

NORTHEAST JOURNAL

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St. Petersburg, Florida

March/April 2023

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Bumblebees getting fresh with a purple coneflower

Pollinator Power: Plants to Bring the Bees

Cathy Salustri

If you build it, they will come. No, not baseball-playing ghosts. Pollinators! Bees, butterflies, birds...the list goes on, and includes mosquitoes (they don't all bite!), bats (who suffer from seriously bad PR), and countless other four-footed and two-winged creatures that can fight climate change. That's right: If you want to fight climate change, find a way to attract pollinators to your garden.

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Something to Reflect The Birth of Historic Preservation in St. Pete

Will Michaels

The story of the preservation of our city's historic 1920s-era Vinoy Park Hotel is well documented. Not so well known is how preservation of the Vinoy led to the preservation of many other historic places throughout the city and continues to do so.

In 1945, the Vinoy Hotel was acquired from its founder Amyer Vinoy Laughner by hotelier Charles Alberding of Chicago. Maintenance of the hotel had deteriorated over the years, and Alberding tried to bring it back to its former glory without success. Beginning in 1972, Alberding began leasing the hotel to interested investors. In 1984 a partnership composed of B.B. Anderson, Craig McLaughlin, Bert Stevens, and Fred Guest acquired the lease on the hotel and set about its restoration.

The partnership determined that, in order to make the Vinoy a success, they needed boat slips in the North Yacht Basin and city-owned land adjacent to 7th

Continued on page 24



Howard Hansen speaking at a Preserve the 'Burg event. Hansen is a native of St. Petersburg and a founder of Preserve the 'Burg. He is likely the city's first professional preservationist.

Nature Preserved: The Heart and History of Boyd Hill

Monica Kile

It took a master falconer from Georgia to open my eyes to the natural gem just four miles from my home in the Old Northeast. It was one of those glorious winter days that makes you realize why everyone moves to Florida; a deep freeze had struck much of the nation, while St. Pete enjoyed blue skies and low 70-degree temperatures. Our family decided to go to Raptor Fest at the Boyd Hill Nature Preserve, an event we'd heard rave reviews of over the years, but never attended. After strolling past volunteers holding all manner of curious birds, we hurried to a set of grandstands set up for a "free flight" demonstration. A huge crowd had gathered for the show.

A burly older man appeared, the kind you fear might drone on about bird habitats and diets before introducing any actual animals.



Master falconer Steve Hoddy with Arrow the hawk at Boyd Hill's 2023 Raptor Fest in February

But Steve Hoddy, who has been working with birds since he was a teenager, soon had everyone in the audience eating out of his hands. His kindly demeanor and quick wit reminded me of a favorite uncle. He introduced a number of stunning birds of prey, and within minutes, one was darting over our heads, soaring into the treetops to roost in a large pine tree.

Steve held the crowd in rapt attention with the natural history of his feathered friends. We met a hawk named Arrow and a condor named Storm. Yet, I was most intrigued by the volume of "party crashers" that flew overhead. Over the course of the presentation, a dozen different birds crisscrossed the sky, and Steve identified them

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Keep on Growing

Last issue I told you about our dog, Maui, who, just before Christmas, woke up paralyzed and needed emergency back surgery. As I write this, it's been two months since we brought him home. For the first month, he was mostly sedated, confined to a small, dark corner of our living room. We were not allowed to let him move much. (Pro tip: human diapers are cheaper than dog diapers, and more flexible. Maui wears a size 6 months.)

Progress came so slowly we almost didn't notice. He was allowed five minutes a day outside, walking with a sling to support his weak back legs. At first it was awful. There were cranky fits – both dog and human – and stretches of boredom that no cheese-filled Kong toy could fix. But we worked on some therapies and tried to keep his spirits up with car rides and – very gradually – upping the time he was allowed to walk. He lived for those ten to fifteen minutes in the park.

Then one day we realized: He didn't need the sling anymore. He was strong enough to walk on his own! Now, we're taking him for longer walks, and he can even run a bit. His whole personality has blossomed again.

The point of this note is not really my dog, though many of you have kindly asked about him. The note – and many of the articles in our paper this issue – is about growth. About coming into bloom. It is spring, after all, and, while we watch our cars slowly turn green under drifts of oak pollen, we are also celebrating new life. From the stay-at-home mom who finally chased her own adventures, to the hard-won success of an immigrant family; from the renewal of one of our beloved landmarks, to the literal flora and fauna at Boyd Hill and in our back yards: These stories are what spring is all about.

Now, every day, I see Maui make his wobbly run through the grass and I think: Dogs really do have it figured out. Just celebrate life and keep on growing!
~ Shelly



Little hero dog – and a bigger hero – on a recent trip to Ft. Lauderdale

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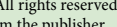
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MEET THE WRITERS

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

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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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





Jon Kile

ONE Resident Makes Teacher of the Year Finals

where she and her colleagues come together to share lesson ideas and support each other.

Ingebretsen's first focus is bringing science to life for her students. When asked how her students would describe her classroom style, she said, "I think they know that I can joke around and have fun, but they also know I get down to business. We have standards to cover and they know I'm doing my job." She balances her lessons with lecture notes, collaborative work, and lab activities like microscope exercises and dissections.

Teaching a state-tested course like biology can be challenging. Ingebretsen has lots of material to cover, but also wants to challenge her students in a way that engages them. Still, she says, teachers always wish they had more time. "In the real world, science is about experimentation, testing things over and over again. In the classroom, we often have time to do an experiment once and we have to move on."

Regardless of the testing load, and sometimes-challenging social landscape that today's teachers face, Ingebretsen is focused on her role. She has 180 freshman and juniors spread between six classes. "Teaching the same biology class for 13 years, I've learned which subjects need more time for students to grasp and which ones tend to come easier," she



Dana Ingebretsen, center, with husband Josh, mother-in-law Joanne, sister Kate, niece Isla (in stroller), and her two sons, Donovan and Jameson

says. "And I know when a student isn't connecting and needs encouragement – and also when not to push."

Ingebretsen also takes time outside of class to mentor five young women through the Take Stock in Children program. "I try to give my students tips and tricks to stay organized so they can become more independent and succeed in college and in their career." Being accessible is satisfying when former students reach out to her for letters of recommendation or show up at alumni events.

Dedication like this is a big part of what made Ms. Ingey a finalist for Teacher of the Year, a highly selective process that started when her principal, Jennifer Gil, chose her as Boca Ciega High School's nominee. A total of 131 nominees across the county were

reviewed by a committee. The 10 finalists then participated in a series of interviews and appeared before a panel of district personnel. The winner was named on February 8, and while Ingebretsen didn't take home the top honor – that went to Dr. Adam Zele, a math teacher at Azalea Middle School – she's no less of a standout in our school system.

When she's not teaching, you're likely to find Ingebretsen and her family enjoying local sports or a day at the beach. Her husband Josh, a St. Pete native and Lakewood High graduate, is a construction materials salesman who used to work for the Tampa Bay Rays. They have two young boys, ages 5 and 3. They met at the University of Florida, where she was studying biology, and still make regular trips up to Gainesville to watch Gator football, basketball, and gymnastics. The boys are just getting into baseball at Northeast Little League.

Classroom style, consistency, and a desire to connect with her students are the things that make Dana Ingebretsen an exceptional teacher. It's important for schools to have reliable cornerstones like Ms. Ingey on their faculty – and for teachers to be recognized for their excellence. Principals, parents, and students know that Bogie's got biology covered by one of the best. ●

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American Stage Goes Big with *Ragtime* in the Park



American Stage in the Park started as a much-smaller crack at Shakespearean adaptations in the '80s. Nearly 40 years later, it's typical to see 17,000 people at just one park run.



American Stage, a downtown theatre company, brings an outdoor musical to Demen's Landing Park each year.

Photos courtesy of American Stage

Abby Baker

Were charcuterie boards a “thing” 37 years ago? If so, they certainly weren’t served when American Stage first started producing outdoor theater shows at Demen’s Landing Park in 1986. Back then, American Stage park shows were much smaller-scale productions, but this April, organizers expect an estimated 17,000 people – and yes, charcuterie boards.

On April 12, Demen’s Landing will come alive for opening night of *Ragtime – the Musical*. It’s the St. Pete theater company’s largest park show yet, featuring 24 actors and a nine-piece live band for a two-and-a-half-hour musical that famously tells the story of three ethnic groups surviving (and sometimes thriving, though mostly not) in New York City during the turn of the century.

It’s a song-and-dance production that’s already on a massive-scale, and American Stage must bring it to life not in a theater, but in the Florida wilderness. Well, OK. The park.

At the helm of the production, director Erica Sutherlin has high hopes for the show. She’s returning to direct *Ragtime* after successfully directing *Dutchman* last year as the first Black female director at American Stage.

“Who doesn’t like a great night out in a park? Food, music, friends, lawn chairs, blankets, togetherness – like a melting pot, all coming together to share an intimate, uniquely ‘theirs’ type of moment under the stars,” said Sutherlin. “Hopefully, it will be with a slight breeze.”

Sutherlin, along with her trusty design team – including theater names such as costume designer Jordan Jeffers, set designer Teresa L. Williams, and sound designer Joseph Lamar – will be responsible for a copious amount of scene changes, choreography, and storytelling.

That includes feats such as building an entire set car on stage and a giant deconstructed Statue of Liberty.

“I know there’s a lot of talk about the relevance of this story, but if we really look at America, the melting pot, this story is timeless through our diverse lens. At least, that’s what I’m hoping to convey,” Sutherlin said. “My plan is to take liberties that may be uncomfortable for some and liberating for others.”

American Stage has not been immune to the effect of the pandemic on the arts world. Things are picking



American Stage’s biggest park moneymaker so far, *Mamma Mia!*



Footloose – the Musical was the theatre company’s first show back after the pandemic. *Ragtime – the Musical* will open on April 12.



American Stage hopes to make *Ragtime* one of their biggest productions yet.

up, but Mainstage ticket sales are not where they were pre-pandemic. Park shows, however, are another story. Along with development in the Bay Area, the size and nature of the show has exploded in the last three decades, and *Ragtime* has the potential to reach their biggest audience to date.

After a two-year hiatus, the theater company brought back its park shows with *Footloose* in 2022. According to Steve Mountain, longtime box office manager at American Stage, *Footloose* claims the title of the second highest money-making park show. Number one? *Mamma Mia!* in 2019. American Stage hopes *Ragtime* will surpass it.

“Park attendance will vary from year to year, based on the show and the weather. Basic range would be around 16,000 to 19,000,” Mountain said. “If we can ever get a year with no rain, 20,000 would not be out of the question.”

Organizers remain hopeful; *Ragtime* ticket pre-sales have been good.

“When we consider visibility, our park production is the largest and widest-reaching programming,” said Patrick A. Jackson, associate artistic producer with the theater company. “There is an excitement around coming together, outdoors, with an experience that is essentially a rock concert for theater.”

What to Expect This Year

When American Stage first began tackling the park in the '80s, the emerging theater company was only doing Shakespeare adaptations, and still working out the kinks. In the nearly four decades since, things have changed. This year, in addition to the charcuterie boards, refreshments will include kombucha, seltzers, snacks, and a special just-for-the-park-show beer from Green Bench Brewing: Gettin’ Ready Rye. Get it?

Saturday, April 23 will be Pride Night in the Park, featuring a live drag show pre-*Ragtime*, and on Thursday, April 30, guests can bring their dog to the party for “Wagtime” in the park.

Visit americanstage.org for information about seating, lawn chairs, weather, and more. Questions? Call the Box Office at 727.823.7529 or email boxoffice@americanstage.org.

Ragtime – the Musical runs April 12 through May 14. Doors open at 6 p.m.; show starts at 7:30 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday. Tickets are \$25-45 at americanstage.org/shows/ragtime.

all. A pileated woodpecker, a short-tailed hawk, and, as if on cue, a bald eagle. Steve, a man whose knowledge of, and devotion to, birds of prey has led him all over the world (and onto the stages of David Letterman and Jay Leno), paused while staring up at the short-tailed hawk and said: “And this is why places like Boyd Hill are so important. Where else in St. Petersburg could you see this mix of birds in the wild?”

It was a light-bulb moment for me. Steve was right. I had never fully appreciated what Boyd Hill Nature Preserve means to our city. Sure, I’d hiked the trails a handful of times, and my son loved their summer camps. But I hadn’t really appreciated what setting aside 245 acres of land in the most densely populated county in Florida meant for the health of the non-human population of St. Petersburg. The herons and the possums; the alligators and the owls.

I may have been late to the party, but city leaders recognized the value of this land as early as 1925. Early offers to buy it from private developers failed, but persistent residents continued to advocate for a park in the area, and by 1943 a plan was sketched out to purchase land on the shores of Lake Maggiore for that purpose. (The natural rise and fall of the lake was one of the reasons early real estate developments foundered and that the land was even available: the rich, but smelly, muck that appeared when the lake was low turned off would-be residents.)

By 1947 trails were being laid in the newly acquired park. From its earliest days, the stated goal was for the park to remain as natural as possible, but “natural” meant something different then than it does today. Many non-native plants were introduced by well-meaning employees and volunteers during a time when Florida attractions operated under the notion that exotic plants and flowers could only serve to make parks more appealing to visitors. (Hindsight being 20/20, we now know those efforts led to monocultures where invasive plants choked out native species and altered the ecosystem.)

Early plans at Lake Maggiore Park were carefully overseen by a city parks employee named Boyd Hill, who would rise to the position of parks

superintendent just a few years later. He never forgot his first true love though; upon his untimely death in 1957, his desk held plans for the expansion of Lake Maggiore Park. It was renamed in his honor the following year.

Over the next few decades, the park went through various iterations. A small zoo with caged bears, macaws, monkeys, and pythons, which had helped attract early visitors, was deemed hazardous after vandals repeatedly attacked the park, maiming some animals and letting others free of their cages. A Mother Goose-themed attraction called Kiddieland, made up of papier-mache sculptures of Jack and Jill, Peter-Peter Pumpkin-Eater and the like, briefly appeared on the park’s nature trails, but were removed after public

Boyd Hill Nature Preserve also now boasts a dizzying number of programs. There are daily Nature Tram Tours and regularly scheduled tours called “Fantastic Alligators” and the “Fantastic World of Birds of Prey.” There are live Animal Encounters every weekend, and family night-hikes once a month. The Preserve hosts weekly Youth Programs like “mini-rangers” and “youth rangers” where children learn the various duties of a park ranger, while enjoying hands-on activities on a range of outdoor skills. Wellness programs like forest bathing, nature journaling, trail runs, and baby hikes soothe the body and the soul. You can sleep under the stars at the new Terry Tomalin primitive campground, and travel back in time (and learn how to be more self-sufficient) at the Pinellas



Boyd Hill has miles of trails through multiple habitats.



The park features iconic metal sculpture, like this armadillo, by the late artist Paul Epling.



Volunteers Claire Grissom and Lucette Lyle, with Owl’s Nest Sanctuary for Wildlife, pose with their reptile and feathered pals at Boyd Hill’s Raptor Fest in February.

outry. One critic compared it to “putting a playground in a church.” By the 1970s, a desire to keep the park as natural as possible was clear, and future expansions and renovations have stayed true to that ethos.

Today the award-winning park boasts six miles of trails and boardwalks through multiple habitats: hardwood hammocks, sand pine scrub, pine flatwoods, willow marsh, swamp woodlands, and lake shore. Efforts to eradicate the non-native plants introduced in the early years are ongoing, and the return of the birds of prey that soared overhead during Steve’s demonstration are just one harbinger of success. Controlled burns and invasive plant removal mean that the rodents that birds of prey feed on are once again visible to eagle eyes.

Pioneer Settlement, which offers fun yet informative talks on topics like DIY Natural Cleaners, Bird Nesting Boxes and Bee Hotels, Foraging Florida, and Starting a Spring Garden. Parents of little ones can enjoy a kid-free evening while their child learns about the natural world at a Parent’s Night Out. There are seasonal hikes like Funky Fungi, Heads up for Hawks, and Wild Wetlands, and monthly lectures by experts on natural and cultural history. Program prices vary but are often in the ballpark of \$3-\$5, which seems like the price you would have paid when the park first opened in 1947.

Any visit to Boyd Hill should include a stop at the exhibit “The Ripple Effect: Understanding Nature’s Connections” at the Lake Maggiore Environmental Education Center, a hike on one of the many miles of trails, and a visit to the

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Crowds loved the bird demonstrations at Raptor Fest.

Birds of Prey rehab center to say hello to Pugsley the turkey vulture and Mystic the barred owl. Prices to enter the park are \$3 for adults, \$1.50 for children 3-16, and free for younger children.

Raptor Fest, where my family and I watched birds of prey in flight, is Boyd Hill's most visible public program. I spoke with Taylor Graham Thornton, nature preserve supervisor II at Boyd Hill; she reported that they had record-breaking crowds this year, with an estimated 4,000 people in attendance. The event is a partnership between the City of St. Pete and Friends of Boyd Hill Nature Preserve, who provide support, food, and care for the raptors at Boyd Hill.

Taylor noted that there are other amenities at Boyd Hill with which the public may be less familiar. "A lot of people don't know that we have

campsites and cabins at the Terry Tomalin campground. People are surprised by that. There are 12 campsites with access to water and grill at every campsite, and our six cabins have water, grills, and, of course, electricity. There are bathrooms with showers, and that building is currently being renovated so that it will be very nice and updated in a couple of months." She also noted the popularity of their newest building, Hammock Hall, which features two rooms connected by a breezeway that are available for rent for parties, weddings, baby showers, and the like.

School children visit Boyd Hill Nature Preserve every single day. Taylor spoke about the extensive relationship the preserve has with Pinellas County Schools. "A Pinellas County Schools employee has an office here at Boyd Hill

and every weekday, Monday through Friday, a fourth-grade class from Pinellas County has a field trip here." Boyd Hill rangers also conduct an additional two or three field trips a week for private schools, home school groups, and others.

Since its inception, Boyd Hill has been a beloved city park – a place for solitude and reflection, or the childlike wonder of a night hike or live animal demonstration. Perhaps more important than the rejuvenation it can offer us humans, however, is the sanctuary from encroaching development and sprawl it gives the glorious birds, reptiles, and other wild creatures who call Boyd Hill home. ●

There's always something new at Boyd Hill Nature Preserve and the Pinellas Pioneer Settlement. Find info at stpeteparksrec.org/boydhillpreserve.

What's in a Name?

Lake Maggiore was renamed from the more provincial Salt Lake that early white settlers referenced. Stories on the origin of the name differ. That it was named after a beautiful lake on the border of Switzerland and Italy is clear, but exactly who bestowed the moniker seems to be a matter of some debate. It was likely one of two early surveyors employed by real estate developers determined to paint St. Petersburg as a lush destination with exotic influences. Little did they know that early residents would mangle the romantic Italian pronunciation, turning the soft "g" of Lake Ma-JORE-e, to the hard "g" of Lake Ma-GORE-e.

Boyd Hill was a person, not a land formation! Visitors to Boyd Hill Nature Preserve would be forgiven for expecting to come upon a large hill while hiking the trails and boardwalks of the park. We may have wondered who the "Boyd" was that this hill was named after, but I'll wager that few of us thought his last name was Hill. Turns out, there aren't any geographic hills in Boyd Hill nature park, just one dedicated environmental advocate who left his mark (and his moniker) on a city forever.

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Art in Bloom

Brandy Stark

Spring has sprung! And what better way to replenish your creative mojo than to get out on the town and get inspired by talented local artists? Here's a sampling of the art on tap in this issue's roundup.

Art Centers

The Arts Xchange: Sustainability and Resilience. March 11-29. Two locations: The Tully Levine gallery at the ArtsXchange on the Deuces Corridor, 515 22nd Street S. and The Gallery at the Mahaffey Theater, 401 1st Street S. 727-256-0821. info@wadastpete.org

This show focuses on art from renewable resources, recycled materials, and carbon-neutral creations. The theme is art that depicts a sustainable lifestyle and where we have failed to act sustainably. Hours vary by location, though the show will be open for the Second Saturday Art Walk on March 11, 5-9 pm.

Florida CraftArt: Member's Exhibition. 501 Central Avenue. March 17-April 29. Monday-Saturday, 10 am-5:30 pm, Sunday, noon-5 pm. floriadcraftart.org

Florida CraftArt members are showing the best of their work at this juried Member's Exhibition. Explore the finest contemporary glass, jewelry, fiber, wood, ceramics, metals and mixed media. With hundreds of skilled and accomplished artist members across the country participating, this show is always stunning.

Morean Arts Center Glass Studio & Hot Shop: Night Blow. 714 Central Avenue. March 25, 7-10 pm. Tickets: \$55 per person. moreanartscenter.org/night-blow

Back-lit by nothing more than a fiery hot kiln and the performers' molten glass creations, *Night Blow* creates a spotlight on the heartbeat of glassblowing, backed with synchronized music choreographed by the evening's DJ. (Note: this is performance art, not a hands-on workshop.)

Morean Arts Center: Fresh Squeezed 7: Emerging Artists in Florida. 719 Central Avenue. April 8-June 22. Open daily, 10 am-5 pm. moreanartscenter.org

Each year, the Morean invites emerging artists currently residing in Florida to submit entries for possible exhibition in *Fresh Squeezed: Emerging Artists in Florida*. The goal of this exhibition is to nurture and advance the careers of emerging visual artists while also giving our community the opportunity to discover exciting new art being made in our region.

Museum of Fine Arts: Still Striking: Creativity & Aging with Dr. Doug Dreishpoon. 255 Beach Drive. April 29, 11 am-12 pm. \$10 for MFA members, \$20 for non-members. Register via the MFA website at mfastpete.org/events-calendar.

This seminar looks at creativity and aging. It asks questions about how aging changes perceptions of art, the creative process, and the artists' messages. This is part of the Pictures of Health initiative, a multifaceted program examining integrated concepts of health across space and time, using the MFA's collection as a point of departure.

Spots About Town

The Half Baked Potato: 12x12 x 420. 1626 Central Ave. April 1-May 31. 11 am-9 pm. Call 727-289-7087 or email Halfbakedstpete@gmail.com

Seventy artists will show their 12-inch by 12-inch art, including the frames! An eclectic art show, it will also have a spin on the date of April 20 (420).

Bar@548: All That Glitters. 548 Central Avenue. April 1-30, 11 am to 3 am. Opening reception is April 1, 7 pm. events@bar548.com

April's art show at Bar@548 features sparkling, bedazzled, and glittery art from a variety of local artists curated by @AmberSparkleArt. The goal is to serve as a reminder to look for the light and goodness in others. Artists and guests are encouraged to bring a book to donate to local Free Little Libraries.

Smokin' 19: Funguary. 3090 34th Street N. Ends March 17. 11 am-10 pm daily. smokin19.com

Chytrids, zygomycota, and basidiomycota, oh my! This show features the creative works of fungi by artists across the Tampa Bay area.



Kathryn Schumacher's "Walking in the Air" at Florida CraftArt

The Kenwood Gables Bed & Breakfast: Second Bohemian Night. 2801 7th Avenue N. Through May 31. Jayson Lazaro, 917-564-9382

The Kenwood Gables B&B, a 1929 Tudor Revival structure in Kenwood, features a three-month exhibition of local visual artists Yael Kelley, an organic expressionist working in transparent oil glazes and metal leaf; Janna Kennedy, an award-winning mixed media artist; and Ed Garrett, who paints nature scenes combined with imagination. Inspired by the Bohemian movement of the 19th century, *Bohemian Nights* are quarterly social and cultural events co-hosted by the Historic Kenwood Artist Enclave. ●

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



"Coy" by Barbara DelMaire at Florida CraftArt

Looking Ahead: Calling all photogs!

May is the International Month of Photography, and "Florida's most art-loving city, St. Petersburg, will be buzzing with opportunities to experience the wonderful world of the lens-based arts." St. Petersburg Month of Photography looks to celebrate the art in all its forms with a month of events and a participation twist. Events include the announcement of a Photo Laureate who will spend the following year documenting life in the area, culminating with a solo exhibit at the Lumen Photo Fest. SPMOP will also promote multiple photographic events across the area, organize exhibitions, photo book fairs, and offer portfolio reviews for participants. To learn more, host an event, or participate visit to spmop.org.



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SHINE Lights the Way Through Medicare and More

Abby Baker

Do you find Medicare confusing? You're not alone. For many seniors, Medicare and health insurance information can be a maze of online documents and government websites. Sometimes, you just need a friend to help.

That's the purpose of SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders). It's a free program for Floridians over 65, run by volunteers and funded by Florida's Department of Elder Affairs. Volunteers, often seniors themselves, help users through Zoom or the helpline, or at multiple locations throughout the county, including the Sunshine Senior Center at 330 5th Street N. during limited hours.

Volunteer Charles Frankle has been with SHINE for 15 years. He used to travel to different Florida offices, but since COVID he helps seniors virtually and trains other volunteers. For two to 10 hours a week, Frankle settles in a chair in his St. Pete home, turns on his computer, and prepares to help people who are often frustrated or unsure of how to use their health benefits.

"What I do varies from helping people find the right health insurance plan to financial assistance, or how to find their medications for less," Frankle said. "I think it's just an understanding of what's available, because there's not a



SHINE is a Florida-wide program, run on volunteers and dedicated to providing education on Medicare and senior services.

Photo courtesy of SHINE

lot out there explaining that."

Frankle formerly worked in banking – risk management, to be precise. Maybe that's why he's stuck around so long: He knows how to decode a complicated system, and he knows people. "Sometimes, I can't even help people with what they need, but we're among the few people they can actually get on the phone and talk to them about it," Frankle said. What's the biggest issue people call about? "Medicare," Frankle said.

Most people aged 65 and older can use free Medicare. If they are not eligible, it's possible to sign up and pay a monthly premium. Everything else, however, can be a bit confusing, according to Frankle. But it's not just direct Medicare help that SHINE's volunteers provide. Volunteers all over the state take calls on anything health related or financially involved, from long-term care to Social Security, that may be difficult to navigate alone. SHINE users can join an

SHINE Helps Seniors Navigate

- Original Medicare
- Medicare Advantage plans
- Medicare prescription drug plans
- Medicare supplement insurance
- Financial assistance
- Extra financial help for prescriptions
- Medicare savings programs
- Medicare fraud and abuse
- Social Security
- Long-term care
- Medicare complaints

online Zoom meeting with others or call for direct help.

"Often people go without," Frankle said. "That doesn't need to happen, not with everything that is available."

Want to make a difference? SHINE is always accepting volunteers. They'll train you, and then you'll set to work untangling things for grateful seniors. ●

To volunteer or access resources, please call 1-800-96-ELDER or visit floridashine.org.

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POLLINATOR POWER – *continued from page 1*

carbon in their leaves, stems, and roots,” says Florida Wildflower Foundation Executive Director Stacey Matrazzo.

Like anything in your garden, however, success depends on the right plant in the right place. While flowers get the lion’s share of notice in most yards, don’t discount the native grasses and trees that grow in St. Petersburg. Landscapes that embrace native grasses and plants keep the soil healthier than turfgrass or exotics. (The word “exotic” sounds fancy, but don’t let that fool you.) In North American parlance, “native” refers to a plant or animal that existed in the area *before* the first Europeans showed up and decided Old Northeast had better winters and, we can only assume, hex sidewalks that convinced them to start setting up camp.

So, what should you plant? Believe it or not, a native plant from Jacksonville or Miami could be problematic in St. Petersburg. The most reliable thing to do is check with a nursery that belongs to the Florida Association of Native Nurseries (FANN), because even in Pinellas County – the second smallest county in Florida (in terms of geography, not population), we have six different ecosystems in three different hardiness zones: beach dunes, Zone 9 and South Florida Zone; mangrove swamps, Zones 9 and 10; maritime forests, Zones 9 and 10; pine flatwoods, Zones 9 and 10; saltwater marshes, Zones 9 and 10; and sandhills, Zone 9. The ecosystem and soil near Coffeepot Bayou will differ from the ecosystem and soil near Sunken Gardens.

Toffer Ross, a landscape architect who also works as the horticulturalist for the City of Gulfport, loves one plant that works most anywhere: blanket flower.

“My favorite overall bee-attracting plant is *gaillardia pulchella* (blanket flower) because it’s a native that can be inserted into almost any type or style of landscape,” she says. “From formal gardens to cottage style, beach scape or highway green strips, it’s beautiful and



Blanket flower is a hardy plant that pollinators love, and it will grow most anywhere.

reseeds itself in a manageable fashion.”

While we typically think of bees when we think of pollinating insects, there are many more, including everyone’s favorite, the butterfly. Butterflies are among the prettiest – and least sting-y – of pollinators. Each butterfly species has a preferred plant for egg-laying. If you want monarchs, for instance, you’ll need milkweed – although Florida wildflower experts caution against using non-native milkweed for monarchs. For advice, go to a native nursery and ask for butterflyweed (*asclepias tuberosa*), pink swamp milkweed (*asclepias incarnata*), or white swamp milkweed (*asclepias perennis*). There are many other plants that attract a range of butterflies, however, and any native nursery can help you find the best fit.

Pollinator gardens may require planning, but don’t fret – it sounds more complicated than it is. The Pinellas County Extension Service has an actual team of people passionate about pollinators and landscapes who can help you plan – for free. From there, you can opt to do the physical work yourself or pay a landscape architect (check with FANN for recommendations, because all landscapers are not created equal).

Remember, you don’t have to rip out your entire landscape and start over. If just reading that sentence made your palms sweat and your heart race, take a deep breath. Start with some potted

plants on your steps – perhaps some purple coneflower (*echinacea purpurea*) for a pop of color and food for pollinators. From there, decide how big you want to go. Maybe that’s enough for



Pollinator gardens, like this one in the Old Northeast, may go a bit dormant in winter, but come spring and summer, they are a hive of activity for local pollinators.

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A busy bee in the Old Northeast

you, but perhaps those lavender blooms were the gateway plant to coral bean (*erythrina herbacea*) near the fence, or wiregrass (*aristida stricta*, var. *beyrichiana*) to edge the sidewalk.

After that, who knows? It might not be long before you can make your landscape look lush, subtropical, and, to the birds and the bees, a lot like dinner. ●

Get Planting!

Ready to add some Florida-friendly pollinator plants to your landscape? Start your journey with these resources.

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program The Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program helps you create the most symbiotic landscape possible in the space available. This free program helps weekend gardeners avoid costly (and unsightly) mistakes. More at ffl.ifas.ufl.edu.

Florida Association of Native Nurseries The Florida Association of Native Nurseries can direct you to a garden center near you that can help you put those Florida-Friendly Landscaping principles into practice. More at fann.org.

University of Florida/ Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, aka Pinellas County Extension Every county in Florida has an extension service connected with a land-grant university, a bevy of information for people, including landscaping and gardening information. While everyone has feelings about what people should do with their gardens and landscapes, by national charter these extensions offer “non-biased, research-based information,” as the extension explains on its website. 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo. Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-5 p.m. 727-582-2100 or visit sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/Pinellas.

Florida Wildflower Foundation You might call it a weed, but if a rose showed up in your veggie garden, you’d call that a weed, too. The Florida Wildflower Foundation supports growing Florida wildflowers – and attracting pollinators to every landscape. They have guides to creating a pollinator pot and a plant selection guide. More at flwildflowers.org.

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Quarterly Neighborhood Meeting

Get the latest news affecting the Historic Old Northeast and updates from HONNA committees at the spring quarterly meeting Monday, March 20, at 7pm at Westminster Palms (939 Beach Drive NE). Hear about this spring's events, including the neighborhood cleanup, Easter Egg Hunt, and the inaugural Art in the Garden Tour. Our special guest speaker will be Elizabeth Abernethy, director of planning and development for St. Petersburg. We will also present a check to our Candlelight Tour sponsored organization, CASA (Community Action Stops Abuse).

Watch for Residents Survey

The HONNA board of directors will be launching a residents survey this spring. All Old Northeast residents are urged to complete the short survey that will help the board set priorities for things such as events, preservation efforts, and neighborhood beautification.

"It's been five years since we did our last survey and a lot can change in five years, especially given the level of growth and change we've experienced in St. Pete and the Old Northeast," said Nick Bell, board president. "Our charter is to serve the interests of all Old Northeast residents. This survey is an important 'finger on the pulse' of our residents and will provide critical input we'll use to create HONNA programs," Nick continued. Watch for details coming soon about timing and how to access the survey.



Porch Parties

HONNA makes it easy and fun for neighbors to get together with a Porch Party the third Friday of most months. Friends and neighbors gather at a resident's home between 7:30-10pm to catch up, meet new Old Northeast

residents and reconnect with ones we've missed seeing. Upcoming on Friday, March 24, will be the Porch Party hosted by Bud Comstock at 345 18th Avenue NE. On April 21, it will be hosted by Anna and John Broshears at 226 17th Avenue NE. Light refreshments and water will be provided, but guests are encouraged to BYOB. For more information, visit honna.org/events.

Spring Cleanup

Twice a year, neighborhood residents gather at North Shore Park before fanning out in the Old Northeast to help clean up the neighborhood. The result is the collection of all types of trash, from gum wrappers to discarded household items. The cleanup is a great way to involve the entire family. The date is Saturday, March 25, beginning at 9am. Watch for additional details.

~ Doug O'Dowd



Easter Egg Hunt

You're invited to join HONNA's annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 8, beginning at 10am at Coffee Pot Park (30th Avenue at 1st Street NE). There will be prizes and light refreshments, plus a visit from the Easter Bunny where you can have a picture taken with our furry friend. There will also be a special area roped off for the really little tots. Bring the whole family and share in the fun of this wonderful event. Don't be late – eggs go quickly!

~ Anna Broshears



Annual Neighborhood-wide Yard Sale

Spring is in the air and that means the annual Old Northeast Yard Sale, which is set for Saturday morning, March 18. This very popular event is open to all HONNA members, with participants listed on the yard sale map along with their sale items. If you aren't already a member, you can join at honna.org up to and including the day of the event. In addition, there will be a Goodwill truck at Westminster Palms (939 Beach Drive NE) to collect items you might have left over and want to donate. There also will be document shredding services at Westminster Palms for HONNA members who wish to dispose of those unwanted stacks of paperwork. Stay tuned for sign up information.

Art in the Garden Tour

St. Petersburg's Historic Old Northeast neighborhood is famous for its array of historic home styles, quaint brick streets, and beautiful oak tree canopies. What might not be as well-known is the abundance of beautiful residential gardens, artists, and musicians who call the neighborhood home.

All three – gardens, artists, and musicians – will be featured during this spring's inaugural Art in the Garden Tour. The tour will take place from 1-4pm on Saturday, April 15. In case of rain, the tour will take place the following day (Sunday, April 16). Tour attendees will stroll through 10 beautiful ONE gardens, with an array of styles from contemporary, to lush tropical, to



cozy bungalow hideaways. (Picture from 2015 Garden Stroll.) The gardens will highlight local artists and their work, ranging from oil and watercolor paintings to sculpture and pottery. Several of the gardens will feature artists at work in their studios. Local musicians will add to the total sensory experience.

In addition to the beautiful sights and sounds of the gardens, artwork, and music, attendees won't go hungry as they meander through the scenic neighborhood. An assortment of local food and drink options to quench thirsts and satisfy appetites will be for sale. Tour tickets will be available beginning in mid-March, and will cost \$30 in advance and \$35 day of the tour; they will be for sale on honna.org and at several local retail outlets. All proceeds will go toward maintaining the ONE's lush tree canopy.

Flag Design Contest

The 1920s saw a housing boom in St. Petersburg. The Historic Old Northeast was no exception to this, and many homes in our neighborhood recently turned 100 years old. In a few years, many more will reach this milestone. Help HONNA mark this centennial by designing a commemorative banner and garden flag which will be available for purchase in the HONNA Store.

HONNA is sponsoring this contest to design the special flag. The contest is open now to all who want to submit a design and will run until April 10. PDF submissions should be sent to Contest@honna.org. The design should include "Historic Old Northeast" verbiage and the signature hex block depiction or the Historic Old Northeast monument. The motif should be suitable for printing a full size (34"x42") nylon banner along with a 12"x18" garden flag. Contest submissions will be posted



on honna.org and neighbors will be able to vote on their favorite design. Additionally, we are hoping to display the finalists' submissions at the upcoming *Art in the Garden* event on April 15 to allow attendees to vote for their favorite design.

The winner will receive a \$100 gift card. HONNA will be promoting the winner and winning design on our website and in an upcoming edition of the *Northeast Journal*. The goal is to have the winning flag available at the second quarter HONNA neighborhood meeting to be held at Westminster Palms on June 19.

~ Onnie Jordan & Charleen McGrath

Bees to Trees

HONNA is excited to soon offer its own locally grown honey for purchase. The Pinellas Beekeepers Association was contacted in October 2021 to see if there was interest in getting a beehive in the Old Northeast, and thanks to David Schneider, soon there was a new beehive in our neighborhood. By last year, we had two reasonably successful harvests of honey. The first harvest in the summer, which contained a lot of mangrove honey, produced about 12 pounds of a light, sweet honey. In the fall, we harvested about half of our expected honey as Hurricane Ian damaged a lot of the fall buds, thereby reducing the production, but the harvest produced a darker, richer honey compared to the summer batch. We were still able to get 45 jars of honey from this harvest and sold out all our jars during the Candlelight Tour of Homes in December. We are eagerly waiting for the upcoming spring harvest.

HONNA will be selling this honey, with part of the proceeds going toward HONNA's program to plant trees in the neighborhood's parkways – hence our "Bees to Trees" initiative. Watch for notices when jars will be available for purchase.

~ Doug O'Dowd

HONNA Tree Program

It's that time of year again – the days are longer, the temperatures warmer, and our street trees are about to burst out with new growth! HONNA's tree canopy is one of our neighborhood's defining characteristics and provides our streets with a special sense of place.

Each spring, HONNA provides parkway trees at no cost to residents. The requirements are minimal – you must be a member of HONNA (free trees are a benefit of membership), your site must be appropriate for a tree, you need to have a sprinkler system installed in your parkway, and you are committed to giving special care to the tree in the first few months after planting. Several varieties are available (oaks, elms, and maples) for parkways without wires. Simpson Stoppers and Eagleston hollies are appropriate if you are on the side of the street with overhead wires. If you are interested in having a tree planted this spring, please contact Carol Kline (carolkline1948@gmail.com).

~ Robin Reed



HONNA'S SHINING STAR: BEFORE & AFTER



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

The STAR for March is 111 26th Avenue NE (Karen and William Coale).

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. ●

MARCH



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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

Martha J. Monfried Snell Isle



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

My husband David and I have lived in St. Pete for seven years. I am originally from Crookston, a town of 10,000 people in Northwestern Minnesota. We live at the Water Club on Snell Isle and love it for the views, our friends, and its proximity to downtown.

Favorite place to visit in St. Pete?

My favorite place to visit in St. Pete is biking from Snell Isle...to the airport and back. We appreciate how the city founders preserved the green space along the waterfront.

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

The most interesting vacation we have taken is on our 31-foot Ranger Tug, *The Lovely Martha*. We completed the Florida Loop (700 miles in seven weeks from St. Pete down the Intracoastal to Marco Island, then to Marathon Key, around Miami, back up to Stuart, across Lake Okeechobee to Fort Myers, and then back home). It was an adventure of a lifetime in 2019.

Top two places in the world on your bucket list?

I have been fortunate to travel through Europe, take a safari in Kenya and Tanzania, celebrate New Year's Eve in Paris and New York, visit Israel twice, cruise from Miami to Barcelona, and from Los Angeles through the Panama Canal. Bucket list items include Hong Kong and Japan.

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

I would like to meet Thomas Edison. His inventions and contributions ushered in the modern age. Edison's attitude of learning from your mistakes and to try, try, try again are an inspiration to me and many others.

Favorite sport, recreational activity, or hobby?

My current favorite sport is golf. We belong to the Vinoy and I am a member of the Vinoy Ladies Golf Association. I also enjoy sailing. We are a member of the St. Petersburg Yacht Club and I am a Salty Sister there.

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

I've recently watched the latest episodes of the *The Crown* and *Yellowstone*. I recommend the earlier series of each show more than the latest.

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

I would be a wire-haired fox terrier. We had one growing up and Whirler was a great dog. He was very smart, loving, and loyal.

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

I was inspired to be self-reliant and to live life to the fullest after losing my parents when I was three years old. They died in a plane crash and my sister and I were raised by my father's brother and wife. My brothers were raised by my father's other brother and his wife. Being the youngest of 14 grandchildren on my paternal side, I watched and listened and learned what to do and what not to do to survive and succeed.

Current book you've read and would recommend?

Last year I read 82 books. Favorites were *Horse* by Geradine Books, *The Last Green Valley* by Mark Sullivan, *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus, and *The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles.

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

I graduated from Stanford University with a degree in communications and completed the requirements for a degree in human biology. I then spent four years working on Capitol Hill as a press secretary for two U.S. Senators. While I had a rich career, I am most proud of the family my husband and I created.

Something people might not know about you?

I spent a month working in Jordan in 2012 as a communications consultant, part of a USAID project on Water, Energy, and the Environment.

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

I retired from a career in public relations. I began my career on Capitol Hill, then returned to the San

Francisco Bay Area to work in communications and public affairs for Pacific Gas & Electric and its subsidiary Pacific Gas Transmission. We moved to Florida when I was recruited as Vice President of Public Affairs, Phosphates for the Mosaic Company where I worked with the Tampa Bay Lightning and Feeding Tampa Bay to launch the Goals for Food Initiative. That program has resulted in more than eight million meals being donated to support local hunger-relief efforts. I then became a Communications Leader at TECO Energy. I completed my career in 2019 as Senior Director of Communications at Ultimate Medical Academy, where I created its internal and external communications program and played a key role in its diversity and inclusion program development.

Tell us something about your family and pets.

David and I have been married for 34 years. We are blessed with four children (three sons and a daughter) and five grandchildren (four girls and a boy). Our three sons and their wives now live in Florida. Our daughter and her husband and our ten-month-old granddaughter live in Irvine, California.

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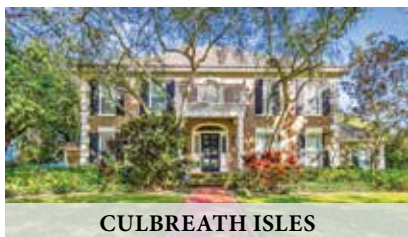
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Williams Park Bandshell Poised to Get Much-Needed Renovation

Brandy Stark

Williams Park has long been at the heart of downtown St. Petersburg, with a unique history that dates to the very planning of the city. The block-sized piece of land was donated by city founder John Williams, and it shows up on the first city plat in 1888.

The area opened under the name “City Park” but was, like much of Florida at the time, overrun with palmettos and scrub brush. According to *Making of St. Petersburg* by Will Michaels, though John Williams died in 1892, his widow, Sarah, continued to work with volunteers to get the park underway. In 1893, the Park Improvement Association formed and, with the aid of women from the local churches, sponsored a Park Day. Residents came out to clear the land of the unwanted growth and added a fence to keep wandering cattle from walking through.

The City Park’s crown jewel, its first bandshell, was erected two years later in 1895. Residents, led by the Women’s Town Improvement Association, introduced horticulture the land with the addition of magnolias and oak trees.

In 1908, there was a successful campaign to rename the park after benefactor Williams. There is a bit of irony to this as he famously wanted to name the entire city after himself, toying with the idea of Williamsburg, Florida. However, his partner and the owner of the Orange Belt Railroad, Peter Demens, suggested the more romantic-sounding St. Petersburg. Demens, who came from Russia, wanted to name the site for his own hometown. This name was more popular with the residents of the town, who liked its association with European culture. Though Williams Park was renamed decades after his passing, it pays homage to the eccentric man who left an indelible impact upon his town.

The city took over care of the area in 1910, and erected a second bandshell in 1920 at a cost of \$10,000. Over the next few decades, the park brought more attention to St. Pete: The Royal Scotch Highlanders Band played during the winters, attracting tourists; Armistice Day brought several thousands to celebrate at the park; Buster Keaton, the famous movie star and comic, was even awarded the key to the city there, during his time filming at Weedon Island in the 1930s.

Time wore away at the second bandshell, and in 1954, a new structure – our current bandshell – was built. It was designed by St. Pete resident William B. Harvard, who also created the blueprints for the iconic pyramid Pier. The bandshell was hailed with great enthusiasm. In 1955, the American Institute of Architects gave it an Award of Merit, which brought national attention, and in the 1980s, the AIA gave the mid-century design the coveted Test of Time Award.

Like its predecessor, the updated stage was popular as a small concert venue, however one of its most well-known “performers” was Richard Nixon who debated Barry Goldwater there in 1964. Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush also held rallies in the park centered around the structure. Today it is the shaded

backdrop for the city’s Saturday Morning Market in the summer, and is the stage for Localtopia performances.

“The bandshell is truly an iconic structure nestled within the downtown of St. Petersburg,” says Bryan Eichler, assistant director of the city’s Parks and Recreation Department. But as its 70th anniversary approaches, the bandshell is in dire need of structural and technological updates. Eichler assures, however, that “this building has and will continue to be an important piece of artwork in the city of St. Petersburg’s parks network that brings the community together and connects arts and culture in the heart of downtown.”

The department, which is working to revitalize historic spaces for public use, hired Harvard Jolly Architecture firm – founded by William B. Harvard himself – to do a study of the structure in 2019. The findings revealed that the bandshell itself requires \$780,000 in repairs, with \$457,600 for the roof panels.



A vintage postcard features the current bandshell shortly after its construction in the 1950s.

bandshell is known for. The second is the ADA upgrades allowing access to all patrons.”

The city is working with the Harvard Jolly to integrate the new elements into the design. Once in place, along with the permits and funding, the restoration project will go out for competitive bidding.

There may, however, be a bit of a wait to see the finished project. “The timeline is currently to be determined on funding. The city council did approve \$300,000 for the design and permitting phases. Now, it is posed to approved \$850K in an upcoming session from the downtown open space fund. We are also looking into alternative funding including grants, capital improvement Penny for Pinellas funds, and public/private partnerships.”

The St. Petersburg Downtown Neighborhood Association is also pleased with the proposed renovations. It is one of the organizations that has worked on revitalizing the park throughout the years.



Performers take the stage in the bandshell at Localtopia. Courtesy of the City of St. Petersburg

Another \$500,000 would aid in upgrading the stage with lights and a permanent sound system. This would include plans for collapsible staging platforms to give greater access for performances.

“The goal of the renovation is twofold. First the restoration of the existing structure including the iconic bandshell roof, stage area, and back-of-house rooms. The second is upgrades that include ADA compliance, electrical, mechanical, and acoustical in order to host modern performances and events,” Eichler explains. “The two top repair priorities are the restoration of the roof structure, which is what the

“We have restarted our efforts again this year and we fully support the city restoration of the bandstand. Our recent Neighborhood Partnership Grant with the city (50/50 match) is funding part of the refresh in the northeast corner,” explains Karen Carmichael, president of the association.

With all this TLC, Williams Park is poised to take on another century as a cultural center in our city. Says Eichler, “This renovation will breathe new life into a structure that is ready to once again be the heartbeat of the downtown area.” ●

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Arthritis Foundation to Hold Inaugural Soiree by the Bay Event

Samantha Bond Richman

Arthritis impacts 60 million Americans and is the leading cause of disability, but it's not just a disease affecting older people – it also impacts 300,000 U.S. children. Hard to imagine, though there are 100 different forms of arthritis and related diseases. They are all disorders affecting the joints, typically with swelling and inflammation; managing the symptoms can often mean living with pain for a lifetime.

Florida Executive Director of the Arthritis Foundation Melissa Hughey tirelessly helps spread the word. A graduate of Florida State University School of Sports Management, Hughey spent an internship with the Tampa Bay Lightning before entering the non-profit arena. She grew up in the Old Northeast and is bringing her work home in the form of an inaugural fundraising event, Soiree by the Bay, at the iconic St. Petersburg Woman's Club on April 15. The theme for the evening is "Anchors Away" and will feature a tropical motif, with tasting stations and tropical drink selections. The local board of directors includes parents of Vivienne, a little girl living with juvenile arthritis.

Hughey explains that the event, which was initially postponed due to the pandemic, has multiple aims. "The local board of directors wanted to host a social event in St. Petersburg that would support the local affected families, provide a sense of hope, and create awareness among the community." As part of the evening's program, a medical honoree, Old Northeast resident and orthopedic surgeon Dr. David Johnson of All Florida Orthopedic Associates, will be recognized for his support of the Arthritis Foundation.

Of the many kinds of arthritis, osteoarthritis is the most common, and typically occurs later in life to joints weakened through deterioration, worsening with age. The whole joint is impacted – cartilage, connective tissue, and bone. Inflammation damages the joint lining, contributing to swelling and pain. Lifestyle factors can influence the development of osteoarthritis, and diet, exercise, previous injuries, and body weight can all have an impact on the symptoms.

Some forms of arthritis are diseases of the autoimmune system, causing a variety of conditions where healthy tissues are attacked by defenses meant to overcome actual disease. An overactive immune system is the cause of rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, and juvenile arthritis. These can be systemic,



Left: Florida Executive Director of the Arthritis Foundation Melissa Hughey. Right: The foundation's local board of directors.



causing damage to the eyes, skin, heart, and other organs. Juvenile arthritis is particularly cruel in that the joint inflammation, swelling, and pain can leave a child unable to play or participate in typical childhood activities.

Gout is a form of metabolic arthritis, resulting from a buildup of uric acid crystals in joints when the body does not process foods properly. Diet can greatly impact metabolic arthritis, and patients are advised to avoid red meat, and consume a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

Lifestyle changes can help arthritis sufferers, as well as over-the-counter medications, like nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, though long-term use can have negative effects on the stomach, heart, and kidneys. Chronic pain sufferers are also sometimes prescribed anti-depressants, even if the diagnosis is not depression. In some cases, opioids are prescribed for acute pain, which are known for their potentially addictive quality. Helping people to navigate this complex disease and its treatments is part of the foundation's core mission.

"The Arthritis Foundation helps support all types of arthritis sufferers in four key areas," explains Hughey. "The foundation supports research, treatment, advocacy, and programs and services." Science and medicine are a priority for the foundation, as well as advocacy in government initiatives. The foundation also holds walk/run fundraising and awareness events, like the December Jingle Bell Run in Tampa. On a more human level, the foundation's programs and services reach people with tangible actions and results.

"Families are provided with tools on how to live with the condition. There are summer camps for Juvenile Arthritis," says Hughey. "We give families a chance to meet and share a sense of hope." ●

Learn more or get involved with the Arthritis Foundation locally at arthritis.org/local-offices/fl-tampa-office.



The local board of directors includes parents of Vivienne, a little girl living with juvenile arthritis.

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Peter Belmont, right, with Jeff Schorr, owner and operator of the 1918 Craftsman House and a long-time advocate of historic preservation.

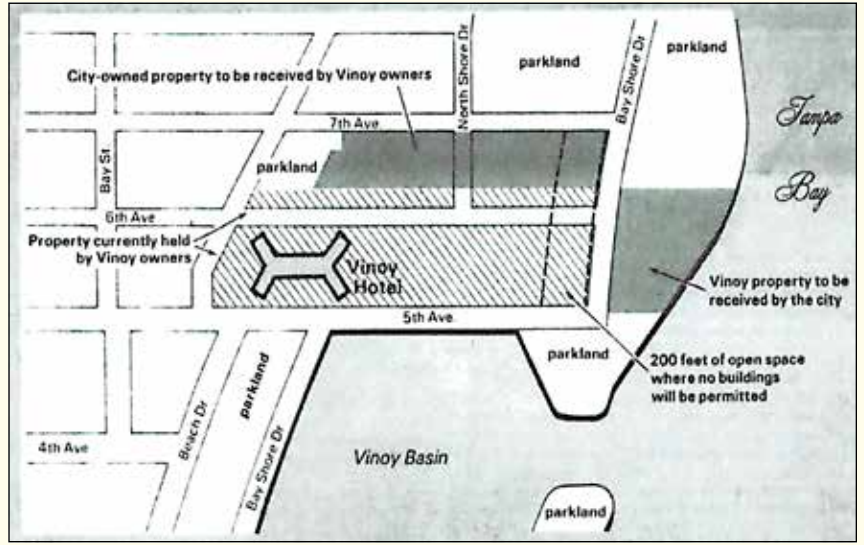
Avenue for tennis courts, including most of Baywood Park. Baywood Park was a small space that included a shallow Indian mound adjacent to the Vinoy. Anderson proposed to exchange what is now Vinoy Park for Baywood.

Baywood was commonly considered at the time to be part of the waterfront parks, with special protection under the city charter. This included the need for a public referendum on any sale or long-term lease of waterfront parkland. In its zeal to accommodate the Vinoy development, city council contemplated an ordinance that would effectively redefine Baywood as not a waterfront

park and thus avoid a referendum. The city's reasoning was that Bayshore Drive separated Baywood Park from the bay.

The first step in accomplishing this was to file a clear title action with the court. Due to discrepancies in old deeds, the city was unable to get title insurance for the Baywood property to make way for the property exchange. Consequently, in January 1984 the city filed the clear title action to assure none of the nearby 450 Northshore residents had any claim to the land. More significantly, this legal action also asked the court to give the city absolute discretion on using the land and that the land not revert to prior owners were it to cease to be a public park.

Two city not-for-profit preservation organizations objected to the proposed transfer of parts of Baywood Park to the Vinoy partnership without public approval through a referendum. The two organizations were Booker Creek Preservation, Inc. and Saint Petersburg Preservation, Inc. (now known as Preserve the 'Burg). Peter Belmont was a founding member of Booker Creek Preservation, which was created when he was a law school student living in Roser Park, a part of the Booker Creek area. Booker Creek Preservation's mission was to preserve the historic character of the Roser Park/Booker Creek area. Their work ultimately saved many historic homes and led to the designation of Roser Park as the city's first local historic district.



Schematic illustrating the 1984 land swap between the city and the Vinoy. Baywood Park was the city-owned land shown to the north of the Vinoy.

Saint Petersburg Preservation was founded in 1977 to conserve important natural, scenic, historic, and architectural sites and structures. Howard F. Hansen was among the founding members of the organization and traces his family roots in Florida back to the 1850s. His grandfather worked for H. Walter Fuller, an early city developer and operator of a steamship line and electric power franchise. Hansen graduated from Tulane University where his studies included archaeology. Hansen is likely the city's first professional preservationist and was a colleague of Belmont. He also played a significant role in obtaining the city's Historic Preservation Ordinance.

As Hansen remembers, he and Belmont were closely following the land transactions centered on the Vinoy restoration efforts, and they became concerned about the process and the precedent it might set for other downtown waterfront parks. Belmont, on behalf of Booker Creek Preservation, filed a motion to intervene in the city's clear title action challenging the request to grant absolute discretion on how Baywood Park would be used, and its intent to transfer Baywood to Anderson without a referendum. Belmont contended that Baywood was a waterfront park protected by the city charter, which required a referendum on

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the sale of waterfront park property. He noted that the city's argument that Baywood was not a waterfront park because it was separated from the bay by a road could apply to other waterfront parks such as North and South Straub Park, which are also separated by Bayshore Drive. The city's objections to the Booker Creek filing were rejected in April by Circuit Judge Mark R. McGarry, allowing Booker Creek to become party to the lawsuit.

Despite the pending legal dispute that April, city leaders from all sectors took time out to celebrate the hoped-for Vinoy restoration. In an event sponsored by Saint Petersburg Preservation and the Chamber of Commerce, 350 people gathered at the Yacht Club. Mayor Corinne Freeman read a proclamation declaring 1984 the "Year of the Vinoy." Belmont, who also attended, declared, "I think it will be an exciting year when it

opens." The event made the point that the pending dispute was not really about the Vinoy but the issue of defining a downtown waterfront park and how best to protect the city's public greenspaces.

The litigation proceeded and a hearing was set for August 21 for the court to consider the city's claim that it was entitled to prevail in the lawsuit. In mid August Anderson stated that he could not get long-term financing for the project while the legal actions were pending. He said he wanted to reopen the Vinoy in December 1984, but now did not expect to open until the fall of 1985. Nevertheless, on August 14, he was quoted in the *St. Petersburg Times* declaring that he had not "even given a thought" to abandoning the Vinoy. "We don't give up very easy." Three days later he reversed himself and said he was "closing down" the project and proceeded to remove windows that had just been installed.

Meanwhile, negotiations were underway between Booker Creek and the city seeking to settle the lawsuit out of court. Belmont stated that Booker Creek had tentatively considered dropping its opposition to the Baywood Park swap in return for an agreement that sharply cut back the number of boat slips in the proposed Vinoy marina and required a hearing and referendum for the sale of any future parkland (not just waterfront parkland). Anderson was seeking a 92-slip marina. Belmont and the preservationists were concerned that a marina that big would block views of the bay from Bayshore Drive and clutter up the North Yacht Basin.

The *Times* opined in an editorial, entitled "A compromise is in everyone's interest," that they hoped negotiations would be successful. They stated the compromise suggested by Belmont was reasonable and would remove a major roadblock to Anderson's plans. It was especially noted that extending the requirement of a referendum for the sale or long-term lease of downtown waterfront parkland to all parkland "would be good policy."

On August 21, the *Times* issued another editorial, entitled "Settle the Vinoy dispute," imploring council to make a clear declaration that they would support a referendum requirement for the sale of any parkland. The editorial concluded, "Restoration of the lovely old hotel appears to be hanging by a slender thread. It would be a great disservice to the community and to St. Petersburg's future if this project fails because of differences that could be resolved

through good-faith efforts by the city, the preservation groups, and the developer. To abandon the Vinoy once again to the ravages of time and weather would only blight the very waterfront that the preservation groups seek to protect."

Later that day the long-awaited hearing on the city's motion for summary judgment was heard. Belmont, along with his friend and environmental attorney, Thomas Reese, appeared on behalf of the preservation groups. Judge McGarry denied the city's motion asking themselves to be declared as the lawsuit's prevailing party, leaving the case's trial scheduled for the following week. He stated, "It is no stretch of the imagination for the court to imagine Baywood Park as waterfront property." He then surprised Belmont by asking if he desired to make a motion for the court to dismiss the city's arguments. With Reese kicking him under the table to do so, Belmont instead told the judge no, believing that the city would finally recognize the need to seriously negotiate with the preservation groups. The *Times* reported that "McGarry's ruling stunned city officials."

The negotiations started quickly. As Hansen remembers, Belmont and city officials happened to take the same elevator after the hearing. During the ride down the city officials sought to "cut a deal" and asked Belmont what it would take to drop the Booker Creek objections to the sought-after land swap without a referendum. Three days later Booker Creek and the city met for four hours to try to resolve the dispute out of court. Talks continued the following day and

Continued on page 26



S-2 Aerial View of St. Petersburg's Waterfront

1930s postcard showing aerial view of the Vinoy and Baywood Park to the north (bottom of photo). Baywood Park was lined by trees as its name implied.

Courtesy of Michaels Family Collection



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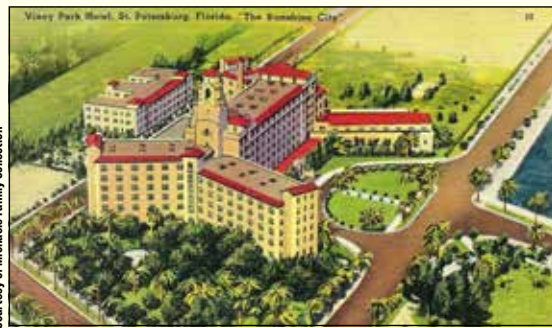
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totaled 13 hours in all. The mayor and city manager were present. City council members were shuttled into the talks one at a time to comply with Sunshine Laws that prohibited them from discussing the matter jointly prior to final council approval.

Participating in the talks with the preservation groups was former Mayor Charles Schuh who had recently led a successful effort to defeat a city proposal for revamping the Pier, known as Pier Park. Schuh had spent much of his career advocating for protecting and adding to the city's parklands. In the Vinoy case he represented a grassroots group known as Preserve Our Waterfront, Inc. It was Schuh who developed a framework for settling the dispute that was ultimately agreed upon by all parties. Terms of the settlement included withdrawal of the Booker Creek suit; a referendum on the Baywood/Vinoy Park land swap; reduction of the size of the proposed Vinoy marina to 74 slips; and a referendum to amend the city charter to provide that public approval be obtained for the sale or long-term lease of any city park (in addition to the waterfront parks). The referenda called for in the agreement subsequently received overwhelming public approval. However, not given much media attention at the time was an additional agreement by the city to enact stronger measures for protecting historic resources. This later element led directly to the city's Historic Preservation Ordinance. Specifically, the city agreed "to adopt an ordinance protecting from demolition, destruction or significant alteration structures on or eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places and provide a mechanism for structures not on or eligible for inclusion on the National Register but of local historic significance to be equally protected."

Hansen recalls, "A committee of city staff and interested parties was assembled to develop the ordinance." At his recommendation, Frank Gilbert of



The Vinoy Park Hotel circa 1930s. Note Baywood Park in upper left corner

the National Trust for Historic Preservation was enlisted to work with Jan Norsoph, director of the city's Urban Design and Development Division, to help draft the ordinance. Prior to his association with the National Trust, Gilbert was Executive Director of the New York City Landmark Preservation Commission who successfully advocated for the preservation of many of New York's historic sites. The ordinance was finally adopted by city council on September 26, 1985.

Gilbert said of his time in St. Petersburg, "One of my most vivid memories will be the image of the Snell Arcade reflected in the mirror glass of the building across the street. In cities that have lost their older buildings the glass buildings really have nothing to reflect." The first three buildings to be protected under the new Historic Preservation Ordinance were the Vinoy Hotel, the open-air post office, and city co-founder John C. Williams' house, now located at the University of South Florida-St. Petersburg. There are presently over 130 buildings and archaeological sites designated as local landmarks receiving protection under the ordinance.

The city's Historic Preservation Ordinance was not the first effort to preserve the city's historic buildings and places, however. In 1981, the city completed and

published a survey of nearly 600 structures, of which 350 were considered potentially worthy of being listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A number of buildings were designated on the National Register and the city had an ordinance providing some special protection for these. There were also ordinances to protect the city's historic hex blocks and brick streets.

However, the Historic Preservation Ordinance provides much greater protection to historic places than does National Register designation. Significant exterior changes to a city-designated historic landmark building may not be made without prior city approval, which is not the case for National Register properties. Also, landmarks may not be demolished unless specific criteria are satisfied, and reuse of historic structures is encouraged. The ordinance also provided for the establishment of a City Historic Preservation Commission with significant powers, which is now part of the Community Planning and Preservation Commission.

When recently interviewed for this article, Peter Belmont reflected, "The city must have viewed themselves as incredibly unlucky. After all, what should have been a simple clear title action became anything but when a community-minded judge and individuals banded together for a public rather than a private interest, and all spoke up. Judge McGarry's actions and a clear vision by the preservation groups about how to proceed resulted in significant new protections for both city parkland and the city's array of historic resources. With 35-plus years having elapsed, I still view the matter as a once-in-a-lifetime experience and one that has stood the test of time for sound public policy helping to keep St. Petersburg special." ●

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

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Old Northeast Resident Hits the Self-Care Sweet Spot Through Travel

Jon Kile

An impulse changed Carol Poulson's life and she's ready to do the same for others. In 2014, while teaching school, she had a sudden realization, "I need to get on an airplane and go somewhere." And it wasn't because her class was driving her crazy. Poulson realized something was missing. As a stay-at-home mom, she loved taking care of her sons, planning birthday parties, volunteering at their school, and driving the carpool. But carving time out of her busy day for a little self-care or "fun" made her feel guilty.

"As moms, we really do need to put our oxygen mask on first," Poulson says.

On that first solo trip, her husband, John, and two sons stayed home while she went to Sedona, Arizona. There, Poulson was struck by the personal freedom of traveling without worrying about anyone else's appetite, what activities everyone agreed upon, and the serenity of having her hotel room to herself. She hiked, photographed the natural beauty around her, and felt dizzy with the "knowing." Poulson says she reconnected with her love of nature, solitude, and adventure – and she returned home recharged, excited again about her roles as mom, wife, teacher, and friend.



Path of the Gods, Amalfi Coast

As she puts it, "It was like waking up and remembering things about yourself that had been swept under the rug of life."

Poulson didn't know then that she was planting the seeds of Backpack and Chocolate, a new and different kind of travel company that aims to empower women to connect with themselves, new places, and new friends through nature and adventure.

The Sedona trip was not only rejuvenating, but habit-forming. Soon her coworker Ginger began joining her on her little escapes from the day-to-day of family life. In fact, it was on a hike with Ginger that the name "Backpack and Chocolate" was born, originally as Poulson's personal Instagram name. To her, the name was a nod to two of the things that brought her contentment.

"My husband always had a sailboat and his own outlets, and I had never really developed my own identity after we had kids," Poulson recounts. "I remember introducing myself at work retreats and having to make up hobbies, because I didn't really have any." She knew that other women must feel the same way, and her trips started to grow as more friends took her up on the offer to plan a group getaway.

In the meantime, Poulson didn't give up teaching.



Carol Poulson conquering the high altitudes of Machu Picchu.

She and her friend and alley-neighbor, Jeannie Hunt, started The Reading Tree for tutoring dyslexia students. For the past fifteen years Poulson's been a savior to Old Northeast's dyslexic children and a critical advisor for families as they negotiate the services their kids require at school. Parents of her students know that she cares.

Dominique and Scott Greene, once neighbors on 10th before moving to 17th Avenue NE, sent one of their daughters to Poulson. Dominique says, "My daughter first started seeing Carol for tutoring after she was diagnosed with dyslexia in the fifth grade. At that time, my daughter's self-esteem was at an all-time low. This crushed me, and I just prayed Carol could somehow help instill greater confidence in her own abilities. To say Carol changed my daughter's trajectory is not an exaggeration. Now she's in the top of her class and takes huge pride in her academics. Learning at school is literally what she loves best."

Even through the pandemic, Poulson tutored kids outdoors and online, making sure they didn't fall behind. During that time, she also laid the groundwork for her travel planning.

Poulson says she's always had the travel bug and spent most of her life on the move before landing in St. Pete. Growing up, her father was a home builder, following Central Florida's construction boom. She moved 18 times around the Orlando area before she finished high school. Graduating at age 17, Poulson took a month to travel through Europe with a group of fellow students.

She met John, a civil engineer, while studying psychology at Florida State in Tallahassee, and it was fitting that they'd end up in St. Pete after a short stay in the panhandle where she started her teaching career. In a way, her roots were always here. Poulson's grandmother moved to St. Pete in 1913 and her mother was born here. She and John bought their home on 10th Avenue North 20 years ago. That's by far the longest she has ever lived anywhere.

Like many moms, Poulson made her kids a priority, and took nearly a decade off to raise her boys before she went back to teaching, first at Shorecrest and then at Saint Paul's Independent School in Clearwater. She laughs when she recounts her own diagnosis with mild dyslexia. "I was in a course on how to screen people for dyslexia and realized I'm mildly dyslexic. It was something I suspected, because both my mother and my brother were identified as dyslexic, and it's hereditary."

Poulson's work as a reading specialist (she uses the Orton-Gillingham method) is more than teaching and it gives her an opportunity to combine her psychology background with her classroom experience. She says she knows her students' challenges because she understands how their brains work. Students who might experience frustration or embarrassment in class feel safe learning from Poulson. Rather than telling a student they're wrong, she will ask if they're sure and help them arrive at the right answer.

Poulson approaches her travel work with the same passion and empathy. Whether it was planning a dream trip for her family to Machu Picchu, which included taking the time to train for hiking at high altitude, or curating a trip for friends to Italy, she's says what she's looking for is balance. While her trips emphasize adventure, she doesn't want people to return home feeling exhausted.

When working to craft the perfect getaway, Poulson interviews potential guests through a "discovery call" to make sure her trip fits what they're looking for. She keeps the groups to about 10 per trip. "It's not a tour and it's not a hiking company. I look to balance adventure, connection, and big splashes of fun. In the evenings we come together as women and talk about



On the Via Ferrata from Murren to Gimmelwald in the Swiss Alps

the day, why we're here, and knowing who we are."

Fittingly, Poulson's very first trip with Backpack and Chocolate was to Sedona in November of 2022, with a group of women eager to get out after the pandemic. Was it a success? "Here we are four months later and the women from that trip still have a group-chat going. Lifelong friendships were made."

And about that chocolate: Poulson says it is part of her mission. "Enjoying life, the sweetness of every day," she explains. "Our trips are a balance of activity and downtime. People can make choices. I honor introverts and extroverts. At the end of every trip, we do a Cacao Ceremony in which we prepare a rich strong chocolate drink. We talk about the history and benefits of the cacao. It's nourishing and has antioxidants. It's a calming ritual." Made even sweeter by a desert sunset.

Backpack and Chocolate's next trip is to a remote luxury island near Belize in April. In July she'll be off to the San Juan Islands off the coast of Washington (one of her favorite places). Poulson will be on the Amalfi Coast of Italy in September, and future trips include Maine and Southern Utah. The change in perspective that travel brings is its own reward for Poulson: "I like to take adventurous women out of their day-to-day lives." ●

Coming to America: A Success Story

Lynn Lotkowitz

Deris and Gabriel Fernandez came to America from Venezuela about four years ago. I was volunteering at the Tomlinson Adult Learning Center and first heard about the couple after they began taking English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes at the center. When the pandemic hit, the school couldn't hold classes and we connected to practice English via weekly Zoom calls. I wrote a story about my experience helping them with conversational English in January of 2021 for the *Northeast Journal*. Two years later, I was curious about



At home with sons Enrique and Ernesto

how they were progressing and reconnected with them. We met for coffee at The Blend Old Northeast and again at my home a few weeks later.

Deris is now an ESOL teacher at Lealman Elementary in Largo. She works with Hispanic students who are new to Florida and transitioning to our public school system. Four days a week, after her teaching job, she heads to a second job she's held for some time at Marshall's, working from 5:30 to 10:30 pm and most Saturday mornings. At Marshall's she works the floor in the men's and children's departments and has been promoted to cashier.

Gabriel had held a job at Amazon, but left for a better position with the GE shipping department. He's currently training for receiving department duties. Gabriel's career in Venezuela was as an auditor, and his next goal is to seek a bookkeeping/accounting position.

Deris and Gabriel also invested in a rental property in Hernando County. They were approved for a mortgage and are now landlords. Their oldest son, Gabriel Enrique, is currently working in Chile, while their younger son, Gabriel Ernesto, completed high school and is attending Pinellas Technical College with a focus on Information Technology. Deris and Gabriel's hard work and investment in the future benefits not only their family in the US, but they also send clothing and toiletries back to Venezuela to help people there. With Deris' employee discount, she's able to purchase good quality, much-needed clothing for friends and family.

For now, Deris and Gabriel's careers are limited by a bit of red tape. They're waiting for their postsecondary education records to be sent from Venezuela for evaluation. "[We want to] certify our university degrees, see how many credits we are approved for in US," Deris said. "Then complete degrees here so we can get better



Deris and Gabriel have worked hard to find success in their new country.

jobs. I would like to teach Spanish in high school."

They both agreed, however, that "the most surprising thing about living in this country is the opportunities. Everyone is offered education and the ability to improve personally and professionally. In three years, we have achieved what in Venezuela took us 25 years."

Of course, life in a new country has its challenges. One of the hardest things, they said, has been the language barrier.

"People told us we wouldn't get jobs other than housekeeping and construction since we didn't speak English," said Deris. "Not that these are bad jobs, but we were professionals in our country and felt we had more to

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Deris teaching ESOL at Lealman Elementary School

contribute to America who has opened its doors for us. It is so rewarding to help the young children I teach at Lealman Elementary as they feel lonely with difficulty communicating with the other children. They have gone through so much and I am able to encourage them.”

Both Deris and Gabriel credit their experience at the Tomlinson Adult Learning Center and regular Zoom calls for their remarkable language progress.

“Studying at Tomlinson was our gateway to this new country. We learned a little about the history and culture and took first steps learning the English language. Our Zoom conversations outside of class were the best practice,” Deris emphasized. “Sometimes in a classroom setting the topics discussed are not things we would discuss in everyday life. We needed to be able to ask for an address or order from a menu, say hello to a neighbor – language you use in everyday situations. So casual conversations were very helpful.”

It hasn’t been all work, however. Deris and Gabriel have made time to develop their hobbies and explore their new city.

“In our free time we enjoy cooking, watching movies, trying new restaurants and visiting new places,” Deris said. “We take trips with our two sons on holidays to different cities. We especially enjoy St. Pete because it has everything. We love the Pier, the downtown, the museums, parks, waterfront, and find the people cordial and kind.”

Having accomplished so much in just a few short years, I had to ask about their remaining goals. Gabriel was quick to answer: “Resume good eating habits and exercise. Our focus these first years has been work. We want to get back to healthier lifestyle.” Also on the list is more travel, Gabriel said. “Another goal is to visit more of this incredible country. In 2022 we went to Las Vegas for a wedding, Memphis to see friends, and a family visit to Chicago. Maybe next year [we’ll go to] New York and California.”

Deris added one goal that is perhaps the hallmark of the American Dream: “We want to buy a little house in St. Pete,” she said. “This is where we want to live.” ◆

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Your Guide to Yard Oddities in Old Northeast



This edition's plant oddity is another airborne fern – only this one is hard to miss. A staghorn fern in your yard guarantees compliments and conversation. These epiphytes (air plants that don't require soil to grow) can be found growing on the sides of trees, but more ambitious gardeners hang them aloft from great oak branches like floating plant planets.

First, we dispel a common misconception. Astonish (or admonish) your friends by correcting them with this bit of trivia: Most of the staghorn ferns we see hanging around St. Petersburg are actually elkhorn ferns. Staghorn ferns are bigger, usually singular plants with a large, shield-like frond at the front that collects water. Elkhorn ferns are smaller and grow in groups – more like a

herd of elk, less like the solitary stag. They may be small, but huge groups of them can form spheres too heavy to lift. It takes a mighty tree to hold the largest of them.

These plants are native to Java, New Guinea, and tropical parts of Australia. There are many throughout the Old Northeast, but some of the neighborhood's finest are on 19th Avenue near Walnut Street, hanging in multiple yards like an elkhorn fern solar system, enjoying the proximity to Coffee Pot Bayou. ●

~ Jon Kile

Got a funky tree or plant you want to see featured in the Northeast Journal? Reach out to jkilewrites@gmail.com.



Empty Hammock

Calm waters of Tampa Bay
Puddled on
The edge of visceral
Vinoy Basin
As companion
To a swinging couch
Of two-tone cerulean canvas
Like a canoe too
Slung by bungee cords
Fastening and absorbing shocks
Secured at each end
By a pleasant pair there
Of accommodating palm trees
With a set of handles
But no pillows
Steadying a raw ghost in the shade



Shamrock

Verdantly triumphant angel
Of light twinkling energy
Flaps two fluttering wings
Like bangles
Flaunting a billowing ball gown below
As belle of the blarney ball
While the rest
Rest in the precious pot
Paying court
To the clever countenance
Of Celtic chlorophyll
That is the grand herself. ●

~ Jeannie Carlson

“Living my best life in St. Pete”

Downtown St. Pete resident Michael D. was suffering from leg and foot pain from peripheral neuropathy, “I was in extreme pain and aside from a handful of daily pills, I was out of options.” Then he met St. Petersburg’s Dr. Matthew Mann.

Pain is often seen as just another inevitable experience in life, but most people expect it to be a brief transition phase while recovering from an injury. Unfortunately for some people with peripheral neuropathy, the painful sensations of burning and tingling never seem to end. Often, after suffering through years of shooting and stabbing sensations, the pain eventually fades to numbness. While that may seem like a relief, it is at this point when the balance problems and risky injuries begin.

St. Pete retiree, Michael D. was dealing with one of the most painful stages of peripheral neuropathy. “I was in constant pain that just made me want to cut my feet off. When the burning started 15 years ago it was mild. Over time I grew used to the annoying nature of the mild burning and just let it go. About 5 years ago the pain started to really increase and I finally talked to my doctor who referred me to a neurologist. She sent me to a pain specialist to find relief. I tried medications like Gabapentin, and it did nothing to help the pain. My doctors told me there was nothing else they could do and that this was something I would have to live with. I just couldn't imagine living the rest of my days feeling like my feet were on fire.”

Peripheral neuropathy is a result of damage to the nerves from poor circulation in the hands or feet.

Poor blood circulation reduces the delivery of nutrients to the nerves and causes nerve degeneration. As peripheral neuropathy progresses, lack of blood flow to the feet results in numbness leading to an increased risk of falls, scrapes, and cuts. Lack of good blood circulation also slows the healing of minor cuts increasing the risk of dangerous infections, the worst case scenario being the possibility of an amputation.

Michael had given up on finding a solution. “I didn't know anything about acupuncture and how it could help me, but a conversation with my neighbor led me to Dr. Mann at St. Petersburg Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine. I tried many other options that did nothing so I honestly did not have much hope that acupuncture would help me either, but the pain was unbearable. My dream of enjoying retirement in beautiful sunny St. Pete was fading away. That picture I had in my head started to come back in focus after starting treatments with Dr. Mann. The pain has decreased so much that I can now sleep peacefully through the night. That was impossible before I started getting acupuncture.”

Dr. Mann, DAOM AP, explains that “acupuncture is incredible at improving blood flow and helping to stimulate the nerves to prevent them from completely dying. We focus on using acupuncture and integrate different modalities such as Chinese herbal medicine



and ATP Resonance BioTherapy into our treatments for peripheral neuropathy depending on what will benefit the patient most throughout their care. All these techniques assist in improving blood flow to the hands and feet to nourish the local tissue and help repair the nerves.” The number of treatments needed to allow the nerves to recover will vary from person to person and is determined by performing a detailed neurological and vascular evaluation. As long as the nerves have not been completely severed or have greater than 85% nerve damage, St. Petersburg Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine offers hope where there once was none.

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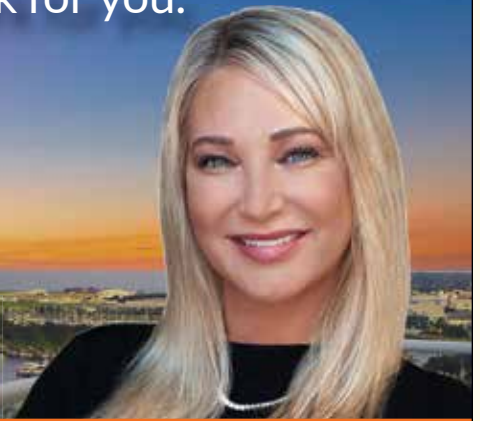
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