



NORTHEAST JOURNAL

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EST. SEPTEMBER 2004

Good People ∞ Good Places ∞ Good Things Happening

Santa's Helpers Are Busy at the Christmas Toy Shop

Janan Talafer

Greetings from St. Petersburg's version of the North Pole: the Christmas Toy Shop. From the outside, you would never suspect the treasure chest of toys inside. Cars zip by the nondescript beige building on 16th Street close to downtown, not far from Tropicana Field. The only hint as to the shop's mission is

the slogan below the building's logo: "We exist so no child will be without Christmas."

The Marine Toys for Tots program might get more national recognition, but on the local level, the Christmas Toy Shop deserves credit for making a powerful difference for families in need. "We've had young adults stop by and say

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Jane Cook and Bonnie Otis (right), an ONE resident and retired art teacher, volunteer at the Christmas Toy Shop.

Mighty Storms of Tampa Bay

Will Michaels

While there have been many near-miss hurricanes in the Tampa Bay area – including the most recent, Hurricane Irma – there are only two so far that have really made the history books. These are the hurricanes of 1848 and 1921. We will not recount the distant 1848 hurricane here. For those interested, you may read about that in my book *The Making of St. Petersburg*.

But on October 25, 1921, a hurricane hit Tampa Bay by way of Tarpon Springs. Known as the Tarpon Springs Hurricane or the Tampa Bay Hurricane, this storm at one point reached Category

4 status with winds of 140 mph while out over the Gulf. Exact estimates on its wind speed when it made landfall just above Tarpon Springs vary between 100 and 115 mph, but the National Weather Service (NWS) reports it to have been a Category 3 hurricane (111-129 mph). Historical reports of the 1921 storm surge vary somewhat, depending on exactly where they were measured. Higher levels seem to have occurred on the east side of Tampa Bay, perhaps as a result of hurricane winds from the southwest and west.

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It does not take a direct hit to do severe damage. This 1926 photo shows early St. Petersburg celebrated pilot Johnny Green's hangar on the site of today's Vinoy Hotel after it was damaged by a hurricane that crossed the state from the east coast. Courtesy of Michaels Family Collection



Ken Wilson on the road with his Vespa scooter

Open Road, Open Heart

Rebecca Malowany

THE REAL LIFE ADVENTURES OF KEN WILSON

Old Northeast resident, Ken Wilson, is a Vietnam veteran, pilot, world traveler, motor-scooter enthusiast, blogger, and humanitarian. Ken has been traveling the world since he was six months old when his parents crossed the Atlantic via a military transport ship with Ken in tow. His lifelong obsession with travel and adventure has taken him across oceans – by boat and plane – and North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa on a Vespa scooter! Ken also is a passionate volunteer dedicated to a number of local and international charitable causes. I sat down with Ken to learn more about his story, adventures, and how he is paying it forward.

NEJ: Where did you grow up?

KW: I was born in Germany and raised in North Carolina.

NEJ: What is your professional background?

KW: I worked as a professional pilot for over 38 years. I was an Army helicopter pilot. After Vietnam, I worked in the oil exploration business flying planes and helicopters in Third World countries. In my 30s, I became a commercial airline pilot for US Airways where I worked for twenty years. After they went into their second bankruptcy, I decided to retire.

NEJ: When did you move to St. Pete?

KW: My wife, Vicki, and I bought our place here in the Old Northeast in 2000. We split our time between the house and a boat we lived aboard for 17 years. Around 2006-2007, we sold our boat and moved into the St. Pete house full-time.

NEJ: What type of boat did you live aboard, and where did you travel on it?

KW: We started on a Watkins 36' sailboat. Then we moved up to a 45' trawler that a friend of mine had custom built in Taiwan. During that period, we spent our time moving up and down the East Coast and going to and from the Abaco Islands, in the Bahamas.

NEJ: What brought you to St. Pete?

KW: The boat brought us here! The boat needed some maintenance, so we took it to Ruskin for servicing. The maintenance was supposed to take three months. It ended up taking a year. We knew we liked it here and once we put our boat in for maintenance, we decided to rent a place in the Old Northeast.

NEJ: How did you get interested in Vespas? What is so special about them?

KW: I turned 60 and I thought I needed something exciting to do, but I can't have a motorcycle (because I go too fast). I always admired Vespas because they are everywhere in Europe.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Let Time Stand Still

Wowie, so much has happened since the last issue of the *Northeast Journal* hit the streets! At that time, Irma was threatening us with large-scale devastation (thankfully she was full of mostly hot air!), and already the holiday season is upon us.

I would say it's time to breathe.

Which brings me to the following: have you thought about meditating? Do you already meditate? Please go to our brand new Facebook page (www.facebook.com/NortheastJournalFL) and let us know your thoughts and experiences about meditation. I recently signed up for a 21-day free, online, daily guided meditation focusing on the concept of time and "making every moment matter." The hosts are Oprah and Deepak Chopra and, boy, do they have some wisdom between them!

One of the concepts discussed, which really rang true for me, was the idea that we can make time stand still... in each and every moment... and that most Westerners suffer time sickness. Time sickness is when we all rush about frantically trying to race a clock in a stressful state of mindlessness. Acting in this manner creates physiological changes in the body that wear it out quickly.

What if we put our attention on each moment and notice it without a bunch of background past and future thoughts inducing fear and stress?

Sounds impossible, but when we practice meditation, we are training our mind to remain present which brings us all kinds of amazing benefits... including a much greater sense of peace and 'more' time.

Most of us suffer stress and anxiety during the holiday season because we are racing against time and an unrealistic notion that we need to buy, buy, buy to make our friends and loved ones happy. If you think about it, each of these stressors is a cultural fabrication and touches on notions from our past and our future. When we take a step back and look at the spiritual intentions underlying the holidays – the spirit of giving and receiving, and the joy of spreading light and love – we can automatically feel a sense of calm and peace. This is because we are tapping into the goodness of humanity that exists in our core being, and are living in that moment and that moment only.

While reading this issue of the *Northeast Journal*, try to really let the goodness and heart and soul of each article sink in. You will feel a greater sense of peace, joy and gratitude for being where you are in this moment.

Happy holiday season!

Jen

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SEASON'S GREETINGS FROM THE NORTHEAST JOURNAL TEAM

The *Northeast Journal* team takes great pride in showcasing what makes Northeast St. Pete unique, vibrant, endearing, and a little bit edgy. It is with passion and delight that we share with you what makes our neighborhood a source of diverse talent, neighborly focus, and steadfast camaraderie, along with a slice of artistic excellence.

We would like to sincerely thank and introduce our writers. 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. Below are the writers featured in this issue, so check each issue to read about the people who bring you stories of all that is good in our part of town.



Jen MacMillen (*publisher*) began her publishing business in San Francisco in 1988. Today, she publishes four print journals featuring communities in Vermont, New Hampshire, and here in St. Pete. Jen has two daughters, Dewey and Maisie, and enjoys being together any free time the three have. And she loves growing her good-news-only publishing business.



Elizabeth Craib (*content manager*) uses her creative skills in generating informative and inspirational content for our Vermont and New Hampshire publications. She also helped streamline the Village Green office and its ad tracking system, including the *Northeast Journal's*. She lives in Vermont with her family enjoying all that the area has to offer.



Nikki Fortier (*operations manager/bookkeeper*) is a lifelong resident of Vermont where she works behind the scenes to manage the details that help our publications keep moving along. She is the mother of 4 children who keep her very busy. She enjoys travel, theater, football, live music and spending time with family and friends.



Susan Williams (*advertising director*) has helmed the ad sales of the *Northeast Journal* since 2005. A native-New-Yorker-turned-Florida-girl, Susan loves living in downtown St. Pete near her dear parents and friends.
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Jeannie Carlson (*managing editor*) is a correspondent for Tampa Bay Newspapers, Inc. and an adjunct professor of English at local colleges in the area. A resident of the Old Northeast since 2000, she is the publicity/entertainment chair for the Suncoast Scandinavian Club.
[carlburn@tampabay.rr.com]



Julie Johnston (*art director/copy editor/sometimes writer*) says, "Graphic design is 'home' for me. It's a natural fit for my synesthetic mind." Julie is a freelance graphic designer, theatre technician, and gemologist. And that's her fur-baby who was found... in a box! His name is, of course, Jack in the Box.
[johnstongraphicdesigner@gmail.com]



Jamie Mayo (*distribution/subscription mgr*) is from Strongsville, OH, came to Florida in 1979, and owns Wife – for hire. She partnered with the *Journal* in 2004, having many roles, currently distribution, door-to-door, and subscriptions. She has 6 amazing children including adopted and in-law. "My other love is Jesus, who gratefully gets me through each day."



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



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



Linda Dobbs, 12-year ONE resident; lived/worked in 10 states and three continents; a journalist/editor for 40 years; member of City's International Relations Committee and Dali Guild; Tai Chi enthusiast; docent-in-training at Sunken Gardens. Husband Bob, 3 children, 3 grandchildren. [linda_dobbs@yahoo.com]

Brian Fernandes is originally from New York City and was raised in North Port (Sarasota County), Florida. Brian loves learning about people and staying up-to-date with politics and foreign affairs. He lives in Tampa, loves jogging, and is an avid reader. [brianfernandes941@gmail.com]



Sara W. Hopkins has lived in Chicago, New York, London, and Los Angeles prior to St. Petersburg. She is a former literary agent and now is vice president of a local corporate training company. In her spare time, she writes novels and screenplays.



Diana Krause Gegan, a UCF grad, taught school and later excelled in the financial services field. She found her passion in real estate and utilizes her skills and training as a successful Realtor. She loves spending time with friends and family, studying God's Word and giving back to the St. Pete community.



Lynn Lotkowitz retired from *Florida Trend Magazine*, lives downtown with her husband Bill who is an entertainer, and has one son, Jason, who lives in New York City with his wife, Lauren, and son, Drake (4). Lynn's passions are family, health and fitness, volunteering, and world travel.



Becky Malowany is a Tampa Bay native, Snell Isle resident, freelance writer, and businesswoman. She earned her Master's Degree from the George Washington University and Bachelor's from FSU. Becky has a passion for travel, art, sports, animal welfare, and the environment. [rlemmon123@gmail.com]



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]



Emily Norton is an aspiring writer and editor who moved to the Old Northeast last year. She currently works as a copy editor and art researcher in addition to voluntarily managing the Charming_Old_Northeast Instagram account. [emjnorton@gmail.com]



Holly K. Walker has over 20 years of experience in speaking and writing both professionally and socially. She has been a resident of NE St. Petersburg since 1995. She is married and has two children. She also enjoys philanthropy and serves on several boards. [walker93@gte.net]



Janan Talafer A long-time Snell Isle resident, Janan Talafer enjoys writing about people and places in St. Petersburg, her adopted hometown. She loves swing dancing, blues music, and gardening, even when the weeds threaten to overtake the yard. [janantalafer@gmail.com]



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



ONE Inspires

Jeannie Carlson



MOTH LIGHT

She landed on a mirror
 Mirror on the wall
 And found love
 In all its delicacies
 In all its obfuscations
 Funneled flat
 Into a single dimension
 Denying all its imperfections
 Denying all its dangers
 Sticking to the ultrasonic glass
 Until paralyzed
 By the miracle of a rainbow



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 Like Morse code
 Casting the whiff of a lure
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GOODNESS InDEED

Wunderfarms Growing Food for the Needy



Jeannie Carlson

Six years ago Ray Wunderlich, a community farmer with a green thumb and a big heart, founded Wunderfarms, a non-profit, organic food-growing enterprise to benefit the needy in St. Petersburg. According to the wunderfarms.com website, Wunderlich began his “all-volunteer, organically grown and propagated demonstration and education vegetable/fruit garden in the city’s Pioneer Settlement section of Boyd Hill Preserve” at 3130 31st Street South, Gate 4, in St. Pete.

Wunderfarms community garden is located on the west side of the Pioneer Settlement where the farmhouse, blacksmith, and sawmill are located. The garden is in a “large raised-bed style” in an 80 x 50-foot area. The approximately one-half acre Wunderfarms garden blends in with the old Florida feel of the area just like Wunderlich does.

Wunderlich himself is a third-generation resident of St. Petersburg who graduated from Lakewood High School. Wunderlich’s father, a well-known pediatrician in the area, was a pioneer in nutritional medicine, promoting kale, healthy eating, and running as exercise long before it became fashionable. His father’s influence led Wunderlich into a career as a professional runner, track coach for Eckerd College, and volunteer for the City of St. Petersburg before embarking on his own path as a community farmer and composter.

No synthetic chemicals or pesticides are used. Only local resources are in play. It’s all organic. The compost is derived from organic refuse; ash from the fire pits; seagrass; and horse, goat, and chicken manure. The seagrass holds the moisture in the soil and keeps the weeds out. Wunderlich says that the salt from the seagrass is fine to use, that he never washes it off.

The loosely organized group of volunteers comes over to farm at the garden under Wunderlich’s tutelage on Sundays and Wednesdays, usually from 8am to noon.



Ray Wunderlich III (far left) and Robin Armstrong (above) keep Wunderfarms in the green with several locations around St. Pete.

“Volunteers may take a helping of a vegetable as a thank-you for their work each day they come when we are harvesting,” said Robin Wiltshire, the assistant to the director. Sixty percent of the crops raised go to feed the needy. “Last year we grew 1,000 pounds of produce per season so that those fresh veggies could go to soup kitchens, the working poor, and those in temporary need,” said Wiltshire.

Three years ago, Wiltshire came on board as Wunderfarms began to expand. Another St. Petersburg native who grew up in the Old Northeast, Wiltshire is a retired teacher who taught early childhood education to three-year-olds at Shorecrest for 15 years. At Wunderfarms, Wiltshire helps with the organization’s online presence, including website, Facebook, and Instagram platforms. She volunteers in the garden as a farmer and composter, gives tours to school groups who come to the farm, and takes pictures to enhance the farm’s marketing visibility.

Wunderfarms can always use more volunteers. Currently, they have some regular volunteers from St. Petersburg High School’s Environmental Club and also from Shorecrest Preparatory School. Shorecrest included Wunderfarms as one of their Service Week projects last March, sending about 20 high school students and two teachers for five days of work. College students from Eckerd College and USF-St. Pete sometimes volunteer as well. Even the City of St. Petersburg gets in the game by donating plants, saw dust, mulch, and planks from the saw mill at the Pioneer Settlement.

Three more Wunderfarms gardens have sprouted up in St. Petersburg. Woodlawn Garden is located at 2612 12th Street North; Oakdale Community Garden is located at 2719 Oakdale Street South; and Edgemoor Community Garden on Faith Covenant Church’s spare lot is located at 116 Hampton Avenue North.

Local businesses have become compost sponsors, such as Kahwa Coffee, Squeeze Juice Works, and St. Pete Brewing Company. Charities Wunderfarms donates to include St. Vincent de Paul Care Center, Daystar Life Centers, Salt Light Art – Homeless Outreach, My Place in Recovery, and they have just added the St. Pete Free Clinic this year. Wunderfarms also sells to Love Food Central and participates in the Sustainable Urban Agriculture Coalition.

“Wunderfarms will connect the community to organic food,” said Wunderlich. With four community-supported and organically grown gardens in St. Petersburg, he has made an impact since opening the original farm in 2011 at the Pioneer Settlement in Boyd Hill Preserve. By 2015, over 4,000 pounds of produce from Pioneer Garden alone were donated to local charities. Wunderfarms is well on its way to fulfilling its ongoing mission to provide the most nutrient-dense produce to the neediest populations in our community, to educate people on organic farming while pursuing sustainable practices, and to cultivate a community of engaged urban farmers. ●



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NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

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Rick Carson, editor • nsnaeditor@aol.com



We want to share our neighbors' thoughts about what it means to be neighborly in The Historic Old Northeast. Send your thoughts about The Historic Old Northeast (100 words or less) to nsnaeditor@aol.com. Won't you join us?

The Historic Old Northeast is the perfect palate for neighborly offerings. Most importantly, get to know your neighbors. Make the effort to introduce yourself, which will result in forming a network within your own community.

Suggestions for the neighborly experiences include being aware of any changes around you; are the neighbors going through a difficult time, are they remodeling, are they moving in or moving out? Any of these events are stressful and deserve a pot of soup or a batch of cookies.

If you have a dog, the canine will give you an opening to meet your neighbors because the Historic Old Northeast residents are drawn to dogs, and your dog will attract all sorts of conversational interactions. Be aware of events which are scheduled close to the neighborhood, patronize the local businesses and get to know the owners. Look and listen and never hesitate to stop and engage with a passerby from near or far. Being a good neighbor can give you life-long friends!

Jill McGrath



Your Historic Old Northeast Neighborhood Association invites and encourages you to stay connected and on top of programs, events and other happenings in our neighborhood. Want to learn more about the neighborhood, become involved, share ideas, learn about events and dates of Porch Parties, and provide feedback? Use social media and

'Like' and 'Share' our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/honnaorg.

WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED:

- Visit the HONNA website. www.honna.org
- Become a HONNA member. You'll receive periodic informative email announcements. honna.org/get-involved
- Volunteer for a project, program or

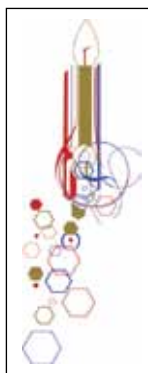
event (Trunk or Treat, the Candlelight Tour of Homes, Porch Parties, Crime Watch). For more info contact Nikki Taylor at volunteers@honna.org.

- Follow Historic Old Northeast Forever at www.historicoldnortheast-forever.org. HONF works "to preserve and protect our special neighborhood" (HONF is not affiliated with HONNA).



IT'S TIME FOR THE CANDLELIGHT TOUR OF HOMES

Be part of the 20th HONNA Candlelight Tour of Homes, the always-popular annual event which spotlights the diverse and distinctive architectural character of the ONE. The date is Sunday, December 10, from 3pm to 8pm. Tickets are available now at www.honna.org to purchase directly online, or check the site for a list of participating ticket outlets. The cost is \$20 per person now until the day of the Tour when the price is \$25. Proceeds of the Tour benefit HONNA's programs and projects with a portion going toward a local charity. So whether you traverse the neighborhood by car, complimentary trolley, bike, or on foot, do plan to enjoy an afternoon and/or early evening of festive holiday cheer.



Melissa Clark, HONNA Board member and Chair of the Tour



Museum of the American Arts and Crafts Movement

The HONNA meeting is on Monday, November 13, at Westminster Church (11th Avenue at 1st Street NE), with social time at 6:45 and the meeting beginning at 7pm. Speaking about the museum will be Tom Magoulis, the museum's executive vice president.

Election of HONNA Board members for the coming year will also take place at this meeting.

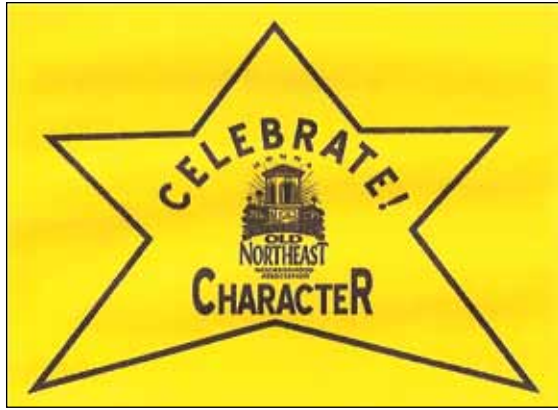
COME GET WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE SEASON

HONNA's annual December Holiday Party will be on Monday, December 18, 7-10pm at the Old Northeast Tavern. All Old NE neighbors are invited to take a break from the holiday craziness to gather with friends and new acquaintances for some time to decompress and enjoy one another's company. The cost is \$10 for pizza, salad, and dessert. There will be a cash bar. Please bring an unwrapped gift or book for a child or teen, which will be donated to a local charity.



LEARN ABOUT THE TERRIFIC ADDITION TO ST. PETE'S MUSEUM SCENE

Come to HONNA's November general meeting and find out about the Museum of the American Arts and Crafts Movement nearing completion in downtown St. Pete, on 4th Avenue between 3rd and 4th Streets North. Art collector, businessman, and philanthropist Rudy Ciccarello is funding the \$70 million museum through his Two Red Roses Foundation, and will showcase its outstanding collection of furniture, pottery, tile, lighting, photography, and other fine and decorative arts of the Arts and Crafts period – featuring names like Frank Lloyd Wright and Gustav Stickley.



Before (above) and After (below): 1630 2nd Street North and 101 27th Avenue North are the first recipients of the Historic Old Northeast Neighborhood Association's Neighborhood Star Award



SHINING STARS

The brainchild of members of one of Old Northeast's book clubs, the idea started as chat at a monthly meeting. Someone remarked about a renovation that transformed a nearby home. Wouldn't it be great to honor the homeowners for preserving or updating their home or property? A group interested in pursuing the idea met with Robin Reed (HONNA Planning & Preservation chair), and a star was born.

Many of us have heard developers say that it's more cost-effective to tear down a house than to do a major renovation, and we see examples of that happening all around us. However, many of us in the neighborhood will 'go the extra dollar' to keep the character and history of our homes intact. Let's pay tribute to these efforts.

Our neighborhood is full of examples of homeowners' care for their homes. From a complete makeover to a simple renovation, new landscaping, or fresh paint – we're recognizing our neighbors for the love and attention paid to their home with the Neighborhood Star Award. It's not hard to find examples. Going forward, every month, yard signs will be placed on properties to indicate an award. The first star goes to the home that sparked the idea, 1630 2nd Street North, as well as to 101 27th Avenue North.

Watch for new stars in the neighborhood monthly, and you'll be able to find them posted on www.honna.org and on HONNA's Facebook page. We invite you to be a part of this effort, so please feel free to nominate a neighbor or a refurbished property you admire in the ONE. Have a home to honor? Send the information to Charleen McGrath at treasurer@honna.org.

Charleen McGrath, HONNA Board member and Treasurer

On the Calendar

Check www.honna.org for details on these and other upcoming events.

- **Monday, November 13, 6:45pm:** Neighborhood meeting spotlighting the Museum of the American Arts and Crafts Movement/election of HONNA Board, Westminster Church
- **Sunday, December 10-20:** Annual Candlelight Tour of Homes
- **Monday, December 18:** Annual HONNA Holiday Party, Old Northeast Tavern

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Birds of a Feather – Helping Others

Holly Walker

It is better to give than receive. Studies have shown that there are several things in life that make people feel better: daily exercise, a challenging career, and giving back to those in need in the community. So, what inspired

Alison Payne, a resident of St. Petersburg, to start her organization and begin giving back to the community? Alison has four awesome grown sons and a wonderful husband. Her family owns an eyeglass manufacturing plant and also nine retail optical stores called Optimart. Alison wanted to show and share with her four sons how important it is to give back to our community.

Alison believes it is extremely important to give to others who have less. She searched for good organizations who would filter the recipients to be ones who were really trying to make a better life for themselves.

Alison then decided to create her own organization. The project is called Team Hope, meaning ‘hope’ for a better life. Her core group of friends, her sons, her sister-in-law, and many neighbors and new friends helped her build her organization. Volunteers help her by driving the flatbed trailer, lifting and hauling furnishings, and spreading the word about the items she needs. They also help by donating their own hand-me-down furnishings and by picking up and shelving items in the warehouse.

It has been a group effort which she would not have been able to start or continue without her volunteers’ support and help.

Ten years ago, Alison and her friends discovered there was a need to help people in the community starting out on their own. They have fully furnished from top to bottom over 45 apartments for women, young adults, and children in need. Her organization feels strongly that if they can supply individuals or families with most of their household needs, then the family members can focus on finding a job and bettering themselves. They can spend quality time with their children instead of spending their time trying to find pots and pans, dishes and

bedding. Team Hope has tons of items for young adults to pick from. It’s like a store... but it’s free; there is no cost to the individual or family in need.

For the past three Octobers, Alison participated in Megan Fetter’s Day of Giving ladies’ weekend retreats. Every year the weekend is more amazing than the prior year. According to Alison: “We love that we can learn about how to be better human beings by listening to the speakers Megan coordinates each year.”

Megan and her Day of Giving is a part of the Girls Night to Give (GNTG) program. Day of Giving is a monthly event. Each month ladies receive an invitation for an event at a different venue where proceeds go to a local 501(c)3 non-profit. The GNTG women are leaders, activists, go-getters, and true givers.

Alison’s husband’s family started their wholesale optical business 49 years ago with the kids in tow, with not much money at all, and took a chance. Now this many years later, “the third generation of cousins and brothers are working in the business... the business is booming and we are honored to give back to our community.”

Alison is blessed to have a comfortable life to have the resources to give to others. “God has richly blessed us continually when we give to others.” Her husband and brother-in-law give Team Hope a large warehouse space at no cost. This is one of Optimart’s many ‘give backs’ to the community. The word has spread and Alison and her team receive many phone calls and requests for kitchen/bathroom/bedroom/living room items that people want to give away. (If you’d like to donate gently used items like coffee pots, dishes, towels, pots and pans, bedding, irons, blenders, and baking dishes, you can email her at payne.ah@gmail.com.)

At the present time, Team Hope is working closely with a nonprofit called Ready for Life. This group helps foster young adults between the ages of 17 and 25 who are aging out of the foster system. They don’t have much money and need everything for their new apartments, so Team Hope lets them come and shop. “We help them load up their boxes and we pray with them and send them on their way.



Volunteers Megan Fetter and Alison Payne



Team Hope at Pinellas County Hope House for men transitioning from foster care



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We try to explain to them that they are worthy and important,” said Alison.

For Alison’s son’s 18th birthday, he surprised her by foregoing presents and asking his friends to bring kitchen and bathroom supplies (paper towel, toilet paper, and cleaning supplies) to donate to Team Hope instead.

Eleven years ago, Megan Fetter read about a group of women in California who were hosting in-home events with friends and asking everyone to bring a check for charity. She had a group of friends like that, so she brought the idea back home. Megan’s first event was in March of 2007 in her home, benefitting The American Cancer Society. Since that time, her group of contacts has grown through word of mouth. As a result, Girl’s Night to Give has hosted over 70 events and raised close to \$100,000.

These women make connections and friendships while giving back to their community. The support is two-fold: they support small, local charities that focus on women and children, while also supporting local businesses including shops and galleries that charitably co-host the events.

Megan started the Girls Night to Give Back Wellness Retreat in 2012 as an off-shoot of GNTG. The retreats focus on fitness and wellness as well as offering a thank you to all who support GNTG throughout the year. It is a rejuvenating and fun-filled weekend, usually held out of town at Useppa Island each year. Megan feels blessed to have the support of so many talented women who are willing to share their time and talent with others.

Valerie Bogle, a photographer who does magazine-style photography, took the photos at Megan’s Wellness Retreat back in October. Each day started with yoga on the dock, various wellness and fitness classes during the day, great meals and drinks, and inspirational speakers including Rachel Stone, author of *Love Affair 101*.

Megan’s events are open to all women. There is no membership. Events are



Megan Fetter at the Retreat at Useppa Island

typically bi-monthly on Thursday evenings and are casual and affordable at \$35. Women can bring a friend or come solo, pay at the door, and there is no need to RSVP. She typically offers wine and appetizers or a light dinner and is always looking for area restaurants to help her in her cause. (Women interested in attending Megan’s next GNTG may contact her at megan.gntg@gmail.com.)

Megan’s favorite event was something that was a bit out-of-the-norm for her group – something they called Caravan of Hope. With the help of Alison Payne and Team Hope, they identified a single woman who was adopting three brothers. Together they rallied to collect and organize a house full of furniture, household goods, and décor. On a Saturday morning, they mobilized their caravan of about a dozen cars and trucks and set out to create a home for this ‘mom-to-be.’ They started with a blank slate and ended many hours later with a similar HGTV-style reveal. This moment brought everyone to tears as the mom and boys explored their newly decorated and established home.

When asked what advice she would give others in the community with regards to giving either time, resources, or donations, Megan stated, “It’s always easier together to get organized, strive for consistency, and find something that is important to you and your circle friends.”

Team Hope has focused their energy on small charities, and although their events do not bring in huge dollar amounts, they raise awareness and make connections. Megan believes her group’s contributions go beyond their monetary value and make a significant difference, even in a small way.

With giving to others comes a sense of fullness and purpose. Where would the community be if there weren’t people like Alison Payne and Megan Fetter, two birds of feather helping others? ●

Megan Fetter has been married to Tim Fetter for 23 years. They have two boys who attend St. Petersburg Catholic High School. She has worked in the commercial real estate industry for over 35 years, and currently is employed at Cushman & Wakefield in Tampa.



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COMMUNITY BUILDING

Diverse Women for Common Cause

Brian Fernandes

Tuesday October 3rd marked a memorable evening at the University of South Florida-St. Petersburg. The campus's Student Center Ballroom was filled with some 200 people to address the issues facing women of color, as well as their triumphs. Male attendance made up a good portion of the audience, including St. Pete's own mayor, Rick Kriseman.

The function entitled *Women of Color Leading Change* was hosted by the YWCA Tampa Bay organization as part of its *Stand Against Racism* campaign. The two-hour event also commemorated the legacy of Myrtle Williams and Maria Edmonds, who were staples for community outreach in the Bay Area.

The YWCA got its roots addressing women's social issues over a century ago. First established in 1858 as The Ladies' Christian Association, it set out to empower women and support civil rights. As the organization branched out from its birthplace in New York onto the international scene, it was renamed the Young Women's Christian Association.

The YWCA branches of St. Petersburg and Clearwater merged in the 1980s to form what is now



A variety of women participated in the Women of Color Leading Change event.

the Tampa Bay branch. While a women's organization, it has opened its doors to others irrespective of gender, race or religion. This particular evening would be no different.

The event had been overseen by the YWCA Tampa Bay board, including CEO Yvonne Ulmer and board chair, Rebecca Watson. The board had the task of conceptualizing the event and choosing its speakers. The intent was to exemplify to colored women that there are successful women who look like them and that they, too, can enjoy the fruits of their own labor.

First, they needed someone to offer opening remarks. This spot was granted to Dr. Kanika Tomalin, St. Pete's own deputy mayor. "Who better to set the tone for the conversation than the highest ranking woman of color in government in our area," recalled Watson as the board decided on the deputy mayor.

Chosen as the panel's moderator was Gyspie Gallardo, editor-in-chief of *The Power Broker* magazine. Her publication acknowledges the achievements African Americans are making in West Florida, while helping others reach prosperity.

Sitting side-by-side with other accomplished women of color,

Gyspie helped guide the panel in what would be a galvanizing conversation. The panelists included: Jessica Costello, assistant statewide attorney with the Florida Attorney General's Office; Dr. Liana Fernandez-Fox, a former math professor at Hillsborough Community College and USF (she is currently a member of the Women in Leadership and Philanthropy organization); Liz Gutierrez, a native of the Dominican Republic (as CEO and founder of the organization *Enterprising Latinas*, she and her staff strive to economically empower Hispanic women in the Bay Area);

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Major Cheryl Johnson, a high-ranking officer of the St. Petersburg Police Department; and Katie McGill, the executive director for Dress for Success, a program which helps prepare women for the workplace by supplying them with professional attire.

"I was particularly interested in being a panelist," admitted Fernandez-Fox after being approached with the opportunity. "It was fabulous. What chemistry."

Beforehand, the six ladies were provided questionnaires to help spark the conversation and give a general idea of where it could go. The format, however, was not scripted and panelists were encouraged to improvise at will.

Dr. Tomalin began by addressing the lack of female representation in leadership and how to improve upon that. She also called upon young women to take advantage of opportunities to excel and not let them pass by. At one point, she opened herself up to the audience, sharing her personal struggles. She spoke on the passing of her husband and how the aftermath impacted her, especially as a single mother. After connecting with the crowd, she was met with a standing ovation.

The introduction had set the stage for the panelists to address their concerns, advice, and personal testimonies. Fernandez-Fox spoke on the lack of trust among women and its negative effects. "We didn't consider ourselves women leaders," she said, explaining college life in the '60s. She stated that the primary focus was just being able to afford and finish school, then starting a career. "Each of us revealing quite different experiences in our careers," she said was a theme on the panel.

Fernandez-Fox, who is of Cuban and Sicilian descent, opened up about her family. Obtaining an education was not emphasized as much as taking care of the household. With determination, she was able to break the cycle and thrive for years as a math professor. She attributes her success to affordability and access to education. However, she worries that coming generations of young women will not see that avenue and she wants to help direct them.

As the panelists continued to share their thoughts and stories, the Student Center Ballroom saw a range of emotions from tears to laughter. Costello noted that she and other attorneys who are colored women, hold monthly dinners

together. It grants them the opportunity to exchange thoughts and offer encouragement as women in a respected field.

Early in her law enforcement career, Major Johnson explained, male officers did not want to be back-up to their female counterparts. Nevertheless, she was encouraged to give her best on the job and stay focused in the event that she may become a superior officer. That advice helped a dream come to fruition.

McGill shared her own hope-filled story, showing that the bridge between genders can still be closed. Once, she had found a man's wallet and set out to return it to the owner. After meeting the gentleman and engaging in conversation, she was able to find commonality with someone who was not a woman and looked nothing like her.

Watson watched as the moderator and panelists, women of different backgrounds, seemed to harmonize well with each other and the audience. "You can't just have one voice, one perspective, one skill set at the table. You really have to have a diverse body of both," she said. "It was such a great turn-out."

Afterwards, the floor was open to all questions, some of which were asked by inspired girls. "Have you been second-guessed or overlooked in male-dominant arenas?" received an admitted 'yes' from the panelists.

"That kind of interaction during the Q&A was really nice," said Watson, who's also the CEO of her own women's advocacy organization, Limitless Leader, Inc. "It was a combination of information sharing, of encouraging."

As a result of the turn-out, the YWCA intends to hold other series in this vein.

In the meantime, Watson offered words of encouragement to women who feel disenfranchised or who are in uncompromising work situations. "That can be a scary thing – to pursue justice for yourself," she said. "But, if you're not doing it alone, and if you give yourself permission to do it afraid... then you're more likely to take action. What happens is you send back the message to yourself that you are powerful, you are important, you matter."

These are inspiring words to build young women of today to become the leaders of tomorrow. ●



Gyspie Gallardo, event moderator



Deputy Mayor Kanika Tomalin

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INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE

Jingle Mingle to Bring Garden Magic to Kids



Linda Dobbs

The first Jingle Mingle event at Sunken Gardens last year celebrated the naming and funding of the new flock of 20 young flamingoes, thanks to numerous generous donors. Purchasing a flamingo – and therefore having the naming rights of your own flamingo – was the theme last year.

The second annual Jingle Mingle is seeking similar donations to make another dream come true by funding the unique Children’s Education Garden. Now there are more choices of donations and even the naming rights of the garden itself.

The December 7th event, presented by the Sunken Gardens Forever Foundation, will be an evening of musical entertainment highlighting soft jazz music by Henry Ashwood, as well as the renowned St. Petersburg High School Pitchforks chorus. Just as last year, there will be heavy hors d’oeuvres, beer and wine, and lots of camaraderie in the enchanted setting of the Oak Pavilion.

Doesn’t the (YOUR NAME) Children’s Education Garden sound wonderful? All you have to do is make a contribution for the total amount of the proposed components and you will have that privilege. Or you can choose to sponsor Mac, the climbing turtle

sculpture; the ‘Hobbit’ entrance; the donor wall; one or two pygmy goat sculptures; a hen house and occupants; planting boxes and composting corner; or creative seats for kids. Maybe you could even sponsor the earthworm bin. A brass plaque with donor names and sponsored components will be placed near the entrance to the garden.

According to Robin Reed, president of the foundation, “With so many children visiting Sunken Gardens, along with the current interest in growing one’s own food, and the Gardens’ association with Great Explorations, the need for such a specialty garden is apparent. This will be a place where children can explore nature, learn where their food comes from, and enjoy a beautiful, creative play space. Children already participate in newly developed programs at the Gardens geared to various age groups; students on field trips regularly visit. Young patrons participating in Great Exploration programs daily walk through the Gardens. All of these children will benefit from a designated area in the Gardens devoted to educational programs and activities tailored to their age.”

Let’s take a ‘tour’ of the garden, according to the published proposal. “Tucked away in a green alcove behind the historic faux-stone work of the old amphitheater, the Children’s Education

Garden invites exploration and discovery. A grotto and tunnel entrance through the former pygmy goat’s pen leads to this small space packed with creative and interactive features.” This tunnel entrance is the Hobbit door.

Currently the clay pot people (two adults and one child), seated among small plants from which cuttings, are easily harvested are very visible as you stroll through the Gardens. So, imagine upon entry through the Hobbit door, the most prominent feature will be a concrete/fiberglass turtle on which the children can climb. While the design will be based upon Mac, the Sunken Gardens alligator turtle, this structure will be larger and more cartoon-like, and will feature a more friendly, less intimidating smile, rather than being an actual replica of the turtle, according to the proposal.

To continue, the food cycle will be illustrated by a raised planter bed for vegetables and flowers, a worm bin, a compost bench, and a small hen house. A vine trellis attached to the expanded Bird Care facility will be another nook to explore. Art elements such as carved or painted logs and drums will provide flexible seating. A colorful, low garden wall buffers the Children’s Garden from other nearby garden areas; it also provides built-in seating, and ample space for donor recognition. Accessible paths and surfaces connect all of the

Children’s Garden features and the surrounding garden path network.

Attendees to the Jingle Mingle will learn more about the Children’s Garden and at the same time help a popular public cause. A ticket to the event is \$40, available either at the office or online through the Sunken Gardens Facebook page. The estimated cost of the garden with all the components is \$100,000. To date, \$10,000 has been raised. This amount includes donations from the Sunken Gardens entrance where children may display a paper turtle with their name on it after donating.

The 2017 formation of the Sunken Gardens Forever Foundation, a 501(c)3 charitable organization, is a direct result of the success of the flamingo project and the continuing need for raising funds for special projects at the Gardens. Before the foundation was created, funds donated to Sunken Gardens went into the City’s general fund and donors were not able to make contributions for specific projects at the Gardens.

Now your donation can be selective and go right to the project of your choice. You choose – have your name at the garden entrance, buy a goat, give a worm bin or a hen house, or make the turtle sculpture of Mac a reality. Come to the Jingle Mingle to hear, see, and support the enchanting visions. ●



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2017 Sales Highlights

Highest Price Per Square Foot Sale in Snell Isle History

119 Bay Point Dr NE Last listed at \$4,300,000

401 Cordova Blvd NE Last listed at \$3,570,000

7171 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. St S Last listed at \$2,998,000

1857 Brightwaters Blvd NE Last listed at \$2,945,000

635 34th Ave NE Last listed at \$2,195,000

1320 Monterey Blvd NE Last listed at \$2,185,000



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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

To be considered for the Meet Your Neighbor page, contact editor@northeastjournal.org.



Ken Degen

8th Avenue NE

If a teleporter existed, where would you go first?
New Zealand

What decade/place would you like to visit for a day?
NY City May 8, 1945

What were you good at when you were 11?
Not much

Tell us about a significant mentor in your life.
My first boss on Wall Street taught me how to manage people and how to bury a ski condo on an expense report.

If you were a dog, what breed would you be?
Chesapeake Bay Retriever

Using one word, what's significant about your life today?
Changing

What is the most encouraging word/statement you can receive?
Thank you

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
I would have started playing guitar much younger

What's the best and worst part of your average day?
Best: Walking the dog along the waterfront in the morning. Worst: Afternoons when it's too hot to even move.

What do you love most about living in this country?
The diversity of our people and the awesome beauty of the American West

What is your idea of exercise?
Golf, tennis, biking, and walking

If your house was burning and all family and pets were safe, what one thing would you grab?
Guitars and some pictures

What is your first thought in the morning?
Coffee

What or who inspires you?
John Coltrane, JFK, and new music

What's your favorite place to meet new people?
Golf course and parties

If you were elected mayor of this city, what would be your first improvement?
The storm drains

Ginger or Mary Ann? Pepsi or Coke? Cats or dogs?
Ginger / Coke / dogs

Best thing about living in this day and age:
Mobility and communication

Best hidden gem in St. Pete:
\$19.25 prix fixe menu at the Vinoy

Your favorite commercial:
Currently the GE Appliance dishwasher ad – our daughter wrote it.

Your favorite quote:
"Fat drunk and stupid is no way to go through life, son." -*Animal House*

Your favorite movie:
Rear Window



Nathan Alexander

10th Avenue NE

If a teleporter existed, where would you go first?
I'd go to the Cascades in Washington State.

What decade/place would you like to visit for a day?
1960s in Colorado

Tell us about a significant mentor in your life.
I'd have to put my mom in that category. She made sure we stood back up and moved forward after each fall.

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

Using one word, what's significant about your life today?
Love

What is the most encouraging word/statement you can receive?
Head up, walk tall.

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
I'm fine with the content of my being.

What's the best and worst part of your average day?
The best part is coffee and family. I'd say the worst part is how fast the day goes.

What do you love most about living in this country?
The potential it holds and the beauty of the land

What is your idea of exercise?
I truly love running, but I've been out the discipline of getting my feet moving.

If your house was burning and all family and pets were safe, what one thing would you grab?
We have a solid file of important papers. Possibly a collection of hats given to my lady from her grandmother. Our photos are safely stored.

What is your first thought in the morning?
Coffee

What or who inspires you?
My family inspires me to do the best that I can. In a sense, love inspires me.

What's your favorite place to meet new people?
There are so many sweet spots in Saint Petersburg to meet people. Just getting out to a cafe or brewery is fine with me.

If you were elected mayor of this city, what would be your first improvement?
Light rail in Pinellas and over to Hillsborough

Ginger or Mary Ann? Pepsi or Coke? Cats or dogs?
Kristi ;) / rum and Coke / both

Best thing about living in this day and age:
Being a father of two amazing kids

Best thing about living in St. Petersburg:
The people, coupled with the flow of stories and experiences that come with meeting them in this changing cityscape

Your favorite childhood book:
The Little Prince

Your favorite restaurant in St. Pete:
I can say we have a solid circuit of Casita, Bodega, Love Food, and Pizza Box.



Peggy Callander

4th Street North

If a teleporter existed, where would you go first?
Scotland

What decade/place would you like to visit for a day?
1930's Hollywood

What were you good at when you were 11?
Washing dishes (I still don't own a dishwasher.)

Tell us about a significant mentor in your life, past or present.

My grandma was the sweetest person you could ever meet. Nobody ever left her home hungry.

If you were a dog, what breed would you be?
Bloodhound. I like puzzles and clues.

Using one word, what's significant about your life today?
Autism

What is the most encouraging word/statement you can receive?
Thanks, Mom.

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
Stop procrastinating

What's the best and worst part of your average day?
The worst part is trying to wake my teenager for school. The best part is watching the wildlife at the end of the day in my garden.

What do you love most about living in this country?
Diversity

What is your idea of exercise?
Cleaning and gardening

What is your first thought in the morning?
What time is it?

What's your favorite place to meet new people?
Work

If you were elected mayor of this city, what would be your first improvement?
Water safe for people and marine life

Ginger or Mary Ann? Pepsi or Coke? Cats or dogs?
Mary Ann / Coke / yes

Best thing about living in St. Petersburg:
Sunshine and Gulf breezes

Best hidden gem in St. Pete:
Our wildlife

Your favorite childhood book:
The Monster at the End of This Book

Your favorite commercial:
Martha and Snoop potluck dinner party on VH1

Your favorite restaurant in St. Pete:
Urban Brew and Barbq

Your favorite quote:
Life is what happens to you when you are busy making other plans.

Your favorite movie:
Fiddler on the Roof

Gadget you can't live without:
TV remote



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2050 Coffee Pot Blvd NE, Old Northeast
Last listed at \$1,599,000



SOLD FOR 97% OF ASKING PRICE

1359 Monterey Blvd NE, Snell Isle
Last listed at \$749,000



SOLD FOR 97% OF ASKING PRICE

141 Giralda Blvd NE, Snell Isle
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1359 Monterey Blvd NE
\$749,000

141 Giralda Blvd NE
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340 1st St N, Unit C
\$595,000

1087 Marco Dr NE
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136 Snell Isle Blvd NE
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1 Beach Dr SE, Unit 1607
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604 2nd St N
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ADOPTION FAQ

Q: How many children are available for adoption?

A: The status of children in foster care changes frequently, however at any given time, approximately 100 children are available for adoption.

Q: How many children are on the Heart Gallery?

A: The Heart Gallery features about 100 children in various stages of the adoption process – from currently available to matched— on our site throughout the year.

Q: Where is the Gallery located?

A: The physical gallery travels throughout Pinellas and Pasco counties. To see current gallery locations, please visit www.heartgallerykids.org/gallery.php.

Q: How many Heart Gallery children have been adopted?

A: We are pleased and proud to have helped more than 325 local children find their forever family and get adopted since 2006.

Q: I think I'm interested, but still have questions. How do I get started?

A: To learn more, consider attending an adoption orientation. To get more information about the orientation, call Diane Johnson at 727-456-0600 Ext. 2085 or email djohnson@eckerd.org.

Q: I can't adopt, but want to help. What are your needs?

A: We are forming a new Volunteer Program. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Megan Slaughter, megan@heartgallerykids.org or 727-258-4806. The Heart Gallery is an independent, 501(c)3 organization that survives solely on the generous contributions of individuals and businesses. Please consider a donation, which can be made on the Heart Gallery website or by mailed to:
Heart Gallery of Pinellas & Pasco
500 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. St. N, Suite 300
St. Petersburg, FL 33705

The Heart Gallery provides an emotionally safe way to connect children with families through a traveling exhibit featuring the faces and stories of local foster children ready for adoption. www.heartgallerykids.org.

JOSHUA, AGE 10

Joshua loves being the life of the party! Don't let the wheelchair fool you... Joshua enjoys the outdoors, bicycling, swimming, and going to the park. He also enjoys reading, playing games on his Nintendo DS, and his fidget spinner. Described as kind, happy, and loving, it's no surprise Joshua wants to be a superhero someday. Joshua says what he wants from his ideal forever family is "to have someone love and care for me just the way I am." He also says, he's amazing, a feel-good friend and always follows the rules.



DFL- 10026336; Photo courtesy of Imagine Pro Photography

TYSHAWN, AGE 12

Friendly and outgoing, Tyshawn is known to light up a room with a calm-yet-dynamic presence. He loves spending time with friends, but nothing surpasses his love for sports, especially football! Tyshawn also likes to tell jokes and his favorite food is pizza. Tyshawn has no preconceived ideas about what his forever family will look like, he just wants a loving family.



LSF-100233120; Photo courtesy of Remember This Studio

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A nod to the craftsman style, but with a modern approach and interior design, this new construction home is conveniently located in North St. Petersburg – close to everything the city has to offer! The home has a split floor plan with an en suite master bedroom and walk-in closet, an open layout with bonus area, and a large laundry room inside the house. The spacious modern kitchen is a chef's dream which includes a breakfast bar with soft close cabinets and drawers. Abundant covered outdoor decks create multiple living areas to entertain guests and appreciate the alfresco lifestyle of Florida. The home also includes impact resistant and energy efficient windows



and sliding doors, plus hurricane straps for the foundation and the roof. A fully fenced back yard is unfinished, waiting for your personal landscaping ideas or even a pool!

Authentic vintage charm in Historic Old Northeast!
This large mid-century 2/2 is an irresistible find with great flow and open living space including living, dining and family rooms, plus a large bonus room that's perfect for a home office, crafts or playroom. Original solid wood kitchen cabinets, beautifully maintained original tile in both baths, cove ceilings, built-ins, inside utilities and attached one car garage add to the home's appeal. Welcome home to prestigious Old Northeast!



VINTAGE CHARM
\$359,900 | Nancy Alexander | 727-709-1007

Furry Superheroes of Tampa Bay: Maltese Therapy Dogs

Jeannie Carlson

While strolling around Sundial St. Pete, the downtown shopping, dining, and entertainment complex, it is not unusual to run into interesting people and their pets. Encountering Marianne and Dan Blazowich walking their three carriages of Maltese therapy dogs is an absolute delight.

The dogs as well as their owners are friendly and sociable, so they usually draw a crowd. The dogs are quiet and dignified, wearing bows and costumes appropriate to the season or venue.

There is something magical about these dogs, almost angelic. These Maltese seem to be oozing love and inviting strangers to pat them or pick them up. They anticipate the emotional needs of humans and make eye contact as if they understand and can empathize with the person they are connecting to on a quasi-spiritual level.

There is a reason the dogs give off this ethereal vibe. They are natural-born therapy dogs. The first person they rescued was Marianne, their owner.

In 2006, Marianne and Dan lost their only child, Tony, who had just turned 23 years of age. Tony was in college, everything was going great for him, and his whole life was supposed to be ahead of him. He had a massive seizure and died suddenly. Marianne and Dan were devastated, but Marianne went into a deep depression that she couldn't shake. Sometimes the



sadness was so overwhelming that Marianne couldn't get out of bed.

Then, two years after Tony died, the idea of getting a therapy puppy blossomed into a reality. Their first Maltese, Brenton, a male, changed everything. "None of it was planned," said Marianne.

Marianne thought she would like to have a female puppy, too, so that she could put ribbons in its hair. They found one. And then they adopted another male, Gordon, the hugger who was a rescue dog. Gordon melts into the shoulder of anyone who picks him up and he hugs that person. They even adopted a 14-year-old Maltese from Philadelphia who was slated for euthanasia. Dan calls this one Grandma. One thing led to another and before they knew it, they were breeding and raising Maltese therapy dogs.

The couple and their growing brood of Maltese joined several dog groups in the area. First they joined Sarasota Dogs, which accepted all dogs; then they joined Yorkies of Bradenton which limited membership to small dogs; and finally, they joined Chihuahuas of Tampa Bay, a group that kept their membership to dogs weighing less than 20 pounds. The dog groups raise money to help support animal rescues and other charities in the area. In fact, Marianne is currently preparing for a Chihuahua wedding of two dogs with all the costumes and trimmings as a rescue shelter fundraiser.

In the early years of having the Maltese dogs, Marianne used to buy costumes for the dogs at various pet stores, but selections were



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limited, they didn't always fit right, and she felt the costumes were not well-made enough to last. Never having sewn before, Marianne took up sewing and began to design and make all the costumes for her dogs. "It began with Halloween costumes," said Marianne.



Marianne and Dan Blazowich have taken their family of Maltese therapy dogs up and down the west coast of Florida from Tarpon Springs down to Naples in support of various rescues and charities. They support Rainbow Rescue in St. Petersburg, St. Jude's, breast cancer awareness and research, and many nursing homes with their furry four-legged friends. The dogs have appeared fashionably dressed or in their Harley-Davidson sidecar to help raise money for many a worthwhile special event. Diane said she would like to become affiliated with more nursing homes in St. Petersburg, particularly in the Old Northeast. "Our son, Tony was a kindhearted person, so we do this in memory of him," said Diane. ◆



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OPEN ROAD, OPEN HEART continued from page 1



The people you meet on the road

So, I decided I needed a Vespa scooter and it had to be red! They are the classiest scooter on the road. It is like a Ferrari with two wheels.

NEJ: How many Vespas do you own?

KW: I own three. All of them are red and each one has a name. Scoot is my first Vespa. It has a lovely paint job (Jackson Pollock-esque) by Tyler Ramsey, an artist and television producer from California. My second is called Big Red. This is the one I've ridden the most. I have about 60,000 miles on it. The third is named Fred.

NEJ: What gave you the idea that a Vespa is the ideal ride for touring cross country and around the world?

KW: I bought my first Vespa off of a Porche race-car driver. I rode it around town for a while and got bored.

So, I decided to ride it up to North Carolina along the back roads. That is when it became my magic carpet to the world!

NEJ: What do you love most about it?

KW: The greatest thing about riding a Vespa, as opposed to a Harley, is that if you pull into a place with a Harley, an immediate picture is drawn of you as a biker-type. If you are an old fat guy who pulls up on a Vespa, everyone immediately wants to talk to you. That is the magic of driving a Vespa. Not only do you get to see tremendous places, you get to meet interesting people.

NEJ: Where have you journeyed on a Vespa?

KW: I've done the Scooter Cannonball race across the US multiple times. I've ridden from Florida to

Alaska and back. I've crossed Egypt twice. I've also done France, Italy, and Canada. I did some riding in South Africa, too.

NEJ: How many total miles have you covered on your Vespa?

KW: Over 85,000 miles.

NEJ: What is the most challenging thing when touring long distances on a Vespa?

KW: Vespas don't break down that much. Most things I can fix myself on the road. With my 85,000 miles on the road, I've only ever had three flats. The key is to have great towing insurance and a cell phone. Recently, I bought a satellite tracker, which is similar to an EPIRB [Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon used on boats].

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NEJ: I heard that you had an interesting experience with movie star Armie Hammer and Vespas?

KW: Armie is a Vespa-file who always wanted to ride a Vespa across the country. So, a few years back, he rounded up ten of his friends and set out across America from Los Angeles. They had a set of rules: no hotels, no chain restaurants, they had to fix their own scooters, and no interstates. If someone invited you to stay at their house, then everyone could stay. They got to the Florida Panhandle where it was 32° and they were freezing to death. Their Vespa rep, who I knew, called me to ask if I would invite Armie and the boys to my house to stay. I said of course. So, they all rolled into St. Pete and stayed one night before moving on to Key West. That is how Tyler Ramsey ended up painting my scooter. He is Armie's best friend and was part of the group. On their way out, I rode with them for a while and then came back home.

NEJ: Which country that you have visited thus far is your favorite?

KW: Turkey because they are the nicest people in the world, but Turkey and France are a tie.

NEJ: Which part of the United States that you have visited thus far is your favorite?

KW: The desert Southwest, Florida, and the Mississippi Delta.

NEJ: What advice would you give someone interested in setting out across country or around the world?

KW: Prepare, plan your route, and prepare your machine.

NEJ: Tell me about www.lostboater.com, the blog you write.

KW: I started it as an email journal that I would send out to my friends. I also started it to remind me of where I have been over the years. Then, in 2010, I put it out as a blog. Now I'm writing it like a book.



Ken Wilson and his wife, Vicki, in Egypt

NEJ: Tell us about the charitable organizations you are involved with both internationally and locally.

KW: I used to work in Ecuador and had a home in Canoa, Ecuador. Together with some of our friends there we formed the James Dean Byrd Foundation. The foundation started a school, Escuela Bilingue Los Algarobos, to serve the poorest children in the village. The school serves grades one through seven. To date, we have helped about 300 children. This one is always a challenge for money. People interested in helping can go to www.jamesdeanbyrdfoundation.org.

We have another foundation called the Big Red Scooter Project. It is dedicated to promoting random acts of kindness to those who need a little help. We don't look for donations, though people do give us money. Anyone interested in helping can visit our website at www.thebigred-scooter.org.

For the past eight or nine years, I've served as a volunteer with the Christmas Toy Shop Project, in St. Pete. The nonprofit organization has been here for 95 years. Volunteers work all year to repair old toys and put together new ones. Every Christmas, we distribute the toys to over 2,000 children in need. To learn more, readers can visit www.christmastoyshop.org.

For the past couple of years I also have worked as a volunteer for Meals on Wheels.

NEJ: What is next adventure?

KW: In May, I am riding from here to California and back. I

also want to go to Big Ben National Park in Texas. Next fall, I'm going to scooter across Spain. We'll start in Barcelona, make our way up to the Pyrenees Mountains, and then back. ◆



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Members of the Medical Staff at Bayfront Health St. Petersburg

SANTA'S HELPERS *continued from page 1*

their mother got toys at the Christmas Toy Shop, and now they'd like to come back and volunteer with us," says Sharon Jackson, a former president of the nonprofit charitable organization.

The Christmas Toy Shop has been serving needy families in Pinellas County since 1921, making sure that thousands and thousands of children have awakened on Christmas morning to presents from Santa. Families are referred by Pinellas County social service agencies and have to prove need. According to Sharon, last year alone they served 816 families – a total of 1,914 children ages infant through age 12. Every child gets a wrapped Christmas package that includes a selection of gifts – both new toys and gently used items which have been refurbished by the Christmas Toy Shop volunteers. A book is always included in the package, along with stocking stuffers, says Sharon. Each family also gets a bike.

The toys arrive at the Christmas Toy Shop year-round and in a variety of ways. New toys are typically donated during the holidays by a long list of groups including service organizations, churches, businesses, scout troops, and schools. Many restaurants, clubs, and lounges place a Toy Shop barrel in the lobby to collect toys from customers. In addition, the Christmas Toy Shop also has a small budget and can purchase bikes direct from several wholesalers.



But many of the toys are donated gently used. Then, like the children's story in the *Velveteen Rabbit*, they're fixed up and made new, ready to be loved once again. In November when I visited, the volunteers were spread out throughout the building doing what Santa's elves are expected to do: sorting, cleaning, sewing, painting, assembling, and packaging toys. There were aisles and aisles of Barbie dolls and baby dolls, stuffed animals, puzzles, board games, action figures, PlayStations, soccer balls, and dozens of other assorted toys of all shapes and sizes.

Over in the infant and toddler toy section, Ann Ruppert was using her cell phone to research a model toy airport so she could use it as a guide to help her correctly assemble the many parts in

front of her on the work table. "We don't give anything out until we have all the parts; we want the toy to be complete," says Ann. Toys missing a piece are set aside. Sometimes the manufacturer can send a spare part. But often, the same type of toy may be donated at a later date. Then the parts can be mixed and matched.

Ann started volunteering there a year ago after she retired. "I came for a visit and liked it. I've always been good with my hands and I sure have learned a lot about toys!"

In the bike repair shop, workers are tightening screws, fixing tires and handlebars, and making sure everything runs smoothly. Last year, nearly 600 bikes were donated, everything from tricycles for toddlers to 26-inch bikes

for pre-teens. About half are new and come in a big box ready to be assembled. That's what the bike repair guys were doing the day I visited. The bikes that are donated usually require a little TLC to look bright and shiny once again. The bike repair elves do that, too.

Ted Lee is 82 and has volunteered at the Christmas Toy Shop about five years. "I always liked fooling around with bikes and everyone kept telling me that the Christmas Toy Shop could use me. So I decided to volunteer. It gives a sense of fulfillment to turn an old bike into something new for the kids. And it sure beats sitting home doing nothing," jokes Ted.

Bonnie Otis, a retired art teacher who lives in the Old Northeast, and Jane Cook, add the artistic touch to toys. During my visit they were painting cool multi-colored fish on wooden puzzles. The puzzles would then be paired with similar toys, perhaps a Beanie Baby fish and a children's storybook about fish. The two also have the fun task of painting decorative designs on adorable doll beds crafted by Klaus Ocher, the Christmas Toy Shop's expert woodcraftsman. Klaus has his own small woodworking shop at the back of the building with all the tools he needs to make the doll beds and old-fashioned pull toys.

Once the doll beds are crafted and painted, the next stop is the Christmas Toy Shop's sewing department, where the ladies make matching pillows and blankets, as well as handcrafted dolls and doll dresses. The finished package is over-the-top adorable, a present any

little girl would be thrilled to receive. The hundreds of electronic toys that are donated are inspected by Art Surplus, who does whatever repairs are needed and makes sure the batteries are working. He also adds an extra battery just in case. "We don't want any child to have a toy on Christmas morning that doesn't work because it's missing a battery," says Sharon.

The toys are officially distributed on two Tuesdays and two Saturdays in early December. "During distribution, this place is hopping," says Sharon. "Our volunteers are lined up and ready to go. The parents come in and a volunteer is assigned to help them get everything they need. Before the parent leaves, another volunteer double-checks everything to make sure the right toys are in the packages according to age and gender. We aim for 100% satisfaction, just like Santa."

There is one important rule that the Christmas Toy Shop does have. Only adults are welcome, not children. That keeps the magic alive. "We don't care if parents tell their children that the toys are from Santa or the Christmas Toy Shop," says Sharon. "It's not about recognizing us, it's about making Christmas special for kids."

Sharon wants to make sure the Christmas Toy Shop volunteers get the recognition they deserve. "Our volunteers become like family," says Sharon. "We look out for one another. Volunteers work here because they love Christmas or they love making children happy. Once you do this, it gets into your blood." ◆

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AROUND THE BLOCK

ST. PETERSBURG WOMAN'S CLUB NOVEMBER & DECEMBER EVENTS
 You don't want to miss the Holiday Arts & Crafts Fair, at The historical St. Petersburg Woman's Club located at 40 Snell Isle Blvd NE on Saturday, November 18th from 9am to 1pm. Come join the fun and do some early Christmas shopping.

Items for sale range from metalwork, stained glass, and china. SPWC member Ardith Rutland is donating her lifelong dragonfly collection to the club for sale.

If you would like to be a vendor, please contact chairman Carolyn DeFreitas at 727-674-3484 or email grannyc0813@gmail.com. All types of arts and crafts are welcome.

General Meeting: Friday, November 10 at 1pm. Officer elections plus a presentation by the Community Outreach Program. Distribution of Christmas stockings for the homeless children at the Sallie House.

Evening Program: Tuesday, November 14 at 7pm. If you are a professional woman who cannot join us during our daytime activities, please join us for our evening program!

Mahjong: Every Monday from 2pm to 4pm, no experience necessary.

Hands on Community Projects: Every Wednesday at 12pm

Cards and Games: Every Friday at 10am

Bunco: Friday, November 17 at 7pm, no experience necessary.

Holiday Potluck Luncheon and Installation of Officers: Friday, December 8 at 12pm

All events are open to the public. Please check out our website at www.StPetersburgWomans Club.org or call 727-822-4982.

- Rebecca Malowany

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AROUND THE BLOCK



TAMPA BAY SYMPHONY FALL CONCERTS

The Fall concerts of the Tampa Bay Symphony, under music director and conductor Mark Sforzini, will feature Pamela Armstrong, soprano soloist. She has performed leading roles with many of the world's preeminent opera companies, including the Metropolitan Opera. On October 11, 2017, she was the soprano soloist with the American Symphony Orchestra in a concert at Carnegie Hall.

At the local concerts, Armstrong will sing Vier letzte Lieder (Four Last Songs) by Richard Strauss, 'the German Strauss.' Also on the program are Beethoven's *Symphony No. 6* ('Pastoral'), which

Walt Disney used in his 1940 movie, *Fantasia*, and *Frühlingsstimmen* (Voices of Spring), a Viennese waltz by Johann Strauss, Jr. The theme of the concert is 'Black Forest Cake.'

Performances are scheduled for Sunday, November 5, at 2:30pm at the St. Petersburg College Arts Auditorium, 2465 Drew Street in Clearwater; Tuesday, November 7, at 8pm at the Palladium, 253 Fifth Avenue North, St. Petersburg; and Sunday, November 12, at 2:30pm in Ferguson Hall at the Straz Center, 1010 N. MacInnes Place, Tampa. Tickets are \$20 for adults and free for students.

On Friday, October 27, Mark Sforzini, who is also

executive and artistic director of St. Petersburg Opera, hosted a Symphonic Chat with the Maestro, a preview of these Fall concerts, at Opera Central, 2145 First Avenue South in St. Pete. Pamela Armstrong sang and was interviewed. Wine and hors d'oeuvres were served and tickets were \$15 at the door.

The Tampa Bay Symphony, celebrating its 31st season, has more than 80 classically trained volunteer players, many of them music teachers. For additional information, please visit the website: www.TampaBaySymphony.org or contact Tampa Bay Symphony at 727-827-8087. ◆

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AROUND THE BLOCK

SUNCOAST SCANDINAVIAN CLUB CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Nearly a thousand people of Scandinavian decent call the Old Northeast home. The Christmas luncheon of the Suncoast Scandinavian Club will be held on Friday, December 1, from 12-3pm at 13355 49th Street North in Clearwater. The club's location is in the same complex as Banquet Masters and the Early Bird Dinner Theatre on the southeast corner of 49th Street and Ulmerton Road.

The December luncheon features harpist Victoria Garcia who will perform a program of Scandinavian and American Christmas favorites. There will be St. Lucia festivities with the Lucia and her court singing as well as playing children's harps, and then serving pepparkakor (Swedish gingersnap cookies) to all attendees. Also, in the spirit of St. Lucia – who is



New treasurer Tim Burns with outgoing treasurer Lyle Anundson and president Cherstin Peterson

said to have miraculously appeared and fed the starving Swedish people during a brutal famine – the club collects non-perishable food items for donation to a local food bank. Festive Jul decorations, a bake sale of Scandinavian delectables (like limpa bread, spritz cookies, almond cake, and more), and a 50/50 raffle will be in store for those attending.

The club is open to anyone who is interested in Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, or Finnish culture. Local Old Northeast residents – including the club's vice president Jeannie Carlson and treasurer Tim Burns, both on 6th Avenue North – have been long-time members. They are especially looking forward to helping man the Suncoast Scandinavian Club's booth at the Viking Fest in Oldsmar on January 13, 2018.

"I was in Copenhagen (Denmark) years ago making fun of the Vikings, when the tour guide pointed out that Dublin (Ireland) was founded as a Viking port," said Burns who is of Scottish-Irish decent. Carlson can trace her ancestry to Vastervik, Sweden and the Aland Islands, but says the club reminds her of growing up in the Scandinavian neighborhood of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, New York.

Regular luncheons begin with cocktails at noon. Lunch is served at 12:30pm, and is followed by a short meeting at 1:30pm, with a 45-minute entertainment program beginning at 2pm. Lunch costs \$17 per person for visitors and \$15 for members. It includes salad, rolls, entrée, dessert, and coffee or iced tea. There is a choice of two different entrées every month.



Victoria Garcia will be featured in December

Reservations need to be made no later than Tuesday of the meeting week. Reservations for the December 1st luncheon may be made through November 28 by calling the club's president, Cherstin Peterson, at 732-546-7756; or the reservations chair, Maren Anderson, at 727-319-4232. Membership dues are \$15 per year for anyone interested in joining the club.

The club was founded in 1965 and meets the first Friday of the month from November to April. The kick-off luncheon in November included a presentation on Danish pastry by renowned chef Michael Ostrander who is the former owner of St. Pete Bakery.

This year, the club will feature entertainment by the Tampa Bay Sax Quartet, accordionist Bruce Ralg, New Century Opera of Tarpon Springs, and the Scandinavian Trade Association's 'Last Florida Viking' Eric Hovland. ◆

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Waterfront damage from the 1921 hurricane in the St. Petersburg Central Yacht Basin. The Spa is seen left of the elevated boat. Courtesy of St. Petersburg Museum of History



Bandstand at Waterfront Park after the 1921 hurricane, image 1921. Courtesy of St. Petersburg Museum of History

HISTORY continued from page 1

Measuring storm surges in 1921 was not as accurate as they are today. The NWS reports the 1921 surge at eleven feet.

All across Pinellas County, windows were broken and power and telephone lines were down. But the greatest damage occurred along the waterfront where boats were smashed and the St. Petersburg Municipal Pier was badly damaged. Other boats in the bay were sunk outright. On the Gulf side, the Pass-a-Grille and Seminole bridges were completely destroyed. There was a rumor that scores were drowned at Pass-a-Grille, which fortunately turned out to be false. Loss of life was limited to two persons in St. Petersburg, and perhaps another six in other areas of the county. Caladesi Island was formed from Honeymoon Island in the Dunedin area. The new channel between the islands was aptly called Hurricane Pass. However, Myrtle Scharrer Betz who weathered the hurricane on Caladesi Island reported in her memoirs no damage to her father's homestead there. It is estimated that approximately \$3 million in damage was done countywide (in 1921 dollars). George S. (Gidge) Gandy, Jr. – son of George S. Gandy, Sr. who built the Gandy Bridge – reported in a 1957 newspaper article that the surge accompanying the hurricane was much lower at Pass-A-Grille than at St. Petersburg. It was highest at the top of Tampa Bay in the vicinity of Oldsmar where water was reported to reach as much as 14 feet above normal.

While no lives were lost in Pass-a-Grille, the island was flooded. People rowed boats up Eighth Avenue. The boardwalk was destroyed. The casino extending into the Gulf at the foot of 23rd Avenue was demolished, and the Pass-a-Grille Hotel was severely damaged. The St. Petersburg Beach Hotel and Casino, operated by George Lizotte on Blind Pass at about 75th Avenue, was washed away. Lizotte



Michael Sechler

As the negative surge emptied Tampa Bay and other nearby areas manatees were left stranded. Historically Tampa Bay has experienced three of the top negative surges on record in the United States. Editor's note: Thank you to Michael Sechler of Sarasota for his perspective in this photo of a stranded manatee which went viral during Hurricane Irma. View more of his photos at www.instagram.com/michaelstheworld.

described the scene: "Dining room tables were floating around and we had to swim to the staircase. We had been there but a short time when the south veranda was torn away and carried over the top of the casino... we silently watched huge waves demolishing the hotel whose roof was lifted bodily and blown away. Furniture piled up in heaps against front rooms, acted as battering rams against the wall, which gradually gave way, and the whole mass floated away, leaving only the foundation as a reminder that a 50-room hotel had been in operation there..." While parts of Pass-A-Grille were hard hit, little damage

of note occurred farther north at Indian Rocks Beach.

The late Helen Gandy O'Brien, daughter of Gidge Gandy, remembered her father telling her how worried he was about their new home, known as Mullet Farm in what is now the Driftwood Neighborhood of St. Petersburg. The home was surrounded by water, but none entered the house. Gidge drove a nail on a post supporting the house to mark the water level. However, many other homes were flooded as far as five blocks in from Big Bayou.

Jim Franklin Sirmons was just 3 years old at the time of the 1921 hurricane. The fact that he had distinct recollections of this event speaks to the trauma he experienced. At the time of the storm, he lived just south of Booker Creek in St.

Petersburg with his brother and his parents, B. F. and Pearl Sirmons. He remembered the storm as "ferocious... I could feel the house moving off its foundations. My mother barricaded us in an inner bedroom and we hid under the double bed. Trees could be heard banging on the house. There was total desolation. Our small barn was blown away. The animals were totally disoriented. There were lots of snakes about that I had never seen before. I remember how frightened and scared my mother was. God, it was frightening." Jim continued to live and grow up in St. Petersburg. He graduated from the University of Florida in 1939, and later became vice president of CBS with responsibility first for radio, and later TV production.

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Tree and roof damage caused by Hurricane Irma. Recorded gusts in the St. Petersburg area ranged from 69mph at Albert Whitted Airport to 92mph in the vicinity of Fort De Soto. Courtesy of Michaels Family Collection



Duke Energy and its many out-of-state partners were challenged to restore power throughout St. Pete. Courtesy of Michaels Family Collection

Fisherman 'Florida' George Roberts lost everything during the 1921 hurricane: fish house, several boats, nets, and all his fishing gear and tools. After the hurricane, 'Florida' got a job with the government salvaging boats that had been sunk. He earned enough to rebuild his party-boat business, and even used some of the salvage to build himself a new boat named *Ain't We Got Fun*, known as simply *Fun* for short. One of his other boats was called the *Leak-a-Lot!*

While many persons, especially fishermen such as 'Florida' Roberts, lost all they had in the 1921 hurricane, the storm was played down by local government and business interests. They were concerned that the tourist trade might be harmed. Damage was rapidly cleared. The Pass-a-Grille Bridge was quickly rebuilt, and the St. Petersburg Municipal Pier repaired and reopened under the leadership of Mayor Noel Mitchell two months after the hurricane hit.

How does the 1921 Tarpon Springs Hurricane compare with Hurricane Irma? To begin with, it is recognized that Irma was in many respects record-breaking. Prior to hitting Florida, it had sustained winds of 185mph for some 37 hours straight. It had the most Accumulated Cyclone Energy (sustained wind velocity) of any tropical Atlantic storm ever. It was a Cat 5 hurricane for 3.25 days, tied with a 1932 storm in Cuba. It was the first time two Atlantic storms attained 150

mph winds simultaneously (Irma and José). It prompted the largest evacuation in Florida history: 6.5 million people, nearly a third of the state's population. More than 13 million Floridians lost power, the biggest outage ever in Florida history. Around 834,000 of these were in the Tampa Bay area. Some 78% of customers lost power in Pinellas County.

A major difference between the 1921 hurricane and Irma is that the Tarpon Springs hurricane approached from out over the Gulf churning up a significant surge, reported by the National Weather Service at eleven feet. Some predictions for Irma also had her coming up the West Coast, over water into Tampa Bay, which would have resulted in a similar or worse surge, perhaps in the vicinity of twelve feet. Irma's storm surge was ten feet in the low-lying Florida Keys, and the water rose seven feet in 90 minutes in Naples. Fortunately for Tampa Bay, Irma hit a low pressure trough in the Gulf sooner than expected, which caused her to go inland at Marco Island and come up the middle of the state with the eye approximately 50 miles east of Tampa-St. Petersburg.

As Irma approached the greater Tampa Bay area at 9:30pm Sunday, September 10th, its outer winds blew 5.32 feet of water out of the bay and into the Gulf.

Continued on page 34

First Presbyterian Calls Dr. Dawn Conti as Pastor



next-door Vinoy Resort and its yacht-filled marina, to high-rise condos, to less affluent rooming houses. "All are God's people who could find a home at First Presbyterian," she says. "I want to take members out into the community and ask, 'What do you see? How would a single mom with four kids be welcomed into this church?'"

Dr. Conti, 55, who most recently served as solo pastor at Kanapaha Church in Gainesville, holds a Master of Divinity degree from Louisville Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry in Preaching from McCormick Seminary. Before answering a call to ministry, Dr. Conti earned a B.S. in Business from Rollins College and an MBA from Drexel University.

"Every pastor has certain gifts — preaching, teaching, pastoring, leading, administration. It is rare to find someone who is the whole package," says Michelle Carothers, chair of the church's pastor nominating committee. "We found that in Dr. Conti."

Interested in connecting with Dr. Conti and First Presbyterian? Visit fpc-stpete.org for more information.

On Sunday, October 15, the Rev. Dr. Dawn Conti took the pulpit at First Presbyterian Church of St. Petersburg. Though the church has been served during its 122-year history by three female associate pastors, Dr. Conti is the first woman to fill the position of pastor. "I feel called just as much to be pastor to this community as to this church," Dr. Conti says. "The church's mission statement, which in part focuses on 'radical hospitality,' is a perfect pathway for that calling." The church's neighborhood is widely diverse, from the



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HISTORY *continued from page 33*

Known as a ‘negative surge,’ this resulted in the virtual emptying of Tampa Bay. Usually, such a blowout would be followed after the eye has passed with a huge storm surge as winds swirled around, pushing the water back in to the bay. But as Irma moved north of Tampa Bay, her eye had weakened so much that her easterly winds caused no more than a two-foot surge above normal. On the other hand, Jacksonville and the St. John’s River on the opposite coast suffered a severe surge as Irma’s leading-edge counterclockwise winds there pushed water into the river and city rather than out.

Historically, Tampa Bay has experienced three of the top-five negative surges recorded in the United States (1910 at 8 feet; 1926 at 6 feet; and Irma). While the 1921 hurricane entered Tampa Bay as a Cat 3 hurricane (110-115 mph), by the time Irma brushed Tampa Bay she was a Cat 1 (74-95 mph). According to the NWS, the highest wind gusts in St. Petersburg were recorded at 74mph at St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport 11:10pm Sunday, and 69mph at Albert Whitted Airport 9:10pm Sunday. The NWS documented gusts up to 92mph in the Egmont Key/Fort DeSoto area. Gusts up to 88mph were documented in the Hurricane Pass area in northwest Pinellas. The highest wind gusts in Hillsborough County were recorded at northeast Gibsonton at 68mph.

These are officially documented gusts. Wind strength varies somewhat from place to place depending on surface obstacles and height at which velocity is measured. Preliminary residential property damage in Pinellas is estimated at \$448 million, most of it minor or ‘affected.’

Fueling recent hurricanes like Irma is climate change. Warmer sea surface temperatures in the North Atlantic and the Gulf have increased both the number and the intensity of Category 4 and 5 hurricanes since the 1980s. Storm intensity and associated rainfall rates are projected to accelerate further in the future. The waters in Tampa Bay have risen over time about an inch per decade, until the



Coffee Pot Bayou at the time of Hurricane Irma’s negative surge. While vast areas of Tampa Bay were laid bare, dredged channels retained water as seen here.

Courtesy of Mark Michaels

Hurricanes by the Numbers

	Tarpon Springs Hurricane	Hurricane Irma
Year	1921	2017
Category	3	1
Wind	115 mph	69-92 mph gusts (range)
Surge	11 Feet	Negative 5.32 Feet
St. Petersburg Population	14,000	260,000


1990s when they accelerated several inches above normal. The Tampa Bay Climate Science Advisory Panel concludes that the Tampa Bay region may experience sea-level rise somewhere between 6 inches and 2.5 feet by 2050, and between 1 and 7 feet by 2100. The Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council estimates that some 250 square miles in Pinellas, including large sections of St. Petersburg, will require “almost certain protection” from future sea-level rise.

History is instructive. Hurricanes such as the great Tarpon Springs Hurricane in 1921 – and the 1848 hurricane before it – which approached Tampa Bay and the Pinellas Peninsula from the Gulf are particularly dangerous because their winds push water resulting in huge surges. In 1921, St. Petersburg had approximately 14,000 permanent residents. Now, there are 260,000 permanent residents and 870,000 in Pinellas County as a whole. Development has also increased exponentially. Despite the fact that many structures are now built much stronger and extensive attention has been given to emergency planning, a recurrence of hurricanes similar to that of 1921 today

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would still bring serious disaster. A 2013 study led by World Bank economist Stephane Hallegatte concluded that Tampa Bay – because of its extensive environment built near water – is one of the ten most threatened regions in the world in terms of the overall cost of potential damage from climate change and associated sea-level rise. In 2010, the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council simulated what would happen if a Cat 5 hurricane were to directly hit Tampa Bay. Their projections are vivid and not to be taken lightly. The resulting – and unnerving – video can be downloaded at www.tbrpc.org/tampabaycatplan/scenario.shtml.

On the hopeful side, St. Petersburg city government is actively mitigating its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions through reduction measures such as energy efficiency, renewable energy like solar power, and tree plantings. Stormwater and wastewater infrastructure improvements are being designed to anticipate locally projected sea-level rise. Building codes have mandated higher foundation levels for new construction (reducing flood-insurance costs), and prohibited increased residential density in high flood-prone coastal areas. Most heartening is to see neighbors helping neighbors when storms such as Irma occur. And, it is equally heartening to see neighbors taking active measures year-round to reduce their personal carbon footprint while advocating for public policies to accomplish the same.

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AROUND THE BLOCK

ST. PETE MEMORY CAFÉ

St. Pete Memory Café is a leisurely gathering of people with memory concerns currently meeting monthly at Carrabba's Italian Grill, located at 1951 4th Street North from 11am to 1pm on the second Monday of every month. Meetings are free and in a private dining room. Food and beverages are available for purchase.

For those who have already received a dementia diagnosis and are still living at home, those with early-onset dementia, and those who await more accurate diagnoses, St. Pete Memory Café is an opportunity to get out of the house to enjoy the company of understanding others together with one's full-time care partner. Socialization and the simple act of going out to eat, meeting, and talking with others is a key factor in helping to maintain a quality of life while living with dementia.

Colleagues Cate McCarty, PhD and Jane Ogilvie started their first Memory Café last February in Gulfport. Due to the need for dementia awareness and stigma busting, McCarty and Ogilvie decided to create a second Memory Café in St. Pete. Their intent in establishing St. Pete Memory Café is to provide this opportunity to a centralized location in the Old Northeast, and make it convenient for those to the north, south, and east of downtown.

Besides helping families, McCarty and Ogilvie intend to work with the business community in St. Pete to successfully raise their own dementia awareness levels in their business dealings. No matter what business they own, manage, or operate, it's likely they have an employee, customer, caregiver, or individual in their own family who is or will be afflicted with dementia.

Information about St. Pete Memory Café meetings and/or business sponsorships may be obtained by contacting Jane at 727-327-0167 or sensol@seniorsmile.com, or Cate at 813-384-7571 or catemccarty@gmail.com.







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SPOTLIGHT ON THE ARTS

The Art and Soul of the City: The St. Pete Store



Sara W. Hopkins

About two years ago, the City of St. Petersburg and the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce partnered to create The St. Pete Store, a place where all items for sale represent St. Pete and are created by St. Petersburg-based artists and artisans.

The store is part of the St. Petersburg Visitors Information Center, located in the Chamber of Commerce building at 100 2nd Avenue North. In August, the Visitors Center was officially recognized by Visit Florida® which is the parent organization of Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater.®

“Anybody can call themselves a ‘visitors center,’” says visitors center and store coordinator, Shelli Hemans. “It’s another thing to be recognized as an official community resource by these organizations.”

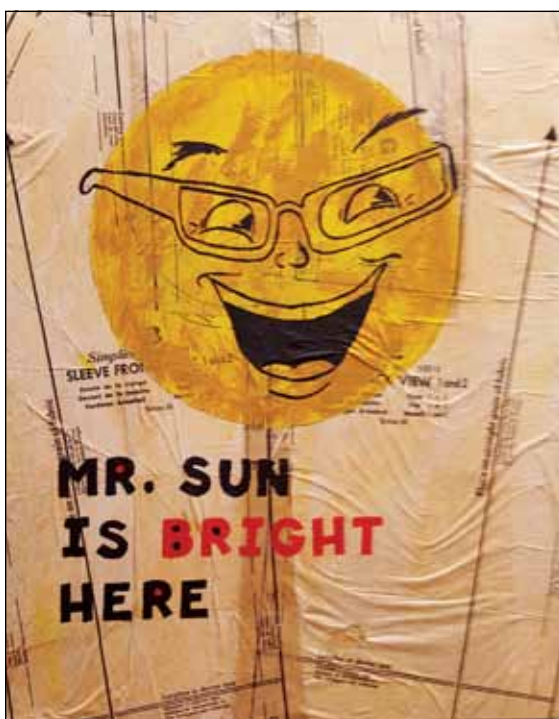
The St. Pete Store prides itself on its patronage of the arts: it gives 60% of proceeds back to its artists. Currently, the store features the work of over 53 local artists. This number has grown 42% since the store opened. These artists may be established in their field or freshly minted – for some, this is the first time their work has ever been for sale.

Appropriately, the St. Pete Arts Alliance is housed in the same building as the Chamber. Every hallway of the space is lined with featured artwork by St. Pete artists. Even Mr. Sun, the official mascot of the Chamber, smiles down from painted canvasses.

“Our purpose at The St. Pete Store and Visitors Center is to cultivate a sense of community. We have so much talent here in town, from our 1,300 Chamber members to our local artists. People come in every day, all day, with questions and needs we can address, even locals coming in and asking what’s happening next weekend,” says Hemans. “Still, a lot of people don’t know we’re here. We get people saying they wish they had known about us sooner.”

The Visitors Center serves over 17,000 visitors annually, with that number expected to grow (and this is up 29% from this time last year). Volunteers at the store have offered everything from directions to pronunciations of local places to medical assistance for visitors and locals alike. Mostly though, people come for the St. Pete-centric handcrafted items.

Not only are the contents of the store produced



by St. Petersburg talent: even the furniture, bookcases, desks, and displays are created by local artisans – most notably by Chris Longmire of Currahee Vintage and Industrial. Longmire’s custom furniture pieces, created from industrial materials with a warm, vintage, wood-worked style, are often inquired about in the store.

The store also features a mural by Derek Donnelly, one of the founders of the mural movement in downtown St. Petersburg. The postcard mural on the side of the St. Petersburg Museum of History is his, along with the ‘Fish Guy’ mural in the alley of the 500 block of Central Avenue, paintings at Ceviche in Tampa, and a mural at Rococo Steak in St. Pete.

The store also features iconic ‘World Tour’ T-shirts by local artist Chad Mize. You’ve seen them – the striking font reading “Paris, London, Tokyo, St. Pete.” They even have them at the store in children’s and infant sizes.

The associates at the store have adopted one of the sayings found on some of The Urban Canning Company’s merchandise, “It’s about community, not competition.” The atmosphere in the store is like visiting a warm, welcoming family.

The Store and Visitors Center proudly offers a canvas to St. Petersburg Area Chamber members to promote events and happenings around town. Locals and visitors are referred exclusively to Chamber members. They also volunteer to stuff welcome bags for residents hosting events in town (weddings, conventions, reunions). As a service to the community, the team at the Visitors Center will create up to 100 of these bags for free, brimming with brochures of your choice featuring things to do in the area.

As the store and visitors center is a non-profit entity, it welcomes volunteers to assist with events and staffing. Current volunteers say it’s a great way for new St. Pete residents to get a feel for the town and the community. Part-time shifts are the norm, ideal for retired professionals and students alike. Volunteers laugh companionably as they share favorite memories of team-building activities, such as a recent brew bus tour and a St. Pete food walking tour formerly called Eat.Sip.Indulge. Inside the store and outside, it’s a testament to the bonds of community. Check it out: www.facebook.com/thestpetestore. ●



Landscape with House and Ploughman (detail)
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