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St. Petersburg, Florida

May/June 2023

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The Tampa Bay History Center called on Creative Arts in 2016 to design their Treasure Seekers gallery, featuring a full scale re-creation of an 18th century pirate sloop.

The Magical World of Roger Barganier

Jeannie Carlson

The real magic happens right here in St. Petersburg – and the spark that ignites it emanates from long-time Old Northeast resident Roger Barganier, owner of Creative Arts Unlimited. Barganier conjures his magic from clients’ ideas that come to fruition through far-reaching concepts of design, building, and installation.

“We are more a service than a product,” says Barganier. The jaw-dropping results of Creative Arts “services” enthrall those who experience

them in the museums, healthcare facilities, corporate headquarters, hospitality venues, education settings, libraries, theme parks, nature centers, and retail environs where they’re featured.

Barganier and his team stay on the cutting edge of, as he says, “what is possible.” Not only are there dazzling feats of modern engineering and/or historical authenticity in Creative Arts projects, but also technical marvels in automation, holographics, and emerging interactive technologies.

Continued on page 20

The Inimitable Robbie Robison St. Petersburg’s Second Mr. Baseball

Will Michaels

St. Petersburg has honored many of its citizens with the title of “Mr. Baseball.” There was of course the first Mr. Baseball, Mayor Al Lang, after whom Al Lang Stadium is named. It was Al who mostly started it all by bringing Major League Spring Training to the city beginning with the St. Louis Browns and their manager Branch Ricky in 1914. Much later there was Mr. Baseball Bob Stewart and Mr. Baseball Rick Dodge, both of whom piloted the building of what is now Tropicana Field, which led

to securing the Tampa Bay Rays in 1995 (their opening season was 1998). Stewart was chairperson of the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce Baseball Committee and later a city council member and county commissioner; Dodge was an assistant city administrator. But after Al Lang died in 1960, the original title of Mr. Baseball fell to Elon Clifford Robison. Known as “Robbie,” he shunned the Mr. Baseball sobriquet, however, saying it could only belong to Al Lang.

Robison enlisted in the Marine Corps during World

Continued on page 28



Robbie Robison with New York Mets manager Casey Stengel, left, and St. Louis Cardinals manager Johnny Keane, right, in 1962.

St. Pete’s Jewish History How Jewish Residents Helped Shape St. Petersburg: Part 1

Monica Kile

When Old Northeast resident Jay Miller told his parents that he was buying a house in the neighborhood 22 years ago, his mother Sonya gave a wry laugh. When he asked why, she had to remind him that when she was growing up in St. Petersburg, the Old Northeast was off limits to their family – in its early years, the neighborhood, like much of the city, was not welcoming to Jews.

Jay’s aunt, his mother’s sister, Marilyn Benjamin, recalled a similar story over a recent lunch at the Helm Restaurant in St. Pete Beach. “I remember when the Vinoy Hotel had its grand re-opening in 1992, after being closed for many years. My husband and I were invited to attend. The general manager reached out to



This circa 1910 bungalow, likely built by Perry Snell as a model home for his development at Mirror Lake, was rented by Leon and Olga Manket, the second Jewish family to settle in St. Petersburg. It remains at 856 2nd Avenue North.

us, and I remember him saying ‘Isn’t it exciting? Aren’t you looking forward to seeing the hotel again after all these years?’ And I had to respond to him that I had never actually been inside the Vinoy Hotel before. And he was shocked, and said, ‘Well, why not?’ And I replied that they didn’t allow Jewish people there when I was growing up. And I remember, he was just shocked. Stunned. He never knew that.”

It’s a part of St. Petersburg’s history that many people don’t know: the blatant antisemitism practiced by many of the city’s most esteemed establishments. It reached its zenith in the 1920s but continued in many establishments well into the 1970s. But the history of St. Petersburg’s Jewish community is much richer than these ugly stories of antisemitism belie.

Continued on page 22

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Joys of Summer

"Love is the most important thing in the world... but baseball is pretty good too."

- Yogi Berra



The fair-weather fan cheering the Rays in the playoffs at the Trop

In April, as I wandered around the park with my 12-year-old nephew, he found a stray baseball in the grass. There is nothing more important to that kid than baseball. He's been playing the game since he could hold a bat. Minus an occasional fun day at the Trop, it's not a sport I really got into. But my nephew knows everything about it. He showed me all the pitches – he's got a heck of an arm for a small kid, which is good because playing ball is his only career goal – and I found myself seeing the game through his eyes. At home, we watched the Rays beat up on some poor team, and I have to admit I've been more into baseball this season than ever before. Call me a fair-weather fan, I guess, but I'm starting to see what people love about the game.

My newfound interest seems right on time for this issue: We've got baseball from two perspectives, the old and the new. St. Pete's connection with baseball goes way back, and historian Will Michaels introduces us to one of the city's lesser-known patrons of the game, a man who hunted alligators with Babe Ruth. Back in the present, we meet a Snell Isle mom who's finding a way for kids to play ball and get coaching year-round with Hit the Mitt. Maybe a new MLB star is already in their midst.

While the kids of summer enjoy the field, we've got other signs of the season, including a primer on St. Pete Pride and a sampling of summer art shows. This issue also brings you a peek at the Vinoy's latest renovations, the history of Shore Acres and the city's early Jewish residents, plus more good deeds and creative works from your Old Northeast neighbors. All that and plenty more to keep you reading as we head into Florida's longest season of all – hurricane.

Stay safe out there and remember your sunscreen!

~ Shelly

Correction

In our March/April 2023 issue, the captions for the photos in our Arts Roundup article were switched. We have reprinted them here with the proper credit. The Northeast Journal apologizes for the error.



"Coy" by Barbara DeMaire at Florida CraftArt



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

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



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



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



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



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 dontmaketurnthisvanaround.com. He's on the board of literary nonprofit Keep St. Pete Lit.



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



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



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 greatfloridroadtrip.com.



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



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



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



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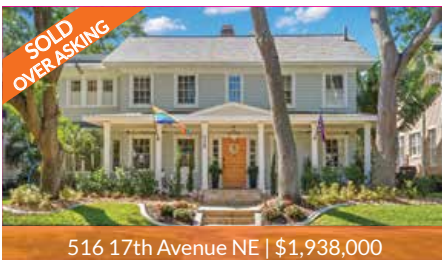
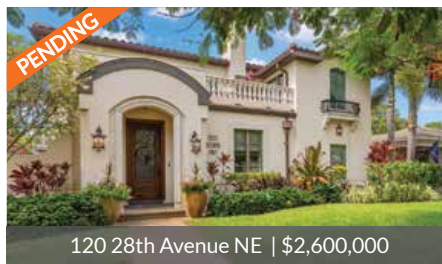
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The Evolution of St. Pete Pride, 20 Years Later

Abby Baker

St. Pete doesn't just throw a Pride parade. The city celebrates all of June with LGBTQ+ extravaganzas leading up to the rainbow-sequined finale. But that wasn't always the case. St. Pete Pride blossomed out of necessity 20 years ago after planning issues and politics put a temporary end to Tampa's Pride. It was just the beginning.

Before then, St. Pete didn't have an organized Pride event – or even much of a visible community. In 2003, St. Pete Pride was spearheaded by a small group of local LGBTQ+ folks, such as Brian Longstreth, Mark Bias, and Carrie West, and included a small parade.

Today, St. Pete Pride is a nonprofit and bills itself as Florida's largest LGBTQ+ Pride celebration with mainstream and heavy-hitting sponsors such as the City of St. Pete and Tampa General Hospital lending their support to a month-long celebration. This year's Pride technically already started with a teaser event – the Mx St. Pete Pride Pageant on April 30 – and ends with events on June 30. A lot has changed since 2003.

St. Pete resident and the current LGBTQ+ liaison for the mayor's office, Jim Nixon, saw the transformation firsthand. He was brought on to be a "friendly liaison" for the LGBTQ+ community under Mayor Rick Kriseman's administration and currently works for Mayor Ken Welch. Nixon first attended St. Pete Pride 17 years ago, when it was still in its infancy.

"I knew the moment I came to St. Pete, I recognized it as a welcoming community, so absolutely I could have seen this growth coming," Nixon said. "Those early Prides were smaller, more central. But still just a wonderful time with wonderful people."

St. Pete Pride's website sums it up well: "What started as a promenade became a parade and then a full Pride Month. And we now host year-round events to amplify, support, and celebrate the diverse voices of the LGBTQIA+ community – including the Black, Brown, and Trans voices that too often go unheard."

A Swell of Pride

As so often is the case in the LGBTQ+ community, it was a local, grassroots movement that rose to the occasion in 2003. With scattered approval from the city – though notably from then-councilmember Rick Kriseman – organizers held a Pride parade that started at 25th and Central Avenue in Grand Central. The now-shuttered gay bar, Georgie's Alibi, acted as a base and refuge for the rainbow crowd, and for years Pride's main festivities were tied to that part of St. Pete.

"We've outgrown that area," Nixon said, but organizers still wanted to honor Pride's origins. "We painted the Progressive Pride Mural there in the Grand Central District in 2020 to anchor the memory."

Another major benchmark in the history of the event came in 2014 with the St. Pete Pride

Proclamation, solidifying the city's support and sponsorship. From that moment forward, St. Pete Pride was no longer a small but fiery movement by those in a subculture, but a community celebration for all. Along with city sponsorship, organizers say that most of the funding for Pride now comes from corporate partners, donors, and foundations that pay to be in the parade.

"We've always had a strong LGBTQ+ community in this city," Nixon said. "But it took commitment from the other communities, our allies, to increase our visible presence." According to Nixon, the three-day-long Pride Festival in 2019 saw 250,000 people. Due to pandemic cancellations, it was off for a few years, but bounced back in 2022, with 333,000 for the event's 20th anniversary. Said Nixon, "That just shows who we are as a city."

A Pride for All

The St. Pete Pride team is full of fresh faces. Among them, St. Pete Pride Executive Director Nicole Berman. This year marks the Washington native's second Pride for the city.

"We are the largest Pride event in Florida, and we want our Pride to be for everybody," Berman said.



Is the parade not your vibe? There are many Pride events to choose from.

"Pride events sometimes historically leave people out – trans people, people of color. We want to highlight them instead."

The nonprofit has added events such as Transtastic, and Shades of Pride celebrating LGBTQ+ people of color. "We want to institute changes; the community calls us to be more inclusive and we want to always grow with the community," Berman said. Other evolutions include the Miss St. Pete Pride Pageant, a pageant typically styled as a drag competition for cis-gendered folk, rebranded as The Mx St. Pete Pride Pageant – with the gender-neutral "Mx" for gender-non-conforming people.

St. Pete Pride is the largest event of its kind in Florida, with many families in attendance. There's even a Youth & Family Day on the schedule. However, given the current political climate, organizers are keeping nimble.

"If anything should come to fruition, or if any of the laws or bills were to pass, we would pivot," Berman said. "But we have every intention of moving forward. It's a waiting game, but we're just trying to uplift the community. We have every intention and right to be where we are."

Avery Anderson knows that battle too well. He's the creator of the Banned Book Library at American



St. Pete Pride started in 2003 when Tampa Pride was shut down. The grassroots event has grown exponentially.

Photos courtesy of the City of St. Petersburg



"We're so lucky to be embraced by this community in so many ways," said St. Pete Pride Executive Director Nicole Berman.

Stage Theatre Company, as well as the director of marketing for the theater. The library displays books – all donated – that have been banned or threatened by school boards in Florida. "Banning words, banning drag, banning our community is a form of oppression," Anderson said. "Participating in Pride is a way of showing you do not comply with that thinking."

Anderson is also a proud member of the LGBTQ+ community, and lives on the border of downtown and the Old Northeast neighborhood. "I've been in St. Pete for four years, and St. Pete Pride makes me feel like I made the right choice moving here," Anderson said. "Even among all of the unknown... it's a place for people – all people." ●

For a full list of events, as well as details on donating, sponsorship, volunteer opportunities and more, visit stpetepride.org.



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\$1,249,000
3 Bed | 2 Bath | 2,080 SF
Cheryl Landwehr 727.804.4747



226 13TH AVENUE N
Old Northeast
\$1,950,000
5 Bed | 4 Bath | 2,971 SF
Ali Bearnarth 727.560.4377



12055 GANDY BLVD N #261
Grande Verandahs
\$500,000
3 Bed | 2 Bath | 2,013 SF
Frieda Marhee 954.673.9317



2217 BREVARD ROAD NE
Granada Terrace
\$1,390,000
3 Bed | 3 Bath | 2,207 SF
Kantner/Waechter 727.278.5866

The Unstoppable Katie Deits, CEO of Florida CraftArt



Deits, center, with her son, daughter, their spouses and her five grandchildren at the Muse Award ceremony



Katie Deits is a master of both the creative and business sides of the art world.

Brandy Stark

In the heart of the downtown business district, nestled in a historic building that was once known as Rutland's Department Store, stands Florida CraftArt. As a statewide, nonprofit organization, Florida CraftArt's mission is to grow Florida's creative economy by engaging the community and advancing fine craft artists with their works. It's a big mission, and the woman behind it is Chief Executive Officer Katie Deits.

"The best part of my position as CEO is feeling like I am making a difference in the lives of artists and bringing the joy of art to the community with the gallery, exhibitions, and educational programming," she says. But "bringing the joy of art" to people requires boundless energy and a keen business acumen. "I work with board members to establish and monitor fiscal goals, fundraise, and write grants, and engage donors and artists. I create marketing, public relations, and social media. Exhibition planning and programming are also my responsibility, with input from the staff and committee, and I also oversee the Florida Craft Art Festival."

Business aside, however, creativity is a huge part of Deits's life. "When I'm not at Florida CraftArt working, I am probably at an art opening, an art workshop, visiting an artist, a gallery, or a museum, and writing and posting about the experience," she says. "Or I'm in my home studio working on my art, writing, or studying about art history or techniques."

Art is quite literally a part of her heritage. Her father, Willis Deits, was a professional photographer. He settled with Katie, an only child, and her mother, Eloise, in Palm Beach in 1960. Here, she gained recognition for her art skills and before she graduated high school, one of her works – a painting of "a six-foot-tall girl in a bikini standing like an Egyptian figure" – was exhibited at the Norton Museum of Art.

Deits attended the University of South Florida in 1967, working summers at the *The Palm Beach Post* in the photography and art departments. She was also part of a program with Finch College that allowed her to spend nine months in New York City attending cultural events, including the 1969 Woodstock Music Festival. As a senior, Deits studied in Florence, Italy, later traveling solo across Europe to visit all the major museums before returning to America.

Back home, Deits worked in the photographic darkroom of the *National Enquirer* where she met her husband, Vincent Eckersley, an English photographer. They wed in 1975 and, with her father, created "a commercial photography business called Camera Graphics. We did aerial photography from light planes and helicopters, architectural, corporate, product, fashion, food, and many other types of photography."

Camera Graphics eventually became the largest studio in Palm Beach County. The couple had two children and, during this time, Deits was also awarded the Florida Degree of Photographic Excellence and a Masters of Photography by the Professional Photographers of America. After passing the PPA exam, Deits became a Certified Professional Photographer.

"As an artist, my personal work has usually been tied to social justice or environmental issues in some way," she says. One of the most meaningful endeavors for her was the 2020 play that she co-wrote called *The Art of Healing* that was part of the Florida CraftArt *Inside the World of Public Art* exhibit. The plays produced through this project emphasized the St. Petersburg Celebration of the Arts' theme of tolerance and acceptance and are now being used for diversity and inclusion training by the Florida Bar Association.

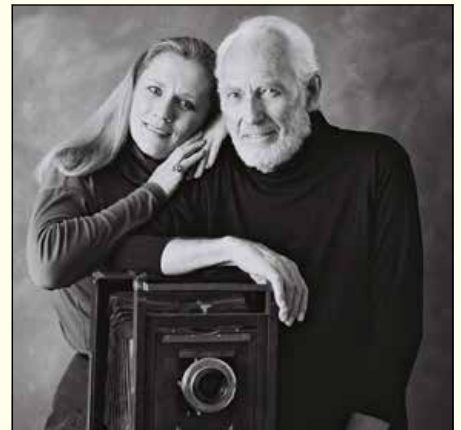
The passing of her father and husband, along with the rise of digital photography, moved Deits to a different place in life. She worked teaching photography at Palm Beach State College and Barry University, as well as the Lighthouse ArtCenter in Tequesta, Florida where she was later appointed executive director. The art center was in a negative financial position, so Deits joined the Association of Fundraising Professionals and studied for and passed the exam to be a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE).

"In whatever job or endeavor I am in, I always work to receive extra education and certification in the field," says Deits. "Doing so not only gives me the knowledge to do the job better, it also gives more credence to my position and ability."

Her years of dedication, experience, and hard work recently earned Deits the St. Petersburg Arts Alliance's Muse Award as an Arts Ambassador. She was nominated by Mary Anna Murphy, who is an exhibition designer and member of Florida CraftArt.

"Katie Deits was an obvious choice to win the 2023 MUSE Ambassador Award. Katie exemplifies the energy, innovation, and inspiration that the St. Petersburg arts community is known for throughout our region," said Terry Marks, CEO of the St. Petersburg Arts Alliance. "She is a passionate advocate of the arts and if you have ever been to Florida CraftArt, you will be taken by the high level of artistry that is exhibited in this gallery. As a city of the arts, we are grateful that Katie lends outstanding leadership to our community."

"It was such a terrific honor to be selected for the Muse Award, and I intend to continue to do what I've been doing in helping to publicize and promote the Tampa Bay art community," says Deits. "I want to continue to develop, curate, and present quality exhibitions. I want to connect with and engage the local and statewide community with interesting and



Deits with her father, Willis Deits, a professional photographer (1993)



"As I think," sculpture by Katie Deits

educational programming related to our exhibitions to retain our current audience and attract new ones."

Deits shows few signs of slowing down. Her other goals include bringing in more statewide artists and expanding the volunteer base for Florida CraftArt to help with day-to-day operations.

Does she have any advice for both established and emerging local artists?

"Create something artistic every day, whether it is a quick sketch, a painting, a poem, short story, or working on a project," says Deits. "Connect with your artistic community and discuss your work with others. Believe in yourself and study your art your entire life. Keep the passion for your art burning in your soul. Help and mentor others." ●

Old Northeast Residents Changing the World, One Small Step at a Time



Zoe Kopp and Thom Namaya at their Old Northeast home



Zoe and Namaya on their many travels

Janan Talafer

Back in New England, Zoe Kopp and Thom Namaya usually took a break from the long, cold winters by volunteering. For years they worked with local leaders of small community development projects around the world that they support through their nonprofit, GRACE Cares. But in 2020, COVID lockdowns prevented international travel and they spent some time in St. Petersburg. Just a year later, the two moved here, trading their 27-year home in Vermont on 13 acres of land for a house in the Old Northeast with an art studio out back.

Why the move? They fell in love with the city's charm, waterfront, the arts, and the strong sense of community. But it also came down to the weather. "I needed more sunshine," Zoe joked as we chatted on a sunny, but windy afternoon at a local coffee shop.

The husband-and-wife team like to say they brought a strong spirit of social activism with them from Vermont. "We do what we can," said Zoe, which seemed to me to be a vast understatement given that the two have traveled the world, together and separately, to bring health education, social justice, and economic advances to people in developing countries.

Zoe and "Namaya" – as he is known – met in 1990 when they were in their mid 30s, already well established in their respective professions. "I was living in New York City and while I was doing



Zoe and Namaya with the founder of the Dominican Republic project, Ruben Ottenwalder, and his family

volunteer work to maintain some hiking trails, I met a woman who mentioned that she knew someone I might want to think about hiring. He sent his resume. I didn't hire him, but six months later we were married," Zoe recalled with a smile. "We were destined to meet."

Zoe grew up in Tarrytown, New York, and moved with her mother to Cape Coral in 1969, finishing high school in Fort Myers. She went on to Florida State, earning a degree in classical archeology. Although she wasn't to be an archeologist, she spent a fun couple of months on an FSU-sponsored archeology dig studying early Etruscan civilizations in the hills of Tuscany, and later went on to live in Italy for a few years.

After Italy, Zoe returned to Tallahassee, where the direction of her life took a 360-degree turn. She became

politically active in the women's holistic health movement, went back to school to get a nursing degree, and in 1981, founded North Florida Women's Health and Counseling in Tallahassee. At the time, the women's health movement was still in its infancy and the clinic was very pioneering. "We had advisors who were members of NOW [National Organization of Women]. Our initial funding came from professors at FSU who bought shares in the clinic," said Zoe.

In 1985, she went to Mardi Gras, staying with a friend in New Orleans, whose roommate was on a medical mission in Africa for USAID, the U.S. Agency for International Development. Looking through his books, she had one of those "aha" moments. It wasn't long before she was pursuing a master's degree in public health at Tulane University,

with internships in Guatemala and Columbia. "Tulane changed my life," said Zoe. "I wanted to continue to improve people's lives, learn about people around the world, and visit all those places I read about as a child."

After getting her degree, she joined International Planned Parenthood Federation and developed guidelines for the organization's reproductive health initiatives around the world. Her next step was CARE International, a global humanitarian agency, where she oversaw health education projects in Asia and Africa. One of her many memorable experiences was teaching people in rural Thailand farming communities how to live safely with AIDS. "I felt privileged to meet so many people from so many backgrounds. I saw how much more alike we all are than we are different," said Zoe.

In her next job, as a consultant to USAID, she designed and evaluated health programs in Latin America and the Caribbean, wrote instructional manuals on women's health, family planning and urology, and spent time in India, developing continuing education training for the Indian Medical Association. "I met such incredibly strong women physicians in India who were working under such challenging medical circumstances, like no clean running water," said Zoe. "Things we take for granted."

In 1997, she switched to the corporate sector, taking a position with Pfizer, where for 15 years she led international

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epidemiologic research teams and health education efforts, among other projects.

Like Zoe, Namaya's always been committed to making a difference globally. During the Vietnam War, he was a corpsman in the Navy, stationed in Jacksonville, and then served in the Peace Corps in Yemen, followed by time with Catholic Relief Services in Morocco. He's also a former nurse practitioner and a Doctor of Homeopathy. "We think of ourselves as world citizens," said Zoe. "We each speak Spanish, Italian, and French, and Namaya also speaks Arabic."

On New Year's Eve 2000, they made a different kind of resolution. They had always dreamed about working together on small-scale projects that larger organizations don't often tackle, like digging a well so villagers don't have to walk five miles for water, or helping women purchase a sewing machine to start a small business. "We thought, 'Let's start our own nonprofit,'" said Zoe. "We decided that we didn't need to win the lottery to help people with this type of community project. It took two years to get our 501c3, and in 2002, GRACE Cares was born."

GRACE stands for growth, resources, action, community, and empowerment. "It's a small organization with big results," said Zoe. "We work with local partners to help plan a project that the community determines will improve their lives, and then we help them raise funds for it." Projects are underway in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Kenya, India, Zambia, Vietnam, and Sudan for everything from safe drinking water to financial literacy for women

and educational materials and books for school children.

When I stopped by the couple's home for a visit, Namaya showed me an art project he was working on. He's an artist, poet, musician, and storyteller, life-long pursuits that he's dedicated to a greater agenda focused on social change. He's the founder of B4 Peace, an international arts initiative with a message of unity, human rights, community engagement, and peace through art, sculpture, video, dance, and theater. His anti-war, pro-peace poem, *One Hundred Flowers*, has been published in 114 languages and hangs in churches, meditation centers, and peace centers worldwide.

His current project, titled *Agent Orange: Do Not Forget Me*, will be installed at the War Remnants Museum in Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City. In 2020, he and Zoe spent several months in Vietnam and Laos on an artist's residency, "Journey of Forgiveness," related to the war and Agent Orange, whose toxic residue continues to harm both the people and the land.

For now, the couple are enjoying their new home, but they're not resting. Locally, they're volunteering to "Get Out the Vote" by knocking on doors. Zoe is a new docent at Sunken Gardens, and Namaya, who plays classical guitar, performed at the inaugural HONNA Art in the Garden tour last April.

In the fall, GRACE Cares plans a week-long service trip to the Dominican Republic. Zoe invites anyone interested in participating or learning more about their nonprofits to visit gracecares.org and b4peace.net. ●

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Spring Cleaning Checklist

Spring is here and you may be preparing for a spring cleaning session. Here is a quick checklist to help you tackle your spring cleaning like a professional!

Kitchen

- Wipe down stovetop
- Throw away expired food
- Wipe out fridge
- Dust pantry and cabinet shelves
- Wipe down countertops and backsplash
- Sweep and mop floors

Bathroom

- Throw away old and expired products
- Wipe down vanity and mirror
- Scrub tub and shower
- Replace shower curtain liner
- Wipe down toilet and scrub inside

Bedroom

- Donate unused clothes
- Organize closets
- Wipe blinds and window sills
- Vacuum carpets and sweep floors

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NORTHEAST JOURNAL

May/June 2023

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PEOPLE AND PETS

Calling all residents of the Old Northeast, Snell Isle, Venetian Isles, Crescent Lake, Crescent Heights, and Downtown!
 Email your HIGH-RES digital photo to editor@northeastjournal.org. Please include your name, address, phone number, and pet's name.
 Photos by Brandy Stark unless otherwise noted.



Karen with Bella
 Crescent Lake Park



NEJ art director Julie Johnston's blind cat Hopie
 "in Technicolor"



Joe with Loucee
 Crescent Heights



Joey and Briant with Sallie and a shy Wanee
 Crescent Lake Park



Paul with puppy, Lazl
 Crescent Heights



Liz, Savannah, and Mark with Trooper
 Crescent Lake Park

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PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY BREAKTHROUGH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

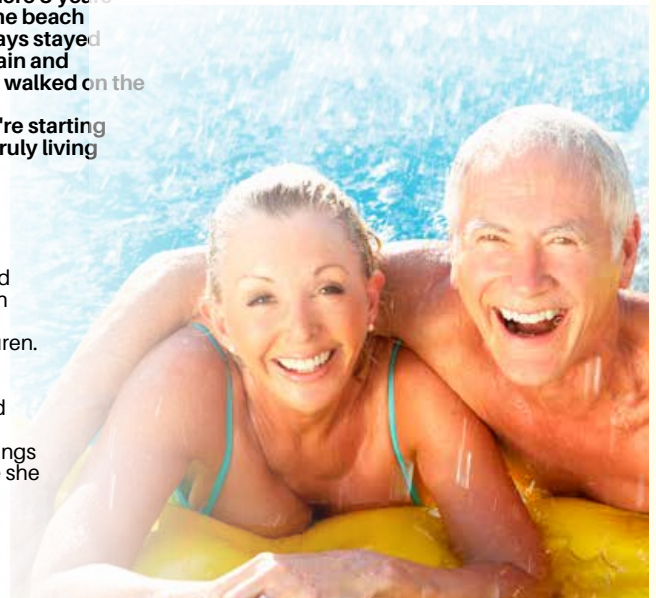
According to Kathy's test result, she has seen a 74% improvement in pain and functionality, which is on par with a majority of our patients,' shares Lauren. "But more important than those test results is the joy she's expressed being here and hearing about all the amazing things she's able to do because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

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

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

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

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



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Bringing the Heat

Brandy Stark

It's time for summer fun and community Pride! Hit up the museums, galleries, and art spots of St. Pete for a wide and fabulous array of local talent in every medium. There's art galore, and here's just a sampling to consider.

Art Centers

Florida CraftArt: *The Alchemy of Art.* 510 Central Avenue. Monday–Saturday, 10 am–5:30 pm; Sunday, noon–5 pm. May 5–June 24. floridacraftart.org

According to organizers, this exhibition “encompasses the creator, the fabrication, the object and the viewer,” with offerings in ceramics, fiber, glass, jewelry, metal, mixed-media, sculpture, and wood. It promises to “move the fine craft conversation forward by sparking questions, insights and wonder about who we are, what we are, and how we inhabit our world.”

Morean Center for Clay: *Hold On.* 420 22nd Street South. Wednesday–Saturday, 10 am–5 pm. Through May 31. 727-822-7872. moreanartscenter.org

This exhibit features sculptures made by Andrea Key Connell between the spring of 2020 and the spring of 2023. According to the artist, “Hold on can be heard, felt, interpreted in a variety of ways. It can be a request on a phone line, or a plea to a loved one. It can be said to a child before you let go of their swing, a mental picture taken of a fleeting moment, or an internal statement to get to the other side of something.” Guests can also see other clay works by the artists in residence in the center’s historic train station home.

Morean Arts Center: *Fresh Squeezed 7: Emerging Artists in Florida.* 719 Central Avenue. Continues until June 22. Open daily, 10 am–5 pm. moreanartscenter.org

The goal of the Morean’s annual Fresh Squeezed exhibitions 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.”



Garden by Rebecca Skelton, showing her work at Artlofts

Museums

Museum of Fine Arts: *Best in Show: Dogs in Art the MFA.* 255 Beach Drive North. Tuesday & Wednesday, 10 am–5 pm, Thursday, 10 am–8 pm, Friday & Saturday, 10 am–5 pm, Sunday, 12 pm to 5 pm. Through August 6. mfastpete.org

This one’s for the dogs – and those who love them. Humans and dogs have co-evolved for tens of thousands of years, creating a uniquely special relationship. Check out this small-focus show, drawn entirely from the MFA collection, highlighting the way we humans have celebrated dogs throughout the history of art.

June 28, 6–9 pm: *Transtastic.* stpetepride.org/events/transtastic

Join St. Pete Pride at the MFA to celebrate Tampa Bay’s trans and non-binary community with a welcoming evening showcasing a variety of talent, artistry, poetry, and more from the community.

Spots About Town

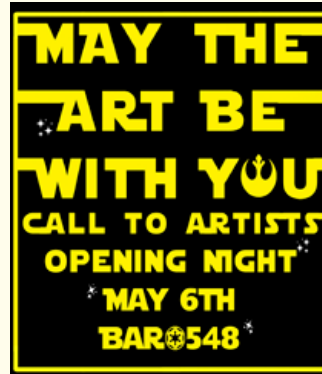
Artlofts: 10 5th Street North, second floor. Monday–Friday, 10 am–5 pm; Saturday, 12–4 pm; Second Saturday, 5–9 pm. 727-449-5146. theartlofts.com

A Handful of Art. Through May 31; opening Second Saturday, May 8, 5–9 pm

This exhibition showcases five of Artlofts most diverse artists. Lee West presents oil and acrylic landscape paintings; Joe Wallis has black-and-white photography; Susan Hess shows encaustic paintings; Kas Turner presents coastal abstract works; with 2D and 3D copper constructions by Rebecca Skelton. Meet the artists and view this eclectic exhibit in the



Sweet Boys features the art of John Gascot



Into “Star Wars” art? Check out Bar@548

second-floor gallery above Florida CraftArt.

Sweet Boys. June 1–30.

Artlofts celebrates Pride month with a solo exhibit by queer artist John Gascot with a new body of work titled *Sweet Boys*. Gascot describes the collection as a “way to speak on the current anti-drag, anti-LGBTQ+ political climate with wit and humor.” The works feature images of drag queens, men in women’s vintage-style swimwear, and roles traditionally reserved for females. The paintings burst with color and tongue-in-cheek imagery. The artist will donate 25% of sales to the ACLU Drag Defense Fund. The opening will also feature DJ Jadget Gam spinning classic Pride tunes.

Bar@548: 548 Central Avenue. Contact events@bar548.com

May the Art Be with You. May 6–31, 11 am–3 am. That’s no moon... it’s an

art show featuring a *Star Wars* theme! Come and see how 45 artists interpret this pop culture theme. The opening reception on May 6 includes a live DJ and a costume contest.

PRIDE Art Show, featuring Kristina White. Opening reception June 1 at 5 pm. Kicks off June with a Pride-themed art show, celebrating all things LGBTQ+.

Bayboro Brewing: *Birdcage at Bayboro.* 2390 5th Avenue South. June 18. 12 p.m. bayborobrewing.com

Bayboro Brewing hosts an art show fundraiser for Metro Tampa Bay whose mission is to provide quality health and wellness services that are “inclusive, relevant, and supportive of the diversity” in the LGBTQ+ community. Featuring drag shows and a costume contest for characters from *The Birdcage*.

Smokin’ 19: *Flowers and Herbs.* 3090 34th Street North. Ends May 15. 11 am–10 pm, Daily. smokin19.com

Inspired by Earth Day in April, this show celebrates the flora and fauna of Mother Earth, including that special herb, 420. For the feline lovers, the exhibit will change out on May 20: *Meow* will feature all cat-themed art, with 100% of art sales retained by artists.

Studio Public House: *Pride Carnival at the Studio Public House.* 2950 Central Avenue. June 26, 11 am–4 pm. thestudiopublichouse.com

As part of the Grand Central Pride Carnival, Studio Public House hosts a mini extravaganza featuring an arts and crafts market, food and drink specials, a live DJ, and much more. ●

Happy Birthday to Shapiro Gallery

In March 2023, Shapiro Gallery celebrated its 25th anniversary representing fine American crafts in downtown St. Petersburg. Some might remember it when it was on the 500 block of Central Avenue, or its location at BayWalk before it finally landed on Beach Drive in 2009. Congratulations!



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Hit the Mitt Goes to Bat for Kids

Janan Talafer

Snell Isle mom and St. Pete native, Catherine Nelke, is stepping up to the plate for youth baseball with Hit the Mitt, a baseball academy she founded to make the All-American sport fun and accessible to more kids.

And she definitely means fun. Picture a young player learning proper batting stance by taking a swing and connecting with a baseball that explodes, sending out a brightly colored cloud of chalk dust. Hearing their own “walk up” song as they step up to the plate, like the professional ball players. Or meeting baseball celebrities like Emmanuel Rosario, a former pitcher for the Savannah Bananas, an exhibition team known for entertaining “on-field hijinks” with music, dance skits, and stunts.

“We teach good sportsmanship, community advocacy, and leadership along with the mechanics of the game and proper technique, but we make it fun so the kids never feel discouraged or want to give up playing,” said Nelke. “It’s great to see them show up with a smile on their face, gloves on and ready to play.”

Nelke launched Hit the Mitt a year ago last summer, just as her son, Connor, 10, was finishing up the spring season with Northeast Little League. He had been playing baseball since he was 6, and he enjoyed it. But she realized that although some of the top players might go on to All-Star, travel, or club teams, the majority didn’t have anything to look forward to that was organized and ongoing locally for the summer.

“There just aren’t a lot of programs in this part of St. Pete where our younger kids could play through the summer and practice their skills,” said Nelke. “I thought, ‘We live in Florida, we have a history of baseball in St. Pete, and these kids should be able to train and condition all year.’”

With the help of another Northeast Little League mom, Elizabeth Tews, Nelke reached out to the parents of team members, asking if they’d be interested in meeting weekly in the summer at Denver Park in Shore Acres after dinner, when it wasn’t so hot. The kids could work on skills, focusing on a different one each week.

“I found a coach who was home from college and we usually had about six kids each week,” said Nelke. “We ended on a super fun note with games like sack races around the bases or kickball. Several families enjoyed it so much they said we should keep it going.”

Julie Bruce’s two sons, Connor, 8, and Mason, 7, were among the kids who showed up for practice. “They loved it,” said Bruce. “They were so excited to play the fun games. It was a really good experience that brought back their love for the game.”



The North Shore Elementary Hit the Mitt players



Hit the Mitt player William Tews up to bat



Rob and Catherine Nelke, founders of Hit the Mitt Youth Baseball

Since then, Nelke has held baseball clinics for Northwest Youth Baseball, organized a seven-week after-school program at North Shore Elementary, and a 10-week program for students in the lower grades at the Canterbury School Hough Campus on Snell Isle. She also hosted a special nonprofit event at North Shore Elementary, open to players in first through fifth grades. Many of them didn’t have gloves, so Nelke spread the word, asking for donations. The Tampa Bay Rays gave hats and jerseys, while an anonymous donor offered batting equipment, gloves, and a check for equipment.

“It’s my goal to bring a high level of coaching and mentoring to the kids,” said Nelke. “Many of our coaches are former MLB players and professionals who encourage the kids by sharing stories about their own baseball journeys – the challenges and successes.”

A retired sales manager for Allstate, John Currado is the head coach at Hit the Mitt and assistant varsity baseball coach at Canterbury High School of Florida. He grew up in Staten Island, where he “fell in love” with playing baseball at age 6 and went on to play on the 1964 Little League All-Star Championship Team. Currado’s passion for the sport continued and he racked up accolades that included a baseball scholarship to New

York University, MPV of the Atlantic Coast Baseball League, and playing with the U.S. National Baseball Team. When he wasn’t playing, he was managing Little League and coaching college teams.

“I loved being on the field, loved practice, and loved competing – and the chance to be part of the team,” said Currado, who also wrote *A Manager’s Guide to Coaching Youth Baseball*. Working with Hit the Mitt gave him the opportunity to get back on the field and in the game. But it was also Nelke’s mission that spoke to him. “She’s hoping to reach out to the regular players who don’t have an outlet and aren’t getting the attention. How else are they going to learn the game and see if it’s something they want to embrace and make part of their lives?” said Currado. “Baseball builds and

develops kids. It teaches life lessons: how not to get frustrated when you’re behind, how to stay in the game, build focus and mental toughness. All those qualities that help you not only be successful in baseball, but also in life.”

Nelke estimates that she’s been able to reach about 75 children through Hit the Mitt. But she has big dreams of expanding significantly, including offering the program year-round. She’s been searching for an affordable outdoor field, and she’d like to partner with an indoor facility where the kids can play in the summer when the heat or storms can put an end to games. So far, she hasn’t found anything affordable, but she isn’t one to give up easily.

This summer, Hit the Mitt will host a youth baseball clinic for kids going into third through eighth grade. It’s open to the public but held at the Knowlton Canterbury School campus. To register, visit canterburyflorida.org/programs/summer-programs. Hit the Mitt is listed in the summer camp brochure. ●

For more about Hit the Mitt, visit hitthemitt.org. To see additional photos and video, check out Hit the Mitt Saint Pete on Facebook and Instagram, Tik Tok (@hitthemitt), and YouTube (@CatherineNelke4611/Hit the Mitt).

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Art in the Garden Tour a Blooming Success



500-plus guests made the inaugural Art in the Garden Tour a smashing success. Other than the above average temperatures, the hundreds of guests who ventured into The Historic Old Northeast for the April 15 Art in the Garden Tour had few complaints and many kudos for the inaugural event.

The combination of a wide variety of residential gardens, talented artists, and live music provided something for everyone. And the food and beverage vendors did a very brisk business, especially with the beverages and popsicles that quenched the guests' thirst.

We could not have had a Garden Tour without gardens. Our thanks to these neighbors who shared their distinctive and creative gardens with us: Marc White and Ritch Burton; Peter and Andy Arner; Peggy West and Jack Sinks; Steve and Dorit Hudson; Jake Bauer and Sharon Leonard; Richard Ballien and Steve Swedberg; Leigh O'Rourke and Stephen Keller; Doug O'Dowd and Cecelia Messina; Hegrado condominium Courtyard; Ed Lafontaine and Gretchen Ward Warren; Marilyn Johnson and Lok Lee.

The committed support of these sponsors made the Art in the Garden Tour possible. Please show your thanks by supporting them: Arner Group/Compass; The Kantner Law Firm; Landscapes by Randy Lee; Sharon Kantner & Brian Waechter/Smith and Associates Real Estate; Bar Chinchilla; Lida's Jungle; Southern Roots Realty; Bayscape Landscaping Inc.; Old Northeast Tavern; Marion's Gift Shop.

The following displayed their art: Michelle Passoff and Andre Kupfermunz; Kris Meenan; Chad Mize; Anna Broshears; T Gilliam; Susan Wiley; Jake Bauer and Sharon Leonard; Gregory Carlin; Ezra Sembler; Leigh O'Rourke; Laura Marshall; Francine Michel; Noelle Mason and Will Douglas; Gina White; Gretchen Ward Warren.

These musicians shared their talents: Liam O'Dowd, keyboards; Don Korg, keyboards; Maryem Bendaoud, flute; Victoria Garcia, harp; Namaya, guitar.

For those who couldn't make the Tour (and for those who did), some photos and a video journey of the event can be found at honna.org/news. Enjoy it, and we look forward to seeing you next year!

~Nick Bell



4th of July Parade

Planning is in the works for the annual 4th of July Children's Parade on Tuesday, July 4 at Coffee Pot Park. We once again hope to have appearances from Raymond of the Tampa Bay Rays and Pete the Pelican of the Tampa Bay Rowdies. In addition, there will be music, refreshments and a visit from a fire engine from our very own St. Petersburg Fire Rescue Station 4. The parade is short to accommodate for the heat so bring the little ones and pets, decorate your bikes, wagons, and scooters and deck yourself out in your best patriotic attire. Keep a watchful eye for HONNA announcements with more information about this wonderful event.

~ Anna Broshears

Spring Cleanup

A half dozen residents turned out on Saturday, March 25, to help clean up a section of the neighborhood near and around North Shore Park, the mangroves, and some nearby alleys. There wasn't much in terms of big items but there were a lot of the usual small plastics, cigarette butts, and paper that totaled 75 pounds.

~Doug O'Dowd



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. The last Porch Party of the season will be on May 19 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. Porch Parties will resume in August with a special event at Sunken Gardens - watch for details. Porch Parties are a benefit for HONNA members and their guests. Non-member neighborhood residents are also welcome to attend, in which case a small donation at the door or online at honna.org is welcomed in order to help defray party expenses.



HONNA's Quarterly Neighborhood Meeting

Three members of the city's Planning and Development Services department led a spirited discussion on March 22 regarding the permitting process and the new city-wide zoning proposal at HONNA's quarterly meeting at Westminster Palms.

Elizabeth Abernethy (Department Director), Derek Kilborn (Manager of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation), and Scott Hancock (Deputy Building Official) presented the dos-and-don'ts of the permitting process and reviewed the city's controversial NTM-1 zoning regulation that was approved by city council the following evening. The new zoning classification allows denser housing development on major city streets but largely avoids the Old Northeast neighborhood.

A barrage of questions kept the 60 attendees in their seats for over two hours, underscoring the importance of having our city officials meet with residents on controversial issues like these. A copy of the city representatives' PowerPoint presentation can be seen at honna.org.

A check for \$5,257 was presented to CASA (Community Action Stops Abuse), the sponsored organization at last December's Candlelight Tour of Homes. Proceeds from the Tour as well as from the sale of HONNA Honey made the donation possible.

The next neighborhood meeting is scheduled for 7pm on Monday, June 19 at Westminster Palms (939 Beach Drive NE).

~Nick Bell

Annual Neighborhood-wide Yard Sale

HONNA's annual yard sale on Saturday, March 17, was a very popular event this year with 45 households listed on the map and 575 pounds of paper shredded. In addition, the Goodwill semi-tractor trailer was filled to capacity with items residents didn't sell.

~ Anna Broshears



Easter Egg Hunt

The annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 8, at Coffee Pot Park attracted scores of children, parents, and friends to hunt for 1,000 plastic, filled eggs. Along with the special Golden Eggs, prizes, and plenty of candy and treats, the Easter Bunny made an appearance. The HONNA Bunny is one of the happiest and hoppiest bunnies around, and he is already planning a visit next year on the Saturday before Easter.

~ Anna Broshears

Become an Eagle Eye

Eagle Eye is a St. Petersburg Police Department initiative to enlist the help of community members in the fight against crime. Citizen-provided security camera footage is increasingly becoming an invaluable asset to the police, helping establish leads and identify suspects. By voluntarily registering your contact information with SPPD, detectives will know how to reach you if a crime occurs in the vicinity of your property. Essentially this will allow the SPPD to know who in the area has cameras that could potentially have recorded a crime. They *do not* have access to your camera unless you give it to them, but it will eliminate their need to take time to search properties in the area that have cameras. Go to police.stpete.org/eagle-eye for more information.

~ Doug O'Dowd



HONNA'S SHINING STAR: BEFORE & AFTER

MAY/JUNE

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 May/June is 117 17th Avenue N; Plane Advice, Inc.

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.

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Creative Arts is very involved in children's hospitals and education environments. This rendering is an example of an interactive space for children with autism.

A professional staff of 25 gifted artists, technicians, and craftsmen labor in a 34,000-square-foot warehouse in Pinellas Park to bring Barganier's visions to life. The inconspicuous metal building that once housed mattresses was selected for its high, 25-foot ceilings to accommodate the mammoth projects that would emerge from it since 1997.

When Barganier began Creative Arts Unlimited 30 years ago, he drummed up business at trade shows, but now, he says, "It's word of mouth. There aren't that many of us who do this." The abundance and quality of his company's projects are renowned worldwide, and the business comes to him.

"Our niche evolved over time with the talent we acquired," says Barganier. From reconstructing the R.M.S. Titanic grand staircase for the Titanic Museum in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee to designing and building a



Creative Arts designed and built this museum space for the recently remodeled J.C. Newman Cigar Factory in Ybor City.

museum space for the recently remodeled J.C. Newman Cigar Factory in Ybor City, Barganier's projects cast a spell on all who encounter them. Further adventures included Creative Arts's remarkable stint at the helm of the History Channel's show *Museum Men*. Creative Arts was the star of the 10-episode series that brought things lost to history – like Apollo 13 and Lincoln's hearse – to life once again.

There was a time when he branched out beyond America's borders. "When the [Berlin] Wall came down [in 1989], projects opened up overseas," says



Creative Arts produced merchandise landings for many Disney movies and at one time was a key vendor for all the retail locations on the Orlando park grounds.

Barganier. After taking on a number of projects in Europe, including some at Euro Disney, he tried doing projects in the Middle East. "It's harder to get things done over there," says Barganier, who prefers work in the U.S., particularly in Florida.

What's his favorite project? "My next project is always my favorite," Barganier says. The thrill is when "I discover a technique or technology and find an application from that," he says. "I do it for my entertainment."

Barganier focuses in on the uniqueness of each project. "Every client is different. [We] never do the same thing twice." When pressed further, he admitted that the *Treasure Seekers: Pirates, Conquistadors and Shipwrecks* exhibit Creative Arts did for the Tampa History Museum is special. "Everything we do is in it," Barganier says. That includes conceptualizing,



Roger Barganier, president and creative director of Creative Arts Unlimited Inc. and resident of the Old Northeast since 1989.

building, and installing a full-size pirate ship as well as incorporating holographic and interactive elements in conjunction with artifacts.

Barganier did not get to where he is by way of Hogwarts, though. He was born and raised in Mobile, Alabama and went to the Ringling School of Design in Sarasota, where he met the woman who was to become his wife. Carolyn, a native of Clearwater who was also an art student at the school, married him at the now-demolished Belleview Biltmore Hotel in 1986.

Starting in retail for Gayfers Department Store in Mobile, Barganier then moved on to work for Maas



Creative Arts Unlimited employs 25 skilled associates who design, build, and install their creations.

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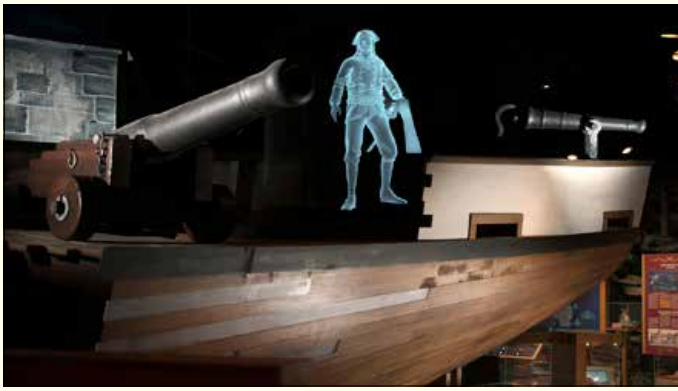
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The Tampa Bay History Center employed our Creative Arts' holographic crew to help tell their story in recent gallery.

Brothers as an ad designer. Barganier's design abilities flourished, and he began to branch out beyond retail. Ultimately, one thing led to another and, *voilà!* Creative Arts was born in the 1990s.

Barganier and his wife have called the Old Northeast home since 1989. Carolyn initially convinced him to move to the neighborhood. "The Old Northeast reminded me of Mobile with that Old South flavor," says Barganier, who particularly liked the Spanish moss hanging from the old oak trees. The couple has two grown children, Erich, 31, and Kirsten, 28.

Currently, Barganier is working on a project at the Corporate Visitors Center for Dollar General in Nashville, Tennessee and at a nature center in Naples, Florida. He says he sees the future as "very fluid," that what happens next in his multidimensional wizarding world depends on new technology, following the money, what companies are doing, and the growth of the hospitality industry.

"We're here and we are doing what's unusual, strange, and interesting," he says. "We're doing all these national projects right here in little St. Petersburg." ●



Creative Arts was called upon to exactly recreate to scale many of the state rooms from the original Titanic, including this grand staircase.

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It's not as if Sonya and Marilyn, the Haliczers sisters, were sitting around waiting for invitations to the Vinoy Hotel or the Old Northeast. Growing up in St. Petersburg in the 1930s and 40s as the daughters of two of St. Petersburg's earliest Jewish residents, Leon and Lillie Haliczer, the sisters were part of a small, but tight-knit group of Jewish families that lived, worked, and socialized together. Their parents, and those of their friends, were vital parts of the St. Pete community, most of them merchants of one type or another in the city's developing years. Tracing their early history provides a fascinating peek into the foundations, not just of St. Petersburg, but of a country developed by immigrants.

Almost all of St. Petersburg's early Jewish residents emigrated from Eastern Europe, most likely fleeing the pogroms that swept that part of the world between the 1880s and 1920s. Many of them came through Ellis Island, settling first in New York City or elsewhere, and then migrating to Florida in search of opportunity. Several traveled to St. Petersburg via Key West, following friends or family that had arrived before them.

The first Jewish person to move to St. Petersburg was a single man named Henry Schutz. Emigrating from Germany in 1883, he originally settled in Savannah. Upon hearing of a business opportunity in St. Petersburg, he moved here in 1901 and began selling ladies hats and notions. Schutz quickly became a valued member of the community. In 1910, the St.



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



Anne Manket, in SPHS's 1930 yearbook, the first Jewish child born in Pinellas.



David Rothblatt in his Southern Grocery delivery wagon. Note the address of 22nd Street South

Petersburg Times described him as "one of our popular merchants" in a congratulatory note about his marriage to Emma Fleischman of Baltimore. In those early years, St. Petersburg was still little more than a village; Schutz's store didn't even have a cash register. When a customer needed change, he would put the money in a basket and send it up to the second floor of his store via a pulley system, where change would be made and sent back down. Schutz's grew into one of the finest ladies clothing stores in the city, located on the 500 block of Central Avenue.

Sometime around 1911, another Jewish couple moved to St. Petersburg. Leon and Olga Manket probably followed Olga's young, ambitious brother,

Abraham Tarapani, who had moved to St. Petersburg from New York City several years after the family emigrated from Russia (today's Lithuania) in 1895. Abe didn't stay long in St. Petersburg, moving within two years to Tarpon Springs where he became a pillar of the community. But his sister Olga stayed in St. Pete. After years of working as a pharmacist on New York City's Lower East Side, Olga had recently married a Polish immigrant named Leon Manket. When the Mankets arrived in St. Petersburg they rented a small bungalow just a few blocks off Mirror Lake. While living there, Olga and Leon had a daughter, Anne, the first Jewish child born in Pinellas County.

The Mankets went into business with Olga's brother Abe, and brother-in-law Sam Lovitz in the New York Supply Company, a dry goods store on 9th Street, and Leon Manket later became a real estate agent. Their daughter Anne grew into a popular and active student at St. Petersburg High School, where she performed in school plays and joined many clubs. She married in 1934 and moved to Asheville, North Carolina with her new husband; her parents joined her there in their later years.

While there are no direct descendants of the Schutz or the Mankets still living in St. Petersburg, many of the next Jewish settlers left permanent roots in the form of children and grandchildren who are

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Haliczer's Jewelry Store on Central Avenue

still active in the community today. Like Jay Miller's maternal grandparents (and Marilyn Benjamin's parents), Leon and Lillie Haliczer. Leon hailed from the town of Kopychintsy, in today's Ukraine. His father was a successful blacksmith, who built wagons from scratch and was known to shod as many as 150 horses in a 12-hour period. During his high school years Leon took a three-year apprenticeship in watch repair, and later had to leave his hometown for treatment of a lung ailment. While he was away, World War I started, and Leon was drafted into the army in 1916 and sent to the Italian front. Meanwhile, his brothers, Sol and Ben, had emigrated to Tampa and St. Petersburg; they sent money for Leon to

join them around 1920. He arrived at Ellis Island, where he was forced to linger while doctors examined his lungs. Eventually Leon Haliczer made his way to St. Petersburg, opening a watch repair and jewelry store in 1921, just a few months after his arrival in the US. He remained in the jewelry business until 1963, and his legacy lives on in the city through his many descendants.

One of those, Leon's daughter Marilyn Benjamin, recalls her father as "the nicest guy you ever met. He was just very happy with life. It was hard work for him to set up his business, you know; he didn't speak the language, didn't know anyone. But he and my mother worked side by side in their little store, a jewelry

Tracing their early history provides a fascinating peek into the foundations, not just of St. Petersburg, but of a country developed by immigrants.


store with some gifts and other things." She laughs as a happy thought occurs to her: "I remember we had these pillowcases that said something like 'Welcome to St. Pete' on them. During the war years, the soldiers loved them! They all bought those! I remember, if a soldier came in, we would all talk to him and my mother would invite them in, and, especially if they were Jewish, she would invite them into the back of the store and feed them. We would kibbutz with them... chat, you know."


St. Petersburg's Jewish community had grown significantly by the time World War II soldiers were visiting Haliczer's Jeweler's. The earliest families had been joined throughout the teens and '20s by the Sierkese family (who owned a fabric store on the 800 block of Central Avenue from 1914 until 1985), the Solomon and the Davis families (successive owners of a clothing store on Central Avenue), the Hankins (grocers on 9th Street North), the Hellers, the Jacobs, and Louis "Boston" Cohen. Louis Boston owned one of the largest bakeries in town, located in its early years along Beach Drive, but later relocated to the historically African American neighborhood of Methodist Town.

This reveals a larger trend – that of Jewish merchants opening grocery stores and other shops in parts of town that had

been designated, by tradition and, in the 1930s by city charter, as neighborhoods for Black residents. As St. Petersburg grew into a resort city in the 1910s, '20s, and '30s, city leaders made a concerted effort to relocate African American residents from neighborhoods near downtown (the Gas Plant and Methodist Town) into a designated "Negro Segregation Zone" between 5th and 15th Avenues South, along 22nd Street, an area that became known as the Deuces. While efforts to segregate Jewish residents were never as pronounced or virulent as the segregation of Black citizens, custom – and in many cases, deed restrictions – prevented Jewish people from purchasing homes or businesses in certain areas. Hence, the many Jewish businesses that sprung up in African American neighborhoods during those years. Louis Boston owned stores in Methodist Town; David Rothblatt, who arrived in St. Pete in 1922, owned Southern Grocery in the Deuces; and the Katz family were much-loved grocers in the Gas Plant neighborhood. ●

In the next issue of the Northeast Journal, part two of the history of Jewish settlers in St. Petersburg will delve deeper into the antisemitism these families experienced, even as they helped to grow the economy and culture of the city.



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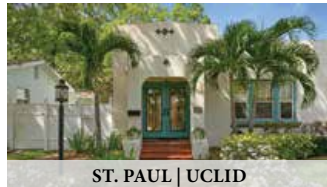
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Sweet as HONNA



David Schneider of the Pinellas Beekeepers Association, talks about HONNA honey at the garden tour on April 15.



Doug O'Dowd's Old Northeast bee hive lives on the roof of his house.



A bottle of HONNA honey with its custom, Old Northeast label.

Threats Facing Bees: A Short Guide

Climate change. As weather patterns change across the globe, flowers don't bloom at the same time. For bees dependent on that consistency, irregular weather patterns can mean a colony starves.

Habitat loss. All these years later, the Joni Mitchell song still rings true: We paved paradise and put up a parking lot. Or a high-rise condo. You get the idea. As we do, bees lose much-needed ground for foraging, which means colonies can't survive.

Invasives (plants and bees). Yep, both invasive species of plants and bees can hurt native bees. Certain bees need the chemical compounds found in certain plants for their eggs to hatch. In addition to that, if a bee tries to pollinate a plant it isn't physiologically evolved to pollinate, it might not get it right. Similarly, invasive bees can't properly pollinate plants designed to grow in a certain area – bad for the bees and the plants.

Insecticides. The problem here is baked right into the name: insecticides, also called pesticides, kill insects. Bees are insects.

Cathy Salustri

In what some might call a debilitatingly single-minded passion that seized me somewhere in the first wave of the pandemic, I've grown increasingly local-minded. This has little to do with the plague and more to do with having a lot more time in my head. But this one grand idea had many rippling repercussions, not the least of which was my fascination with pollinators: specifically, bees. More specifically, Florida bees. According to the University of Florida researchers, of the 4,000 different types of bees that call the United States home, more than 300 of those species make their home in Florida (and who can blame them; despite our sometimes-sensational press, Florida's pretty great). Of those 300, you can find 29 species only in Florida.

There's no doubt you will find at least a few of those in Doug O'Dowd's Old Northeast backyard. Actually, he estimates his hives have about 45,000 bees. O'Dowd, a CFO for World Product Solutions, a Largo-based skin- and hair-care manufacturer, started reading about threats impacting bees, and he knew he wanted to do something. After reading about "all the problems with bees" (see our short guide), O'Dowd reached out to David Schneider with the Pinellas Beekeepers Association and told him he wanted to help.

"If we don't have them, we lose everything," O'Dowd said one spring night as we look at the hive living at his guest house. Not in the guest house, but on the roof. Think of it as an "airbeebandbee."

It's not really his hive, but one Schneider hooked him up with. The hive started with an estimated 15,000 bees; now the beekeeper who manages the hive thinks as many as 45,000 bees call this Old Northeast hive home. Bees travel, too: While they may feast on the tropical sage or other plants in his landscape, the first honey harvest – which came in late summer 2022 – produced

an almost-clear honey, which O'Dowd says could have come from mangroves along the shoreline.

That harvest produced roughly 20 bottles. Largely due to tropical storms, a fall harvest only yielded half, but the hive has more honey on the way. And yes, you can buy it. O'Dowd participated in the Art in the Garden Tour in April, and along his stop, anyone could buy the honey; part of each bottle sold goes to HONNA's tree-planting initiatives. That's a pretty sweet deal.

The Weird Life of Bees

Since getting involved in the apiarist arts, O'Dowd's learned about the more unusual – and sometimes humanizing – life of bees. He's learned, for example, that bees have a death ritual. No, not the ages-old "telling of the bees," where someone tells the hives when the beekeeper or a loved one has died, but what bees do with other dead bees. O'Dowd says they will bring dead bees to specific places in his landscape, like a little bee burial ground.

O'Dowd also calls his bees – save the queen and the odd drone – "girls." But what about the drones? O'Dowd says they serve a specific purpose. The queen will seek out a drone, mate with him, then go back to the hive, where she will stay for the rest of her life.

"Who rules the nest is not the queen," he says, "but the girls." When the queen stops laying eggs, the girls will kill her. Then, he says, "they'll feed the larvae queen juice," and, if several bees could be the next queen, it's whoever emerges first.

So, the next time you see a bee in your Old Northeast yard, know that not only do they have their own special culture, they might also be making the neighborhood's very own HONNA honey. ●

Missed Art in the Garden, or want another taste of Old Northeast honey? Email info@honna.org to learn more. Find more about bees and beekeeping at pinellasbeekeepers.buzz or entnemdept.ufl.edu/honey-bee.

Coffee Pot Date Palms to Rise Again

Cathy Salustri

Many residents noticed that last year's Hurricane Ian brought down several of the medjool date palms along Coffee Pot Bayou. The popular winding promenade was already patchy as storms and other factors have felled at least 16 of the majestic palms since they were planted more than 20 years ago. But there's good news for fans of the exotic trees: The city of St. Pete has plans to restore them to their frond-ish glory.

Brian Eichler, assistant director of St. Pete's Parks and Rec department, says that the city will replant. "The city is in the process of receiving quotes for replacement of the palms and reviewing the current conditions of the areas that the trees were planted in to make sure they are suitable for replanting," he said. "Once we receive quotes and assessment of the area we will have a better idea on how best to move forward."

About that "reviewing current conditions" part of his answer: Eichler wants to make sure the current holes will offer the palms enough stability so they can take root in



Photo courtesy of the city of St. Petersburg



Photo by Arin Greenwood

their new neighborhood. "Palms have small root balls," he said, "so we want to make sure if the city makes another investment in these trees, the area will hold them secure moving forward."

How much of an investment? Eichler said mature medjool date palms cost between five and six thousand dollars per tree, and the city intends to replace the palms kind for kind to keep a uniform look. While medjool date palms are native to arid north Africa and the Middle East, they can also grow well in our tropical climate.

"If the soil is suitable and funding available," Eichler said, "our intent would be to replace in kind. I'm not sure why the city originally went with medjools instead of native palms. We are looking to replace in kind to be consistent along the corridor."

As for when people will once again see the graceful dancing palm fronds swaying in the sea breeze? That's still up in the air. "There is no timeline currently," Eichler said, "until we receive the cost and analysis of the holes is completed." ●

MEET YOUR WRITERS



Brandy Stark

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

I moved to St. Pete in 1992 from Lutz. I was born in St. Louis but moved to Florida when I was 4.

Favorite place to visit in St. Pete?

My art studio at ArtLofts. I love it there.

Your most interesting, enjoyable, or exotic vacation?

I am all about the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome. I have been to Rome 13 times, as well as Pompeii, Florence, Ostia, and similar sites. Rome is where my heart is, though.

Top two places in the world on your bucket list?

Transylvania and the Isle of Man.

What famous person would you like to meet and why?

Augustus Caesar. I would totally disagree with his politics, but his reign literally changed the Western world and impacted 2000 years of history.

Favorite sport, recreational activity, or hobby?

Pug wrangling. All of my hobbies are my jobs.

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

I am rewatching all 13 seasons of *Mystery Science Theater 3000*.

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

I'd say pug, but we all know that pugs are not dogs. They are small, slightly misshapen human/cat/canine/imp hybrids who exist to make us laugh. So, I would have to go with French Bulldog. I am sort of shaped like one (sigh) and I love their bravado!

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

I enjoy the religious founders from history: Confucius, Laozi, Jesus, Buddha, and Moses. Confucius believed that humans were reasonable and loved education (so do I); Laozi taught us to go with the flow; Jesus was about treating others with kindness; Buddha teaches on the mind and attitude; and Moses teaches about patience.

Current book you've read and would recommend?

I am reading *Severed: A History of Heads Lost and Heads Found* by Frances Larson. This book is not for everyone – it discusses the act of decapitation, preservation, and depiction of heads in history. It's not something that I would have thought that I'd be reading, but it is very insightful.

Tell us about an accomplishment of which you are proud.

When I went in to propose, then later to defend, my PhD dissertation, I was sweating profusely (cold sweat). I managed to calm my nerves, pass both, and have been "Dr. Stark" since 2010. I also love that I have three graduate degrees on top of that – two of them just for the fun of it.

Something people might not know about you?

I am a mutant who has webbed toes on both feet. Like my grandfather, I can wiggle my pinkie toe independently of all my other toes.

Tell us something about your family and pets.

I have a pug grumble, with each pug named for a character from Greek mythology. I have a rat mischief (colony), and a bearded dragon named Pumpkin. Yes, my household is as much fun as it sounds! I was able to purchase the house next door to my mother, Gail, so we literally live next to each other, with a walking path between the houses.



M. Shackelford Burns

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

I've lived in St. Pete with my wife, Megan, for just over two years now. I am originally from Aberdeen, Scotland and previously

lived the past 35 years in Canada, mostly on the west coast – or as we affectionately call it, the "wet coast."

Favorite place to visit in St. Pete?

The Dali Museum – so inspiring and fun! Book and Bottle to relax on a Sunday afternoon, and enjoy a nice cappuccino and vegan croissant while perusing so many great book titles!

Your most interesting, enjoyable, or exotic vacation?

Traveled to Peru with Megan in 2013 where we adventured into the jungle and proposed marriage to each other.

Top two places in the world on your bucket list?

Turkey and Wales – I'm a huge fan of *The Prisoner* TV series that was originally filmed there.

What famous person would you like to meet and why?

I would love to meet Nikola Tesla. He was a genius and ahead of his time, and held the key to harnessing free energy. A fascinating man.

Favorite sport, recreational activity, or hobby?

Playing music and performing in public. I am a drummer and percussionist, play some guitar, and I love to sing.

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

The movie *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. I am also currently re-visiting with *Seinfeld*. Always a classic.

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

A husky

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

My wife inspires me every day with her dedication and commitment to healthy living. She is the kindest and hardest-working person I know next to my mum.

Current book you've read and would recommend?

Shatterday by Harlan Ellison and *Greenlights* by Matthew McConaughey

Tell us about an accomplishment of which you are proud.

When I was 19 years old, I worked as a camera assistant on the finish line of the cross-country and biathlon events for the 1988 Winter Olympic Games in Alberta, Canada. This began my career in TV and film and was an amazing start for someone so young.

Something people might not know about you?

I am a well-seasoned world traveler and began my globe-trotting adventures at the age of 9, living in places from Denmark to Brazil, Australia to Africa for periods spanning three months to two years at a time. I have a secret desire to drive the Autobahn in Germany in a high-speed Mercedes. My ancestry is half Scots, Mongolian (by way of Northeast India), and Bavarian.

Tell us something about your family and pets.

I love my family. I have two fully grown children and am very blessed. Our family is very large and covers the globe – I literally have 100s of relatives in India alone! Currently without a family pet and seeking to adopt as Megan and I both love animals. We are fortunate to live in a place where we can see turtles, manatees, dolphins, and exotic birds on a daily basis.



Jeannie Carlson

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

It's been nearly 40 years since I moved to St. Pete from New York, so I consider myself a semi-native here. I was

born in the Scandinavian neighborhood of Bay Ridge in Brooklyn and grew up in the New York metropolitan area.

Favorite place to visit in St. Pete?

As a huge fan of coffee, seafood, classical music, museums, and theatre, St. Petersburg is very satisfying to me. I can't pick just one favorite since the city has so much to offer.

Your most interesting, enjoyable, or exotic vacation?

That's easy. In 2007 my uncle arranged a family roots trip to Scandinavia where, along with the U.S. branch of my family, I got to meet my Swedish cousins and experience Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the Aland Islands.

Top two places in the world on your bucket list?

For one, I'd like to take one of those Danube cruises; and go to the British Isles for the other.

What famous person would you like to meet and why?

Christina, Queen of Sweden in the 1640s. She was brilliant, and yet she abdicated her throne.

Favorite sport, recreational activity, or hobby?

Horseback riding

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

The Chosen TV series.

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

A Lab

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

My great grandfather, Carl M. Carlson, kept a journal of his life, entitled *Pastime: a Swede in America Looks Back*, which I have read. There is a great deal to admire there.

Current book you've read and would recommend?

The Righteous Mind by Jonathan Haidt

Tell us about an accomplishment of which you are proud.

I am proud of my book, *Landmarks in the Sand*, and my forthcoming book, *Aland A Land*, due out next year.

Something people might not know about you?

I performed with the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players and sang opera with Amato Opera in NYC. Locally, I sang with Opera Tampa.

What do you do for a living?

I have been a correspondent for *Tampa Bay Newspapers* since 1998, and have been a contributing writer for the *Northeast Journal* since 2016. I taught English and English literature courses at both St. Petersburg College and Hillsborough Community College for six years before the pandemic.

Tell us something about your family and pets.

I live with my charming husband of 25 years and our chatty housecat. My wonderful son, delightful daughter-in-law, and fabulous grandson live in Dallas.

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 Tights pathetically
 Plié purposeless perspiration ~
 Reluctant rosined slippers
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 Peripherally,
 The reflection is rectified to a brief
 Balancé of physical perfection ~
 Awakened, Aurora ardently
 Arabesques ~ And
 Giselle joyously
 Jetés in the mirror's momentary
 Mirage of poise on pointes ~
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~ Jeannie Carlson

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Mayor Al Lang was St. Petersburg's first "Mr. Baseball," and led the effort to bring spring training to St. Pete. Image circa 1919.

War I and took part in five major battles. Upon his return, his sweetheart and soon-to-be wife reflected, "Robbie left as a boy and came back a man." He became the owner of Robison's Camera Shop (advertising "Eastman Kodaks, Greeting Cards and Fountain Pens, and a Lending Rental Library") located at various downtown locations over the years, including 410 Central Avenue. The business was established by his father in 1921, but Robbie took it over the following year and evolved it into Romo Color Lab, Inc. It served not only St. Petersburg, but much of the West Coast of Florida, employing as many as 50 people.

Robison served on the city council from 1943 to 1947, including the position of vice mayor. One of his accomplishments was to establish a city-owned industrial park, the Tyrone Planned Industrial District, which later evolved into ECI, among other industrial uses. He also organized and directed the Community Blood Bank, served on the City Planning and Zoning Board for 11 years, and was board chair of the St. Petersburg Museum of History.

But Robison's passion was baseball. He got involved in Major League spring training. His grandson, Peter Robison, recalls his grandfather did photo processing for Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, and on at least one occasion, in 1932, he took the Babe alligator hunting in Gulfport.

Robison later chaired both the St. Pete and State of Florida Chamber of Commerce Baseball Committees and led efforts to build a new stadium to replace the old Waterfront Park Stadium. This was finally accomplished in 1947 after overwhelming approval in a public referendum. It was Robison's city council resolution that named the new stadium in Al Lang's honor.

Historian and city activist Walter Fuller wrote, "Robison eventually became Al's faithful lieutenant as his health failed, and ably and loyally has kept St. Petersburg in the fore of Florida baseball-wise since." This appears to be a bit of a gloss – Robison eventually had a falling out with Lang around 1959. He did not respond to Lang's concerns but was quick to credit Lang for all that he had accomplished when he died a year later. Robison stated, "[Lang] was a fabulous figure in the baseball world. His knowledge of the game, the players, and the scribes was unlimited. And they all knew and loved him. He was welcomed wherever he went. St. Petersburg, and Florida too, owe him much. We will all miss him."

When St. Petersburg lost the Yankees to Ft. Lauderdale in 1961, Robison is credited with leading efforts to replace them with the newly established New York Mets. The Mets were one of baseball's first expansion teams, organized to replace the Dodgers and Giants, which had left New York City. At age 72, Casey Stengel came out of retirement to manage the new team. In addition to Stengel from the Yankees, and Richie Ashburn from the Phillies, the Mets recruited such stars as Gil Hodges, Roger Craig, and Don Zimmer



Robbie Robison with Mets manager Yogi Berra. Yogi was a golfing partner of Robison. Image circa 1972.

from the Dodgers, and the one and only Yogi Berra from the Yankees.

Robison was a friend of Casey Stengel and Yogi Berra and saw them on many occasions when the Mets were in St. Pete. He helped Mets pitcher Tug McGraw (who coined the slogan "You Gotta Believe") find housing when he first arrived for spring training around 1966. Robison was especially close to the Mets' board chair Donald Grant who invited him to Shea Stadium games in Queens, including the World Series in 1969, which the Mets won in an upset. After that, the team was known as "the Amazing Mets."

At the state level, it was Robison who led much of the effort to prevent Arizona from enticing Major League spring training teams away from Florida. One of Robison's last initiatives was to establish a baseball museum in St. Pete. He raised \$37,000 for the project,

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but when city council refused to help fund the museum, he returned every penny to the donors. His grandson Peter recalls that he also collected considerable baseball memorabilia for the museum. What happened to that is unknown.

In the mid 1920s, St. Petersburg was growing by leaps and bounds. Charles Hall and his Victory Land Company developed Lakewood Estates in South St. Pete, which boasted the Lakewood Golf and Country Club (now the St. Petersburg Country Club) whose butterfly fairways weave throughout the neighborhood. Lakewood was part of the PGA Tour from 1930 to 1964, with such golf legends as Bobby Cruickshank, Sam Snead, and Ben Hogan among many others competing there. Robison invested in three lots on Anastasia Way in Lakewood facing the 13th fairway in 1950 for \$600 each. Peter Robison's father, Donald, built a home on one of the lots in 1963.

Robbie Robison was an excellent golfer and a charter member of the Lakewood Country Club. Peter remembers that when he was a young teen about 12 or 13 years old, his grandfather suddenly appeared at the door and asked for a couple of beers. Peter dutifully took them to him and his golfing partner on the fairway. The golf partner turned out to be none other than Mets catcher Yogi Berra. Peter was amazed that Yogi was not much bigger than he. "I was as tall as he was."

Robbie Robison died in 1978 at age of 79. The *Evening Independent* ran a full-page banner headline announcing his passing on the front page, and the *St. Petersburg Times* ran a similar banner on the first page of the sports section. John Lake, publisher of the *Times* and *Independent*, said at the time, Robison "was completely unselfish... He did a hell of a job for us." St. Louis Cardinals owner August A. Bush, Jr. noted,



Grandson Peter Robison with his wife Mary Ellen

Courtesy of Robison Family



Robbie Robison (left of gator with glasses) and Babe Ruth alligator hunting in 1932.

industry, much of it in the west, but in 2010 Peter returned to St. Petersburg and built a new home on one of the Lakewood lots his grandfather had purchased 60 years before.

Peter himself played short stop and first base when he was a kid in Lake Maggiore Little League and Junior Major League at Hoyt Field in Gulfport. He keeps up his family tradition on the diamond as coveted "A" (Alternate) player for the world-famous Kids and Kubs Three-Quarter Century Soft Ball Club who play at North Shore field from November through March. Kids and Kubs regular players must be 74 years or older, but each year the club accepts a few "younger players" (73 if you are male, and 71 if female) to fill in when regular players are absent. The Kids and Kubs are now in their 93rd season – it's very likely Peter's grandfather watched some of their games. ●

Will Michaels is a former executive director of the St. Petersburg Museum of History and the author of The Making of St. Petersburg and the Hidden History of St. Petersburg. Contact him at wmicahals2222@gmail.com.



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AROUND THE BLOCK

Lemonade Entrepreneurs



Henry Boyd (4th grade) and Lillian Boyd (pre-K4) were in the lemonade business on 1st Street NE during the Old Northeast Neighborhood Yard Sale in March. Parents Jennifer and Chad Boyd have instilled a good work ethic and very polite manners in these entrepreneurs. Steve and Jeana Seibert of 13th Ave NE supported the youngsters' efforts and enjoyed hand-squeezed orangeade and lemonade, as well as yummy homemade scones, moist with orange juice and zest, topped with icing.

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Exploring the Iconic Vinoy's Recent Renovations

Cindy Cockburn

In St. Pete, our beloved Vinoy Resort was sold, renovated, and just named a member of the Marriott's prestigious luxury Autograph Collection. An icon for nearly 100 years, the Vinoy has survived a lengthy renovation, while locals played the waiting game with faith that her refreshed look will still reflect the resort's rich history.

The hotel has always endured the highs and lows of life with a certain charm, managing to entertain guests from movie stars and dignitaries to presidential candidates and demanding brides. Celeb sightings are legendary: the Princess of Spain, Jimmy Stewart, Babe Ruth, the du Ponts, the Guggenheims, and more have walked her halls. Now, the first phase of the Vinoy's latest facelift is finally over, and she continues to watch over booming downtown with glowing reviews and the sophisticated vibe we know and love.

With or without construction zone barriers, our love affair with our sweet pink neighbor (just 100 steps from my condo door) continues. Through the long months of renovations, I've still enjoyed meeting my friends and neighbors, clients, and out-of-town relatives at Paul's Landing for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. I would go in the back entrance and wind through the maze of the hotel's "back of house" construction obstacle course and up at the casual restaurant overlooking the pool and the marina. I call it my very own Old Northeast secret getaway. Try it at sunset for happy hour – there's nothing like dining al fresco year-round.

Recently, I met with Nikki Gaskin-Capehart at the Vinoy. She's the former Director of Urban Affairs for the city of St. Pete, and now the founder and Senior Coach of The Network of Gifted Consultants Team. We sat together, looking around at the renovations and celebrated the first-year anniversary of her own boutique consulting firm. A proud mom, she was also celebrating the upcoming college graduation of her daughter Giovana Capehart from the University of North Florida after a photoshoot at the James Museum.

"We have been enjoying the Vinoy for years," she said. "I love the new furniture and décor. It's much more vibrant, and the more contemporary look is so inviting. I look forward to going to events in the newly renovated ballroom."

Also renovated is the Vinoy Spa for hair, nails, massage, and facials. I've been missing treatments there for over a year now, but as of April 8, it's open. The new spa offers treatments inspired by the healing properties of the ocean and a holistic approach to skin and wellbeing. The space is updated with a sleek feel and very inviting.

Sold and Refreshed

When the Vinoy was sold a few years back, we held our breath. Would the new owners be committed to excellence? Tampa Bay Bucs owner Bryan Glazer paid \$188.5 million for the historic resort and is thrilled to show off his changes. "I have enjoyed every minute of this renovation," he told me one afternoon, sitting on the veranda with a big grin on his face. He explained the joy and excitement of being able to personally create a new look and how inspired he is to offer a new culinary option. The award-winning formal Marchand's dining room we loved is gone, but the owner is looking forward to creating another fine dining restaurant in that beautiful space off the grand lobby. Since this will be the final renovation of his current project, the specific cuisine and chef have not been decided yet and Glazer is in no rush. We can only expect perfection.

New General Manager Vanessa Williams has overseen operations at the Vinoy for months now, working with the hotel team and getting it ready to become part of the Autograph Collection. The GM comes with impressive credentials. She used to run the Waldorf Astoria in Beverly Hills and has an extensive international hotel management background. Said Williams, "Being able to play my part alongside so many others in breathing new life into the iconic Vinoy is my magnum opus."



The updated valet circle at the Vinoy



The writer with Giovanna Capehart (L) and Nikki Gaskin-Capehart (R) at the Vinoy Veranda



The Vinoy lobby

Open for Business

For months, guests arriving by car had been directed to park behind the hotel, but valet parking is open once again. The reimagined arrival court highlights the dramatically detailed original portal and incorporates original 1920s brick.

Guests are now free to step up to the hotel's sweeping, historic porch, a gathering spot for locals and visitors alike with views of the heart of downtown. The Veranda dining hours on the porch are still being adjusted, and the bar is currently open from 2 p.m. to 12 a.m. You will still find construction, as the hotel works on a soon-to-be completed raised, outdoor patio, but guests can enjoy the Veranda menu of food and drinks outside. Be prepared for sticker shock: a glass of Veuve Clicquot champagne is \$34.

The Vinoy's historic rocking chairs – a tradition since 1925 – have also been kicked up a notch, with the new wooden chairs featuring thick, comfy cushions.

Lobby & Ballrooms

The Vinoy lobby is now home to the French patisserie, Lottie, offering house-made pastries and sweets, including signature pistachio cakes, macarons, gelato, and over 20 flavors of truffles. The menu offers classic French lunch fare, from seared tuna niçoise salad to quiche Lorraine and a jambon fromage sandwich on a croissant with brie, prosciutto, and fig jam.

Foodie writer Tom Scherberger was recently impressed: "The Vinoy's patisserie is a major upgrade, they clearly have a world-class pastry chef. It looks like some of the best pastries in town."

The lobby also offers shopping at Sunni Spencer, branded as "a personal lifestyle boutique," which also has a location in Tampa's Hyde Park.

The Grand Ballroom restoration is also complete, and the focal point continues to be the glass chandelier, *Luna*, designed by Dale Chihuly. The Palm Court Ballroom and entrance hall debut a neutral color palette and chic Art Deco chandeliers. In keeping with the hotel's position as an icon of the city, the Vinoy's 22 meeting rooms are named after St. Pete's parks.

Guest Rooms

The Rockwell Group's design refreshed the Vinoy's rooms and suites, many of which offer balconies and water views. My cousins from Clifton, New Jersey checked in for a visit in March and loved what they found.

"With a tip of one's hat to luxury hotels of days gone by, the Vinoy's renovated, ample-sized room and large 'let the Florida sunshine in' windows immediately let the guest know this isn't your run-of-the-mill hotel room," my cousin Karen said. "I wish my pocketbook would allow me to stay at the Vinoy each time I visit St. Petersburg."

The décor is influenced by Florida's coastal topography and feature the hotel's signature polished palette. Custom art by painter Alicia LaChance adorns the walls, while the floors transition from wood to custom, blue-patterned carpeting, presenting the look of sand meeting the sea. Many rooms have marble walk-in showers. Karen's not wrong about the cost, though. While room and suite rates vary daily and can be as low as \$400, they can run upwards of \$2000 a night, plus tax, depending on the season.

More to Come

Among other changes in the next phases, Parasol, opening this summer, will be a Latin-inspired, full-service outdoor restaurant. The Vinoy promises an island-like atmosphere featuring fresh seafood and craft cocktails, with a marble, wrap-around bar, and living green wall.

Overall, the updates to our iconic Vinoy are fresh and exciting while still retaining the historic detail and character it's known for as a member of the U.S. National Register of Historic Hotels of America. I am proud to report all is well and better than ever. ●

Shore Acres, the Shortcut That Never Was, Turns 100



Nathaniel Upham house under construction in the 1920s



An aerial photo of Shore Acres, circa 1926, shows Niel W. Upham's home at 4001 Alabama Avenue in the center.



Shore Acres trolley and club house, circa 1926



Shore Acres before development

Jon Kile

A century ago, St. Petersburg was in the midst of a massive real estate boom. Empty lots changed hands multiple times a day and developers took large groups of visitors on bus tours to inspect the newest neighborhoods. Snell Isle was taking shape, but the area beyond Perry Snell's development was considered a wild and distant place. The first house in Shore Acres sold in 1923, and on March 4 of this year, residents celebrated their neighborhood's centennial with the dedication of the new Shore Acres Rec Center followed by a 1920s-themed block party. Attendees clamored for seats on a historic trolley tour, highlighting the lesser-known, but fascinating, history of Shore Acres.

In the early 1900s, the area of today's Shore Acres was best known for its bodies of water: Smack's Bayou and Papy's Bayou (sometimes Pappy's Bayou). Getting there was an adventure, requiring a journey up a dusty, narrow 4th Street and then a trip east on today's 62nd Avenue. For many years, the land was in the hands of Hamilton Disston's Florida Land and Improvement Company, and then his cousin William H. Wright. Then along came Nathaniel Janeway Upham, a well-known real estate man from Duluth whose descendants still call the area home.

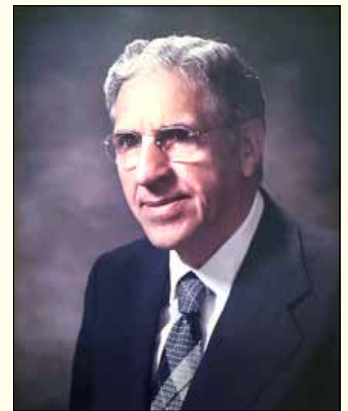
While Perry Snell was creating his eponymous development, Upham went to work on a neighborhood he decided to call Shore Acres – possibly named after an estate in Oregon, or possibly after a wildly popular, turn-of-the-century play, according to Gary Grudzinskas, current Shore Acres resident and president of the Council of Neighborhood Associations.

Unfortunately, Upham was a little late to the party, and when the boom came crashing down, so did his fortunes. By the time the boom ended, only a few homes had been built in Shore Acres. "What's intriguing about Nathaniel's story is that he had a vision and he planned that vision out. He was smart to use the dredges from the Gandy project in creating neighborhoods here," said Grudzinskas, who has conducted extensive research on his neighborhood's history, "But, he never saw it come true. In life you can dream big and do things just right for that dream to come true and then something happens out of your control. It was almost empty until the 1950s."

Upham died in 1942, but the land stayed in the family, as did his entrepreneurial spirit – passed to his sons, William and Nathaniel G. or "Niel." They learned from their father's experience, and the way he persevered during the Great Depression. Under their management Shore Acres took off in the post-World War II boom. This explains the unique character of the neighborhood today: predominantly mid-century, sturdy cinderblock houses



Nathaniel J. Upham



Bill Upham, son of Nathaniel J. Upham

with unique 1920s homes mixed in. And of course, there is an increasing amount of new construction in the form of larger homes built high above the flood line. Perhaps if Upham had christened the neighborhood Upham Acres, his name would ring as loudly as St. Pete's other developers. Alas, today, the name is more familiarly linked to Upham Beach, another area where Nathaniel's early work stalled, and ultimately flourished under the tenacity of his sons.

Nathaniel Upham was initially drawn to this piece of land because he believed it would be well-trafficked by people to and from Tampa via the Gandy Bridge. A scenic waterfront road was a major goal and big part of his marketing. A wooden bridge connecting Shore Acres with Weedon Island is long gone and the neighborhood isn't a shortcut or scenic route. The community is unique partially because of its sense of remoteness, or as Grudzinskas put it, "You don't pass through Shore Acres to go anywhere."

Fellow resident and Realtor Kevin Batdorf agrees that Shore Acres has a special sense of community. "The centennial event was such a huge success; we plan to continue it as an annual Founders Day event [on the first Saturday in March]. We also had over 1,000 people at the Easter Egg Hunt." Batdorf is the president of the Shore Acres Civic Association, which not only fosters a sense of community through

Photos courtesy of Mary Ann Will and Upham family descendants

“Until we had this celebration,
I had no idea about the history of Shore Acres.”

social events, but also fought to keep the local fire station, advocated for a higher 40th Avenue bridge (also known as the Nathaniel J. Upham Bridge) for boat traffic, and played a significant role in shaping Shore Acres’ new rec center.

Back in the mid 1990s, Batdorf even wrote himself into Shore Acres folklore. In the tradition of creative St. Pete real estate men, Batdorf confessed to being the source of the rumor that Al Capone had a house in Shore Acres. “We were listing this very old house and I tripped over a throw rug in the kitchen. Underneath was a huge trap door, leading to a space big enough to stand in. We decided it had to be an escape hatch or something. It was all a marketing ploy to suggest Al Capone

built it. All a lark.” While he’s known to have visited the area, no evidence has been uncovered that Capone ever came to St. Pete. But the rumor has been repeated enough times that the house at 5426 Venetian Blvd. N. is known as the Al Capone House.

The celebration of Shore Acres’ one hundredth birthday culminated at city hall on April 13 with a presentation led by City Councilman Ed Montenari in the presence of Nathaniel Upham’s granddaughter, Mary Ann Will, and great-grandson, Niel Allen. The mayor and council declared the date Shore Acres Day with Montenari, whose parents once lived in the neighborhood, noting, “Until we had this celebration, I had no idea about the history of Shore Acres.” ●

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Lasting Impressions: Japanese Prints from the Read-Simms Collection was organized by the Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston, South Carolina

KATSUSHIKA HOKUSAI, *South Wind, Clear Dawn (Red Fuji)* from the series *Thirty-six Views of Fuji*, c. 1831-33, Color woodblock print. Image courtesy of Gibbes Museum of Art



SHASHIN

Japanese Photographs from the Meiji era, 1870-1900

ON VIEW THROUGH JULY 23

Kusakabe Kimbei, *Umbrella Maker* (detail), c. 1880, Albumen print, Gift of Ludmila and Bruce Dandrew from The Ludmila Dandrew and Chitraneep Drapkin Collection

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A St. Pete Shuffleboard Glow Up

If a person playing the game when St. Pete's shuffleboard club first opened 99 years ago encountered glow-in-the-dark courts, they wouldn't believe their eyes. But don't worry, purists – the look is only temporary.

In March, St. Pete Shuffle, at 559 Mirror Lake Drive North, lit up downtown after volunteers and staff painted eight of the courts with glow-in-the-dark paint and blasted the area with UV lights. "It looked really cool, I have to admit," said club member and volunteer Doug Dozark. "Like cosmic bowling, but outside, for shuffleboard."

Dozark's such a fan of the club, he and his wife had their wedding there. And it was Dozark and fellow shuffler Josh Dulabaum who hatched the idea to give a



temporary glow to the soon-to-be-repainted courts pro bono – just for fun. The club was up for a scheduled maintenance painting anyway, so trying out the neon look wasn't a huge deal. With the permission from staff, they took a crack at it before a tournament.

"We're not artists," Dozark said with a laugh. "And we ordered the lights off Amazon... people loved it though, there was a great reaction. The paint didn't affect how people played at all, and we had a lot of people in town who just thought it was so cool."

The glow-in-the-dark paint formula was covered with a much-needed fresh coat of regular paint shortly after its moment in the limelight. However, the concept may be repeated next fall. "It's something fun for us to do, and I think people really liked it," said St. Pete Shuffle staff member Lela Gonzalez. "We would be open to doing it again."

In recent years, St. Pete's historic shuffleboard club has seen a revival, and a huge jump in members. Mixing it up with lights and paint might also help bring in younger players and introduce them to the classic sport once considered a senior pastime.

"I think the real serious shuffleboard members wanted to make sure the paint didn't mess with the game, and it didn't," Dozark said. "I think the younger population thought it was cool. I know we did." ●

There's no date yet for the next glowing shuffle, but fans of the club can keep an eye out for events and more at stpeteshuffle.com.

~ Abby Baker



Left: St. Pete Shuffle lit their courts with temporary glow-in-the-dark paint in March. Above: The St. Pete Shuffleboard Club has seen a recent revival.

"We'd definitely try it again."

~ Lela Gonzalez, St. Pete Shuffle staff member

Mid-Century Vintage: Sunken Garden's New Sign

When we heard the news that Sunken Gardens' welcome sign was down and a work crew with a bulldozer was on the move, a lot of people were alarmed that yet another iconic piece of St. Pete history might disappear. With all the development underway, it's hard to not to overreact. What might be next on the chopping block? First Wilson's, then El Cap changed hands, and now our favorite historic garden?

But as we now know, there was no need for concern. According to Jennifer Tyson, Sunken Gardens education coordinator, the previous Sunken Gardens welcome sign had some structural damage and was well beyond repair after decades of Florida's sun and storms.

It also wasn't the original, but a sign that had gone up in 2003, when the city was still busy revamping the gardens after purchasing it from the Turner family in 1999. In fact, says Tyson, there have been multiple iterations of the sign over the years, including one that had a toucan instead of flowers, part of a marketing campaign to promote Sunken Gardens' once-popular bird shows.

The new sign, 30 feet tall with 40-inch letters, meets today's hurricane wind requirements. It's an eye-catching display at night with neon-bright LED lighting, and during the day it looks fabulous with its retro coral pink backdrop and stylized flowers. It's a design that more closely resembles the original 1960 mid-century modern version, Tyson says. It also helps capture Sunken Gardens' role as one of the most popular roadside attractions in the Southeast, helping usher in an era of



prosperity for St. Pete, and boosting sales for the city's many "drive-in" motels that populated 4th Street in the '50s and '60s.

For years, most preservation in the city has centered on saving beautiful 1920-era homes and buildings. But more recently, there's been interest in the mid-century modern style of the '50s and '60s – not just homes, but also the signage. This was the "Atomic Age" and many of the signs featured cool, abstract geometric shapes. Sunken Gardens, with its green Chevron arrow pointing to the flowers, fits right in.

In 2012, the city code was amended to establish a procedure by which select historic signs could be recognized, with the goal of helping "preserve a sense of place dating to an earlier era." The city has a fascinating online database showcasing many of these signs. In addition to several versions of Sunken Gardens' signs, you'll also find St. Pete landmarks like Biff Burger, Ace Hardware, Derby Lane, Fray's Donut, West Central Shopping Center, El Cap, and dozens of old motels like the Sandman and Landmark. You can take a look at tinyurl.com/historic-signs. ●

~ Janan Talafer

HEY, WHAT'S THAT?

Your Guide to Yard Oddities in Old Northeast

Sometimes the most common plants can do amazing things. You've probably seen places where bright green grass grows in the thin cracks in between our Augusta Blocks, while a nearby lawn struggles to grow in rich irrigated soil. Oak tree saplings often find rain gutters to be a fine place to begin their life. Fruit trees are known to emerge where its ancestor was removed many years ago.

This edition's yard oddity is actually one of the most popular house plants in America. The golden pothos (and its sister, the heartleaf philodendron) are loved for how easy they are to care for. They are tolerant of light, shade, moisture, and periods of drought. In short, they're hard to kill (although I've done it).

If you have a neglected golden pothos it still can do something incredible, and the evidence is in yards all over the Old Northeast. Golden pothos plants, discarded or cast into yards for one last gasp at life can do things their indoor brethren can't. Like certain fish and reptiles that will grow larger in larger tanks, the golden pothos will grow, spread, and climb. The leaves, which would normally fit in the palm of your hand, can grow to the size of hubcaps. They can develop fat air roots, the thickness of a garden hose, and they can slither towards the tops of tall oaks and up the sides of homes and fences.

All of this glory comes with a couple of caveats. First, those interested in a Florida-friendly landscape will know that the golden pothos isn't a native plant. It comes from Southeast Asia, Australia, and some Pacific Islands. But it's not a scourge like Brazilian pepper or melaleuca. In Florida it is classified as a Category II invasive species meaning that it has spread in the wild but hasn't done serious ecological damage.



The other warning on the golden pothos is that it is poisonous to cats and dogs. When eaten, they can cause serious inflammation of the mouth, throat, and digestive system. While they might not be a delicious snack, curious cats and dogs have been known to develop big problems from munching on their leaves.

Golden pothos may not be the right plant to cover your yard, but the big broad leaves and winding vines that can come from these humble house plants are something to marvel at. ●

~ Jon Kile

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



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