



# NORTHEAST JOURNAL

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St. Petersburg, FL

JUL/AUG 2021

EST. SEPTEMBER 2004

## On the Road Again



Our northern terminus: Acadia National Park in Maine

— JON KILE —

Summer in the Old Northeast: the shouts of kids splashing in swimming pools, the howl of leaf blowers, the hum of mosquitoes, and the song of the ice cream truck – warbled by the humid air. In summer, there's plenty of parking on Beach Drive and you don't need a reservation. But a lot of our neighbors beat the heat by disappearing north. A few years ago, we decided to join the club.

It wasn't retirement that afforded my family the chance to spend summers in a cooler climate. Our life changed five years ago, when I spent much of the summer of 2016 hospitalized from a series of major medical events. I was ultimately diagnosed with a serious genetic condition affecting my arteries, the only silver lining of which is I now have lots of time for things like travel and contemplating life's meaning. After a couple of years in old vans, we upgraded our summer home to a still nimble 24-foot-long RV.

Continued on page 22

## Mayor Ulrich Woos the White Sox

— WILL MICHAELS —

Robert (Bob) L. Ulrich served as mayor of St. Petersburg from 1987 to 1991. Ulrich, now 87, continues to be engaged in the city he loves. He is a zealous protector of the Downtown Waterfront Parks and an active member of the Waterfront Parks Foundation. One of his other passions is baseball. He closely follows the current negotiations over the future of the Rays. As mayor, he played a major role in bringing Major League Baseball to St. Petersburg.

At the time he became mayor, the city already had made the bold decision to build a stadium without obtaining any assurance of a baseball franchise to play in it. "Build It and They Will Come." That action was taken in 1983 when the late Corrine Freeman was mayor. The decision to build without a team was highly controversial. Mayor Freeman herself called the decision "the

Continued on page 26



Bob Ulrich served two terms as City Mayor between 1987 and 1991. He helped lead the effort to bring the Chicago White Sox to St. Petersburg. Image 1987.

## A Deeper Kind of Love

— SAMANTHA BOND RICHMAN —

Eric Swanson waited for his wife Heather Graeme at the VA hospital where he was being seen for high blood pressure. After an unrelated Urgent Care visit out of town, he was advised to have his blood pressure checked by his hometown physician, as it seemed the medication he was previously prescribed was no longer adequate. When Heather entered the room, Eric's eyes uncharacteristically welled with tears when he saw her. He immediately blurted out, "I have PKD." At that time, she didn't know what it was, or how it would change their lives forever. PKD is short for polycystic kidney disease.

There had been no obvious symptoms of kidney trouble, though sometimes Heather wondered why Eric spent the weekend laying on the couch, too lethargic to join her in some outdoor activity. It was 2015, and Heather's mom, who had been living with them, had passed away about a year before. Heather had grieved inwardly, and self-admittedly indulged in too much food and drink attempting to numb the pain. Her spirits were low, but now with the new-found knowledge that her husband needed her, she knew she needed to steel herself and become the support

Continued on page 14



Heather Graeme and husband Eric Swanson in front of the familiar mural gracing Heather's massage studio

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4TH OF JULY



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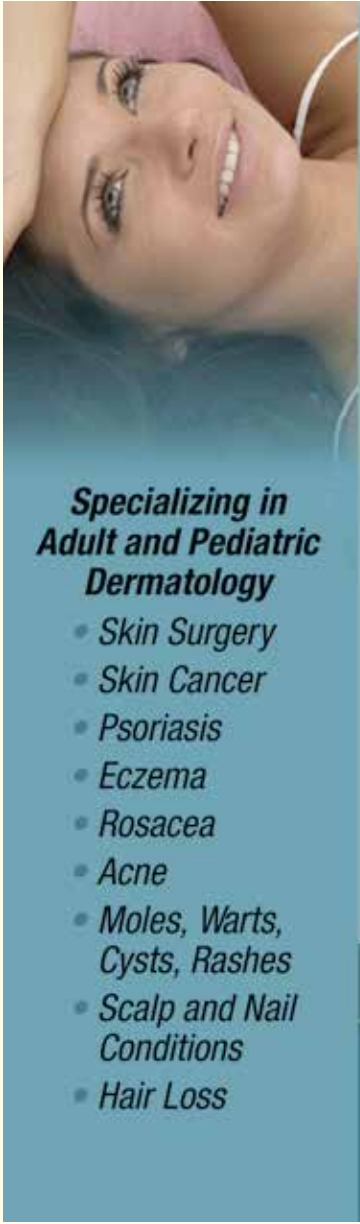
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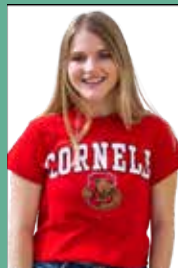
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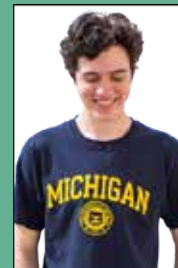
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## EDITOR'S NOTE

### Summer Vacation Stories

When I look back at the stories we've published in the *Northeast Journal* over the past three summers, the contrast is astounding. In the summer of 2019, we asked writers and readers to take a copy of the paper along on vacation and send us photos from around the globe – similar to the once popular "Flat Stanley" or "Where's Waldo?" grade-school projects. Those photos were published in our September-October 2019 issue.

Then last summer, when our world upended, no one could travel anywhere. We devoted an entire issue to writing about the St. Petersburg community coming together during COVID, and the many individuals who stepped up to bring a spark of kindness, compassion, and assistance to those in need.

This summer, it's such a relief to be almost back to normal, with families finally able to schedule vacations to sites around the US, if not overseas. I hope you enjoy Jon Kile's story about his family's adventures as he and his wife Monica and the kids tour the country in a 24-foot-long RV. Look for his story, "On The Road Again," on page 1.

If you feel inclined to take along the *NEJ* and send us a photo from your own adventures this summer, we will publish them in the fall issue. In the meantime, have you visited and 'liked' our Facebook page? Visit [www.facebook.com/NortheastJournalFL](http://www.facebook.com/NortheastJournalFL). We'll see you there!

*Janan Talafer*  
Editor, *Northeast Journal*



Mark and Janan enjoying an early summer vacation in Homosassa Springs to kayak and see the manatees

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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.

**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.



**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. [[www.JeannieCarlson.com](http://www.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). [[nsnaeditor@aol.com](mailto:nsnaeditor@aol.com)]



**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](http://dontmakemeturnthisvanaround.com). He's on the board of literary nonprofit Keep St. Pete Lit.



**Lynn Lotkowitz** spent years in radio in NY, and in business dev/mgmt at *Florida Trend Magazine*. She volunteers at Tomlinson Adult Learning Center ESOL Program, and travels internationally. Lynn is the new *NEJ* Facebook roving reporter sharing photos and video about exciting events, people and places around town. [[facebook.com/NortheastJournalFL](https://facebook.com/NortheastJournalFL)]



**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](mailto:wmichaels2@tampabay.rr.com)]



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



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



**Janan Talafer** A long-time Snell Isle resident, Janan is the editor of the *Northeast Journal* and 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](mailto:janantalafer@gmail.com)]



**Livia Zien** moved to the area from Washington, DC in 2000. She married, traveled, and changed careers from electrical engineering to culinary arts to teaching math. Livia (who also enjoys running and swimming) and her husband Greg love life in the ONE with their two kitties.




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# NYC Millennials Transform Their Lives in St. Pete

— LYNN LOTKOWITZ —

Thomas Maloney and fiancée Sonya Sarkar left New York City in the midst of the pandemic to create a new life in St. Petersburg. Young and ambitious millennials, they caught the city's entrepreneurial vibe and recently opened their own business, Paradeco Coffee Roasters, St. Pete's newest coffee shop and cool place to hang out. The venue, at 111 2nd Avenue NE, adds new life to the Plaza Tower & Courtyard Shops downtown.

Over the last decade St. Pete's demographics have changed considerably, with the average age dropping significantly. The pandemic seems to have further accelerated that trend, with more young people than ever moving here to start over, drawn by the sunshine and opportunity. Sonya, age 30, and Tom, 32, are a great example of the transformation underway.

Sonya grew up in Jacksonville and received her bachelor's degree from the University of Florida, before relocating to New York City and earning a master's in fashion merchandising and retail management from LIM College, a small fashion school in Manhattan. After graduation, she stayed in NYC and worked as a fashion buyer, then in product development and home decor.

Before venturing south to St. Pete, Tom worked as a private investigator in New York, and did special investigations for attorneys and insurance companies related to fatalities and workplace injuries. He grew up in the New York area and received his bachelors from Western Connecticut State University and master's in criminology from John Jay College (CUNY) in New York.

Over coffee at Paradeco, I had an interesting Q&A interview with this young couple who now work and live in the downtown area. They are renting just a few blocks from Paradeco and especially enjoy walking to work.

## Why a Coffee Shop?

"As an investigator, I never interviewed anyone in their office," says Tom. "All my meetings for the last ten years were in coffee shops. The clients were more comfortable away from their work environment. I always had it in the back of my mind that one day I'd like to open a coffee shop."

That opportunity came sooner than expected. When COVID hit New York City hard in 2020, they weren't able to continue working, so the couple spent most of their time researching the coffee business. They'd been considering doing something different for a couple of years, but COVID just pushed up their timeline. Then, in March 2020, just prior to the mandatory lockdown, they were able to attend the annual NYC Craft Coffee Festival, where they networked with coffee roasters, manufacturers, and coffee shop owners from all over the country.

They also did some research about where they'd like to live. "We wanted to start a family and the environment in New York wasn't right for that," says Sonya.

## Why St. Pete?

"One of our coworkers in New York had moved to Florida and lived in St. Pete on the water near the Sunshine Skyway Bridge. She was always posting beautiful videos of sunrises. We decided to take a few weekend trips to visit South Florida and St. Pete to check it out," says Tom.

Another influence was *Inc. Magazine's* "Top Surge Cities in America." Four of those cities were in Florida. In addition, during the NYC Coffee Festival, they had met several people from the Tampa Bay region. "All of them said St. Petersburg when I asked



Tom and Sonya in their new coffee shop, Paradeco

if you were going to open a coffee shop where would you put it," says Tom.

But, before making the final decision, the two did their homework to make sure St. Pete would be the right market. They studied the city's population growth and looked at the differences in cost of living. "In New York City, you pay \$500,000 for a 400-square-foot apartment. Here, for that price you get a full house with a yard," says Tom.

The couple also worked with artificial intelligence companies that track foot traffic for specific streets in St. Petersburg. "We further analyzed data related

to buildings going up in town and developer's plans," said Tom.

They left NYC in May of 2020, during the peak of COVID. On the drive to Florida, they spoke to different brokers, developers, and landlords seeking the right space for their coffee shop. When they finally arrived in St. Pete, they looked at all the available spaces in town.

Once they saw the vibrancy of Beach Drive, it was an easy decision. "We said, 'this is where we need to be,'" said Tom. "The space we ended up taking on 2nd Avenue North was perfect. It's only a block from Beach Drive."

## Getting Ready For The Grand Opening

Tom and Sonya spent six months doing the demolition, renovation, and decorating for Paradeco. How did they come up with such a unique name? "We wanted to name the coffee shop Paradise but the name is used in a dozen other places so we came up with Paradeco, a combination of Paradise and Art Deco," says Tom.

Sonya's background in fashion and home décor was helpful with the design and branding of Paradeco's interior space and social media. "We wanted to create a space that was open and inviting," she says. "The beautiful floor-to-ceiling windows all around make it bright and easy to see the highly stylized interior space. A plant wall with seating directly in front of it brings warmth to the room."

The new venue officially opened in May 2021. Although nationwide, the hospitality industry is having a challenge finding sufficient staff, that is one concern that Tom and Sonya say they haven't had to worry about it. "Our manager Chris is a highly skilled coffee professional with excellent contacts, and helped put us in touch with the right team," says Tom. "We are also roasting all of our own coffee beans as part of our new business venture."

Now that they've been here for just over a year, Tom and Sonya feel like St. Pete is home. "The people are so friendly and welcoming, and the walkability of the city and the waterfront make it convenient and beautiful," they say. In a city full of independent small business owners, they're happy to be part of the community. ●





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# GOODNESS INDEED

## Patti's Act III



A Habitat for Human ReStore in Michigan



Patti, Michael, and Chica



Clothes For Kids

— JEANNIE CARLSON —

No one leaves the theatre when Act III starts. Not the audience. Not the actors. Not the backstage crew. Not anyone. Act III is the culmination of the play. It is where the protagonist is revealed for who she or he really is... and everyone wants to know how the story turns out. Looking at the last act of a play as a metaphor for the zenith of an entire lifetime gives the conclusion more meaning.

Patti Thomas Hanks was concerned about her approaching 60th birthday. A friend pointed out that both of their mothers had lived into their nineties. Turning 60 was certainly not the end of Patti's life, much less her productivity. Patti's friend told her to think of it as her Act III.

It's not as if Acts I and II weren't engaging. Act I began with Patti growing up in California and being raised Mormon. However, she was not in sync with the Mormon faith, so she left it behind at the start of Act II when she moved to Michigan for her college years and the outset of her calling into nonprofit work. Then she moved from Ann Arbor, MI to St. Petersburg in 2008 where she has lived in the Old Northeast neighborhood ever since.

Patti began her career by completing her BA in

communication and English followed by her MA in organizational communication, both attained at Eastern Michigan University. After that, she taught communications courses at her alma mater as an adjunct English professor for about a year, and filled her free time volunteering at a homeless shelter.

Contributing her time at the homeless shelter gave her a sense of purpose and she felt herself drawn to charity work as a vocation. Ninety percent of the families she found homes for were still housed a year later. She knew she wanted to explore her gift for making an impact in underserved communities and social justice. "I fell down the nonprofit rabbit hole for the next 20 years," said Patti.

A friend at Habitat for Humanity gave her a taste of working at their local ReStore in Michigan where donations of nails, cabinetry, and assorted construction materials were sold to financially support the effort to build houses for low-income families. She was inspired by the organization's mission, and now in Florida and living in the Old Northeast, she spent the next three years developing ReStores throughout Pinellas and West Pasco Counties.

Her next step presented itself at a fundraiser for a Clothes to Kids. The Tampa Bay children's charity

collects and displays children's clothing in an inviting retail environment, giving low-income kids the opportunity to 'shop' and pick out seven new outfits twice a year. This was something Patti had not seen before. "I was blown away," she said, and instantly fell in love with the concept. A year later she was hired as executive director of the organization and worked there for nearly a decade. During her tenure there, some 100,000 children were served.

"It was a challenging, glorious time," said Patti with her infectious enthusiasm. It made perfect sense to Patti that she had spent her life (up to this point) providing food, shelter, and clothing to people in need.

This is when the curtain began to go up on Patti's Act III. About a year after Patti retired from Clothes To Kids she was sitting at a BLUU (Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism) Conference in Minneapolis when she realized what her Act III was going to be: ministry.

As she sat there, a song was being played that had a soul-stirring refrain. "There is a voice inside your head..." went the lyrics. "I began to cry," said Patti. She knew in that instant what she was

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Jode Eye (L), one of the Clothes To Kids founders, with Tampa Bay Rays Mascot Raymond and Patti Hanks after a donation from the Rays Foundation



Patti and her granddaughters

supposed to do. “I wanted to work with individuals on a spiritual journey.”

Knowing what she wanted to do and finding the right place to prepare her for that was another thing altogether. “I was looking for a liberal progressive sort of seminary,” said Patti, but it took some searching to find just the perfect match that would have progressive theology, Unitarian Universalist studies, and a focus on counseling. Locally, she is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of St. Petersburg at Mirror Lake.

She enrolled at the United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities in St. Paul, MN in January 2020. The seminary was founded in 1962 and is self-described as “a progressive seminary open to people from any – or no – religious tradition.” The graduate program is a low-residency seminary where courses are taught online and Patti spends one week per year on campus to connect with students and

instructors. Patti admits that her timing registering for online Zoom classes was fortuitous given the onset of the pandemic.

Now in her second year of this three-year program, Patti is halfway through her studies. It is clear that she is looking forward to completing her Master’s in Divinity degree and being ordained as a Unitarian Universalist minister. “I guess they will call me ‘Pastor Patti,’” she said with a lilt in her voice, pausing to imagine what that will feel like when the day comes.

The requirements of her degree program include serving 400 hours of CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education), involving personal pastoral counseling and providing care of some kind yet to be determined. Patti has yet to launch that part of her obligations, but is hoping that she will get to serve in a hospital.

Living in the Old Northeast is another part of

her quest to “live the authentic life I really want.” What she likes best is “the ability to walk out the front door and walk to so many places that are just gorgeous.” She says she walks about five miles a week, often with Chica, her 5-year-old Havanese dog, a non-shedding Cuban breed resembling a Maltese. The dog’s name means “girl” in Spanish.

Patti and her husband Michael Hanks – who has a Ph.D. in chemical engineering and works as a consultant – have been married for 35 years. They have four children and three grandchildren and are hoping to convince all of them to move to the area. For Patti, Act III is going very well indeed. “The happiest people live life consistently within their values – doing the next right thing,” observed Patti. ●

For more information about Clothes For Kids, visit [www.clothestokids.org/our-history](http://www.clothestokids.org/our-history). And for Habitat for Humanity ReStore, go to [www.habitat.org/restores](http://www.habitat.org/restores).

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SPOTLIGHT ON THE ARTS

# Tampa Bay Museums Collaborate on Skyway 20/21

— BRANDY STARK —

**S**kyway 20/21, currently at the Museum of Fine Arts St. Petersburg, is an amazing collaboration that crosses the entire Tampa Bay region, not only with the artists represented, but also with the venues hosting the show.

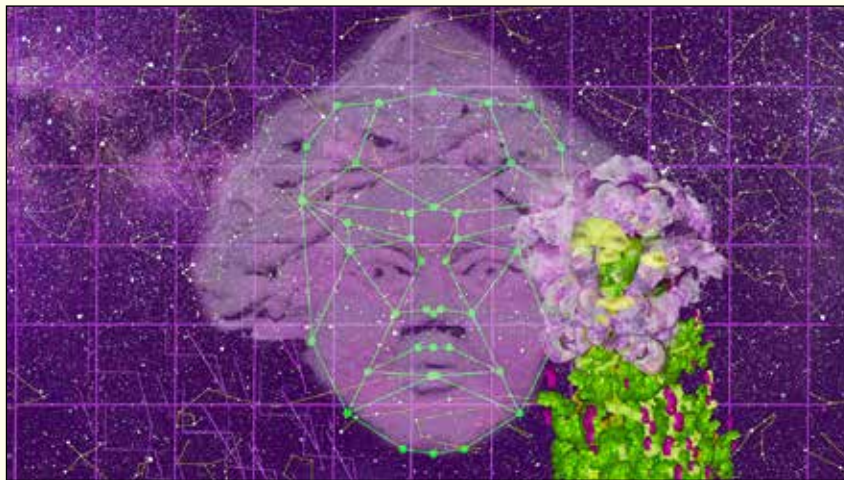
Four Tampa Bay museums – The Museum of Fine Arts St. Petersburg, The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, the Tampa Museum of Art, and the University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum – have joined together to bring the Skyway 20/21 exhibition of contemporary art to the public. MFA director and CEO Kristen Shephard calls it “an innovative partnership the regional arts community enthusiastically supports and embraces.”

This is the second Skyway exhibition. The inaugural collaboration kicked off in 2017 with the expectation that it would be held every three years. The current show was initially slated for summer of 2020, but the widespread impact of COVID caused the exhibit to be delayed by a year. The museums agreed that they wanted the artists and their works to be fully celebrated.

“The Tampa Bay area is fortunate to attract an abundance of talented artists working across all media, and we are proud to be able to give them a platform to elevate artistic exploration, share their voices, and build connections across our communities and beyond,” Shephard said at an advance media event to promote the exhibition. Similar to ikebana art, each piece in the show contributes to the whole in an organic fashion while maintaining the individual artistic voice.

Skyway 20/21 was not easy to put together as over 400 applications were submitted. The call to artists went out in 2019 and was directed to those residing in Hillsborough, Manatee, Pinellas and Sarasota counties. From these, the organizers evaluated artists via an online examination, read artist statements, studied concepts, mediums, and techniques. Then, 60 artists were selected for studio tours.

The MFA’s Curator of Contemporary Art, Katherine Pill, was part of this process. She described traveling all over the Tampa Bay Area – “from St. Petersburg to Venice, Osprey to Riverview” – in search of the perfect blend of artists for the event. A total of 49 finalists were selected to participate. The MFA selected 15 artists whose work “celebrates, investigates or honors” some



Dakota Gearhart: Life Touching Life, Episode

aspect of the theme the MFA selected – the natural environment of Southwest Florida.

Gabriel Ramos uses incredibly red hues in *Mi Isla*, which explores themes of nature observed by the artist when he moved from Puerto Rico to Florida. The wall-sized work is created from painted PETG plastic, magnets, and stainless-steel standoff pins. It hosts a multitude of shapes, and the eye catches glimpses of palm trees and flamingos among the flowing forms. Pill explains that the piece is “made from a translucent material that took the artist months to find. The installation took him two days to complete.” Pins of differing depth give a three-dimensional complexity to the piece.



Gabriel Ramos: Mi Isla

Additional artists showcased at the MFA include Karl Kelly, whose work Pill describes as “an abstract response to the Florida landscape, while photographer Jon Notwick “sheds light on the military test sites that sit below our parks and forested areas.”

A video installation by Dakota Gearhart describes a utopia-based future that draws on the theme of learning to love, despite feeling fear. Pill noted that the work was extremely time-consuming for the artist, who completed the project just days before the deadline.



Ezra Johnson: Six Cups

Matthew Wicks has three works, *Lounger*, *Sleeper*, and *Chaiser*, made of polypropylene webbing and galvanized steel, which incorporate diverse mediums to create sculptures that combine both the masculinity of minimalism with the feminine nature of craft art. His *Stretcher* series references the lawn chair, but transforms the concept into a stretcher, an “X” form, and a triangular form.

“He really likes to juxtapose things like industrial products with domestic craft,” says Pill. “Here we see bent metal that references lawn chairs, and he uses vintage chair webbing which he crisscrosses. They are not functional, but they combine domestic active weaving with utilitarian industrial looking sculptures.”

The entire exhibit takes time to fully assimilate and appreciate, which makes for a perfect afternoon at the MFA. The show is open to the public through August 22. The work of additional artists who are participating in *Skyway 20/21* can be seen at the Tampa Museum of Art through October 10; at the USF Contemporary Art Museum through September 1 and at the Ringling through September 26. ●



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### Victoria Rogers Joins the Team

Nice to meet everyone! I'm the new *Northeast Journal* People and Pets coordinator. My name is Victoria Rogers, and I live in the Old Northeast with my husband Patrick and our nine-year-old rescue mutt Louie. We think he might be part Black Mouth Cur or Jack Russell Terrier, but we're just guessing. Anyone else out there who has resisted the urge to test their dog's DNA?

Patrick and I lived in Miami for 30+ years until his job in financial services took us to Illinois, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. We honestly never thought we'd end up back in Florida, but while visiting my brothers in Tampa, we stumbled upon St. Petersburg. We – like so many of you – fell in love with the banyan trees and brick-lined streets. We marveled at the miles of walking and biking paths skirting Coffee Pot Bayou and Tampa Bay. We adored the mix of bungalows, low-rise apartment buildings, grand mansions, and midcentury-modern ranches.

Patrick was still working when we started house-hunting in 2018. What we wanted was not easy to find: a main house we could rent out until we were ready to move south, with an in-law suite or apartment we could use when we came for visits, and within walking distance of downtown.

Thanks to our real estate agent, we found the perfect home after just a few months of looking. Of course, it came on the market the very afternoon I returned to Providence. Our agent swore it was exactly what we were looking for, so I turned around and flew back down. She was right. We were under contract within 24 hours. Patrick didn't see it in person until the day we closed.

We've been in St. Petersburg full-time since last September, living in the garage apartment while we expand and renovate our 1925 bungalow. We're thinking of naming it Bee Line Bungalow in memory of the ferry that traveled between St. Petersburg and Bradenton back in the 1940s. Or the Orange Belt Bungalow in honor of the railroad line that Russian exile Peter Demens built between Sanford and St. Petersburg in the 1880s.

We are happy that our daughter, Allison Kay Rogers, a recent graduate of Wheaton College in Massachusetts, plans to join us in St. Pete this fall. Allison has a BA in studio art. But her real passion is working with shelter dogs so they can become good family pets. She has been volunteering for years with Handsome Dan's Rescue, a non-profit that works exclusively with pit-bull-type dogs in New

England. She's in the process of getting certified in basic obedience and behavioral issues such as aggression and separation anxiety. She's a devotee of the Humane Hierarchy which uses force-and-fear-free training methods.

Please email me at [victoria.spofford.rogers@gmail.com](mailto:victoria.spofford.rogers@gmail.com) if you'd like to see your pet(s) and family featured in an upcoming issue of the *Northeast Journal*. In the meantime, let's all wag a little more and bark a little less! ●



Victoria & Patrick Rogers with Louie  
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Rick Neal & Rita Knorr with Padma & Brie  
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Allison Rogers and Louie  
 soon to be at 11th Avenue NE



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**A DEEPER KIND OF LOVE** *Cont'd from page 1*  
 Eric needed to make it through. Surely, he would beat the disease. She never thought otherwise, though the facts forced her to recognize that his life would be impacted, and that distant time known as 'old age' may not be as long for him.

Eric, the love of her life, had come to her attention in 1997, while he worked on a boat in the marina where she lived aboard her recently purchased sail boat. Heather had returned to her hometown of Jacksonville, FL after spending a year backpacking the world with her best friend. The dream of so many dreamers had been realized by this vibrant young woman, who hit the road after graduating with a master's degree in Greek Architecture from Colorado University. She and her friend traveled to London, backpacked to Greece, and from there made their way to Australia, New Zealand, and then on to Fiji before returning home.

Eric, the handsome marine repairman who caught her eye, had recently left the Navy and was working on his divorce attorney's boat to pay the legal fees. Smitten, Heather soon made her attraction known at a mutually frequented watering hole, and ten years later they were married on the beach in Fort DeSoto Park on the 10th anniversary of their first date.

As the years passed, their marriage survived and thrived through the test of time with typical highs and lows. Then,



*A sunset wedding for Heather and Eric on the beach in Fort Desoto, October 2007*

when the diagnosis of polycystic kidney disease threatened Eric's longevity, they developed a level of understanding and team-togetherness that few couples share. It is a test of fortitude not to be wished for, though the rewards it brings are deep and lasting.

Theirs is a partnership made stronger by their differences, he the pessimist, she the optimist. Heather embraced the concept of a worldwide energy as part of a higher power, and Eric, a man who works with his hands, recognized the more tangible in life. Now, in the hour of their greatest challenge, they embarked on a new chapter.

PKD is a heinous, debilitating, deadly disease. The kidneys are



*Heather Graeme up and around after her heroic surgery*

designed to filter our blood. The tissues work like a pair of strainers, except when they become covered with cysts. Eric's disease progressed over time, leaving him with zero energy, headaches, pain, and nausea. It sounds like a bad hangover without the fun of getting drunk. His diet became very restricted with limits on intake of protein (no red meat; especially his favorite, a good steak), along with potassium, phosphorus and sodium.

Heather became an expert in helping Eric manage his disease, though the progression continued. His eGFR – a measure of kidney filtration efficiency – continued to fall. The strain of his diseased kidneys stressed

his heart, further increasing Eric's high blood pressure, which required a complex prescription cocktail to contain. Nothing could stop the ill-effects of PKD that ravaged Eric's body, and eventually, according to Heather, "There were no good days." In October of 2019, Eric's kidney function had fallen to a level of dysfunction that put him in a critical position of needing either dialysis several times a week, or a new kidney.

To put it bluntly, kidney donation can be from a live donor or a cadaver donor. Live donors are preferred and provide for more successful outcomes, less complications, and increased longevity. Our bodies are amazing in that we can function just fine with one healthy kidney. Donating a kidney can save a life, and for a healthy donor, the recovery is usually fast, lasting only several weeks to a month. Kidney donation and receipt are orchestrated through a 'list' process managed by the US Department of Health and Human Services Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network. The harsh reality is that it takes years for recipients to get their turn and thousands die annually waiting for a donor match.

As a veteran of the Navy, Eric received medical care from the VA hospital system. In order to be considered for a transplant, Eric had to be thoroughly examined, tested, scanned, and otherwise qualified. "The VA was the biggest blessing in all of

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this,” related Heather. Going to the hospital for the battery of tests was a strange affair, it was early 2020 and COVID had cleared the halls. There was no waiting, there were no lines, just an eerie quiet shared by only those who were receiving or administering what is considered ‘medically necessary’ treatment.

After attending a kidney transplant seminar, Heather got to thinking. Perhaps there was another way she could help her husband. She volunteered to be tested to determine if she was a donor match. In June 2020, at age 51, Heather was told she was a match and could be her husband’s donor!

The next hurdle to giving her husband the gift of life was to qualify medically. After many tests and meditation visualizing the mutual good health Heather *just knew* they could enjoy, she was approved. Heather would be able to give her husband one of her kidneys. The two cried tears of joy at their good fortune. Heather felt waves of relief and a nervous anticipation. She could save her husband; this was actually going to happen.

Infections of the COVID-19 virus raged around them, and the surgery was delayed, target-date after target-date pushed, while Eric suffered. Then, in January 2021, Eric tested positive for COVID. Heather tested positive as well, though thankfully the



Eric (in a wig) and Heather (R) in family photo from a few years ago

effects were not catastrophic for either of them. Once again, they had to postpone any thoughts of the sophisticated surgeries they both would endure simultaneously. Eric began dialysis, something he had so valiantly tried to avoid. His diseased kidney function was so meager, it would not allow the doctors to move forward without improving his eGFR number (or filtration rate) by mechanical means. Again, the VA provided quality care in the form of a private jet to take Heather and Eric to Pittsburg, where they would receive their surgeries at the VA Hospital/HJ Heinz Campus. Heather remembers chatting with the anesthesiologist one moment, and waking up drowsy at

lunchtime the next. A local apartment with a medical attendant for each was arranged so they could stay near the hospital after a successful surgery. Eric’s mother, Gloria, and sister, Lynn, provided support as well, coming to stay with the recovering couple for a few days.

The healing process was easier for Heather, as her surgery was performed laparoscopically. Several small incisions were made on her abdomen and the donated kidney delicately removed. Eric’s surgery was more invasive and required a large (9 inches!) incision and the removal of his distended, diseased kidney. They healed together and even experienced some of the same symptoms, such as

pain and nausea. Eventually, both returned to work. Heather is the owner-operator of The Therapeutic Massage Center. Eric has returned to working with gusto as the head of Florida Marine Engineers, Inc.

Together they joke that Eric has a softer, more sensitive side now with his ‘female’ kidney. They are closer than ever in their relationship, grateful to the universe for orchestrating the events that lead to the best possible outcome of their medical journey, their spiritual growth and their deep love for each other. ●

Heather is writing an autobiographical account of her experiences. A timeline of her story appears on her blog [heathergraeme.medium.com/our-kidney-transplant-story-cae37d39da8](https://heathergraeme.medium.com/our-kidney-transplant-story-cae37d39da8).

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# NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF COMMUNITY ... 1911-2011

## ST. PETE'S JEWEL ON TAMPA BAY

Rick Carson, editor • rickcarson1@gmail.com



If you lived in the ONE in the early '00s, families with toddlers were pretty scarce. That changed quickly as younger couples discovered the neighborhood. Soon it seemed like kids were everywhere, and maybe you watched some of these youngsters grow into teens. Here are two of them and where they are now.

### Rising Old Northeast Stars

The future is bright for Meredith and Katelyn as they will be heading off to college soon with great ambitions and dreams. If you have lived in the neighborhood for a while, you may have passed these little girls – now young women – and their families over the years, possibly in their red wagons, tricycles, bicycles, or scooters as they were both born and raised a few blocks from one another

on 15th Avenue in the Old Northeast.

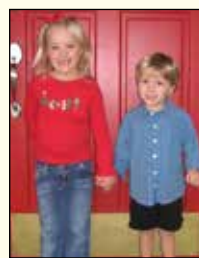
Meredith Adams, daughter of Jack and Sarah Adams, attended Canterbury School of Florida for elementary and middle school and recently graduated from Calvary Christian High School. She will be attending the University of Texas on a track-and-field scholarship. Meredith's senior year was a huge success, winning the individual state championship and receiving medals in track-and-field for the javelin, discus, and shot put events.

Her other varsity sports accomplishments included MVP on the track-and-field team, Pinellas County All Star Volleyball Team, and playing soccer. Meredith plans to major in business and continue pursuing her dream to become a professional athlete in a throwing event on a national level. Watch out for this young star as we may see her in the Olympics some day!

Katelyn Disler, daughter of Dodd and Heather Disler, attended Lakeview Fundamental Elementary, Thurgood Marshall Middle and graduated summa cum laude in the International Baccalaureate program from St. Petersburg High School. In addition to her academics at St. Pete



Meredith then (with big sis Hannah) and now.



Katelyn then (with brother Blake) and now



High, Katelyn played soccer, clarinet in the symphony and jazz band, was the marching band drum major, and was involved in numerous honor societies. She was accepted into the chemistry honors program at Boston College as a pre-med major and plans to major in chemistry and minor in French. She would like to become a doctor and work in either pediatrics or neonatology.

How exciting it is to watch kids growing up in the ONE, creating lasting memories and achieving great accomplishments. These friends on 15th went to kindergarten together at Canterbury and will always have fond memories of growing up in the neighborhood, particularly walking to friends' houses for play dates, trips to the waterfront, biking downtown, picnics in the park, Halloween and Easter Egg hunts, and spearheading lemonade stands.

As Katelyn says, "I liked that everyone was very friendly and seemed like 'neighbors' even if they lived blocks away." And Meredith recalls her fondest memory is "having lemonade stands with all the kids in the neighborhood and becoming best friends with my neighbor." There are many other 2021 graduates in our neighborhood who will be moving on to their next stages of life, and we wish them all great success in the future.

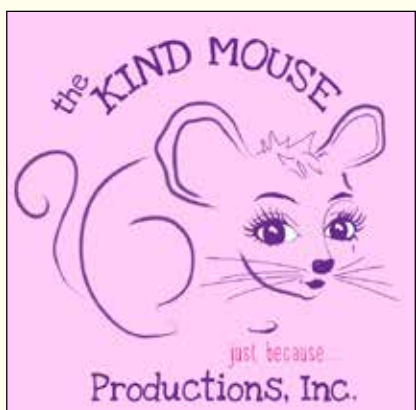
Hats off to Meredith and Katelyn as you begin the next chapter of your lives. Go Longhorns and Eagles!

~ Sharon Kantner



### If There's Still Time...

HONNA has been conducting a July 4th food drive running July 3-11 at locations around the neighborhood. The drive benefits The Kind Mouse, a local organization that provides daily meals to school-aged children who are out-of-school for the summer. If you're reading this while the drive is still on and wish to help, go to



www.honna.org to find the list of bin locations where you can drop off non-perishable food items. If you've missed the July 11 deadline but want to make a contribution, here's the link to The Kind Mouse website: www.thekindmouse.org.

### Quarterly Neighborhood Meetings

The June quarterly neighborhood meeting was held via Zoom on Monday, June 21. The guest speaker was Liz Abernethy, the director of the city's planning & development office, who discussed the St. Pete 2050 vision plan, which seeks to "honor our past while pursuing our future." StPete2050 began as a Citywide conversation about the future of St. Petersburg, and the result is a vision plan organized around ten priority community themes that were identified during the engagement process with the input of thousands of St. Petersburg residents. StPete2050 will help inform future decisions, and guide plans, programs, and services throughout the City and in support of its sustainable, resilient and equitable growth over the next 30 years. The "StPete2050: A Vision Plan for St. Petersburg" and supporting reports are available at www.stpete2050.com.

**Coming up on the calendar:** Porch Parties are returning in September;

check the HONNA website and watch social media for details

Quarterly Neighborhood Meeting: Monday, September 20 (details to be announced)

Annual Candlelight Tour of Homes: Sunday, December 12



Louise Graham staffers Joanne Stottlemeyer and Joan Carevic with HONNA treasurer Charleen McGrath

### Bargain Shopping

HONNA's annual neighborhood-wide yard sale took place on Saturday morning, May 15. It was a big success with 53 homes signed up ahead of time to participate and get listed on the free locator map available to bargain-hunters. And lots more households set up shop to take advantage of the shoppers. Many thanks to all our neighbors who put in a lot of hard work and effort to make the event a great day!

Special thanks to the Louise Graham Regeneration Center for providing a document shredder truck for HONNA members to utilize at no cost, an opportunity some 30 people took. The not-for-profit Center provides employment for developmentally disabled adults through the recycling and sale of paper products. Also, thank you to Salvation Army for collecting 'treasures' not sold. Start planning to participate in March 2022!

~ Anna Broshears

### Westminster Church Property Sold

Westminster Presbyterian Church at 1st Street and 11th Avenue in the Old NE sold last month to local developer Darin Kucera, whose other projects include Priatek Plaza (aka One Progress Plaza) and McNulty Station.

The church and school had served as a place of worship, fellowship and education for many of our residents and their families for over 90 years. HONNA's partnership with the Presbytery included use of the church property for meetings and events. You may remember purchasing tickets for the Candlelight Tour, celebrating Trunk or Treat, or attending HONNA monthly meetings there.

The church and school were closed in 2015 due to declining membership.





## HONNA'S SHINING STARS: "BEFORE" AND "AFTER"



In an effort to honor Old NE homeowners for preserving or updating their home or property, and investing the extra dollar to keep the character and history of their homes intact, HONNA has been recognizing them with the Neighborhood Star Award. Every month, yard signs will be placed on properties to indicate an award. The STAR for July (155 9th Avenue NE, Kimberly and Michael Franklin) and for August (256 9th Avenue NE, ATD Park Slope LLC).

Watch for new STARS in the neighborhood monthly, and you can find them posted on [www.honna.org](http://www.honna.org) in addition to HONNA's Facebook page. We invite you to be a part of this effort, so please feel free to nominate a neighbor or a refurbished property you admire in the ONE. Have a home to honor? Send the information to Charleen McGrath at [treasurer@honna.org](mailto:treasurer@honna.org). ●

### Passings to Note

Many of the reasons we so enjoy the neighborhood can be traced to the efforts of HONNA to offer a variety of programs and events. HONNA also serves as a link to the City when it comes to issues and concerns regarding services and the overall physical quality of our neighborhood. This doesn't just happen. All this couldn't be accomplished without the countless number of volunteers who have served on HONNA's board and committees over the years. All these people deserve our thanks. We're often reminded of this when we've lost them – the likes of Cathy Weisberg, the chair of the most recent Candlelight Tour of Homes, who passed away last summer; and Marsha Carson, involved with the Tour and Garden Strolls and the Garden Club, who died on April 2 after a lengthy debilitating illness. As we went to press, we learned of the death of Mary Alice Lange, the embodiment of dedication to HONNA and the betterment of the ONE, and we will remember her in the next issue of this newsletter.

Long time Old Northeast resident Joe O'Connor died suddenly from an aortic dissection on May 16 at age 64. As noted in a tribute by a family member, "He was most satisfied when he could analyze and improve systems, whether he was a paid consultant or a tireless volunteer... Where there was a need, there was Joe." When it came to the Historic Old Northeast Neighborhood Association, Joe always accepted the call, applying his MBA degree and career experience in management consulting and software development. Over the years, he served on the HONNA board of directors, focused on membership communication, the website, the quarterly newsletter, bylaw revision, the Candlelight Tour of Homes, and the Local Historic District drive. When asked, Joe would employ his considerable analytical skills to tackle the many challenging, detail-oriented tasks – like those involving membership and mailing lists – that no one else would take on, or – more importantly – do as well as Joe could do them. He generously shared his time and talents, and a grateful neighborhood extends its condolences to wife Maureen and daughter Meara.

~ Rick Carson



July: 55 9th Avenue NE "Before"



July: 55 9th Avenue NE "After"



August: 256 9th Avenue NE "Before"



August: 256 9th Avenue NE "After"

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# Coaching Elite Swimmers & Future Olympic Stars



Kim coaches a swimmer training in the Endless Pool



Kim and Kirsty at the Athlete's Village in Brazil, 2016 Summer Olympics

— LIVIA ZIEN —

With the Tokyo Olympics just around the corner, anticipation is mounting around the world, and locally the swimming community is brimming with excitement. Old Northeast resident Kim Brackin has some insight into the emotions of the coaches and athletes. The swimmers she has coached run the gamut from beginner to Olympic gold medalist. She understands the highs and lows accompanying the sport at any level, whether trying to pass a swim test, winning an NCAA Division I Swimming Championship, or competing to win at the Olympics.

Brackin herself had a late start to swimming. Growing up, she swam for fun but did not compete until high school. As part of her graduate fellowship in

psychology, she worked at a Stanford University swim camp, an experience with “elite swimmers,” that piqued her interest in coaching. She remembers, “It was 1992, and everyone was getting ready for the Olympics. I was able to observe very intense, high-level athletes.”

She started coaching at Division III schools to gain more experience and eventually landed a coaching position at Auburn University. During her eight years there, she led the Tigers to their first NCAA Championship title in 2002 and subsequent titles in 2003 and 2004. In 2002, she was awarded NCAA Swimming Coach of the Year. While at Auburn, also recruited Kirsty Coventry, future Olympian of the Zimbabwe National Team. Brackin remembers receiving the phone call on her honeymoon, asking her to fly to Zimbabwe to meet Coventry. The special

relationship that began as coach and mentor lasts to this day and has evolved into a close friendship.

Brackin considers the 2004 Games in Athens, where she was Coventry’s deck coach, as the most magical of all her Olympic experiences. “Opening ceremonies were the day before the swimming events started,” she says. “We both felt that if Kirsty wanted to enjoy this experience to its fullest, going to the opening ceremonies was a huge part of it. It was kind of controversial, but it was an experience that Kirsty wanted to fully embrace,” she explains. “...And then she won three medals!”

Coventry won gold in the 200m backstroke, silver in the 100m backstroke, and bronze in the 200m individual medley. She became a national hero in her home country. Along with that new-found fame came



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North Shore Aquatic Center, home of BEST. Photo courtesy of Josh Smith

the pressures to repeat her accomplishment. “It was sort of unexpected,” she admits. “It’s so much easier when you don’t have big expectations like that on your shoulders.” Her success continued at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, where Coventry won three silver medals, and defended her 200m backstroke Olympic title with a gold and a new World Record. Brackin continued to coach Coventry through the 2012 London and 2016 Rio summer games.

What goes through Brackin’s mind while watching athletes warm up, step onto those starting blocks at the Olympic Trials or at the Olympic Games? She smiles, “I have no control over anything, so I can just be a spectator. I watch the youngsters and see how they handle the pressure, their demeanor behind the blocks. Are they smiling? Are they super fidgety the whole time?

What do they look like when they’re in the ready room?”

She remarks, “I think the US Olympic Trials is the hardest meet in the world. It is so competitive, more pressure-filled than the Olympic Games.” Through the lens of a coach, she says, “I like to see different styles of strokes. With all the different body types, I know there are different training programs for each one.” Comparing 100m breaststrokers Andrew Wilson and Michael Andrew, she notes, “They have completely different training styles, yet they finished just 1/100th of a second apart! There is no one secret to success, and it’s so fun to see!”

What is Brackin’s secret to success? Perhaps it is her experience or her contagious energy. Perhaps it is knowing, as she said, “There is no one secret to success.”

After Auburn, she took a year off to have her second

child and was then approached by the University of Texas to coach the women’s team. During the next six years, she added several Big 12 Championships and Top Ten NCAA finishes to her résumé. The cut-throat life of a collegiate coach gave way to an opportunity to start her own business, focusing on individualized coaching and technique. Brackin Elite Swim Training, fittingly abbreviated as BEST, began in an Endless Pool in their Austin backyard, drawing clients from beginner to elite, children to adults, triathletes, and everyone in between.

Brackin jokingly likens her pool to Vegas. “Mirrors, video, headset. It can be information overload, so I try to keep them fairly chill. But I also get excited about what I see, and want to give them as much information

*Continued on page 20*

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Dolores Coe, *Perimeter*, 2019, Oil on canvas, Image courtesy of the artist. Photo: Pat Blocher.



**FROM MARGINS TO MAINSTAYS**  
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION  
ON VIEW THROUGH SEPTEMBER 26  
Richard Avedon, *Marian Anderson (Contralto, New York, June 30, 1955)*, 1955, Gelatin silver print, NEA photography purchase grant



**FROM HEATH TO HEDGEROW**  
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION  
ON VIEW THROUGH OCTOBER 17  
Designed by Hannah B. Barlow, *Vase*, 1882, Glazed stoneware, Extended loan from Eleanor Davidov in memory of Leonard Davidov

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### COACHING ELITE SWIMMERS *Continued from page 19*

as I can.” She videos clients so they can see themselves and other peers who have good techniques. “You don’t need to look like Michael Phelps,” she says.

She helps her swimmers define a purpose for every drill, every aspect of their training. She identifies what they do well and then chooses a few things they can improve. She is analytical. “I think I have a good eye, but because I was not a great swimmer, things didn’t always come naturally to me,” she says. “But I can tell you how something should *feel*. I can explain it.” She believes that “working smart and using your talents is as important as your work ethic.”

“I have been so fortunate to be around the highest level of swimmers,” says Brackin. “I have spent so much time watching them, listening to their coaches on deck. I’ve learned a lot. I’ve met amazing people.”

Brackin brings her experience and expertise to St. Pete. Her husband Steve, took an opportunity at MacDill in the Special Operations Central Command that was too good to pass up. Initially reluctant to move to Florida, she embraced the change and now loves their new home.

Before moving, she contacted head coach of St. Petersburg Aquatics (SPA), Fred Lewis. He and Rebecca Hansen, St. Petersburg parks and recreation manager, thought BEST would be a wonderful asset at the North Shore Aquatics Complex (NSAC), which is available for training and for play. It is home to SPA and St. Pete Masters (SPM) and hosts competitive swim meets year-round. The Swim-to-Stay-Fit program and a variety of other aquatics program are offered. Now, it is also home to BEST and has attracted swimmers from all over. Approximately a quarter of Brackin’s clients are out-of-state, half are Floridians outside the Tampa Bay region, and a quarter are local club swimmers.

Brackin has joined SPM and can be seen riding her bike to 5:30 morning practices. Her son is learning to sail. Her daughter swims with SPA. She and Steve joined the St. Petersburg Shuffleboard Club. Before the pandemic, they frequented HONNA’s porch parties. “I think of St. Petersburg as a smaller Austin. I absolutely love the community! Great people, beautiful weather. I feel like I’m on vacation with sailboats and beaches everywhere.”

As she reflects on her path, she says, “Sometimes I don’t even know how I got here with the swimming coaching career.” Regardless, she will continue to help swimmers in her Endless Pool reach their individual purposeful goals here in St. Pete. “There’s no one formula for success and everybody is so different. That’s part of why I love doing what I do.”

See these links for more information about BEST: [www.brackineliteswimtraining.com](http://www.brackineliteswimtraining.com) and NSAC: [www.stpeteparksrec.org/northshoreaquatic](http://www.stpeteparksrec.org/northshoreaquatic).



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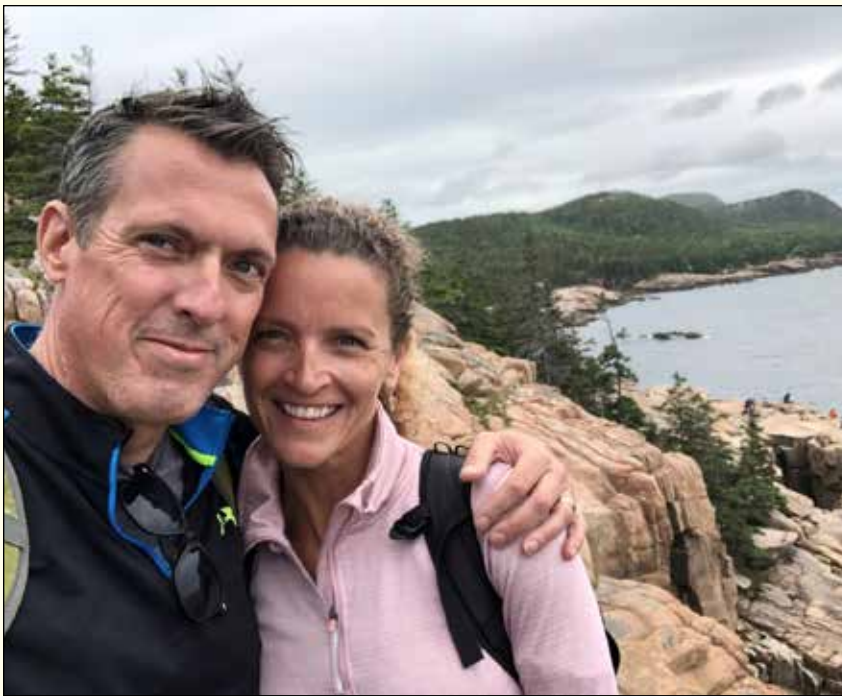
**ON THE ROAD AGAIN** *Continued from page 1*

From coast to coast, we've explored hiking trails, museums, battlefields, riverfronts, cemeteries, and harbors. City or country, beach or mountain, you can bet we'll find a good bookstore and a coffee shop. (Our kids even added a series called *Coffee Quest* to their soon-to-be-famous *Sibling Spectacular* YouTube channel.) We've acquired so many books that I'm starting to calculate the weight of our rolling library when I encounter New England's small bridges.

This isn't just a family vacation, though. On this year's getaway, we're finishing up a year of homeschooling (courtesy of COVID-19). Some of our stops are coordinated with things in this year's curriculum: for Civil Rights history we stopped in Selma, AL. We visited Helen Keller's home to go with the biography we read; and our kids were ready to enlist with Civil War reenactors at Bull Run Battlefield in Manassas, VA. It's so much easier for our kids to understand the raid on Harper's Ferry and the first flight at Kitty Hawk when they're able to stand on the spot where it happened. My wife, Monica, even tricked the kids into thinking we were buying 'school supplies' when she led us to the Hershey Store in Times Square to get a trove of chocolate bars that could be broken into fractions for the greatest math lesson ever!

All this travel has given our kids the unique perspective on living their formative years during a pandemic. They walked the corridors of an eerily empty Ellis Island the week it reopened. I don't think the Great Hall has ever been so quiet while it was open to either immigrants or tourists. They met reenactors in Williamsburg who compared the challenges faced by early settlers to our current plague. Bloodletting and leeches anyone? "We'll always know when these pictures were taken," historian Monica says, "by the masks people are wearing."

As I write, we've been on the road six weeks and we've probably reached our northern terminus: Bar Harbor, ME. We're not quite sure where we're going next.



*Jon and Monica enjoy a 'Florida winter' in Maine in June*



*Biking the waterfront in Liberty State Park in Jersey City, NJ*

I'm often asked how a family of four lives in a 150-square-foot RV without killing each other. It's something we've had to learn. In small spaces, one grumpy family member can ignite a spreading gloom. We spent a week in the Boston area, some of which was magical, and at other times had me worried there'd be a new Boston Massacre. But, we all smiled our way through a rainout at Fenway Park, and had a hearty laugh after I nearly got us stuck in a parking entrance that was 4 feet shorter than our vehicle. (Boston drivers offered helpful hand gestures as I backed down the ramp.) Later, we taught the kids how to play poker – our homeschooling covers life skills too.

We enter a different pace of life when we travel. Between the bumpers of this home on wheels, everyone has found their cozy spot – from our son's 'tree house' in the bed above the cab, to Monica's corner reading spot with a view of whatever is outside the window. (Right now it's Frenchman's Bay and Maine's rocky coast; air temperature 55 degrees.) I've learned to whip up delicious, healthy meals in its tiny kitchen and our daughter's art has given our walls a personal touch.

Taking time to get off the beaten path, we like to dip into local history, literature, and culture. You really get a feel for a place when you visit a small museum, read a biography, or take a house tour. Reading a local memoir about a small organic farm in Maine, I was struck by the Robert Louis Stevenson quote, "To travel hopefully is better than to arrive."

It's a philosophy that resonated because Monica and I often wonder if the next stop will be where we find what Kerouac called "It." As the landscape changes, we're continually imagining ourselves as a permanent part

of the latest tableau. Perhaps lasting contentment will come from the views in the Smoky Mountains, the serenity of a cold Atlantic harbor, or the comfort of world-class hospitals in Boston. We find ourselves perusing the real estate and wondering, "What if..."

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The kids take part in a reenactment of the Boston Tea Party



A typical homeschooling scene, this one in Great Smoky Mountain National Park

Just last night, while walking in the neighborhood near our campground outside of Bar Harbor, we discovered a three-bedroom cabin sitting on eight wooded acres for sale. Our imaginations ran wild with visions of setting our own lobster traps, hiking Acadia National Park and reading on the wide porch overlooking a thick forest carpeted in moss. Indeed, our Maine dreams could be a reality for the price of an empty lot in St. Pete. Then I read the listing's fine print: "Seasonal water service, ready to be winterized." I'm not kidding when I tell you that the ad listed the heating source as "wood." After a couple of Maine winters we'd be dreaming of bright January days in the Old Northeast again.

And it's not just Maine that has enticed us; we've entertained new lives all across the country. Surely, Jersey City – just across the Hudson from Manhattan – would offer a New York experience at a palatable price. (Not unless you have a couple million dollars burning a hole in your pocket.) Maybe the little village

of Hingham, MA, a quick ferry ride from Boston would be a place to find a deal. (Sorry, Hingham was trendy, and expensive, not long after the Mayflower landed.)

No, if we've realized anything by traveling to 44 states in four years, it's that we may have actually found the 'sweet spot' in choosing to live in St. Pete. Bitter Maine winters, New York real estate prices, Boston traffic, North Carolina's – well, I still haven't figured out what's wrong with North Carolina yet – but my point is that even though we're curiously checking Zillow, we still always look forward to returning home. From Missoula to Mackinac Island, Charleston to Cape Cod, not many places offer the robust combination of art, community, dining, and outdoor splendor as St. Petersburg.

Like Johnny Cash, I've been everywhere, man. And I've learned that contentment isn't found in other places. Like Robert Persig says in the classic *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, "The only Zen you find on tops of mountains is the Zen you bring there." This year I'm bringing my Zen home with me. ●

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# MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR



## Susanne Olin

Snell Isle Blvd NE

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

I've lived in St. Pete for about six weeks now. My husband and I just moved here from Portland, OR. I grew up outside Detroit, MI, but raised my children in Minneapolis MN, and lived there for 25 years.

### Favorite place to visit in St. Pete?

I love walking in my neighborhood and the Old Northeast. One of my favorite places is Sunken Gardens. It's a hidden gem. And one of my favorite venues is Pete's General on 7th Avenue North. Their bagels and baked goods are out of this world.

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

My husband and I took a spiritual trip to Bali in 2015. We were able to see it through the eyes of local friends and that was extraordinary.

### Top two places in the world on your bucket list?

Paris, France with my husband, and Alaska. But I'm content to be right here at home.

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

Former Congressman John Lewis. I would love to be in his presence and listen to him. He had great wisdom to impart.

### Favorite sport, recreational activity, or hobby?

Hockey. It's the state religion in Minnesota, and my oldest son played the sport in college. I love to walk and swim for exercise. I also love to sing and do sculpture.

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

I'm watching the series *This is Us* for the first time. It's really touching.

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

I'd be a little dog... like my dog Darby. He's a Shih Tzu-Bichon mix... and he seems to enjoy life.

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

My husband Tom inspires me. He is an incredible speaker and writer... always touching on what matters most. He has a servant's heart and puts hospitality and care of others at the top of his list.

### Current book you've read and would recommend?

*The Underground Railroad*, by Colson Whitehead. The characters are so layered and well-developed... and they tell a truth we all need to hear.

### Tell us about an accomplishment of which you are proud.

I started taking music lessons during the COVID shutdown. It's led me to find a voice I didn't know that I had... and to write music.

### Something people might not know about you.

I'm a Notre Dame grad.

### What do you do for a living?

I began my career as a CPA, then became a CFO and financial consultant for various organizations. About 15 years ago I studied at One Spirit Interfaith seminary in New York City and was ordained as an interfaith minister, honoring all heartfelt paths to God. I now do weddings, memorial services, spiritual counseling, and retreat work for Nine Gates programs, an organization dedicated to helping people live the most conscious lives possible and serve the greater good.

### Tell us something about your family and pets.

Between us, my husband and I have five adult children, three sons-in-law, and five grandchildren. We are spread across five different states and Puerto Rico, so our St. Pete home is everyone's new vacation destination!



## Tom Soma

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

My wife (Susanne Olin) and I just moved here on Memorial Day. I grew up in Westland, MI (a suburb of Detroit), and had been living in Portland, OR since 1979.

### Favorite place to visit in St. Pete?

There are so many great places, I can't limit it to one! We love walking the Pier, going to the Saturday Market, exploring the art galleries, hiking at Sawgrass Lake, and trying new restaurants. I also enjoy shopping at Publix!

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

Susanne and I visited Bali for two weeks in 2015. Fascinating!

### Top two places in the world on your bucket list?

Alaska and New Zealand

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

Stephen Colbert. He's smart, thoughtful, funny, and faithful.

### Favorite sport, recreational activity, or hobby?

Sport: Baseball. Recreational activities: Walking and reading. Hobbies: Writing and baking. (Cinnamon buns are a specialty.)

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

I know we're behind the eight ball on this, but we're really enjoying *Schitt's Creek*!

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

Small goldendoodle

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

I'm most inspired by regular folks who are genuinely kind and caring. I had

some great teachers in high school and college. But if I had to single out one person, it's a guy named Buddy Moody in Hattiesburg, MS. He's a cattle rancher who started The Barn Church which offers food, furniture, and other assistance to folks in need.

### Current book you've read and would recommend?

*The Overstory* by Richard Powers (Pulitzer Prize winner in 2019). Nature speaks directly through the characters – and it's a not an easy message to swallow.

### Tell us about an accomplishment of which you are proud.

I've written two books (collected essays from my tenure as executive director at Ronald McDonald House Charities of Oregon and SW Washington), and am currently working on a third (about a year I spent traveling around the country in my RV – which is how I met Buddy Moody).

### Something people might not know about you.

Hard to think of anything! Much to Susanne's dismay at times, my life's an open book! But I spent eight years as a "dad at home" in the 1980s and '90s – long before that was fashionable.

### What do you do for a living?

Most of my career was in the not-for-profit sector –initially in college fundraising, eventually directing two different organizations serving children (highlighted by 15 years at Ronald McDonald House Charities). I did a bit of freelance writing, primarily during the years at home with my daughters. I wrote a few magazine articles and did some business marketing communication. I retired in 2019, but continue to do some informal consulting; I also serve on the board of a charitable foundation in Oregon. A good portion of my free time now is devoted to writing (poetry, lyrics, and the book).

### Tell us something about your family and pets.

You saved the best (and most important) for last! Susanne and I met in college (where we became good friends), reconnected in 2010 (after enduring painful divorces), began 'dating' in 2011, and married in 2018. I have three adult daughters, she has two adult sons, and we share five grandchildren (ages 2-9), along with an 18-pound fluffy white dog named Darby. I can't wait for the kids and grandkids to start visiting!

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**MAYOR BOB ULRICH** *Continued from page 1*

riskiest gamble” St. Petersburg had ever taken. Consequently, Freeman and a city-council stadium supporter lost their bids for reelection. Mayor Freeman was replaced as mayor by Dr. Edward L. Cole, Jr. who opposed the stadium. Mayor Ulrich defeated Dr. Cole in his bid for reelection in 1987. He recalls, “There was a great deal of contention in the community about building the stadium. About 50 percent were opposed, and 50 percent were not opposed, to the idea of building a stadium without a baseball team.” Ulrich notes not only was the building of the stadium a risky gamble, but at the time, there was no record of any other city building a stadium without commitment from a Major League team to play in it.

Efforts to secure a team pre-dated Mayor Ulrich’s first term, but given the opposition of Ulrich’s predecessor, far from certain. There was a failed petition to recall Ulrich and seven council members over their continued support of stadium construction, and also a \$23 million renovation of the Bayfront Center as well as



Mayor Ulrich overlooking the bridge to the previous Inverted Pyramid Pier. Ulrich led an \$11 million renovation of the Pier in 1987, image 1989.

an \$11 million remodeling of the Pier. The earlier efforts to obtain a team were led by city leisure services director Rick Dodge under the supervision of city manager Bob Obering. “Rick Dodge was our point man,” Ulrich says. Still, Ulrich himself was involved in conversations with Frank Morsoni, Jerry Reinsdorf, and other baseball movers and shakers of the time. As Ulrich came into office, discussions were already underway between Dodge and the Chicago White Socks. The Sox were negotiating with Chicago for a publicly funded new stadium to replace Comisky Park. In 1986, they decided to develop an out-of-state alternative and their top choice was Florida. The Florida market was particularly attractive as there was no Major League Baseball franchise in the entire state.

In October 1987, Dodge and Mayor Ulrich visited the Windy City. Both claimed to be visiting Chicago on “other business” than baseball. But this did not fool the local press. A Chicago columnist shortly wrote a story entitled, “St. Petersburg White Sox? Shameful But Possible.” This was followed by an announcement from Baseball Commissioner Peter Ueberroth that he would not object to the Sox relocating to St. Petersburg. In April 1988, the White Sox went so far as to give St. Petersburg a \$25,000 check to undertake a study of the feasibility of converting Al Lang Stadium into a temporary major-league ballpark in the event the new stadium would not be ready in time for the 1989 season. This was followed by a \$30 million appropriation from the Florida Legislature to speed up construction of the stadium and add various enhancements; although the appropriation was technically earmarked for the first baseball team to come to Florida, wherever that might be, and also set to expire January 1st.

About this time, a media war broke-out between Tampa Bay and Chicago. “During the time that we were negotiating with the White Sox, the Chicago fans mounted a campaign to let us know what they thought about our stealing the White Sox out of Chicago, and they sent a considerable number of white dirty socks to St. Petersburg to emphasize their annoyance,” recalls Ulrich. St. Petersburg-based radio station WYNF started a petition drive to show support for bringing

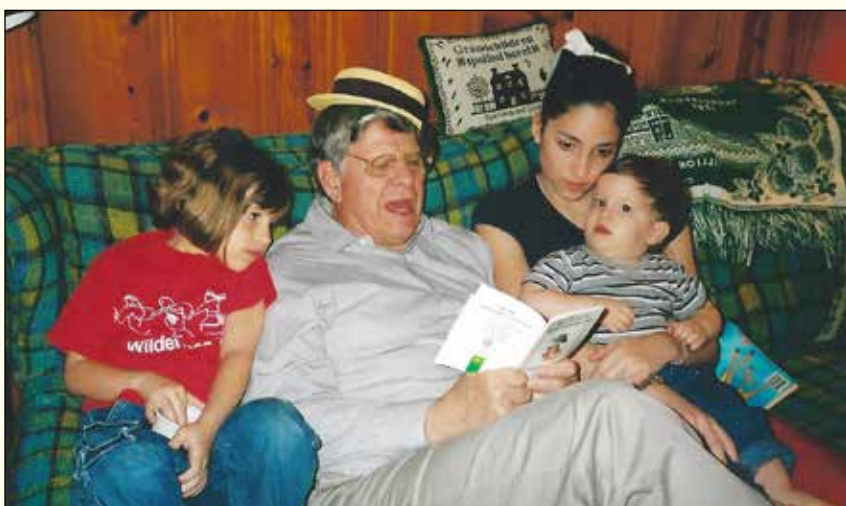
the White Sox to Tampa Bay. Newspapers in Chicago started a campaign to get Chicagoans to send their white socks, “one, or a pair, striped or plain, clean or dirty,” to St. Petersburg Mayor Ulrich. Ulrich humorously replied, “Just remember that I wear size 10.” The *Chicago Tribune* then collected the white socks in a bin and shipped them off for hand delivery to Ulrich. Upon their arrival in Ulrich’s city-hall office, he dispatched two firemen with gas masks, two assistants, and a truck from the hazardous-materials unit to remove them. The socks were later washed and distributed to the needy.

Meanwhile negotiations began to heat up in Chicago. The Illinois Governor got involved in the discussions to build a new stadium for the White Sox with public funding, but approval was required by the state legislature. A vote on providing \$150 million for a new Chicago stadium was delayed until the last day of the Illinois legislative session. At five minutes to midnight, the vote stood at 54 to 61 against the stadium. “The legislature was in its final hours and was due



Bob Ulrich (right) with brother Dick and playmate William Henry, circa 1939

Photos courtesy of the Ulrich Family



Granddaddy Ulrich reading to his grandchildren

to adjourn at midnight. At the 11th hour and 59th minute and 59th second, they moved to extend the session. In the next five minutes, they agreed to move forward to commit to a stadium.” Illinois Governor Thompson personally worked the floor, twisting arms until he reached the needed 60 votes for approval.

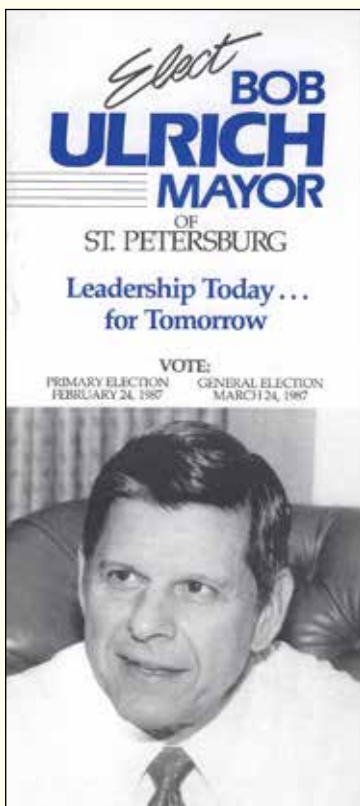
The flirtation with the White Sox was followed by unsuccessful efforts to secure the Texas Rangers, Seattle Mariners, and San Francisco Giants. Ultimately, St. Petersburg was awarded a new baseball team franchise in 1995 and the Tampa Bay Devil Rays were born. (The team’s name was later changed to the Tampa Bay Rays.)

The stadium, along with the restoration of the Vinoy Hotel, and the former International Museum, are credited by many with igniting the renaissance of downtown St. Petersburg.

Was St. Petersburg used as leverage so the White Sox could get their new Chicago stadium? As Mayor Ulrich said at the time, “when we went into these negotiations, they wanted to use us for leverage. The *quid pro quo* for that was the opportunity for us to raise our profile. It was well worth the effort...” Baseball historian Paul Pedersen wrote, “The affair put the Sunshine City back near the top of the race for an expansion franchise.”

What about baseball today in St. Petersburg? Ulrich observes, “It’s got to be a difficult time for the Rays. But the Rays need to better create an emotional infrastructure in Tampa Bay with the team. The owners themselves need a higher Pinellas County and St. Petersburg profile. It’s so huge. The better they identify with the community, the better they will get the support of the community. Kevin Cash has represented the team well, living in St. Petersburg. He is consummately talented in managing the team, a consistent personality in the community, highly regarded, and is a benchmark in developing emotional infrastructure in the community. But, despite the ownership’s shortcomings the Rays have produced a heck of a team!”

A former pilot in the US Air Force, Ulrich continues to practice law. He is married to Barbara Ann Woodworth and has four adult children. ●



Campaign brochure from Bob Ulrich’s first run for mayor, 1987

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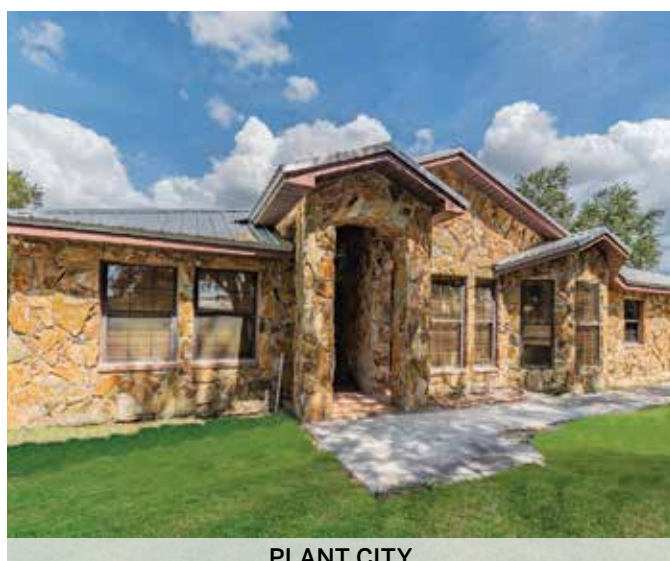
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# Paranormal Investigators at the Melting Pot

— BRANDY STARK —

On May 13th, the SPIRITS of St. Petersburg investigated a unique historical building located on the corner of 22nd Avenue North and 4th Street North. In the last issue of the *Northeast Journal*, I wrote about the building, which once housed the Earl Gresh Wood Museum and The Melting Pot restaurant. It's now under renovation to become the brewpub Sesh. Our team had heard rumors about the building being haunted and the new owner gave us the go-ahead to investigate.

As a paranormal investigation team, we were most interested in the urban legend that I had been told some years back that involves an illicit affair, murder and suicide. Would any of these spirits show up for us as we wandered through the structure?

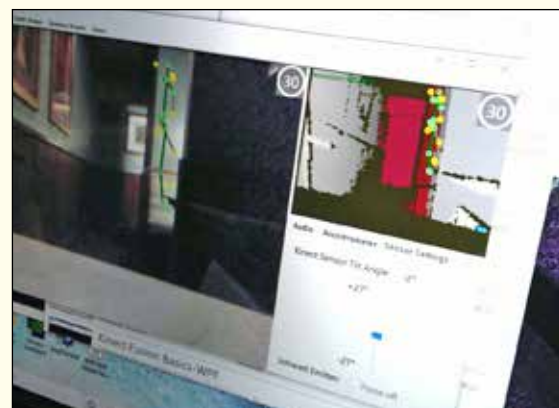
It was interesting to see the building starting its process of transformation. Elements of the old Melting Pot remained, including abandoned fondue pots and multiple pieces of silverware that were scattered about. But the building was quiet and still – no diners chatted at various tables. All of the fondue burners were gone. It is an incredibly large structure and there was no air conditioning. The temperatures inside remained a constant 85 degrees.

The team walked through the building trying to get the layout and determine where the best areas were to start. We found power boxes and areas of EMF (electromagnetic frequency) produced by the power grid within the building. At the end of the walk through, all of the investigators present agreed on several 'hot spots.' These included the back dining room with a fireplace, the private room with the long table, the manager's office, and the kitchen.

The team got its first hit in the private dining room with the long table. The SLS camera – which uses electromagnetic fields to create figures that can be tracked – picked up a figure standing just behind the group. Review of our recording from the night did pick up a few faint voices, one of which answered with a "yeah" when we asked, "Are you getting tired?"

Though we were drawn to the manager's office and kitchen areas, there was not as much activity there as we had hoped. The figure that we had encountered from the dining room was still present, but constantly on the move – and often away from us and our equipment.

One surprise for the night, however, was in an area in the building that I had not heard about previously:



The SPIRITS Team investigating the old mirror. Top right: Earl Gresh purse used during paranormal investigation. Above right: The yellow and green dots highlight an area of potential paranormal activity

the area we call the 'cozy booths.' The booths were newer installations to the building and I had not heard stories of any haunting activity there. However, our SLS camera picked up a very agitated figure standing in the middle of the room. We conducted an experiment with an IR thermometer requesting that the 'presence' drop the temperature in the room a partial degree at a time. This was met with success. Though the temperature did not drop significantly, it did drop in increments upon request.

This room held further surprises for us. After the investigation, I learned that employees of the Melting Pot had reported seeing a shadow figure sitting in that exact area. There was an unofficial challenge to the staff to stay in the room in the dark after closing – \$100 was the prize. No one ever claimed it since no one wanted to do it.

The other surprise for the night was the lack of response from Earl Gresh. There was no response when we played a record from Earl's conductor days,

nor when an original Gresh wooden purse was brought out and discussed.

The new owners plan to incorporate various early memorabilia in the new building design. One item includes an allegedly haunted mirror that was hung in the back dining room with fireplace. Rumor has it that writing a word on the mirror would get a response from the ghost, usually in the form of handprints. (We did not have success with our own experiment). The mirror is tentatively planned to be moved to the front area so that future patrons can write messages to any spectral beings still present. When that happens, our SPIRITS team will be back to see if there are any responses to these messages. ●

Look for more information about the investigation at [www.spiritsoftpete.com](http://www.spiritsoftpete.com). If readers have any personal ghostly encounters related to the building that they would like to share, please reach out to Brandy Stark at [BrandyBStark13@gmail.com](mailto:BrandyBStark13@gmail.com).

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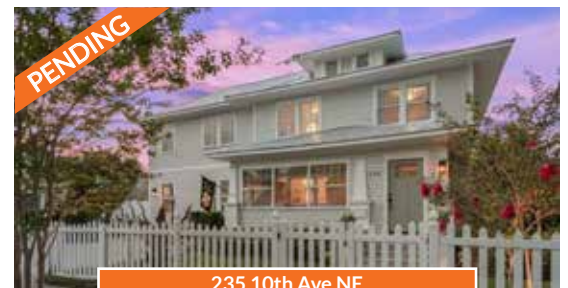
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# The Last Word Around the Block

## Second Time Arounders Marching Band Needs You

— CANDACE ROTOLO —

St. Pete's famous Second Time Arounders Marching Band is gearing up for its 40th season and will celebrate by marching in the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Dublin, Ireland on March 17, 2022. Performances are also scheduled in nearby Kilkenny Castle as part of the band's five-day tour. Since Dublin's St. Patrick Day Festival was canceled in 2019 and 2020 due to COVID, the much-anticipated 2022 event is expected to be the largest in the city's history.

The Second Time Arounders is believed to be the first all-adult community marching band in the world. Others have followed The Rounders' example, but the band remains one of the few still organized. The *Northeast Journal* published a story about the organization in 2019 as the band was headed to the Macy's Parade. <https://northeastjournal.org/second-time-arounders-congratulations-at-the-macys-day-parade>.

Co-founded by former high school band director, Bill Findeison, and colleague, Herb Melleney, the all-adult marching band gives former high school, college and military band members a chance to perform a second time around in parades and field show exhibitions. "The Rounders," as the group is affectionately called, includes not just musicians, but a color guard (flags and rifles), twirlers,



Baritone player at rehearsal

dancers, and an honor guard. The organization draws members aged 18-80 from all over Tampa Bay, Sarasota, and other parts of Central Florida. The Rounders also count seasonal residents from as far away as Germany and California among its ranks.

Although the band and color guard has an amazing 400 members, the group is always looking for new members who want to experience performing one more time. Auditions are not required for musicians, but color guard, dancers or other auxiliary groups may ask new members to demonstrate their skills.

Currently, membership for majorettes (baton twirlers) is closed.

The majority of our members marched in their high school, college or military band. But the main requirement for all members is a desire for excellence and a willingness to attend rehearsals and performances.

In preparation for Ireland, The Rounders hope to perform at several high school marching band festivals throughout Central Florida this fall, as well as holiday parades in Tampa Bay (post-COVID conditions permitting).

Although it's not a requirement for any band members to travel to Ireland, those who would like to participate will need to begin rehearsing this summer. Membership information is available on our website [www.secondtimearounders.org](http://www.secondtimearounders.org). ●



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- A competitive money management fee structure
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**1229 Darlington Oak Cr NE**  
Custom Placido Bayou Estate  
Offered at \$1,395,000



**300 Beach Drive NE #402**  
Parkshore Plaza  
Offered at \$2,600,000

**7888 Bayou Club Blvd**  
Bayou Club  
Last listed at \$850,000



**176 4th Avenue NE #1801**  
Bliss Condo  
Sold for \$4,600,000

**3596 Beach Dr SE\***  
Coquina Key  
Last listed at \$575,000



**1300 74th Circle NE\***  
Harbor Isle  
Sold for \$950,000

**536 21st Ave NE\***  
Old Northeast  
Sold for \$1,220,000

**ABOUT ME** | As a lifelong resident of St. Petersburg, I have in-depth knowledge and appreciation for the history and beauty of the city. This unmatched insight combined with a unique blend of enthusiasm, marketing expertise, and negotiating skills makes me a perfect fit to help you with your real estate needs. Inspired by a family of successful real estate brokers, I believe my success has come from a vital combination of excellent communication, keen interpersonal skills, and tireless dedication. I also know building relationships is just as important, and among the main reasons why I enjoy repeat business and referrals from satisfied clients.

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