



# NORTHEAST JOURNAL

Good People ∞ Good Places ∞ Good Things Happening

St. Petersburg, Florida

July/August 2022

Est. September 2004



Schuler at Wadi Rum in Jordan

## Meet St. Pete's Real-Life Indiana Jones

Jeannie Carlson

Though he's an anthropologist rather than an archaeologist, Bryan T. Shuler is an adventurer, scholar, professor, musician, pilot, and all-around fascinating guy – much like Indiana Jones, except that Shuler is the real deal. Sometimes, when he is on one of his adventures, he even wears a hat that looks suspiciously like the iconic fedora.

Shuler's life reads like an adventure novel, with wild tales from his globe-trotting escapades: getting charged by a bull elephant as a Fulbright Scholar in Ghana; being surrounded by whales as the onboard anthropologist for the *National Geographic Explorer* during a six-week expedition off the coast of Africa; hiking in the Yung Frau region in the Swiss Alps; he still recalls "the breathtaking view and thrill of crossing a glacier in a crevice."

Continued on page 8

## Our Sunshine Center A Community Treasure for Seniors

Will Michaels

St. Petersburg was once known largely for its senior population, but that demographic did not begin to develop until about 1950. Between 1930 and 1940, the proportion of those 65 and older ranged from 10% to 15%, although this was still substantially higher than the total US

population. In 1960, the percent of those 65 years and older was 28%, and peaked at 31% in 1970. As of 2019, the percentage was a fraction over 20%, still above the national average around 17%.

St. Petersburg has a long history of its senior population supporting the city, and the city offering a helping hand to seniors who need it.

Continued on page 24



Sally Marvin with staff at the Sunshine Center Cafe

Photos courtesy of Bryan Photos courtesy of Sunshine Senior Center

## St. Pete's Still Shuffling Nearly 100 Years Later, St. Pete Shuffleboard Club Is Growing

Abby Baker



Leela Gonzales: "I think it's good for my mental health. I can't think of anything else if I'm playing and I'm playing to win."

Seeing the St. Petersburg Shuffleboard Club trophy wall on Netflix feels like a glitch in the Matrix. Cindy Smith-Maglione, a Redington Beach resident and the former vice president of merchandising for Abercrombie & Fitch, gave an interview under the iconic white-and-green shuffleboard club sign in *White Hot: The Rise & Fall of Abercrombie & Fitch* on Netflix. It's not just any documentary – it was one of the top shows on the streaming service.

Staff members at St. Pete Shuffle, as it's known, say the club had no idea the documentary was filming there last summer; it was most likely a private rental in the clubhouse that flew under the radar among parties and events.

Continued on page 12

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3327 Overlook Dr NE  
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700 Beach Dr NE #802  
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100 19th Ave NE  
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 list price: \$950,000 (represented buyers)



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**EDITOR'S NOTE**

**Summer Shade**

I was barely eight years old when we moved from northern California to Florida. I loved the pelicans, palm trees, fishing off my grandparents' dock, and eating boiled shrimp by the pool. But I famously don't love summer in Florida.

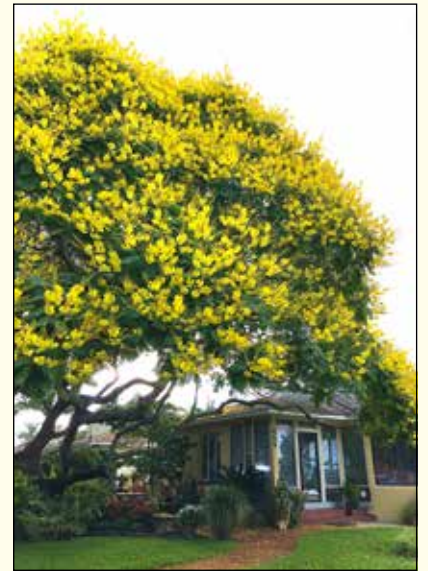
You see, I am essentially a Scottish cave creature. My skin burns in minutes, and the endless sunshine and humidity exhaust me. I know there are many of you who love it, and I'm not complaining! Not when we get to live in paradise for much of the year. But when it comes to summer in Florida, it's hard for me to find a silver lining. Still, there is one thing: the trees.

The Old Northeast area seems especially blessed with trees. Walking around the neighborhood, I find this deep shade can take a significant sting out of the summer heat. The best thing, however, is how many of these trees come into full bloom from May to September. Orchid trees, frangipani, royal poinciana, crepe myrtle, and many more just explode with color. Touring the shade-dappled sidewalks of Old Northeast has become one of my favorite outdoor summer activities.

This issue of *Northeast Journal* is all about celebrating summer. Sure, it's hot and muggy; sure, the mosquitos seem to be mounting a hostile takeover. But those of us who don't head for the north still have so much to love right here, from shuffleboard and the Sunshine Center, to endless treasure for art lovers, foodies, and those who celebrate their community. So, sit back in the shade of a blooming tree, grab a glass of lemonade, and get inspired. You never know when the next storm will come.

~ Shelly

*Have a story you'd like to share?  
Email me anytime at [editor@northeastjournal.org](mailto:editor@northeastjournal.org).*



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**NORTHEAST JOURNAL**

is published bimonthly by  
Greater Good Media formerly Village Green Publishing  
[www.greatergoodmedia.net](http://www.greatergoodmedia.net)

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Jennifer MacMillen  
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**SPECIAL THANKS**

Historic Old Northeast Neighborhood Association  
Northeast Journal distribution crew

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# Compeer Pinellas: The Healing Power of Friendship

Samantha Bond Richman

Mental health issues impact millions of Americans, numbers that are reportedly growing in recent years. While myriad resources and treatment options exist, sometimes help starts with just a friend.

There's a new chapter of a nonprofit for folks who want to enrich their own lives by helping those who struggle with mental health. Known as Compeer Pinellas, the organization is one of more than 50 chapters worldwide matching people who live with mental illness with a volunteer companion. Participants are typically referred by a physician or therapist, and are actively managing their condition with treatment. They are matched with a friend through age, interest, and gender, and typically meet once a week to enjoy whatever activities they both like, such as a walk in the park, or conversation over coffee.

Founder of the local chapter, Dr. Jon Coren, knows firsthand the pain and stigma of mental illness. His diagnosis came as a young man adapting to the new surroundings of college life at Cornell University. After just a few weeks, he says, it became apparent that something was wrong. Returning home confused and defeated, Coren learned for the first time from his mother that

mental illness ran in his family. He then began his journey of diagnosis, treatment, and, eventually, acceptance.

By some estimates, mental illness affects one in five people in their lifetime and can include a range of conditions. "It takes on average 10 years to receive the correct diagnosis," Coren says.

Coren found proper treatment, however, and went back to school where he developed a fervent passion for the study of genetics, earning his B.A. in Biology from the University of Pennsylvania. He followed that with a Ph.D. in Genetics from Cornell University, where he became a teacher and researcher for 30 years.

While still a young man in need of companionship and understanding, Coren took advantage of the services offered through a local drop-in center near his home in Lancaster, Pennsylvania operated by Compeer. His association with the organization energized him, and he began volunteering in the companionship program. He has mentored many participants over the years, developing meaningful friendships along the way, including that with his current pal Jimmy.

When Coren and wife, Jaime McCauslin, and their two cats moved to Old Northeast, he increased his involvement with the nearby chapter, Compeer Sarasota, which led to serving

on their board of directors. He mentioned to his wife, who is a psychiatric nurse practitioner, that someone should start a chapter in St. Petersburg. "And that was that," said Coren. "Being my wife, she just knew I had to do it."

While still in its infancy, Compeer Pinellas is a 501c3 organization with opportunities for people in volunteer board positions, as active mentors, or financial contributors. To promote their mission, Compeer Pinellas plans to have booths at local events, including the downtown Saturday Morning Market and St. Pete Pride.

Compeer Pinellas works to match volunteers with local participants. They provide orientation and training for new volunteers, and ongoing opportunities to discuss creative solutions to challenges along the way. Group get-togethers help participants socialize with others in the group, if they wish, and include coffee meet ups, games, and park outings.

"We believe that the healing power of friendship – of just one caring friend – is life changing for an individual striving for mental wellness," reads the Compeer Pinellas website. "With your help, Compeer provides good mental health through meaningful relationships." ♦

Learn more about Compeer Pinellas by visiting [compeerpinellas.org](http://compeerpinellas.org).

*"We believe that the healing power of friendship – of just one caring friend – is life changing for an individual striving for mental wellness."*



Compeer Pinellas founder Dr. Jon Coren

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## MEET THE WRITERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Jeff Donnelly** is a writer, educator, and co-founder of The Cardboard Sea theatre company based in Asheville, NC. His plays have been produced up and down the east coast and he has taught multiple styles of writing to kids, teens, and adults. When he isn't writing, he's teaching history and directing the service-learning program at a local independent school.

**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.

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

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

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

**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]

**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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# Keeping Up with Life

Apart from surgery or heavy medication, there've been few options that truly help chronic back pain sufferers until now. Dr. Matthew Mann, DAOM provides his patients at St. Petersburg Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine (St. Pete AIM) with much needed relief from debilitating pain.

If you're suffering from chronic pain, you understand this sentiment all too well. Local resident Ed J. found himself at a turning point when he noticed his condition had started to take a toll on his family and friends.

"I was frustrated at times because I couldn't do the things I've been doing my whole life anymore. I've taken care of myself since my teens, and was responsible for my family not long after that. It's been difficult to be on the sidelines now because things such as walking on the pier with Jo, my wife and camping during spring break with all the grandkids has become impossible. My body just couldn't keep up but I'm not ready to be benched!"

Chronic pain affects practically all aspects of a person's life beginning with their ability to perform functional tasks at work or around the home. This often leads to associating anxiety and emotional distress with activities that aggravate their symptoms. It ends up isolating and preventing them from engaging in social activities.

"I grew up biking, fishing, and camping all around town, now I can barely stand up from a bed much less a sleeping bag," explains Ed.

This is what it's like to suffer from chronic pain. Symptoms make participating in and enjoying life incredibly difficult. Daily tasks are nearly impossible.

Too often, the situation is made worse from the extra side effects of the pain medications. Then even more medication is prescribed to help with those side effects, increasing the possibility of drug interactions. It gets to the point where your life is no longer ruled by just pain. It's now ruled by a difficult routine and pill regimen too. Specialists commonly recommend surgery but it can come with risks, sometimes complications, and there are rarely any guarantees except a minimum recovery time.

Ed put it this way, "I couldn't accept that. There had to be something else I could do besides surgery or letting pain and pills control my life."

On one sleepless night, Ed began searching online and found his answer: acupuncture. It kept showing up as an effective, drug-free treatment for chronic pain. Determined to find a local acupuncturist experienced in treating complex chronic pain conditions, Ed discovered Dr. Matthew Mann, Acupuncture Physician at St. Pete AIM.

Dr. Mann has successfully treated difficult-to-manage, chronic pain cases. He uses the time-tested science of acupuncture and integrates it with proven modern medical advancements that encourage healing and recovery.

Acupuncture is a form of Chinese medicine that has a long-proven history of being used to reduce pain. By reducing inflammation and stimulating the body to release endorphins, acupuncture can offer much-needed, effective relief for pain. Dr. Mann also skillfully layers non-invasive therapies like ATP Resonance BioTherapy™ and other regenerative therapies for amplified, long-lasting results.



Sunset at the St. Pete Pier with the grandkids

"I feel great! The good days far outnumber the bad. We even went out to the pier with the grandkids. Dr. Mann helped me get back on my feet. I took Jo dancing and now she's been telling all our friends to try acupuncture."

If you're looking for a doctor and a practice that not only understands your diagnosis but also has a proven solution for chronic pain, look no further than St. Pete AIM.

Ed describes the St. Pete AIM clinic almost as enthusiastically as he does Dr. Mann's treatments, "Even Jo loves it here while waiting on me!"

Additional information about Dr. Mann and his integrative treatments can be found by visiting [www.stpAIM.com](http://www.stpAIM.com) or call 727-235-0435 to schedule a consultation and learn more.

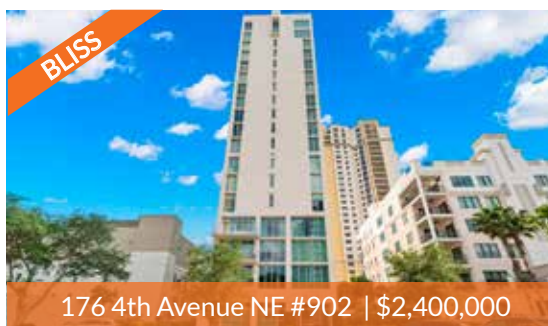


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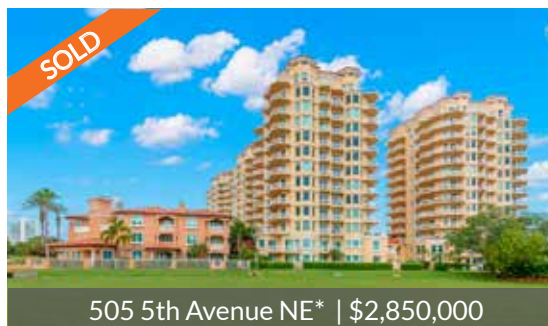
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Whether it's "walking in the ancient city of Petra in Amman, Jordan," he says wistfully, or researching the West African Bagre myth with Sir Jack Goody, the renowned British anthropologist at St. John's College, Cambridge University, Shuler's life seems to take him from one thrilling experience to another. But he didn't start out to be the next Indiana Jones.

Born in Pittsburgh, Shuler moved with his family to South Tampa when he was 11 years old – making him a semi-native, by Floridian standards. In 1999, he moved to St. Petersburg after finishing his graduate degree.

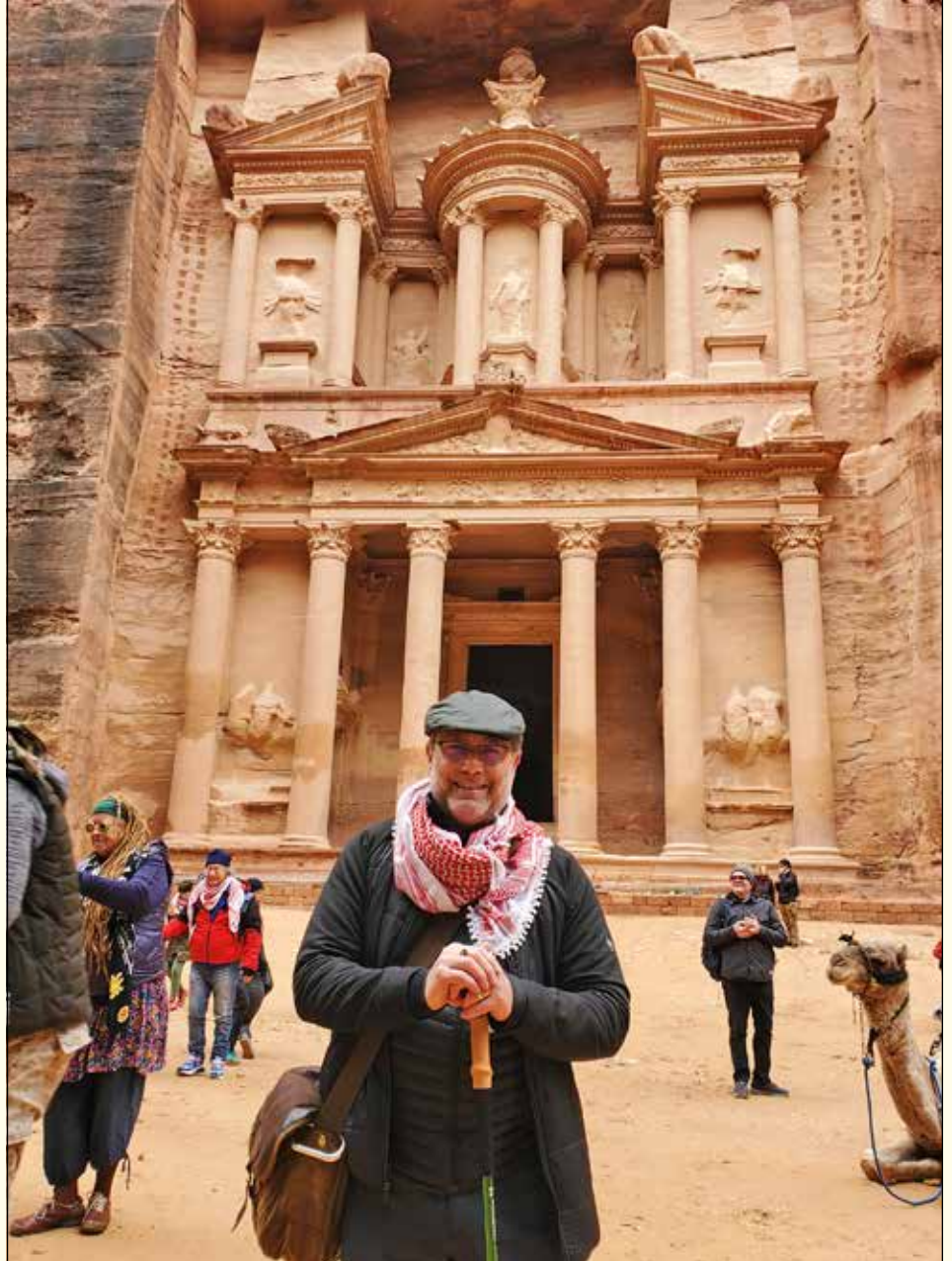
Music was Shuler's first love. His undergraduate and graduate music degrees and studies in piano performance, music theory, composition, and ethnomusicology eventually evolved into humanities and anthropology doctorate and post-doctorate research. Shuler landed a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship Academic Coordinator for Afro-Brazilian Culture Research and was a Fulbright Research Scholar to Ghana. A humanities professor, Shuler has taught at Florida State University, University of South Florida, St. Petersburg College, University of Tampa and Hillsborough Community College.

Academics propelled Shuler to a

number of adventures, including as a researcher for the History Channel's show, *Museum Men*. Roger Barganier, president and creative director of Creative Arts Unlimited, a St. Petersburg museum-display company based in Tampa, secured Shuler's talents for the show in 2015, and featured him in a highly authenticated segment on Abraham Lincoln's funeral entourage. He performed the extensive research necessary for the show to rebuild Lincoln's funeral carriage down to exact specifications.

Shuler also worked as a carto bibliographer for Griffon's Medieval Manuscripts here in St. Petersburg. He spent six years researching provenance of 16th to 19th century maps, creating complete bibliographic descriptions and catalogue.

But what about the music? It all began there. Shuler composed music in a traditional way, but then branched out, exploring ethnomusicology and science. He made an electronic composition based on genetic information of the HIV virus DNA and the T-4 lymphocyte RNA. Shuler's "Song of the Helix" is considered the first musical interpretation of genome-based material. That landed him an interview on NPR and a "Rapture" Tour with



At the Treasury Temple at Petra in Jordan



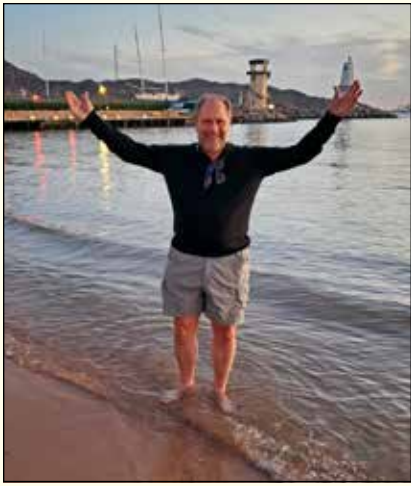
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As National Geographic Cultural Expert and Anthropologist in Ghana

Photos courtesy of Bryan Shuler

## *“In life, one thing leads to another, and you need to go with that to find where you should be.”*

reconstruction surgeon and photographer David Teplica.

As an accompanist and composer, Shuler has performed for ballet and modern dance companies worldwide. In addition to the Tokyo Star Dancer Ballet Company, Shuler's credits include Tampa Ballet, Broadway Theatre Project, Tallahassee Ballet, Circus Nexus, and Bay Ballet Theatre among others. When he was composer in residence at the National Dance Company of Ghana, he wrote and performed "Hands of Steel, Souls of Stone" for an international audience at the gala opening of the new National Theatre of Ghana.

Schuler's thirst for learning seemingly knows no bounds. While he studied more pedestrian European languages like French and German in high school and college, he catapulted into less familiar vernaculars like Twi, which he learned while in Ghana, Portuguese in Brazil, Japanese while working at the Tokyo Star Dancer Ballet Company, and Arabic on an ACOR Sustainability Fellowship in Amman, Jordan. Perhaps Shuler's most impressive assimilation of written communication is his fluency in Mayan hieroglyphics.

Not content to be simply a brilliant mind on the ground, Shuler's exploits also take to the skies. "As a pilot and

vintage aviation supporter, I attend the Oshkosh Airshow, the world's largest, every year," said Shuler. Most recently in 2021 Shuler put on his flight suit and piloted the "Berlin Express," a World War II B-25 Bomber at the Oshkosh Airshow, where attendees "can support the care of older aircraft by paying for a ride in them."

Shuler has been married to his wife, Kerryanne, for 15 years, and together they have a blended family of four children. They live near Downtown, but Shuler spends a good deal of his free time lunching, reading, or "holding court" at Fourth Street Shrimp Store, as well as rifling through the antiquarian

stacks at Wilson's Book World. Kerryanne is a dual citizen of Ireland and the U.S., and she works as a project manager for a telemedicine company. They met at the party of a mutual friend where Shuler was playing the piano, and the rest, as they say, is history. History even played a part in their wedding as they were married at Roseland Chapel outside of Edinburgh, Scotland.

The only continents Shuler has yet to explore are Australia and Antarctica, but it's hard to imagine those won't be checked off his bucket list before long.

"In life," said Shuler, "one thing leads to another, and you need to go with that to find where you should be." ●



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# Hot Takes: A Guide to Free Art Shows this Summer

Brandy Stark

Looking for something to do this summer? Get out and support our local artists! St. Pete has a plethora of upcoming exhibits – some in unexpected places. Here is a roundup of free summer art shows to get your creative juices flowing.

## Galleries

**ArtLofts: Encaustic Treasures...The Art of Florida Wax.** August 1 to August 28; opening reception August 13, 5-9 pm. 10 5th St. N., (2nd floor, above Florida CraftArt) Contact Susan Hess, 727-504-8788.

Susan Hess – contact for the art show – says, “Encaustic means ‘to burn in’ and is an ancient medium using beeswax and fire to create beautiful layered and luminous art.” This unique exhibit will display the diverse works by the members of Florida Wax using various techniques including encaustic, collage, cyanotypes, and shellac burns. Artist demonstrations throughout the evening.

**Atelier De SoSi: For the Love of Functions.** August 12 to September 22. Opening reception: August 10, 6-9 pm. 2380 6th Ave. S., 727-370-4192

This show’s focus is to demonstrate that art can be both functional and beautiful. Atelier de SoSi’s gallery will be transformed to represent a living space. If it’s handmade and can be used functionally or decoratively in a house, it is here.

**Chad Mize Gallery: Rain and Thunder.** July 8 to 24. 689 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. St. N. 727-251-8529.

In a show that is most fitting for Florida summer, the Chad Mize Gallery highlights our favorite unpredictable summer event: stormy weather. As described by the gallery, “Storms can symbolize a character’s sense of terror and plight. Rain can drive people together, who otherwise would have never met. It can represent unhappiness, rebirth, foreboding, determination, the breaking of a drought, and a pause for introspection.” Featured artists include Timmie Boose, Ashley Cantero, Jenny Carey, Coralette Damme, and more.

**Florida CraftArt (multiple shows):** 501 Central Ave. 727-821-7391.

**Beyond Words: Celebrating Books as Art.** Through July 30. A juried exhibition showcasing fine handcrafted work by 36 artists from Florida, Georgia, and Tennessee. The diversity of contemporary books as art is highlighted by the

75 pieces on exhibit at Florida CraftArt. “This exhibition celebrates the book as art through a varied collection of inventive works,” says exhibit curator Cindy Bartosek.

**Artists’ Workbench.** August 12 to October 15. Fifteen Tampa Bay area artists will set up their workbench and studios in the Florida CraftArt Exhibition Gallery and demonstrate how they create fine craft. Each week visitors can watch artists working in their chosen medium, such as ceramics, glass, fiber, jewelry, metal, mixed-media, and wood.

**Morean Art Center (multiple shows):** 719 Central Ave. 727-822-7872

**Bookish** through August 25. This show features artistic interpretations of books that have had an impact on artists. Each work is titled for the book that inspired it. Multiple shows run in conjunction with this theme, including *Johanna Falzone: Read with Me* through July 30. Johanna is a Florida-based artist presenting her latest drawings. “My work is an observation of the self, giving the audience an intimate way of becoming aquainted with me through self-portrait illustrations. The illustrations capture moments of myself reading books.”

*Jeanine Newcomb: Looking through the Window* through August 25. Last year’s Margaret Murphy Steward Best of Show winner, Jeanine Newcomb has a solo show showcasing her latest narrative paintings. A St. Petersburg artist, she is strongly influenced by a mixture of drawing and psychology.

## Eateries and More

**Awakening Into Wellness** features guest artist Lora Humphries. 1990 Central Ave. 727-289-4747.

This holistic center works to support to our local art community. A gallery wall features artwork by a local artist for two months at a time. Lora Humphries is the current artist. People are welcome to come during their weekly Social Friday event 10 am to 1 pm.

**Bayboro Brewing Co: Melted** through September 5. 2390 5th Ave. S. 813-426-4305.

This art show celebrates the Florida summer season in all its sunny, sticky, drippy sweetness. Visual artists in a variety of mediums – oil, acrylic, aerosol, mixed media, photography, and textiles – display works inspired by the theme of melted/melting.

**Studio Public House (multiple shows):** 2950 Central Ave., 727-873-6992.

Grab a bite and enjoy a wall full of art by local artists.

**PRIDE** is featured through July 31. Organized by Luke Heath, artists were asked to create original works that promote inclusion, love, and education. On display in coordination with the St. Pete PRIDE festivities.

**Skate Pete.** August 1 through September 30. “This one is going to be a little different,” says Heath, “as all artists participating will be using a uniform, medium-size vintage skate deck to create a work for the show.” Thirty artists were invited to feature their work in this unique medium. ●

Are you interested in being a part of the art roundup? Please send press releases with a short description of the show, location, contact information, and an example of the art in the show to [editor@northeastjournal.org](mailto:editor@northeastjournal.org).



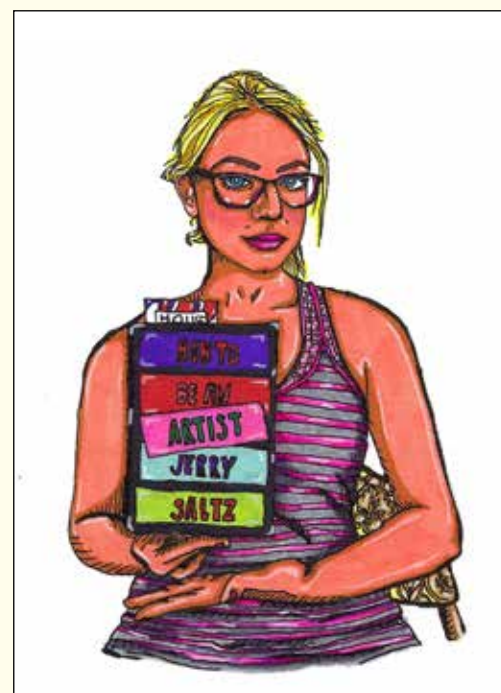
Tyler Jones throwing pottery at Florida CraftArt



Art by Jeanine Newcomb (Morean Art Center)



Joyce Curvin in the studio at Florida CraftArt



Art by Johanna Falzone (Morean Art Center)

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“We had no idea. They rented our space to film parts of a documentary film,” said St. Pete Shuffleboard Club Director Christine Page. “They blacked out the windows. The night it was released people were sending me screenshots, and there it was.”

Maybe it’s a fluke that Smith-Maglione chose to shoot her brief interview on Abercrombie’s work culture in the historic club – or maybe it’s a sign of the recent growth and notoriety of the historic club at 559 Mirror Lake Dr. N. Club officials think it may be a little of both – membership is on the rise, after all.



Almost a century after its founding, membership at the Shuffleboard Club is the highest it’s been in years.

### Shuffleboard’s In, Covid’s Out

On any given Friday night, the St. Petersburg Shuffleboard Club is a lively place, lit up and filled with members – some just learning how to play, and some out for blood on the court. Zealous staff member Leela Gonzales attributes low membership costs, Covid-19, and the “bring your own beer” policy for the recent spike in players: 2,300 this year. She says many players live in downtown St. Pete or Old Northeast and travel short distances to the outdoor club. Typically, it’s less busy in the summer heat, but that hasn’t been the case since the pandemic began.

“People were looking to do things outside,” said Martha Reed, St. Pete Shuffleboard board member and chair of the sponsorship, fundraising and grants committee. “Membership is higher now than it was pre-Covid.” A membership costs \$40 and grants year-round access to the club, or \$70 for two adults and their children.

Gonzalez had no knowledge of shuffleboard prior to coming on as a staff member several years ago. She worked next door, at the St. Petersburg Bike Co-op, and naturally gravitated to the adjacent club. “Once Covid hit, I really had nothing else to do,” she said. “So I picked it up.”

Her and hundreds of others. While traditionally shuffleboard players have been an older set, the demographic is skewing much younger these days. Out of 2,300 members of the St. Petersburg Shuffleboard Club, 70% are under 50. “I think shuffleboard is kind of trendy now, kind of cool... you can bring a beer, hang out outside,” Gonzales said. “When I started, I wasn’t into it at all, but it kind of grows on you.”

### How St. Pete Shuffle Came to Be

Stroll by St. Petersburg’s Mirror Lake and you’re bound to see a sign declaring that St. Pete Shuffle is the oldest and largest club in the world. That’s what drew



Club members can shuffle whenever, but Friday nights are the busiest.

in current director Christine Page, a lover of historical places, before she began volunteering in 2005.

“I love historic buildings, I always have,” Page said. “I drove past here many times before I went in. I read in the newspaper in 2005 that they were starting events on Friday nights. It struck me that I could get involved, and be a part of making sure this historic building is still here.”

Since she joined up nearly 20 years ago, Page has become an expert in the club’s history. Much of it is preserved in paper files in storage, and she sometimes hosts happy hour history talks using what she’s learned.

“The club sits on the north end of Mirror Lake,” Page said. “Since around 1910, that area has been designated for recreational use, park land, by the city.” According to Page, in 1924, six St. Petersburg men set out to build a shuffleboard club in Williams Park on 2nd Avenue N. However, the Williams family filed an injunction to keep the club from building there.

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“The Williams family thought the park should be for everybody, not just private clubs,” Page said. “So, [shuffleboard] came to Mirror Lake instead.”

Despite the growth in recent years, shuffleboard is not nearly as commonplace as it was when the club was founded. It also was not an inclusive space. The green benches that still line the shuffleboard courts are a historic reminder of segregation in St. Pete. In the early 1900s, downtown was filled with green benches – colorful seats that tourists and locals enjoyed, as long as they were white.

“While no laws were implemented to restrict Black residents from enjoying the benches, it was custom that police officers would only permit the white community to use them,” reads the St. Petersburg green benches Wikipedia page. “However, Black caretakers were allowed to use the benches while accompanying white children.”

Nearly a century later, the green benches still remain at St. Pete’s shuffleboard club. “There has been talk of changing the bench color, but it’s a historic place,” Gonzales said. “I’m not sure about that, but I do know everyone and anyone is welcome here. We see all types of people, types of humans here, and that’s great.”

While the club continues to grow, Page and her staff are preparing the building for even more visitors – particularly international visitors – next year. In October 2023, the International Shuffleboard Association will host the 40th World Championship at the Mirror Lake Club. “It’s a huge deal,” Reed said. “People from all over the world are going to come here.” ●

*Ready to play? Volunteers and staff are always present during operating hours, Tuesday through Thursday, 6-9 p.m., Friday, 7-10 pm, and Sunday, 9 am-12 pm. Find more at stpeteshuffle.com.*



The shuffleboard courts at night in the early 1900s

Photo courtesy of Florida Memory



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# Gio Swaby Brings *Fresh Up* to St. Pete Museum of Fine Arts



Gio Swaby via gioswaby.com

Abby Baker

It's been a long time since an art exhibit made me feel emotional, and I didn't expect it at noon on a Thursday at Museum of Fine Arts in downtown St. Pete. But *Fresh Up*, an exhibit composed of women created from thread by Bahamian-born fabric artist Gio Swaby, did just that.

The exhibit is "a love letter to Black women," says Swaby. It's emotional, invoking familiar feelings of the pain and pride of womanhood. It's the commonplace



"Gyalavantin" by Gio Swaby Courtesy of the artist and Claire Oliver Gallery, New York

details in her subject matter that does it, from colorful sneakers to a life-size portrait of one of her three sisters, complete with hot pink acrylic nails made of thread.

Swaby's work is not the typical collection you might see in the MFA. Before this, it's unlikely the phrase "going out clothes" was ever printed in the Museum of Fine Arts. The idea of women's expression, whether that be hair or dress, is woven throughout most of Swaby's thread-and-fabric pieces – even the exhibit name itself.

"The title comes from a Bahamian term, 'Fresh Up.' It's really a compliment to describe what someone is wearing," says Katherine Pill, MFA Curator of Contemporary Art. "That's the theme that runs throughout the works."

### Meet the Artist

*Fresh Up* in St. Petersburg is Swaby's first solo exhibit, and she wasted no time getting in the game after graduating with her MFA in Interdisciplinary Art,



"Another Side to Me Second Chapter 3" by Gio Swaby

Media and Design at OCAD University in Toronto. Two weeks before her Florida debut, the textile artist was turning in her OCAS thesis. "It's a pretty unusual career trajectory for an artist," says Pill, "but once you see the work you'll understand why she's taken off."

Swaby includes artist statements outlining her thought process for the exhibit: "In the Bahamas, your wardrobe is separated into three main categories: yard clothes, church clothes, and going out clothes," she writes. "It was strictly forbidden to wear your going out clothes around the house or for more casual



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activities. So it always felt like a momentous occasion when your mummy would let you wear your good jeans and a dressy top.”

Every moment in the series is a momentous occasion. Her threaded women are dressed to the nines and in some cases, it’s hard to tell if their detailed dresses and beanies are made of thread or painted on the canvas.

“*[Fresh Up]* will be a little different every time it appears,” says Pill. In 2023, the exhibit will go to the Art Institute of Chicago, but it’s not lost on the MFA curator that St. Pete saw it first.

**Threadbare**

The exhibit comprises work spanning from 2017 to 2021, and the layout takes viewers through the natural progression of Swaby’s artistic growth. One of the first series, “My Hands Are Clean,” addresses what Black women go through when people touch their hair, a microaggression.

“I don’t care if your hands are clean, even if you just washed them twice while singing the ‘Happy Birthday’ song... what you are really asking is that I sacrifice my comfort to satisfy your curiosity,” Swaby writes. Pill says that Swaby created these after moving to Vancouver, where less than 1% of the population is Black.

Many of the pieces in this series feature the imperfect back of the canvas, rather than the clean-cut lines in the front – a choice that evokes vulnerabilities around the sensitive topic of hair. “She’s creating nuanced representation of Black women; that includes

vulnerabilities,” says Pill. “She doesn’t actually make many mistakes.”

The next series, and perhaps the most striking, is “Love Letters.” In the museum’s middle room, it features a mix of self-portraits, women Swaby loves, and unknown women that serve as symbols. “I loved what she was describing; the stories of these people aren’t completely told yet,” said Darcy Schuller, MFA Director of Marketing and Communications.

Swaby began the love-letter series with actual written love letters to her dead mother. She asked people she knows to pose and recreated their silhouettes with textiles, including all three of her sisters, who exist life-size on the canvas. “Her sisters saw their portraits for the first time, here, at the museum,” Pill said. “It was very emotional.”

Walking through Swaby’s work in the MFA feels like a feminine turning point for the art world. The work is remarkable and deeply evocative, but throughout this exhibit, Swaby also discusses relatable concepts like selfies and Friday nights. It reminds me that even women like myself, wearing dirty FILA sneakers, deserve to be in these rarified spaces.

“I want you to know that I see you. I see you in full glory of your existence, apart from the flattened narrative systematically imposed upon us,” Swaby writes. It feels like a love letter. ●

*Swaby is back in Vancouver for school, but she will return to the museum in July to teach an art camp for young women. See Fresh Up at the Museum of Fine Arts through October 9. More at mfastpete.org*

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# New Leadership and Big Plans for History Museum's Second Century

Monica Kile

You could almost say that Michael Magidson's journey to become the President of the Board of Directors of the St. Petersburg Museum of History was preordained by his very name.

"Magid" is a Hebrew word meaning "itinerant preacher," or loosely interpreted, an oral historian, one who travels from town to town to share the news of the day. His great grandfather, also named Michael Magidson was a Cantor, a congregational leader who signs the prayers and hymns at the synagogue, having trained at the Berlin Conservatory of Music. After coming through Ellis Island, the first Michael Magidson took a job near New York City, where Michael's grandfather was born. The family has a deep love of history that extends to his mother's side as well. Part of the Dimmitt family, her Florida roots run deep; the Dimmitt family's car dealerships have been in business here since 1924 and are now run by the fourth generation of family members.

So, Michael Magidson is that rarest of Florida specimens: someone who was not only born in Florida (just a third of Floridians are), but someone who goes back four generations in the state. Born in Clearwater in 1978, Magidson graduated from Tampa Prep and then went on to Vassar College, where he studied history, focusing particularly on the American Civil War and the 19th century. Uncertain of what he wanted to do after college, he took a teaching position at Darlington, a private boarding school located in the small town of Rome, Georgia, where one of his colleagues in the history department was none other than future Governor Ron DeSantis.



President of the Board of Directors of the St. Petersburg Museum of History Michael Magidson, left, and Executive Director Rui Farias look over the expansion plans.

Feeling antsy in the small Georgia town, Magidson moved on to law school at Catholic University in DC. He briefly considered a career in politics, but his deep Florida roots drew him home and he joined a law firm in Tampa, eventually settling down in St. Petersburg where he now works for the firm of Johnson Pope. His practice is focused on business transactions, particularly in the health care industry. He lives in Snell Isle and has three children attending LCC.

Magidson discovered the Museum of History while participating in Leadership St. Pete, where he took a historic tour of the city with Museum Director Rui Farias and Education Curator Nevin Sitler. He found himself saying, "Now *this* is a non-profit I can get behind."

Magidson follows in 100 years of footsteps, the museum being founded in 1922 by a group of civic leaders headed by Mary Wheeler Eaton. Those early history lovers approached the mayor and city council about donating an abandoned aquarium building on the city's municipal pier as a museum to house the young city's history. On February 11, 1922, the St. Petersburg Historical Society's Museum opened its doors.

Magidson started his tenure as president of the board this past April, following some of the roughest years for the museum industry in recent memory. Not only was revenue decimated by pandemic shutdowns, but construction on the new St. Pete Pier virtually walled the museum off from pedestrians and passersby.

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Magidson sees those challenges as an opportunity. It has given the museum time to refine their vision and hone their messaging about who they are now – and what they want to be in the future. One of those things is a source of information, not just about the past but also the present.

### A New Home for the Past and Present

The success of the new pier revealed a weakness in the city’s visitor experience – namely, that there’s really no “welcome center.” With a prime location at the base of the pier, the museum witnesses this firsthand every day and they want to fill that void. They are working with the city and county to fund a St. Pete Visitors Center. It’s just one piece of a planned 10,000 square-foot expansion.

Magidson puts the need bluntly: “In order to be a major city you need a history museum. That becomes particularly relevant with all the change that’s happening in St. Pete.”

The museum has big plans. In addition to the Visitor Center, the expansion will feature a new exhibit, *Explore Florida!*, which will bring St. Petersburg, as well as Florida history, to life. And when you’re done exploring Florida, you will be able to enjoy a drink on the new rooftop terrace, dubbed the Flight Deck in honor of St. Petersburg’s unique role in aviation history. While enjoying a cocktail, you can gaze on “Intersections,” an art installation by Ya La’ford, that will wrap the second level and rooftop terrace exterior. The museum’s expansion was designed by ARC3 Architecture and will be built by Hennessy Construction. They are hoping to break ground early next year.

To ensure that everything goes as planned, the museum is working to raise \$5 million dollars for the project – and already has a chunk of that under their belt. A recent fundraiser at the waterfront home of Eduardo Zavala and Michelle Harris in Driftwood was just the beginning of their efforts.



Magidson with some of the St. Petersburg Museum of History’s current exhibits



Rendering of the museum’s proposed expansion.

Courtesy of the St. Petersburg Museum of History

But you don’t have to wait for the expansion to enjoy all the museum has to offer. The doors are open now, with the popular exhibits like *Schrader’s Little Cooperstown* (4,800 autographed baseballs and their stories) and *Building St. Petersburg City* – an exhibit that explores the growth of St. Pete from pioneer times through the boom of the 1920s. They also host a wildly popular lecture series “Happy Hour with a Historian.” And hidden behind the exhibits and events is an even richer trove for history lovers – the museum’s

archives are available for local researchers to dig deeper into topics of interest. Just email the archivist Jessy and she’ll set up an appointment for you.

As the St. Petersburg Museum of History steps into its second century, they feel confident that it is in the hands of someone with a strong love of history and deep local roots. What more could we ask from our city’s oldest museum? ●

Learn more about the St. Petersburg Museum of History’s plans and exhibits at [spmoh.com](http://spmoh.com).

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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



### Quarterly Neighborhood Meeting

A couple dozen neighbors – plus others on Zoom – attended the June 20 quarterly meeting of the neighborhood association and were presented with an overview of our waterfront parks. Logan DeVicente, president of the Waterfront Parks Foundation, outlined the efforts of the non-profit organization to “preserve, protect and promote” what is arguably one of St. Pete’s most valuable resources.



According to Logan, St. Pete is blessed with the third most waterfront park acreage in the country. But this beautiful asset should never be taken for granted and requires continuous close oversight by the city, neighborhood associations, and organizations like the Waterfront Parks Foundation. He pointed out that our city fathers had the foresight to set aside miles of waterfront green space 100 years ago, but they created few regulations regarding what can and cannot be done there. One area of concern the foundation is working on with the city is the large events that take place periodically – such as music and food festivals – and the damage they cause.

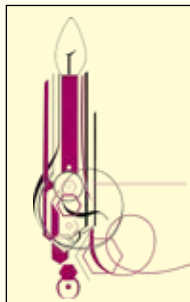
The foundation also supports – both financially and via its volunteers – the beautification of our waterfront parks. It is responsible for numerous seasonal flower beds, recently led the effort to secure the large waterfront swing near the sundial and entrance to Coffee Pot Bayou and is proposing up-lighting of large live oaks. The large swing is proving to be very popular, and the foundation hopes to add more.

The Old Northeast enjoys an eastern boundary bordered by the Bay and beautiful green space. Logan noted how the foundation works closely with associations like HONNA and asks for even closer cooperation going forward to preserve, protect, and promote St. Pete’s “green gem.” For more information about the foundation’s work and how to become involved, visit their website waterfrontparksfoundation.org.

In other meeting news, HONNA’s St. Pete police department representative, Officer James Fuchs, provided an update of recent Old Northeast police-related activity, including five vehicle burglaries, two incidents of road rage, and a bike theft.

HONNA president John Johnson reminded the attendees that the annual Candlelight Tour of Homes will be held again this year on December 11. The association is seeking homes approximately 100 years old to be featured on the popular tour and important fundraiser. The Old Northeast neighborhood is 100 years old, and the tour may feature a 1920s theme. Anyone who would like more info about recommending their or a neighbor’s home for the tour can email John at HONNApresident@gmail.com.

~ Nick Bell



### A Patriotic 4th

HONNA held its annual 4th of July Children’s Parade after a two-year hiatus due to Covid-19. Families weathered the heat to enjoy a patriotic parade to celebrate our country. Special thanks to the Rowdies and Tampa Bay Rays who delighted the children with their mascots, Pelican Pete and DJ Kitty. Also, our deepest appreciation to the ONE Fire Station #4 firefighters who attended with their firetruck and led the parade. We are grateful for our special guest, Mayor Ken Welch, who honored our neighborhoods by walking with us. Thank you to St. Pete ROTC and the Florida Fife and Drum who marched and provided music. Last but not least, thanks to the many volunteers from Snell Isle who came out to help.

~ Anna Broshears

### Development Proposals Threaten Character of Old NE: An Update

Three proposed development projects are currently threatening neighborhood structures. Here’s a summary of them and how to voice your concern.

Two of the three projects are being driven by Belleair Development. The first involves the Westminster Sanctuary

and school at 11th Avenue NE and 1st Street NE. Although the buildings have been granted local-historic-landmark status and enjoy a degree of protection from demolition, the developer is seeking to demolish the buildings and construct large single-family homes. It is the HONNA board’s belief that the church and school could be profitably repurposed and made into apartments or condominiums. *For more information and comparison drawings, please refer to HONNA’s recent letter which was sent to all residents. (honna.org/belleair-redevelopment-proposal-for-westminster-church-and-school)*

The second Belleair development is on 4th Street N and 28th and 29th Avenues N. The developer is proposing to demolish an existing house and request a “special exception” for a parking lot. They are also requesting approval of a “special exception” for a drive-through to service a Panera restaurant to be located at 2831 4th Street N.

Area residents are adamantly opposed to both proposals, citing negative impacts including loss of privacy, noise and light pollution, traffic, and exhaust from idling cars at the 4th Street site. *This project is*



tentatively scheduled for review at a public hearing before the Development Review Commission on August 3.

The third development involves the vacant Granada Terrace home at 100 23rd Avenue NE. Owner Canopy Builders desires to demolish the 1941 home and replace it with new construction. Although the current home is not a contributing property within the Granada Terrace historic district, it is significant as it was part of a second wave of homes built in Granada Terrace. No date has been set for the Community Planning and Preservation Commission (CPPC) hearing to review the demolition request.

To voice your concerns about these proposals and their impact on the neighborhood and its residents, email the following city departments and copy HONNA: Derek.Kilborn@stpete.org (manager, Urban Planning and Historic Preservation Division); Elizabeth.Abernethy@stpete.org (director of planning and development); Joe.Moreda@stpete.org (manager, zoning department); HONNApresident@gmail.com.

### Mind Your Sidewalk

As you walk and enjoy the sidewalks of the Old Northeast, occasionally you might come across a part of the sidewalk that is overgrown with bushes and you swerve to pass it, or a tree branch is hanging so low you have to duck to get around it. Well, HONNA is sponsoring a "Mind the Sidewalk Day" on August 20. We are asking our residents to simply walk their sidewalks and clear them of any shrubbery (as Monty Python would say). A couple of things to consider, which also align with city code (and to avoid possible fines):

1. If you can raise your hand above your head and touch a branch, it is probably too low.
2. If you can touch a branch at the outer edge of a sidewalk, the branch should be cut back.
3. If groundcover is growing into the sidewalk, it needs to be cut back or trimmed.

If you have a neighbor who needs to address any of the issues, please offer to help. If you or your neighbor needs assistance, please contact HONNA at honna.org and we will try to assist in helping with Minding Your Sidewalk.

~ Doug O'Dowd



### Porch Parties

There isn't a Porch Party in July. The next one will be Friday, August 19, 6-9 pm, at Sunken Gardens, with light bites and a tour of the gardens. The dates for the remaining PPs this year are September 16, October 28 (the always-anticipated Frank Hay/Steve Deal Halloween party), and November 18.

### HONNA Flags

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



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

### Ways To Stay Connected:

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



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

Here is the STAR for July: 1020 Beach Drive NE; Donna Guillaume and Ed Kidston. Watch for new STARS in the neighborhood monthly, and you'll be able to find them posted on honna.org, in addition to HONNA's Facebook page. We invite you to be a part of this effort, so please feel free to nominate a neighbor or a refurbished property you admire in the Old Northeast. Have a home to honor? Send the information to Charleen McGrath at [treasurer@honna.org](mailto:treasurer@honna.org). ●



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# Finding Her Life's Passion

Janan Talafer

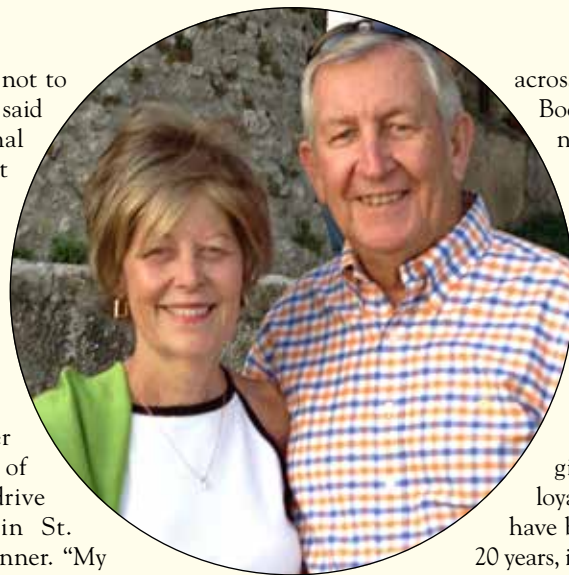
For most of the year, Old Northeast resident Margaret Ann Burtchaell is hard at work in her commercial kitchen on 4th Street, where she and her team are busy creating everything from specialty cookies to gourmet comfort food.

But in the summer, her kitchen is in a villa in Italy, where she teaches cooking classes to guests enjoying a week-long vacation in the Sabine hills just outside of Rome. The villa is part of a 150-acre estate that includes orchards full of cherry, fig, orange and lemon trees, olive groves, and rosemary bushes.

"It was one of those unexpected blessings in life that come along," says Burtchaell. "You wouldn't believe the kitchen. It's enormous, with beautiful Italian tile."

The villa is owned by her friend and Snell Isle neighbor Mike DiGirolamo, a retired Raymond James

That's why it was hard not to do a double-take when she said that she's never had formal training as a chef and didn't cook at home because the family had a full-time cook. However, she says, food and entertaining were an important part of Burtchaell's childhood. She grew up in Jasper, a small town in north Florida, and her mother would think nothing of making the three-hour drive over to Flagler Hotel in St. Augustine for lunch or dinner. "My mother would plan trips around what we'd eat," says Burtchaell.



Margaret and husband Bill

across the street from Haslam's Bookstore and not in the best of neighborhoods at the time," she says. "The restaurant opened at 11 am, so I would go in a 3 am, lock myself in and leave before they opened in the morning."

In 1986, Burtchaell signed the lease for her own commercial space on 4th Street North, where she's been ever since. She gives credit to her team of loyal employees, some of whom have been with her for more than 20 years, including Marlene Anderson, who cooks alongside Burtchaell, Dennis Bender, who serves as the delivery guy, and



Margaret Ann teaches a cooking class at the villa in Italy.



Margaret Ann with co-chef Marlene Anderson

senior vice president who, with a business partner in Italy, converted the estate into a luxury vacation experience, complete with cooking lessons taught by both Margaret Ann and local chefs.

Can she share a favorite recipe that she's taught? "When the cherries are in season, I might serve cherries sautéed in rosemary with arugula and pork tenderloin pancetta with lemon orzo," says Burtchaell. "I use the freshest local produce in everything I can." For anyone who loves Italy and Italian food, it sounds like a dream come true.

Until Covid put the brakes on everything and made travel to Italy out of the question, Burtchaell didn't miss an opportunity to spend a week there every summer. Now, finally, after a two-year hiatus, she was able to return in June. This time, she had the good fortune to teach cooking not just for a week in the Sabine hills, but also for a week in Umbria. In addition to the villa just outside of Rome, DiGirolamo and his business partner have added all-inclusive culinary and cultural vacations to villas in Umbria, Sicily, and Tuscany.

Burtchaell is, of course, the owner and founder of Margaret Ann's Catering & Gourmet Cookies, a fixture on the St. Petersburg culinary scene since 1983. Over the years, she's catered hundreds (maybe thousands) of business meetings, office parties, cocktail parties, weddings, and special events. Her made-from-scratch cookies are locally famous.

Becoming a professional chef was not the path she initially took after college. She taught high school English for 10 years and was a reading specialist with a master's degree in reading education. She moved to Alabama, Tennessee, and then Texas, where in her spare time, she decided to make specialty deserts for a local caterer and taught the occasional cooking class for her church.

In 1982, a friend in Texas typed up all of Burtchaell's desert recipes and assembled them into a cookbook, still in print today. Looking through the table of contents of Margaret Ann's *Elegant but Easy Deserts* is dangerous if you're watching your calories. Sinfully Rich Apple Pie, Aunt Mildred's Caramel Pie, Cream Cheese Pecan Pie, and Viennese Mocha Torte are just a few of the recipes you'll find there. "I love pastry, especially almond pastry, and pie," she says.

In 1983, Burtchaell moved to St. Petersburg with her son and former husband, who was getting his Ph.D. in psychology and had taken a position at the Bay Pines Veteran's Hospital. She needed to work, but found it impossible to get a teaching job. So, she turned to the next best thing – cooking. "It was meant to be," she says.

Burtchaell launched her cookie and catering business from home, but after about a year she decided to "become legal," and signed a contract with a local restaurant to use their commercial kitchen. "It was

Danielle Rasmussen, who "does everything but cook." There is also Bill Burtchaell, her husband of more than 21 years, who makes sure she has the specialty items she needs for certain recipes, like the six heirloom tomatoes I saw on the counter when I stopped by for a visit to the commercial kitchen.

First and foremost, Burtchaell is an optimist and an entrepreneur. As Covid ramped up and the entire world came to a halt, every scheduled catered event that she had on the books was cancelled. "Literally overnight all catering orders were cancelled," she says. "I thought, I'm not interested in retiring. I have got to do something about this."

Instead of taking a break, Burtchaell plunged forward and launched a new line of business offering a different "gourmet" home-cooked meal every day for people stuck at home. "Customers responded immediately," she says. "It was unreal. I was never slow."

Now that life has returned to normal, she's continuing to serve daily home-cooked meals. Her catering business is back on track, too, and this summer, cooking classes in Italy resumed.

After cooking all day for customers, it's easy to imagine not having much of an appetite left for dinner at home. But Burtchaell says she and Bill cook every night, sometimes with friends. "I couldn't imagine being married to someone who didn't appreciate food and cooking as much as I do," she says with a smile. ●

**"It was one of those unexpected blessings in life that come along."**



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# An Ode to the Hexblock

Jon Kile

The versatile hexagon: it's on our neighborhood flags, it's in local logos, it connects us – quite literally – along many of our sidewalks. We identify these six-sided concrete tiles so much with old St. Petersburg, you'd think the hexagon sidewalk was invented here.

Alas, from Savannah to St. Paul to St. Pete, the hexagonal sidewalk was a common element in neighborhoods a century ago. Many have cracked and shifted over the years, and it would be easy to say it was an inferior idea, whose time came and went. If you've cursed uneven sections of hexblock, remember the world was less hospitable to high heels and wheelchairs in 1915, and these sidewalks were a big improvement. In fact, there was a bit of brilliance behind using hexagons.

There are a couple of reasons early sidewalk-layers liked hexagons. First, there are only three shapes that can be repeated over and over to cover a flat area: the equilateral triangle, squares, and hexagons. No, pentagons and octagons will not work – I tried. And in the concrete world, the gentler 120-degree angle of the hexagon resists breaking compared to the right angle of a square. It turns out, the bees are onto something with their honeycombs.

Across the country, maintaining mile after mile of old pavers lost favor to poured concrete forms. But here in St. Pete, hexblock sidewalks and brick streets are symbols of neighborhood charm. There are many stretches where the blocks look like they were put down yesterday. Other sections betray their age, sending wheelchairs and skateboards looking for a kinder path.

Old Northeast resident Joni James is in the camp of those who appreciate the pavers. "Texture. I love how the hexblocks contribute to a more organic feel of our neighborhood, that is a pattern instead of just uninterrupted seas of concrete. It's a wonderful twin to our brick streets. But when I really fell in love with them was when my daughter was young and we'd use the blocks for hopscotch and other games. A permanent playground."

The city has a dwindling supply of original hexblocks that they use for maintenance. In the city's



sidewalk was scored with a hex pattern before the concrete set. This mimicry can be effective; when done right, it leaves crisp lines that almost pass for authentic. Wilkinson notes that they offer a smooth surface: "The stamped concrete seems to represent an attempt at compromise between authenticity and function, which I can appreciate. Having said that, should the city ever tear up the sidewalks on this block, I hope they replace them with hexblocks."

In today's hot real estate market, Realtors are quick to highlight the presence of the original paths. Quotes like this one: "Located on a Beautiful Street with Hexblock Sidewalks and Mature Oak Trees," and "Highly Coveted Location in Historic Old Northeast with Brick Streets and Hexblock Sidewalks" are common when sellers are trying to differentiate their property. Toni Russell, of Russell Property Group, has been selling homes and managing properties in the area for two decades. Of the old sidewalks she says, "It's a huge thing. Especially if it's stamped with Farmer. People love them like the brick streets. We hate driving over them, but we love the way they look."

Russell refers to the stamp of one of the city's earliest industries, Farmer Concrete Works. These stamps often include the year they were made. Farmer supplied many of the city's early hexblocks and their name also marks some of the poured sidewalks that gained favor in the 1940s. Farmer Concrete Works was a fixture for nearly six decades, until it closed in 1961, and the family lived in a home on Booker Creek at 5th Avenue that featured a large concrete terrace

overlooking a deep gorge.

When some of the oldest hexblocks were laid more than a century ago, they weren't meant to last forever. What was once said to be nearly 100 miles of hexblocks is dwindling every time a tree root comes up, or a piece of construction equipment rolls over it. This makes the remaining hexagon walkways lend to the nostalgic atmosphere. Old pieces of early St. Pete give the area a unique feel, and the sidewalks are a big part of that. It can take a hundred years for a house or a tree, a brick, or a paver to become special, so take pause before replacing. It's hard to imagine plain concrete ever tugging on our heart-strings. ●



Repurposed hexblocks meet backyard pavers in the Old Northeast



Hexagons have come to represent the ONE as seen on the neighborhood marker



A stretch of well maintained pavers on 17th Ave NE

language, hexblock sidewalks are protected within, and adjacent to historic districts, hexagon block preservation districts (the only one of these is in the Old Southeast), and landmarks. So, maintaining the hexagons in front of your home might incur an expense.

Over the years, a lot of those old hexblocks were repurposed into backyard pavers and footpaths. The good news is, Carroll's Building Materials on 13th Avenue still makes crisp new pavers in white, charcoal, grey and red.

Over the years, there have been efforts to maintain the look of hexblocks without the expense. In front of Zoe Wilkinson's house on 10th Avenue, the newer

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## AROUND THE BLOCK

### Polish American Society Raising Money for Ukraine



Dancing at the Polish American Society

With its new president, Monika Smolarczyk, the Polish American Society of St. Petersburg (PAS), at 1343 Beach Dr. SE, is sponsoring “Thirsty Thursdays: Party with a Purpose,” a weekly Ukrainian relief event. Every Thursday, PAS donates 20% of bar profits and all Ukrainian Relief Donation Box proceeds to Global Giving’s Ukraine Relief Fund, a charity that supports local organizations helping millions of refugees in and around Ukraine. To date, the club’s efforts have raised over \$6,280.

President Smolarczyk immigrated from Kraków, Poland to Chicago in 1984. She says, “We must help our brothers and sisters in this terrible war, and in eventually rebuilding their nation.” PAS has been in existence over 70 years, and you don’t need to be Polish to enjoy it. The club is open to all, and its venues promote Polish values, culture, art, music, food, and refreshments. Annually, the group awards scholarships to family members, sponsors public polka lessons, and events like Thirsty Thursdays, Sunday Dances with live music (November through April), and Dyngus Day (celebrating Easter and spring). Thirsty Thursdays also now feature local artists displaying their work for sale. Club membership is \$25 per year. To donate or get involved, visit [polishsociety.org](http://polishsociety.org) or contact Smolarczyk at [PolishSociety1951@gmail.com](mailto:PolishSociety1951@gmail.com). ●



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Retirees from other areas of the state and country invested their wealth in St. Pete and contributed substantially to the economy, especially in years of recession. To help sustain quality of life for all seniors, the city established a Commission on Aging and an Office on Aging in 1973; the first director of the City's Office on Aging was Connie Rudd. It was Rudd who initiated the planning of what is now the multipurpose Sunshine Senior Center. Rudd obtained approximately \$500,000 through a federal Community Development Block Grant to build the center and their mission is "to serve as a community focal point to enhance the quality of life of our citizens aged 50 and over."

Located at 330 5th Street North and facing Mirror Lake, the Sunshine Center was specifically designed and furnished for use by seniors. True to its name, it's a bright, cheerful place with lots of big windows to let the sunshine in. The windows open to a view of Mirror Lake and Banyan Tree Park. The slightly inclined walkways into the building and the sloped floor of the auditorium – named in memory of former center supervisor Martha M. Frappier – make the center accessible for wheelchair users and those with impaired mobility. Signs designating rooms and activity areas are large and contrasting, making it easier for visually challenged people to find their way. There are small, contained areas ideal for private conversation.

Gerald Buchert followed Rudd as director of the Office on Aging in 1976. Buchert was exceptionally qualified for the job, having previously served as bureau chief of Adult Services for the state. As director of the Office on Aging in St. Pete, he oversaw the opening of the Sunshine Center in 1977 and supervised its operation for 22 years. The Sunshine Center was the first senior center to receive the prestigious Florence R. Goldmann award from the Florida Association of Senior Centers. It was also the first center in Florida to achieve national accreditation from the National Institute of Senior Centers.

The Sunshine Center now offers a nice mix of small group activities, such as arts and crafts, table tennis, and creative writing, combined with large group activities like arthritis exercise classes, tai chi, yoga, Caribbean aerobics, and many other activities. In addition to other support groups, the center recently started an LGBTQ group. The resources and activities available at the center help many older people remain a vital part of their communities. A popular center offering is field trips, including recent excursions to the Victory Ship in Tampa, many parks, the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, the Strawberry Festival, and of course, Rays baseball.

Recently, while City Hall was being remodeled, the Sunshine Center served as an alternate City Hall location. Council and many city commissions and committees held their meetings in the auditorium. For many years, the Council of Neighborhood

Associations (CONA) held their monthly Town Hall Membership meetings there. CONA is still meeting by Zoom, but plans to resume in-person meetings at the center when the Covid-19 situation improves.

Sally Marvin is the current supervisor of the Sunshine Center. She has worked there for 31 years and remembers that after she interviewed with the city, she was offered two jobs: One was an administrative job; the other was working with seniors at the Sunshine Center. At the center, she interviewed with Buchert, who was affectionally known as "Mr. B." When Buchert heard that Marvin had a young daughter who needed looking after, he told Marvin to bring her to the interview. After Marvin was hired, her daughter, Jennifer, visited the center frequently. There she acquired many "grandmothers" – seniors making use of the center's programs and services. There was "Dollar Grandma," who gave her a dollar; "Dresses Grandma," who handmade dresses for her; and "Hug Grandma," who always gave her a hug.

Marvin recalls that Buchert was a "towering presence." In addition to shepherding the center's opening, he initiated much of the programming, which was cutting edge for the time. This included "Job Marts" for seniors (defined as over 40). An associated program is the AARP Foundation's Senior Community Service Employment Program, which provides job training by nonprofits leading to good-paying employment. He instituted the "Senior Hall of Fame," annually honoring seniors who volunteered significant service to the city. They are honored with a key to the city at a reception, and their photos are permanently displayed in the center auditorium. An intergenerational sensitivity training program was created called "Hands Across the Ages" for high school students and seniors, as well as an intergenerational choir. Another initiative, "My Favorite Older Person," saw youngsters write essays on their favorite senior. Under Buchert, and with the help of Sister Margaret, founder of the Free Clinic, the center also established a program on spirituality.

Marvin reflects: "Mr. B was such a great guy. He had a passion for seniors advocating that they be treated respectfully and with dignity. He personally would greet each senior he encountered at the center, addressing them by name and asking about their welfare." Even after Buchert's retirement, he was still actively involved in supporting the center. One of his last projects was to install a new arbor in the center's courtyard. Buchert passed away in August of 2021.

At one time, the center offered a program called "Seniors vs. Crime." Seniors who were victims of scams were encouraged to report them to the program. Over \$1 million was recovered and returned to the victims. Other notable center services and events over the years include health fairs, and the Florida Department of Health



Sally Marvin, Sunshine Center Director, has spent 31 happy years at the center.

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used the center as a test site for new health technology devices. Seniors at the center also played extras in the films *Cocoon* – notable centenarian Charles Rainsbury played Smiley – and *H.E.A.L.T.H.*, filmed at the Don CeSar. The center has been visited by a host of politicians over the years, including Lawton Chiles, Tom Gallagher, Bob and Adele Graham, Bill Young, Paula Hawkins, Jeanne Malchon, Hillary Clinton, and Charlie Crist.

In 1981, the Enoch D. Davis Community Service Center was established at 1111 18th Avenue South. Adult and senior programming is also currently offered at Azalea, Bay Vista, and Roberts Recreation Centers. Over the years, the Office on Aging, in addition to operating the Sunshine and Enoch Davis Centers, also took on administration of the Shuffleboard Club, the Lawn Bowling Club, and the Chess Club, all at Mirror Lake, adjacent to the center.

In her 31 years at the Sunshine Center, Marvin has seen many changes. She remembers that in the early 90s, participating senior women usually wore house dresses and engaged in passive activities, such as sewing. Most men just sat around (unless they played softball with the Kids and Kubs). Now the outlook on senior life has changed. There is major emphasis on physical activity, much of it is medically driven.



Sunshine Senior Center



Jerry Buchert led the City Office on Aging from 1976 to 2003.



Sunshine Center Garden



Martha M. Frappier Auditorium, home to many city groups, such as the Council of Neighborhood Associations. The wall on the left displays members of the Senior Hall of Fame.

Marvin estimates that about 60% of senior participants come from the downtown area – many from senior housing such as Peterborough Apartments, Lutheran Apartments, The Princess Martha, Presbyterian Towers, John Knox Apartment, Town Center, and others. She is concerned, however, about condos and expensive apartments displacing several affordable, vintage apartment complexes in the Mirror Lake area.

The Friends of the Sunshine Center, a nonprofit corporation, helps raise funds not provided by the city to enhance center activities. The group was recently recognized by the center as “Volunteers of the Quarter.” A citation reads, “They help bring awareness to the community about the center and promote our events, programs, and activities. Their continued advocacy is a fierce support system for the Sunshine Center, one for which we thank them endlessly.” The Friends raise funds for special center activities and have purchased fitness and café equipment. The center also has a Senior Fee Waiver program funded through a trust fund that allows

low-income seniors to attend fee classes and field trips at no cost.

The Sunshine Center has about 40 active volunteers, but there is a need for more to help at the reception desk, the resale shop, and the café. The center also welcomes instructors for line dancing, a book club, and Mahjong.

A popular current program is amateur dramatics. Participating seniors will hold A Murder Mystery Dinner on September 10. Tickets are \$15. The center is also preparing for an auction, “Sunshine on My Mind,” on November 3, and is seeking donations of items to be auctioned off. Those interested in donating or volunteering with the Friends of the Sunshine Center may call 727-821-2323 or email [sunshinecenterfriends@gmail.com](mailto:sunshinecenterfriends@gmail.com). ♦

For more information on the center and its services, visit [stpeteparksrec.org/sunshinecenter](http://stpeteparksrec.org/sunshinecenter) or [sunshinecenterfriends.org](http://sunshinecenterfriends.org).

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# A St. Pete Love Story with a Healthy Twist

Cindy Cockburn

Florida is expected to gain an average of 845 new residents a day until 2025, according to state projections. St. Petersburg has always been characterized by endless sunshine, soaring pelicans, and a glistening waterfront, so it's no wonder that many of those newcomers end up here.

When Ivan and Peigi Jeanblanc left the cold of Chicago and arrived in Tampa Bay, they decided right away to trade in their snow shovel for a slice of our paradise where they could play outdoors. "We were always known as 'that' family who liked to bike and hike," says Peigi. "This amazing weather and beautiful destination was the perfect location for our new home in St. Pete."

Over 250,000 people now call St. Pete home. Many of our neighbors in the Old Northeast moved here for the

town: "Did you know we are ranked first in Florida for its park system? St. Pete provides access to parks, playgrounds, and preserves, offering residents and visitors thousands of acres for recreation, sports, exercise, and exploration."

Thousands of St. Pete residents and visitors bike or walk around our city for health, recreation, or as their primary transportation. St. Pete's City Trails include bicycle lanes, bicycle routes, recreational trails, sidewalks, crosswalks, and other resources to help people get around without a motor vehicle, and this was a huge draw for the Jeanblancs.

## United In Fitness

"We see healthy living as an integral part of our life," explained Ivan, who is also a chef. "Of course, there are the fitness activities we do, but just as important is our diet and food choices. We have easy access to world-class healthy spices, a significant assortment of seafood, and outstanding local chefs who focus on the freshest ingredients."

For the Jeanblancs, the city of St. Pete seems to have it all. "We love the beauty of the city and the focus on fitness programs available to all St. Petersburg residents," says Ivan. "An example is the Healthy St. Pete initiative led by the St. Petersburg Parks and Recreation Department. This initiative strives to build a culture of health in St. Petersburg by implementing policies and programs that give all citizens the opportunity to reach and enjoy optimal health."

St. Petersburg's downtown has also been rated among the best in the South and the area's beaches are just a short drive away. "We choose St. Pete to live, work and play here year round," says Ivan, but it's not all play for the couple. Together, they own St. Pete's downtown Savory Spice shop. In addition, Executive Chef Ivan offers a variety of monthly cooking classes and private catering options for gatherings. Chef Ivan also introduced *A Year of Brunches* cookbook with 52 weeks of recipes to explore.

"When one thinks of wine pairing," says the chef, "food comes to mind.



Peigi and Ivan Jeanblanc celebrate World Bicycle Day in June with St. Petersburg's City Council Chair Gina Driscoll in June on the steps of City Hall.

**"We see healthy living as an integral part of our life. Of course, there are the fitness activities we do, but just as important is our diet and food choices."**

However, did you know there is magic behind pairing wines with herbs and spices? It starts with aroma compounds found in spices and wine. When you match like flavors together, they magnify each other. This type of pairing is called congruent pairing and it's the theory behind matching wine with spices and herbs."

## In Love with Bikes

Promoting a healthy lifestyle is part of the family mission for Ivan and Peigi. In June, they joined St. Petersburg's City Council Chair Gina Driscoll to celebrate World Bicycle Day on the steps of City Hall. "Today we celebrate the countless ways bicycles have improved our lives – from providing an affordable, healthy way to get around, to helping us conserve resources and protect our environment," said Driscoll.

Much to Ivan and Peigi's delight, St. Pete has been recognized by the League of American Bicyclists as a

Silver-Level Bicycle Friendly City for its attention to promoting, educating, and investing in bicycle friendliness.

The Coast Bike Share program, bike-friendly events such as Open Streets St. Pete, and increased miles of bike lanes and trails are all examples of the city's commitment to supporting more sustainable, people-powered modes of transportation. For the Jeanblancs, it's icing on the cake.

Ivan was thrilled to hear that the head of St. Pete's City Council was celebrating World Bike Day, and said it was natural to show up and offer support. "This is just one of many healthy living aspects we love about St. Pete," he said. "Collectively, the recognition for excellence in bike-friendly living is a catalyst for much more, including healthy dietary habits, fitness, and outdoor activities." ●

Find more on biking in St. Pete at [stpete.org/visitors/getting\\_around.php](http://stpete.org/visitors/getting_around.php). More on the Healthy St. Pete initiative at [healthystpete.com](http://healthystpete.com).



The Jeanblancs serve up a healthy meal.

same reasons: healthy living. Peigi says, "We both have a passion for fitness. We've taken bike trips around the world, completed in marathons and even an Ironman. But we always loved participating in St. Pete's St. Anthony's Triathlon the best."

The two, who have been married for 29 years, love to promote their new



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# St. Pete Pride Celebrates 20 Years

M. Shackelford Burns

Florida's largest LGBTQ+ Pride event celebrated 20 years this June as St. Pete Pride festivities culminated with the traditional parade on June 25. Thousands of people flocked the St. Pete waterfront where food vendors and pop-up merchants filled the green space of North Straub Park just south of Vinoy Park where the parade commenced at 4 pm. The following day was the street carnival on Central Avenue where many blocks were closed to traffic and returned to the people. Families and friends, old and young alike, came together to celebrate the spirit of Pride. There's something about it that can't help but make you smile. The colors, the costumes, the dancers, the drag queens, the playfulness and kindness exhibited by so many people in one place at one time. It's the ultimate celebration of unity and community – and the joys of being yourself. ♦



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## ArtWalk Gets New Trolley Service



The new ArtWalk trolley

Photo courtesy of the St. Petersburg Arts Alliance

Worried about getting your feet wet during summer ArtWalks? Now you can travel to the galleries for the second Saturday events in comfort on a free trolley, courtesy of Star Trolley. After more than two years without a transportation service, the new ride debuted at the July 9 ArtWalk, shuttling tour-goers among the over 40 galleries and venues spread throughout St. Pete.

According to the St. Petersburg Arts Alliance, which sponsors the event, only one trolley is in service for now, but the group hopes to add another to the mix when it can raise the funds. Waterfront galleries can still be accessed via the free downtown Looper, which stops every 15 minutes.

ArtWalks feature great works in the Central Arts District, EDGE Business District, Grand Central District, Warehouse Arts District, Uptown Arts District, and Downtown Waterfront District, from 5 to 9 p.m. on the second Saturday of each month. For more on the event and the trolley service, visit [stpeteartsalliance.org/experience-arts/artwalk](http://stpeteartsalliance.org/experience-arts/artwalk). ●

## Donate School Supplies



Mahaffey Theater

Folks headed to the Mahaffey Theater this summer can do more than just catch a show. Bill Edwards Foundation for the Arts has partnered with local education foundations to sponsor a school supply drive for benefit local public-school kids – and you can drop supplies right at the theater.

According to a media release, new school supplies are being gathered now through August, and will go to Pinellas Education Foundation, where they will be organized and delivered to local public schools. Guests can drop supplies off in designated donation boxes in the theater lobby, and at the next Bill Edwards Foundation for the Arts Members Mingle on July 27. For more on upcoming events, visit [themahaffey.com](http://themahaffey.com).

Pencils, paper, and notebooks are some of the most needed items. Hand sanitizer and disposable face masks are also appreciated. For more information, contact Sydney Lindell at [slindell@billedwardsfoundationforthearts.org](mailto:slindell@billedwardsfoundationforthearts.org). More on Pinellas Education Foundation at [pinellaseducation.org/stuffthebus](http://pinellaseducation.org/stuffthebus). ●

## Libraries Now Loan WiFi Hotspots



MIRROR LAKE BRANCH PUBLIC LIBRARY

Mirror Lake Library has hotspots on loan. Photo courtesy of the City of St. Petersburg

If you or your student need portable internet, the St. Petersburg Library System has a solution. According to a release from the city, “Libraries now have portable WiFi hotspots available for loan for library card holders as a means of promoting access to online information, resources, and culture.”

Card holders can borrow the hotspots for up to 14 days at a time and they must be returned to the same library branch where it was borrowed at the circulation desk.

“This is a step in the right direction for internet accessibility and equity in St. Pete,” said Mika Nelson, Director of the St. Petersburg Library System. “This offering will be a great way for library patrons to get online when and where they need.”

Visit [splibraries.libguides.com/hotspots](http://splibraries.libguides.com/hotspots) or a local library branch for more information. Don't have a library card? They're free and easy to get by visiting your nearest library, emailing [webmail.library@stpete.org](mailto:webmail.library@stpete.org), or clicking “Contact Us” at [splibraries.org](http://splibraries.org). ●

# Gio Swaby *Fresh Up*

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



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# Lofty Art: The Heart of St. Pete's Original Art Scene



One of the early joiners, Lee West, in her studio

## Brandy Stark

There's a hidden gem on the second floor of a 1916 building that was once known as the Rutland's Department Store: The ArtLofts of St. Petersburg. Established as ArtSpace in 1996, with a name change to ArtLofts in 2002, it is the longest, continually running artist studio space in St. Petersburg.

ArtLofts houses artist studios on the top floor of this building, which also holds the Florida CraftArt gallery and offices. This working artist enclave hosts a variety of mediums ranging from copper and wire sculpture to photography, watercolor and acrylic paintings, encaustic works, collage, and more.

The idea for the ArtLofts came from Mary Klein and her partner, Bill Killingsworth, who were part of an artist studio project undertaken by John Warren at the Studebaker building in 1986. When Florida Craftsmen (now known as Florida CraftArt) moved to 2nd Street South to open a studio and gallery around the same time, the pair formed a partnership to move their studios into an adjacent space.

"Downtown St. Pete in those days was not popular, but we had benevolent landlords who rented the space to us, and Florida Craftsmen, very reasonably," says Klein. "We built that space out ourselves. We had 13 studios and it worked great."

As downtown grew in popularity, there was a push to repurpose some of the buildings. Rutland's Department Store, located on the corner of 5th Street North and Central Avenue, had a 70-year run until it closed in January of 1990. Through a series of connections that brought building owner, George Rahdert, Florida Craftsmen, and Klein and Killingsworth together, new life was breathed into the structure. In 1996,

Florida Craftsmen moved into the first floor, while the upstairs was built out by Klein and Killingsworth. They even made discoveries about the building that had long been lost over time.

"George's contractor discovered the wonderful French doors that adorn several of the studios. They had been covered by sheets of concrete from a Rutland renovation. They cut through the concrete and preserved the doors, original hardware and all," Klein says. "There were always interesting little spaces in that building. It was great for me while I was there, and I am so pleased that it has been able to stay there for so long. It was a good idea then, and a good place now."

Betsy Orb Lester, who was part of the original artist group to move to the spot, currently holds the title of the longest artist in residence at ArtLofts. She was encouraged to join when, after years as an Overseas National Airways flight attendant, Lester returned to college to study art. She wanted a space of her own to express the memories and knowledge from her travels. As she settled in, she was impressed with the energy of the group.

"Mother' Mary Klein kept us in line and initiated projects like the yearly Deck the Halls Christmas artist-ornament sale to benefit Hospice," says Lester. "Mary was especially kind when I was burning the midnight oil, painting my grad school thesis work."

In the new building, the artists were fondly known as "Space Cadets," a moniker assigned by Killingsworth, Lester notes. She was present for the renovations, where a treasure trove from the Rutland Department Store era was uncovered.

"We found pins under the carpet from alterations, a bucket full of dust, and storage closets full of yellowed price tag blanks and various accoutrement of the department store trade," says Lester.

"The attic, now closed off in the building, had discarded department store invoices, ad copies and the like."

The original floors now line the studio space, as does a vintage wood panel wall from the 1920s in the front studio, and walls section off the second floor into multiple studios. In the era before cell phones, the studio even had a house phone on the wall. Betsy remembers fondly the day that a call came in from her sister, "I was going to be an aunt!"

In the early 2000s, Klein and Killingsworth left the organization as leadership of the artist studios shifted to Florida Craftsmen. The studio space was reorganized and expanded. At present, there are 18 artists who call ArtLofts home, several with studio space spanning back 20 years.

Rebecca Skelton, a teaching artist at the Morean Arts Center who works with sketching, mixed media, and metal, came to the location in 1998. She had outgrown her home studio and wanted a safe place to create after she finished her day jobs as a freelance graphics artist and an arts teacher. The space was perfect for her to show her art and offer private lessons.

With the shift in leadership, she explains, "the biggest difference was that ArtSpace gave us a rent discount because we were the assistant manager – as in we did minor cleaning/repairs and were on call if something happened. We would close windows that had blown open or put people's art or deliveries in their studios." Now, the care for the building falls under the wings of Florida CraftArt, who has, in recent years, refurbished the kitchen area and added an upgraded security system to the building.

Skelton loves the openness of the art group. "We are a collection of artists, diverse in styles and media, located right above Florida CraftArt Gallery. Visitors can see twice the amount of wonderful art in the same building just by coming up the elevator in our 5th Street entrance, or the stairs off of Central."

Christine Di Staola is the most recent member to join the studio group in late 2021. "At ArtLofts, I am fortunate to be surrounded by both space and light, not to mention a cadre of great art people to bounce ideas off of, exchange views with, or get an impromptu critique," she says. "In downtown, one can feel the full weight of the creative vibe and immense support for all the arts. I don't think I'd be doing the quality of work I'm doing now had I not landed at ArtLofts and St Pete."

People are welcome to come up for Second Saturday art walks as the studio space hosts rotating art shows in the front gallery. Often, the center is open Saturday afternoons. New works are available by each studio dweller monthly, and some spaces have special events with pop up shows, small art classes, or other similar events.

As a legacy location, says Lester, "Artlofts symbolizes time, past and present, for us artists and the city." As such, it is well worth the visit! ●

ArtLofts is at 10 5th Street North, above the Florida CraftArt Gallery. Studios are open at various times but are consistently open for Second Saturday and Saturday afternoons, noon to 4 pm. For more, visit [theartlofts.com](http://theartlofts.com) or [facebook.com/artlofts](https://www.facebook.com/artlofts).



One of the newest artists to the space, Christine Di Staola



ArtSpace Cadets in 1998. Front row: Kas Turner, MaryJo Dicus, Rebecca Skelton, Jack Lebowitz, and Betsy Lester. Back row: Rick Whalen, Lee West, Robert Holmes, Mary Klein, Mack Hicks, John Richardson, and Ronnie Boudreau.

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## MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR



**Susan M. Robertson**  
Beach Drive NE

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

I have lived and worked in St. Pete since 1997 when I started as the marketing director for Parkside Mall. I was born and raised in Bradenton, Florida, but have lived in many states and overseas.

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

There are so many restaurants from which to choose, but I must cite Lingr as one of my favorites now, and Sauvignon Wine Locker. Living in St. Pete has turned me into quite a 'foodie.'

**Most interesting, enjoyable, or exotic vacation?**

We just recently returned from a two-week trip to South Africa and I have to say it was the most exotic vacation I have been on to date. We went on safari game drives, stayed in five-star rustic accommodations, and saw a huge variety of wild animals up close and personal.

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

When my fiancé and I met and found out we wanted to travel, we made a long bucket list of places we wanted to visit. Covid got in the way for a while, but this year we are in full swing and going back to England, where I had lived (to see Adele in concert); return to Santorini, Greece (where I had my first exotic vacation with a girlfriend who has since passed away); taking a river cruise down the Thames and more! We just added Tuscany and the French Riviera to the list for 2023.

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

After Freddie Mercury died and when Adam Lambert became the lead singer for Queen, I became obsessed with Freddie and watched the movie about his life at least five times. I would love to have met him in person to talk about his rise to fame, his loves, and his illness.

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

I have never been much of a sports person, but I enjoy the big games – Super Bowl, the World Series. I do love boating and being on the water, though. My favorite 'sport' is award shows – the Oscars, the Emmys, the Golden Globes, etc.

**A movie you'd recommend or current TV you're watching?**

I have gotten into period pieces and absolutely loved *Bridgerton* and *The Gilded Age*. Some of the others have become so violent and sort of disturbing, but these are lovely with the old homes, the beautiful clothes, and manners.

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

I would be a golden retriever. I have owned about eight dogs in my life – six of them rescues – and each of them have been different, but the personality and affection you get from a golden can't be beat.

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

I was the director of marketing at the St. Pete Pier – the inverted pyramid one – for 12 years. I worked with the best management team ever and was inspired daily by general manager Carol Everson and leasing director Don Paul. These two people made me a better person and we often referred to ourselves as 'The Three-Legged Stool' – we would fall over if one of us wasn't there!

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

I've been reading some great books by Elin Hildebrand, all taking place on Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. It started with *28 Summers* and I was hooked.



**Patrick McGee**  
20th Avenue NE

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

I've lived in St. Pete since 2011. I'm originally from Virginia, grew up in Texas, and then lived in Oldsmar.

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

I love Vinoy Park. My kids and I can often be seen flying a kite, visiting the playground, or running along the waterfront. I also love the cruising the Grand Central District and drinking a beer at Green Bench.

**Most interesting, enjoyable, or exotic vacation?**

My wife and I ran the Paris Marathon on our honeymoon!

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

I want to go somewhere where I can see the Northern Lights and the Milky Way.

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

I would love to meet Tom Hanks. I love his movies and he seems like he would be a nice, genuine person.

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

My favorite thing to do is ride my bike or go for a nice run along our beautiful waterfront.

**A movie you'd recommend or current TV you're watching?**

We just finished up *Ozark* and we are looking for a new show to watch. I am a bit of a nerd so I am trying to catch up on all of the new *Star Wars* and Marvel movies and shows.

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

I love our poodle Harvey so I think I would have to go with poodle.

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

My dad and grandfather inspire me. They taught me how to be a good person and a good father and family man. I am grateful for both of them and I hope I can be a great father to my two boys.

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

I listen to a lot of audiobooks. (I borrow them from our great library system.) Some of the books I have recently finished and recommend are *Station Eleven*, *Educated*, and *Killing England*.

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

I helped produce some of the largest and most unique endurance events in the world including Ironmans, New York City Triathlon, Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon, and the Bay-to-Breakers Road Race in San Francisco.

**Something people might not know about you?**

I love doing yard work! The sense of gratification and satisfaction at the end of a project is one of my favorite feelings.

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

I am the race director for the St. Anthony's Triathlon.

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

Our whole family loves taking a walk through the Old Northeast and looking at all of the unique and historical homes.



**Tiffany DeCarlis**  
11th Avenue NE

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

I have lived in St. Pete approximately a year and a half. I am a South Carolina native who divided my time between homes Greenville and Charleston.

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

Top of the list includes strolling the parks along the bay, Dali Museum, as well as visiting Lolita's Wine Market for wine and tapas.

**Most interesting, enjoyable, or exotic vacation?**

Experiencing carnival in São Paulo, Brazil with my Brazilian friend and her family. The energy and excitement! Almost a sensory overload in the best kind of way.

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

Remote hiking in Bhutan for its people, culture, and scenery, as well as Antarctica for its pristine beauty.

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

Audrey Hepburn... her beauty seems only to be matched by her tireless humanitarian work for children. Such grace and poise!

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

Cycling, STOTT Pilates, yoga, and cooking.

**A movie you'd recommend or current TV you're watching?**

*Breakfast at Tiffany's* – classic Audrey Hepburn.

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

Saluki – beautifully graceful, intelligent, and athletic.

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

Truthfully, my husband. David is such an amazing soul and genuine person. His work ethic, radiant and sincere smile, and his positive attitude have inspired me for more than 20 years. I'm a better person because of him.

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

I'm a big fan of cookbooks and love to collect them. Books with great stories and fun facts, as well as recipes, are the best. One of my favorites is *Street Vegan* by Adam Sobel.

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

I started running when I was 12 years old. Over the years, I've completed marathons, full and half Ironman triathlons, and have cycled some of the epic climbs featured in the Tour de France. I have fully embraced big challenges and I cherish these.

**Something people might not know about you?**

I love animals and have backyard chickens. My favorite birds are my Polish Crested and Mille Fleur D'Uccle. "The Girls" are a simple pleasure in life. We can often be found "drinking with chickens" – enjoying an afternoon glass of wine or morning coffee in our side yard. They are fun to share with friends, neighbors, and children.

**What do you do for a living?**

I am a pharmacist and a STOTT Pilates instructor. I currently do not practice pharmacy, since moving from South Carolina, and focus my energy on teaching Pilates. I believe it is my calling and passion.

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

My husband, David, is in the industrial packaging industry. We have several cats and our backyard birds.



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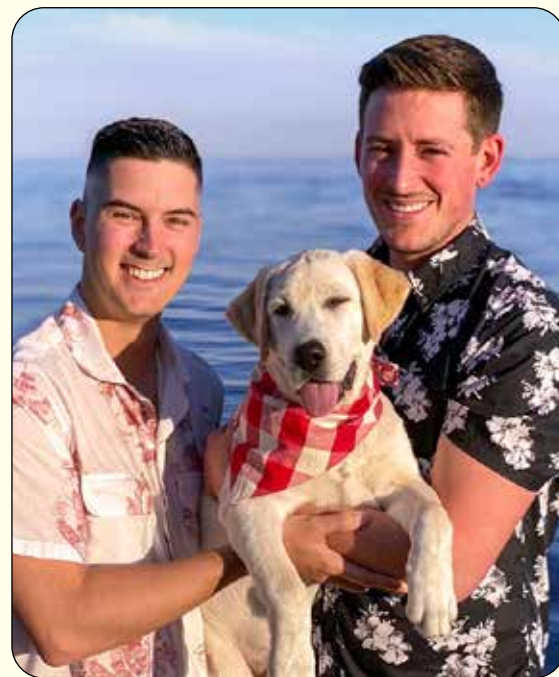
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# The Best of Both Worlds for High School Students Downtown

Jeff Donnelly

Calling all overachievers! For students who want to get their Associate's Degree while they finish high school, there's a new option close to home. When St. Petersburg College's Collegiate High School (SPCHS) opened at the St. Petersburg/Gibbs Campus in 2004, it was the only location for the program until a north county option opened in Tarpon Springs in 2019. Just a few years later, the award-winning program will expand again, opening a new campus this fall for grades 9 through 12 at the college's Downtown St. Petersburg location.

personalized instruction and remediation of gaps in knowledge, while accelerating instruction for each student.

"Our 'family-like' school culture is inclusive, collaborative, and supportive," she says. "All staff members mentor students and strive to build a relationship with each student."

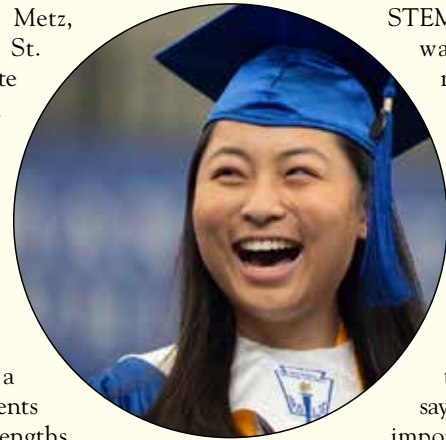
The new campus, like the others, will let students simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate degree, but will be a bit different than the others, as it will be the first to enroll ninth-graders. SPC's pre-collegiate program will serve ninth- and tenth-graders, while upperclassmen take

According to Metz, each student at St. Petersburg Collegiate STEM High School follows an individualized learning plan aligned to their college major/career pathway and the school's mission.

"Students take a variety of assessments to identify their strengths and interests and the data is

STEM occupations had wages above the national average."

"Preparing students for careers in STEM will empower them to excel in school, as they continue their post-secondary education, and as they enter the workforce," Metz says, "which is especially important for first-generation and economically disadvantaged students."



SPCHS Grads at SPC Commencement Ceremony



Students working on a group project at St. Petersburg Collegiate High School

"The goal at the new campus is to prepare students to successfully enter the workforce in high-demand, high-wage STEM careers," says Starla Metz, associate vice president of collegiate high schools.

Metz says SPC selected SPC's Downtown Center for St. Petersburg Collegiate STEM High School (SPCSHS) to make it convenient for parents, hoping to attract some of the most underserved students in Pinellas County, and giving them future opportunities for economic mobility.

"Additionally," says Metz, "the access to local business leaders will allow our students to learn about STEM career pathways and may lead to relevant work experiences for our students." Metz also notes that the close proximity to SPC's Palladium and American Stage may also give students a chance to attend events or support the integration of the arts at the school.

## Student Life at SPCHS Downtown

SPCSHS is staffed much like any other school. What is unique, says Metz, is the small size, which allows for

part in the collegiate program where they dual enroll in college classes.

"Students in grades 9 and 10 are taught by highly qualified high school teachers," says Metz. "They take traditional high school courses and a few college courses aligned to the Associate in Science degree and industry certifications." Students begin in a grade-level cohort, taking predominantly high school courses, but also learn college success skills and take college computer courses. Reading and writing, critical thinking, collaboration, problem solving, and organizational skills are infused within all subjects to prepare students to excel in all college courses in the junior and senior year.

Students in grades 11 and 12 are fully dual-enrolled in college courses, with other college students, taught by college instructors, thus gaining an authentic college experience. Students who want to go on to postsecondary education can also earn an Associate in Arts degree, with a few college courses over the summer between their junior and senior year, maximizing their educational opportunities. SPCSHS provides free tutoring with no cost for books, fees, or tuition.

used in collaboration with the student, school counselor and parents to guide students in selecting a college major/career pathway leading to a high-wage, high-demand career that is aligned to his/her strengths and interests," Metz says. "They also hear from industry experts, develop leadership skills, and volunteer in the community gaining confidence and skills that will serve them well as they continue their education or enter the workforce." School counselors also assist students and parents with the college application process including applying for FAFSA and in applying for scholarships to eliminate or minimize student debt.

## A Program Suited to the Times

St. Petersburg Collegiate STEM High School lands in downtown St. Pete at a time when STEM careers are in high demand. The U.S. Department of Education has indicated that STEM expertise as a critical component of the United States' global leadership. STEM careers are projected for high growth, and according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017): "Ninety-three out of 100

## The Full High School Experience

According to Metz, ideal applicants will be willing to commit to the vision, mission, and values of SPCSHS as well as adopt a growth mindset in pursuit of a career in STEM.

"Students will be active participants in their learning and will learn to be self-motivated," she says.

SPCSCH makes a compelling case for academically ambitious and career-minded students, but ultimately it is still high school and, done right, it stands to reason that young people should take much more from high school than grades. To ensure students get not only a strong academic foundation, but also develop essential social and emotional skills, students at SPCSHS will have a variety of extra-curricular activities to engage socially, supplement their academic development, pursue artistic interests, or serve their communities.

"SPCSHS provides students with age-appropriate extra-curricular activities," Metz says, "such as fall dance, prom, Grad Bash, awards ceremonies, two graduation ceremonies; one for high school and the SPC Commencement Exercises."

In addition, SPCSHS students may join in any of the clubs and activities offered by SPCSHS and SPC. Student athletes can participate in sports at their zoned Pinellas County public school. At SPCSHS students enjoy the best of high school and college within a safe and supportive learning environment. ●

Learn more at [spchs.spcollege.edu](http://spchs.spcollege.edu), or contact Starla Metz at [metz.starla@spcollege.edu](mailto:metz.starla@spcollege.edu) or 727-302-6883 for more information.

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