


# Northeast Journal

Good People ∞ Good Places ∞ Good Things Happening

St. Petersburg, Florida | November/December 2026 | Est. September 2004


## Wonder-ful News
### Williams Park Gets Seasonal Market and Ice Rink




*An organizer's rendering of Winter Wonder highlights the ice-skating rink as part of the seasonal attraction.*

*Jennifer Amato*

Williams Park will undergo a much-anticipated evolution this month. From November 20 through January, Winter Wonder will transform the space into a magical seasonal wonderland complete with an ice-skating rink, a marketplace, and food service.

"This will be a showcase of what Williams Park can be," said Shaun Drinkard, CEO of the St. Petersburg Downtown Improvement District.

Williams Park will host Tampa Bay's only open-air skating rink, designed and installed by Ice Rink Events. The company runs rinks all around the country and uses a technology that can survive the Gulf Coast's wind, humidity, and warmer winter temps, Drinkard explained. Since Williams Park is a few blocks off the water, it doesn't get as much wind, and it has a lot of shade, helping to keep the ice from melting.

"Skating under the stars is not a common thing in Florida, for sure," Drinkard said of the excitement building over the ice rink.

As part of the festival, 10 PODS containers will be retrofitted into retail shops at the Wonder Market. Some businesses will remain on site for the entirety of the event, and others will rotate.

The Food & Beverage Commons will offer seasonal food, desserts, specialty coffees, cocktails, beer, and wine from two airstream trailers; one for coffee and hot chocolate, the

*Continued on page 10*

## Positive Vibes: Weekly Food Distribution Spreads the Love

*Jennifer Amato*

After his homeowners insurance increased by $150 a month, a 65-year-old man started driving for Uber to cover basic expenses. Rising costs made it even harder to make ends meet. He thought about getting a roommate to help out because he needed money for groceries. Another woman, over 55, had never eaten fresh blueberries or a whole fresh peach; canned fruit was all she could afford.

Both these neighbors benefit from Positive Impact ST. PETE, a nonprofit known for its free, weekly distribution of groceries and household items that is open to anyone in need.

"He thought he would need a roommate to help with expenses, but receiving groceries from Positive Impact ST. PETE gave him enough room in his budget to continue living on his own," said Karen Rae Selm, executive director and CEO of Positive Impact ST. PETE. And for the woman: "Seeing the happiness on her face when she tasted the fresh fruit was something I will never forget. These moments show how much a grocery distribution can mean. For one person, it helps preserve

*Continued on page 14*




*Positive Impact Santa Claus Joe Strickler with Mrs. Claus, Antoinette Taylor.*

## Santa Claus is Coming to Town




*Santa Parade float in 1958.* **Courtesy of St. Petersburg Museum of History**

*Will Michaels*

### 98 Years of Santa in St. Pete

This year, Santa Claus will once again lead the holiday parade along St. Petersburg's downtown waterfront. The Santa Parade traces its origins back 98 years – to 1928 – and while not exactly a parade as we know it today, the very first celebration was truly spectacular.

That year someone dreamed up a trip by Santa from the North Pole to sunny St. Pete. The idea may have originated at the *St. Petersburg Times* (predecessor of the *Tampa Bay Times*), or someone may have pitched it to them

*Continued on page 22*


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## Recently Sold




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4 BD | 5.5 BA | 5,217 SF **$4,250,000**




4091 13th Way NE
4 BD | 2 BA | 1,949 SF **$1,195,000**




337 Coffee Pot Dr NE
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## EDITOR'S NOTE

# Getting Into the Spirit




*As 80s kids, The Ghostbusters house was one of our favorites.*

I have a confession to make: I'd never actually been to a Halloween in the Old Northeast.

I've lived in St. Pete most of my life, and I've been the editor of the Northeast Journal since 2022, but if I'm honest, I had always avoided this part of town on its most legendary holiday.

I don't love crowds, and hate being scared, so I'm not really a "Halloween" person. Thanksgiving has always been more my jam. But this year, a friend who lives in Snell Isle invited us over and we walked down into ONE to visit friends and see what all the fuss was about.

If you're reading this, it's likely you already know what the fuss is about. You might even be part of the fuss! But let me tell you, I was amazed. It's one thing to see pictures and hear stories, but quite another to experience it in person.

The spectacle! The creativity! The proliferation of candy-crazed children! Honestly? I loved it. We had a blast. Because, while it was just as wild and crowded and chaotic as I'd always feared, there was something more that I never really considered: A deep current of joy and community.

And that's exactly the kind of spirit you want to take with you into the holiday season.

This issue of the Northeast Journal celebrates those very things, from feeding those who are struggling to remembering the roots of holidays past. There are also new traditions to explore, like the Wednesday Night Market, Winter Wonder in Williams Park, and more. You're never far from a community of good people doing good things in this town.

Whatever the season looks like for you, we hope you celebrate with comfort and joy. From all of us at the NEJ, Happy Holidays to you and yours! ⬣ ***~ Shelly***

*If you have something to share, drop me a note: editor@northeastjournal.org.*

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**All photos should be high-res and not cropped too tight.**
**We'll email you the Meet Your Neighbor questions for you to answer in 550 words or less.**

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## MEET THE WRITERS

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



**Jennifer Amato** is a professional journalist with more than 20 years' experience in the print, broadcast, digital, and social media realms. She is a managing editor, content coordinator, social media content creator, and contributing writer for magazines and newspapers in New Jersey and Florida.



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



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



**Laura Flint,** a Tennessee native, moved to St. Pete in 2017. With her master's in literature, she began a career in youth sports and recreation. For Preserve the 'Burg, she began spending time with volunteers, planning events, and writing about special places and neighborhoods in St. Pete. Laura lives in St. Pete with her husband and two children.



**Amanda Hagood** teaches courses in environmental humanities at Eckerd College. She also contributes to *The Gabber Newspaper, Creative Loafing Tampa Bay,* and *Bay Soundings.*



**Becca McCoy** is an award-winning photographer, multi-disciplinary artist, and St. Pete native, recently returned to the area after years in Chicago and Atlanta. She has contributed to numerous City Lifestyle magazine franchises, Rough Draft Atlanta, and *Northeast Journal.* She and her husband, artist Justin Groom, comprise Leafmore Studios, LLC.



**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]



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



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

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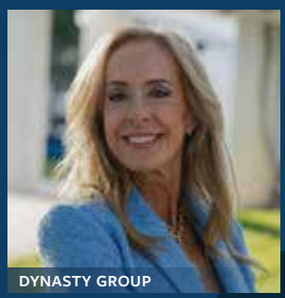

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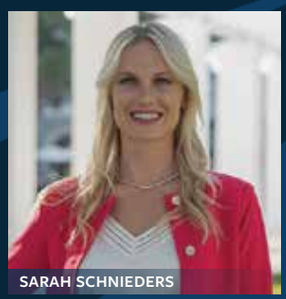

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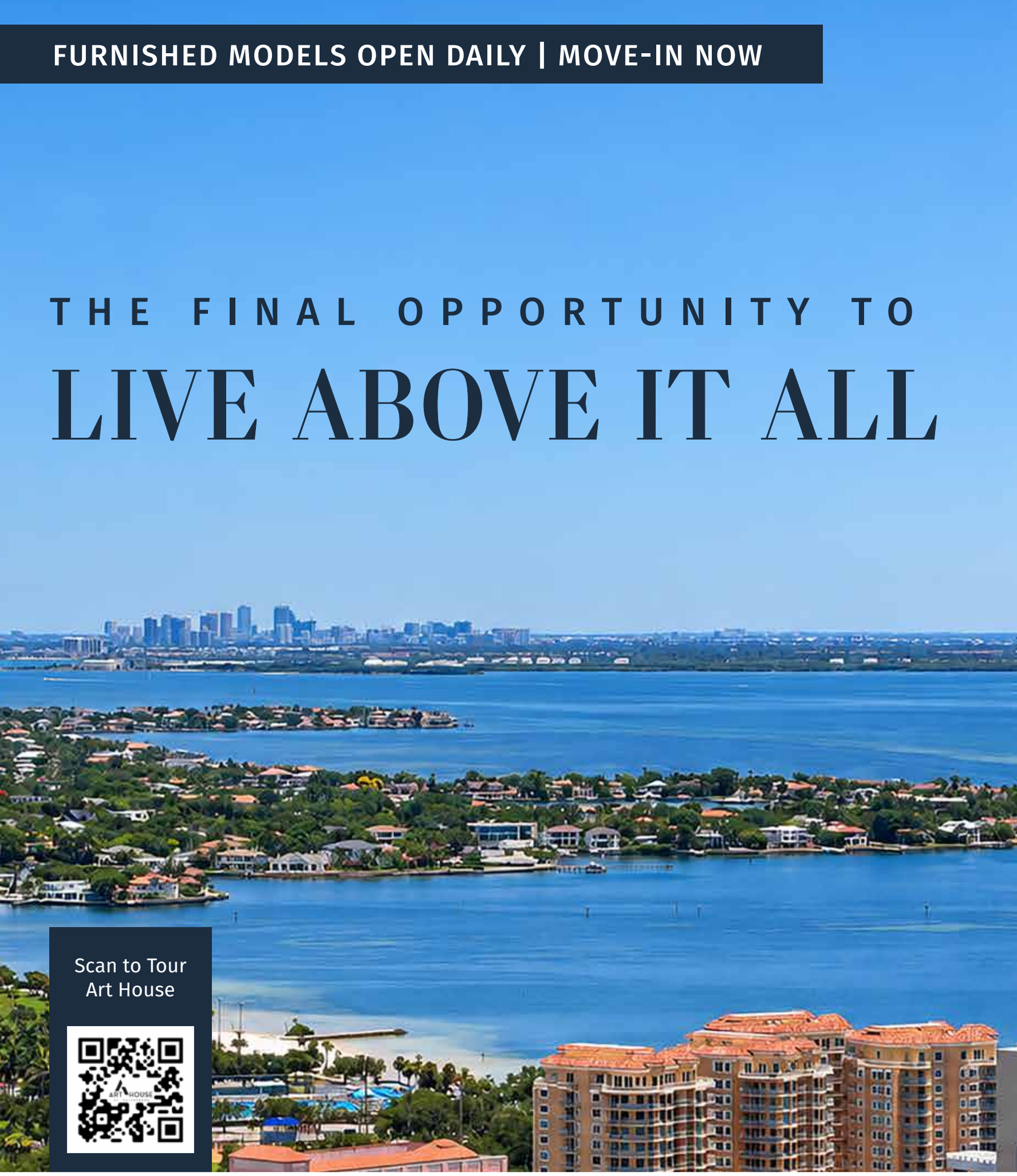
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*Williams Park will host Winter Wonder November 20 through January.*

other for food and the bar. Expect to see ice cream, too, "because of course we need ice cream at an ice rink in Florida," Drinkard laughed.

To celebrate the reopening of the bandshell, performers from American Stage, The Florida Orchestra, Palladium at SPC, and downtown theatrical groups are invited, among other performers, to take the stage.

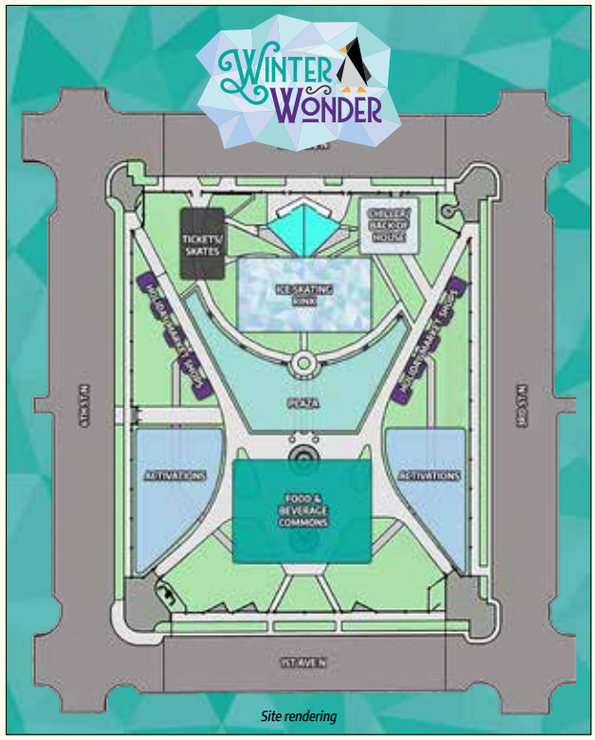
Winter Wonder also comes with its own live mascot. Willie the Penguin, aka Chilly Willie, is a snowbird visiting his pelican friends in St. Pete, Drinkard explained. Willie has been roaming around town and will frequent the park during the upcoming season. Representatives from the Florida Aquarium will also bring live penguins to the park on opening night.

"We're very excited during the holidays to create a special place for family and friends to spend time together," Drinkard said, noting that while other parks in the area will be holding their versions of Christmas festivals, Winter Wonder is going to celebrate the magic of the whole season. "We want to be a destination where you can spend an afternoon in the park."

The plans for Winter Wonder have been in place for about a year, with the support of private sponsors. Williams Park is the town's civic center, but its "good bones" have since been neglected, Drinkard said. Since many downtown organizations across the country network with each other, members of the St. Pete Downtown Partnership and St. Pete Downtown Improvement District had a connection to Dan Biederman, who designed New York City's Bryant Park, and worked on a major review of the area.

The Williams Park improvement project started with a $4 million renovation of the bandshell on the north end of the 3.3-acre park, which was showing signs of aging in addition to hurricane damage, Drinkard said. Along with $1 million worth of improvements to the park site's electrical, hardscaping, and landscaping elements over the next six months, the goal is to make Williams Park – which is St. Petersburg's oldest park – the newest must-visit destination in St. Pete.

"This is our first chance to be pretty impressive… If it feels vibrant and lively, I will consider that a success," Drinkard said. "We want to create something that provides memories for years to come so people come back to the park." ⬣




Site rendering

*An organizer's rendering of Winter Wonder highlights the ice-skating rink as part of the seasonal attraction.*

*Winter Wonder will open from November 20 to January 3. For more information, visit winterwonderstpete.com.*






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# Gardening in the Old Northeast: Made in the Shade

*Amanda Hagood*

Old Northeast is known for its quaint brick streets, historic houses, and old Florida charm – all things that make it one of the loveliest neighborhoods in St. Pete. But that same vintage vogue means gardeners must contend with the neighborhood's smaller-than-average lots and shady streets when managing their landscaping. In fact, St. Petersburg's 2022 tree canopy analysis found that Old Northeast's canopy cover topped out at an impressive 34.47%, several points above the city's 27% average and well ahead of the 30% tree cover goal it set for itself the same year. The canopy – which the Historic Old Northeast Neighborhood Association actively helps to cultivate and expand – does present challenges, but also opportunities, for plant divresity.

In fact, the tree cover is an important asset. As the St. Pete study details, a healthy canopy enhances neighborhood character, provides wildlife habitat, and keeps down sweltering summer temperatures, with a positive impact on both human health and cooling bills. Other




*#1. Coontie. #2. Florida swamp lilies. #3. Wild coffee. #4. Cuban oregano. #5. Jatropha flowers. #6. Anderson crepe hibiscus.*

benefits, while harder to see, are equally important: In a rain event, well developed root systems act like sponges, soaking up stormwater before it can flood roads or send pollutant-bearing run-off into the bay.

So, it is perhaps no surprise that Paul Meyers, a landscape designer for Wilcox Nursery who frequently works in the Old Northeast, recommends that homeowners try to work *with* their natural shade, rather than taking down those spreading oaks and gumbo limbos. "Keep your trees!" he urges. "They provide shade to keep your home and outdoor spaces cooler and give animals a place for food and shelter."

Fortunately, there are many great options for a small, shade-rich yard, particularly, says Meyers, if you think in terms of one or two main focal points – plants that draw the eye and create interesting lines of sight to explore. "Design in layers," he advises. "Think about how trees, shrubs, perennials, and ground covers all layer in together."

As we come into the winter planting season, here are some options to consider.

One great choice for a focal plant, says Meyers, is ixora. This shade-tolerant shrub flowers year-round, bearing




large globes of four-petaled blossoms in dazzling red, pink, orange, yellow, or even white (depending on the variety). Similarly, jatropha bears bright red or pink flower clusters, like firecrackers against its cool green foliage, showy in all seasons. Both plants are classified by the University of Florida's IFAS Extension as Florida Friendly, meaning that, while not native, they are well adapted for Florida growing conditions and unlikely to become invasive (though it should be noted this only applies to two varieties of jatropha: *Jatropha integerrima* and *Jatropha multifida*). Anderson Crepe hibiscus *(Hibiscus rosa-sinensis)* – a tropical adoptee which the South Florida Plant Guide website describes as "a pink-flowering fantasy with an exaggerated weep" – is another dramatic anchor that can tolerate partial shade.

But another important landscaping consideration is texture, and here, Florida native plants offer some truly unique options for shady yards. Wild coffee lives up to its nickname of "shiny coffee" with lustrous emerald leaves, punctuated in fall and winter by small red berries. Contrary to its scientific name *(Psychotria nervosa),* these berries do not share coffee's psychoactive effect, because they do not contain caffeine; but they are a favorite pick-me-up for




cardinals, mockingbirds, and blue jays. Coontie *(Zamia integrifolia)* grows in two- to three-foot mounded clumps, trailing wiry fronds that resemble the feathers of a mythical bird. If it looks like a plant that emerged from the age of the dinosaurs – that's because it did! And then there is Florida peperomia *(Peperomia obtusifolia),* a shin-high marvel with glossy, succulent leaves and tiny flowers that bloom on a leafless, antenna-like stalk. Peperomia thrives in deep shade.

If perennials are your thing, there are many Florida Friendly choices that can work in shady landscapes. Cast iron plant *(Aspidistra elatior)* is a tough-to-kill, evergreen choice that comes in varieties with cream or yellow stripes and spots. Carolina wild petunia *(Ruellia caroliniensis)* is a lavender-flowered native, and a great substitute for the commonly used Mexican petunia *(Ruellia simplex),* which is considered invasive. Aquatic milkweed *(Asclepias perennis)* and cardinal flower *(Lobelia cardinalis)* are both good choices for moist areas, and will attract nesting monarch butterflies and hungry hummingbirds, respectively. Florida swamp lilies *(Crinum americanum)* add a hint of wildness, with their lanky foliage, spidery blossoms, and creamy-sweet fragrance.

Despite their long-lived




reputation, Meyers offers a note of caution about perennials in Florida: our warm growing conditions mean many are not adapted for our climate and bloom many times a year, leading to a shorter, five- to six-year lifespan.

Maybe you are dreaming of something a little more aromatic, like a home herb garden? While it is true that some Mediterranean favorites like sage, rosemary, and thyme (if not parsley!) prefer full sun, there are many herbs that can thrive in partial shade. Try cuban oregano *(Plectranthus amboinicus)* – also confusingly known as Mexican mint, Spanish thyme, and Indian borage. Its camphor-like scent makes it a great accent for meaty dishes and stuffings. Lemongrass *(Cymbopogon citratus)* can be an attractive edging plant for fences and pathways, but it is also an essential ingredient for Thai-style soups and curries and can be combined with ginger, citrus, and a sweetener




to make a delightful sipper. Ginger comes in a myriad of ornamental forms, and like its edible cultivar, *Zingiber officinale,* most prefer some morning sun with dappled midday light. Culantro *(Eryngium foetidum),* mints, and turmeric *(Curcuma longa)* can all be grown successfully in partial shade.

Herbs, like most food plants, need soil rich in organic matter to thrive, meaning our naturally sandy Pinellas soil is not especially suitable for them. Compost or other amendments might help your herb garden grow. Or you might consider using containers, which can add some visual pizazz while allowing you to control for moisture, nutrients, and other important growing factors.

In short, don't let shade cast a shadow on your gardening ambitions. You can do marvelous things with a small space and partial sun, particularly if you follow the Florida Friendly landscaping credo of *right plant, right place.* Observe hour-by-hour conditions in your yard, do your homework to find suitable plants, and you will have it made.

In the shade, of course. ⬣

*For more Florida-friendly landscaping tips – in the shade or sun – check out gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu or floridawildlifefederation.org.*



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independence. For another, it brings access to fresh, nutritious food and a moment of joy. We are grateful to be part of both."

Positive Impact ST. PETE began more than 20 years ago when Selm's parents, Jay and Dr. Karalynne Brubaker, recognized that children at church were hungry. "My mother knew it was difficult for a child to hear a message of hope while their stomach was growling, so the ministry began providing meals and sending groceries home to their families."

One simple gesture transformed into a weekly community grocery distribution serving nearly 1,000 households.

"We help families put food on the table while reminding them that they matter to their community," Selm said. "Our contribution also includes bringing people together: neighbors, volunteers, churches, businesses, and other organizations working toward a stronger St. Petersburg. We want that shared effort to create both immediate relief and opportunities for lasting change."

## Services for the Community

The no-cost grocery distribution takes place at Tangerine Plaza in South St. Petersburg from 8 to 11 am every Saturday morning.

Anyone can walk up or drive in the line and wait for their car or wagon to be loaded, with no advance registration or sign-up required. Items like fresh produce, nutritious foods, meats, and snacks are given out, in addition to encouragement and prayers, if needed.

"Our grocery distribution is open to neighbors who need food assistance. You do not have to belong to a church to receive food. Positive Impact ST. PETE is a faith-based nonprofit that grew out of Positive Impact ST. PETE Church, and our faith motivates us to welcome people with compassion and dignity," Selm said.

A main focus is also making people feel like family, no matter their circumstances – and that they be treated with warmth, respect and dignity, Selm said. "Any one of us could find ourselves in that grocery line. A job loss, illness, family transition or rising expenses can change someone's circumstances quickly, and needing help does not diminish their worth or potential."

The food comes from several Publix and Sam's Club locations, as well as through a partnership with Feeding America.

## Volunteers at the Core

The work of Positive Impact ST. PETE is a collaboration of thousands of people. There is coordination among the core leadership and operations team, a volunteer community of more than 2,000 participants, approximately 70 volunteers who make the distribution process possible, and additional preparation and coordination throughout the week.

Volunteers pick up pallets of food, sort and pack groceries, welcome neighbors, and load food into their vehicles.

Myra and Cesar DeJesus are a husband-and-wife team who moved to St. Petersburg from out of state a few years ago. After seeing Positive Impact ST. PETE on the news, they decided to volunteer – and have been serving ever since. Now retired and in their late 50s, they have become lead volunteers, Selm explained.

"Serving with Positive Impact ST. PETE has been a blessing – not only for the neighbors receiving food, but for us as volunteers. We have the opportunity to build relationships, pray with people, and meet them right where they are, whatever their circumstances, with love and without judgment. Knowing they will have food for the coming week is a blessing," Myra DeJesus explained.

Another volunteer, Beth Cole, first connected with Positive Impact ST. PETE at a Thanksgiving food distribution in 2019, when she and her Little Sister through Big Brothers Big Sisters were looking for volunteer opportunities to help the young woman earn hours toward a college scholarship. Around June 2020, Dr. Brubaker invited Cole to volunteer at Tangerine Plaza. After serving in several roles, Cole












began leading the walk-up station for neighbors arriving on foot, by bicycle, or by scooter – a role she has continued for six years.

"What keeps me coming back are the gratitude, the smiles, the hugs, and the handshakes. I have gotten to know many of the neighbors and their stories," said Cole. "Each week, they tell me how much the food – and being greeted with a smile – means to them. Often, I hear, 'I couldn't make it without this.'"

Cole is particularly affected by the entire process because she also received assistance. "When Hurricane Helene flooded my home, a team from Positive Impact ST. PETE arrived during the first week with cleaning supplies and helping hands," Cole explained. "Among the volunteers was Miguel, a neighbor I had served for years. Now he was there to help me. I saw the beauty of coming full circle."




Individuals, families, church groups, business owners, school staff, and civic groups are welcome to volunteer. No experience is necessary; the team provides direction and helps people find a role. Volunteers can begin serving at age 8; those ages 8–12 must be accompanied by an adult chaperone.

"Our volunteers become like family. We work hard together, enjoy serving together, and build friendships that extend beyond Saturday mornings. Volunteer socials give us time to connect, celebrate, and get to know one another. It is a place of belonging, and we often feel just as blessed by the experience as the neighbors we serve," Selm said.

Aside from volunteering, financial gifts via PositiveImpact.org support the work behind every distribution. They also gratefully accept food donations from 7:30 to 10:30 am on Fridays at Tangerine Plaza.

"You do not have to make a large gift or have specialized experience to make a difference," Selm said.

## Holiday Cheer

With the holiday season in full swing, the Bags of Blessings campaign helps families enjoy Thanksgiving and Christmas meals. Church groups, business staff, school members, neighbors and individuals can collect traditional holiday meal items for the distributions. This year's Thanksgiving distribution is planned for Saturday, November 21, and the Christmas distribution is set for Saturday, December 19.

## More 'Positive Impacts' for 2027

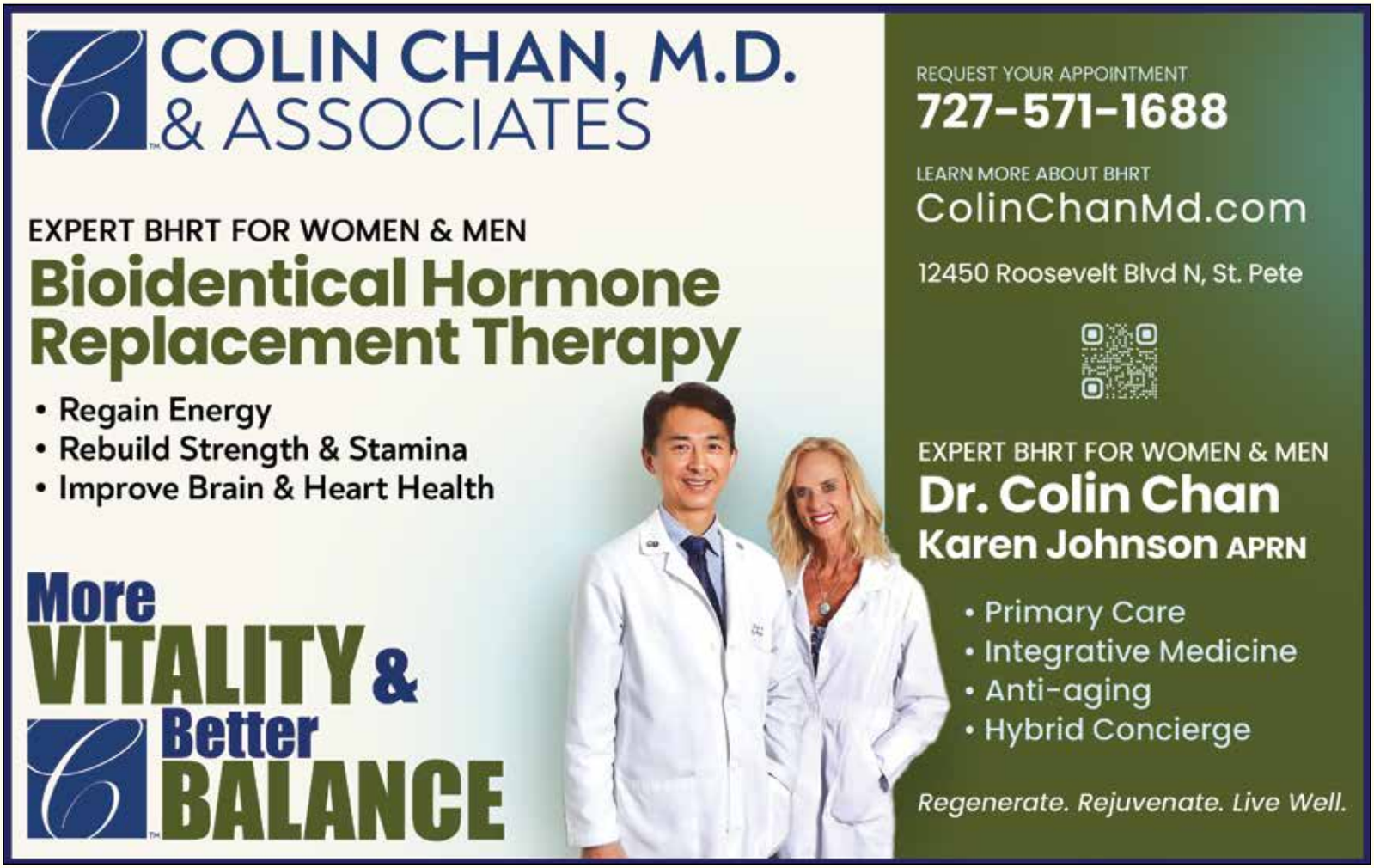
Selm said the priorities for leadership at Positive Impact ST. PETE are to strengthen weekly food access, build sustainable funding, improve transportation and cold storage capacity, and deepen community partnerships.

One of those methods is by advancing plans for The Impact Center: "a welcoming campus that brings food, trusted resources, relationships, and opportunity together," Selm explained.

Planned components include a choice-based community market; Food Rx and nutrition partnership; community resource collaborations; personal development; and a Culinary & Hospitality Training Center with a training kitchen and café, in partnership with Pinellas Technical College.

"By bringing trusted partners and practical opportunities together," Selm said, "we want a visit for groceries to become the beginning of a relationship that helps people move toward greater stability." ⬣

*For more information, visit PositiveImpact.org.*

# Neighborhood News
## Events & Community Updates

HONNA.org
Rick Carson / editor
rickcarson1@aol.com

Historic Old Northeast™ NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION




## Neighborhood Relations and St. Pete Free Clinic Featured

Join your neighbors on Monday, November 16, for local updates, community news and HONNA Board elections.

HONNA invites all residents to attend the final quarterly meeting of 2026 at 7 pm at Westminster Palms (939 Beach Drive NE). This fall's gathering features guest speakers Jennifer Joern from the city's Neighborhood Relations Department and Sheryl Zeitler from the St. Pete Free Clinic, alongside important neighborhood updates and our annual board elections.

### Connecting with City Resources

The city's Neighborhood Relations Department plays a vital role in helping St. Petersburg's 110 neighborhood associations thrive by connecting residents with municipal services, grant opportunities, and volunteer programs. Neighborhood Specialist Jennifer Joern will share how neighborhoods can tap into these valuable city resources.


*Jennifer Joern*

"Jennifer is a literal extension of the HONNA Board and an invaluable partner for our neighborhood," HONNA Board President Nick Bell explains. "We collaborate with her department on important neighborhood enhancements, including the 1st Street acorn lighting project and matching grants that support events like our annual Candlelight Tour of Homes."

### Supporting Our Community Partner: St. Pete Free Clinic

Speaking of the Candlelight Tour, the St. Pete Free Clinic (SPFC) has been selected as this year's local nonprofit beneficiary. Proceeds from the upcoming December 6 Tour will help support SPFC's essential work providing healthcare access, food security, and basic needs assistance to Pinellas County individuals and families.

Sheryl Zeitler, SPFC's Chief External Affairs Officer, and Steve Bakerand, Director of Donor Engagement, will highlight how the clinic's programs make a lasting impact in the broader St. Pete community. "We are extremely proud to partner with the St. Pete Free Clinic this year," says Nick. "They offer indispensable care to neighbors in need, and Sheryl and Steve will give us a firsthand look at their wonderful work."


*Sheryl Zeitler*


*Steve Baker*

### Annual Board Elections & Fall Updates

In addition to our guest speakers, HONNA members will vote to confirm three seats on the 12-member Board of Directors. "This annual vote ensures our leadership remains directly connected to and supported by the community we serve," Nick notes. Attendees will also receive the latest news on seasonal neighborhood events and ongoing projects.

Catch up with neighbors, hear what's happening around our brick streets, and celebrate another wonderful year in the Old Northeast!




## The 27th Candlelight Tour of Homes

Lighting up the Historic Old Northeast on Sunday, December 6, this beloved holiday tradition will feature home tours, live music, and local treats.

This year's tour, which runs from 3-8 pm, showcases six extraordinary properties highlighting the rich architectural heritage of the neighborhood, including romantic Mediterranean Revivals, classic American Foursquares, and a newly built Craftsman Bungalow.

"Our lineup this year is truly outstanding," says Nick Bell, HONNA Board President. "Each property is a showstopper that captures the spirit and beauty of the Old Northeast. Guests will love the variety, from a home overlooking scenic Coffee Pot Bayou to one nestled among the historic live oaks of Granada Terrace."

To ensure a seamless and enjoyable experience, dedicated trolleys and golf carts will be available to transport tour guests between stops. "We worked hard this year to structure the route so our trolleys navigate effortlessly while also offering several homes grouped close together for guests who love a pleasant evening stroll," Bell added.

Along the tour route, an array of award-winning musicians will serenade visitors with live performances, adding a festive backdrop to the event. Guests can also stop by the Hospitality Station at Granada Terrace Circle (Bay Street and 23rd Avenue NE) to purchase delicious food and drinks from a variety of local vendors.

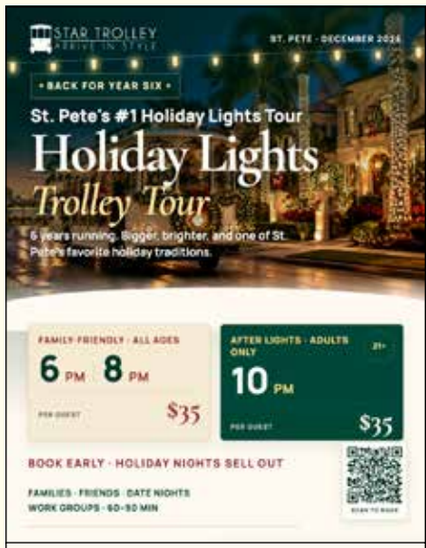
More than just a seasonal celebration, the tour directly benefits the local community. Proceeds help fund HONNA's ongoing tree canopy replenishment program, and a portion will be donated to support the St. Pete Free Clinic.

**Ticket Information:** Due to high demand, the tour is expected to sell out quickly. Tickets go on sale November 6 for $40 ($35 for HONNA members).

**Online beginning November 6:**
Available at honna.org
In-Person (cash or check only):

- Marion's (1301 4th St N)
- Sunken Gardens (1825 4th St N)
- ONE Rally Station (2131 4th St N)

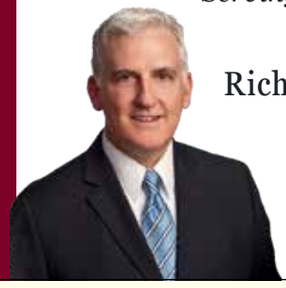
The tour takes place rain or shine and tickets are transferable but not refundable.




*HONNA is partnering with Star Trolleys.*
***$5 of every ticket purchased via the QR code goes to HONNA.***
*You will select a date and time when you book your ticket.*

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**Thank You, Neighbors**
For your continued trust and referrals.
Wishing you a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year.




## Let's Branch Out, Old Northeast!

Neighborhood residents can support our precious canopy by helping inventory rights-of-way and applying for free trees.

Our neighborhood's beauty is defined as much by the lush green canopy arching overhead as by the historic homes lining our streets. For the past decade, HONNA has partnered with residents to plant more than 200 trees in our public rights-of-way, continually strengthening the "green roof" that keeps our community cool, beautiful, and vibrant.

**Rooted in a Shared Passion** Our tree planting program originally grew from the vision of three dedicated residents who shared a deep love for our neighborhood's natural beauty: Carol and Burt Kline alongside the late HONNA Board Member Robin Reed. They recognized early on that our canopy is a living ecosystem – one that requires thoughtful monitoring, tender care, and ongoing replenishment.

**Branching Out for a Resilient** Future As we step into the second decade of this program, we are excited to evolve our efforts through *Branching Out* – our initiative to strategically inventory rights-of-way trees, diversify species, and replenish the Old Northeast canopy. While our iconic live oaks are an irreplaceable treasure, introducing a broader variety of native and climate-resilient species ensures our urban forest remains healthy and vibrant for the next century.

**The Right Tree in the Right Place** Building a healthy canopy starts with knowing what we have. Through our volunteer-led tree inventory, we are mapping species, assessing health, and identifying open spaces ready for new growth. Neighborhood volunteers have already inventoried nearly half of the Old Northeast! As autumn brings cooler weather, Monique Kramer, HONNA Board Member and Branching Out Project leader, is looking for volunteers to help finish the mapping. It's easy, fun, and a wonderful excuse for a neighborhood stroll!

**Become a Canopy Champion** Every tree we plant is an investment in our shared future. We invite you and your family to join us as "Canopy Champions" by helping inventory our streets and/or signing up to receive a free right-of-way tree(s)!

When you apply for a tree, HONNA handles the heavy lifting:

- We source and deliver a high-quality tree suited for your right-of-way.
- Our team plants, mulches and stakes the tree properly.
- We provide a slow-release watering bag and detailed care instructions.

Each tree represents a several-hundred-dollar value – provided free to HONNA members to keep our neighborhood green

**Ready to Get Growing?** To volunteer for the inventory team and/or to apply for a free tree(s) for your curb, please email Monique Kramer at trees@honna.org. Let's grow the future of The ONE together!

***~ Nick Bell & Monique Kramer***

## HONNA'S SHINING STARS

To honor ONE homeowners for preserving or updating their home or property and investing to keep the character and history of their homes intact, HONNA recognizes them with the Neighborhood STAR Award.

Here are the STARs for Nov. & Dec: 106 25th Ave NE and 516 20th Ave NE.

Watch for new STARs each month, on HONNA.org and HONNA's Facebook page. Have a home to honor? Send info to Charleen McGrath: cfmcgrath@msn.com.













## HAPPY HONNA-WEEN!







### 23 Years of HONNA Halloween Fun

More than 150 neighbors and friends gathered at the home of Frank Hay and Steve Deal for the 23rd annual HONNA October Porch Party, a tradition that has become an epic Old NE event. Guests arrived in everything from deviled egg and Pope costumes to Roman soldiers, SuperGirl, zombies and plenty more creative characters.

The backyard pool area was transformed into a lively dance floor, complete with amazing live music by DJ Rich, spinning old-school '80s favorites, Halloween tunes, fog and lights. After 23 years, the HONNA Porch Party continues to bring neighbors and friends together for one unforgettable night of Halloween fun.

Residents know the Old NE is famous for its Halloween festivities, including amazing decorations and displays. Star Trolley and HONNA paired up for the 2026 Old Northeast Halloween Showcase Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, October 27 and 28. Two trolleys each evening treated 72 riders to 15 outstanding holiday displays, and riders voted for their favorites. 1st Place: Alien Invasion, Rob Arrington, 446 18th Avenue NE; 2nd Place: The Scary Clown House, Michael Russo, 326 17th Avenue NE; 3rd Place: Haunted Zombie Mansion, Nick Bell, 106 14th Avenue NE. The first-place winner received a tour package of four Holiday Lights Trolley Tour passes and four St. Petersburg City Tour passes ($260 value).

### PORCH PARTY! THE THIRD FRIDAY OF MOST MONTHS...

**Friday, November 20 at the home of Susan & Larry Wildes, 105 17th Avenue NE**

- Friends and neighbors gather at a resident's home 7:30-10 pm
- Free for HONNA members
- Non-member ONE residents & members' guests are welcome with a donation at the door to defray party costs
- Enjoy lite bites and non-alcoholic beverages
- Bring your "spirit" drinks of choice

A Season to Celebrate

This holiday season, we're reminded how thankful we are to call Old Northeast home. We're grateful for the friends, clients, and neighbors who've shared memories with us over the years. Here's to the people and traditions that make the holidays special – wishing you peace, joy, and time to enjoy the moments that matter most.

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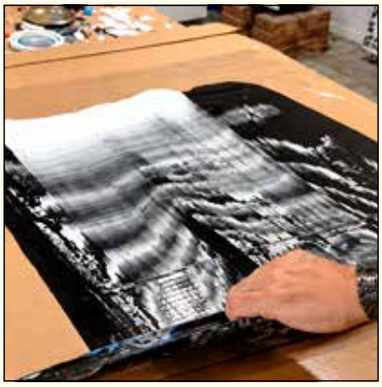
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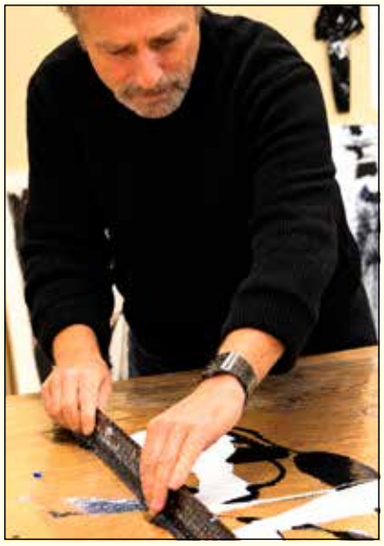
# Like a Rorschach Test: The Art of Steve Pennisi



*"Chinese Industrial Revolution."*



*Squeegee monotype in the artist's studio.*



*Steve Pennisi using a squeegee to pull paint.*

*Brandy Stark*

There are two things that go well together: fine music and fine art. The St. Pete Opera building, which houses the Mirella Cimato Gallery, presents both this winter. Those who go to see *Pinocchio* in November and the *SPO Holiday Show* in December get a special treat with the show, *Painting With Both Sides of the Paint* by Steve Pennisi.

Born in another famous art town, Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he graduated from the University of Michigan, Pennisi's background includes work as a printer, freelance editorial cartoonist, and commercial illustrator. However, once he established a family, he craved more financial security. He worked in advertising, eventually founding his own company. After 25 years, he returned to his true passion: being a full-time artist.

Pennisi moved from Portland to St. Petersburg in 2012, attracted by the "vibrant art scene and the young vibe of the city." Then he began searching for his own artistic voice, a brand that was new to him and the world. To pursue this, he tried various experiments, but an accidental discovery set him on his current trajectory.

One day, he saw a dried paint corner peel away from the waxed paper of a disposable palette. Upon further examination, he found that there was a gestural pattern left behind. This appealed to him as gestural painting engages the artist's body through physical acts like sweeping arm movements, drips, and expressive brushstrokes. It was his energy mixed with the mystery of unknown results that piqued his interest.

It took a series of attempts with various mediums, but soon Pennisi found that he could paint on clear cellophane, the type used for gift wrapping, and then peel off the paint once it dried.

"If I liked what I was also doing on the visible surface, I could lay a piece of clear film on the wet paint and capture that image too. This ability to utilize 'both sides of the paint' gave me a freedom and expanded palette that creates a seamless integration of line, paint, and halftone," he explains. "This technique keeps the paintings 'open' for both the artist and the viewer, allowing for different subjective personal interpretations."

The results are "powerful abstractions and imaginary landscapes. There's a dynamic tension between illusionary power and the sheer physicality of the paint. The paint vacillates between pure physical paint – Jackson Pollock splashes and splatters – to photographic Ansel Adams-like halftone."

Pennisi's work challenges traditions of depth, figure and ground, chance and intention. He uses pareidolia to find hidden forms he can highlight. "Much of the process is just looking—like finding animals in the clouds or Jesus in the toast," Pennisi says. "I'm able to bend the paint the way a musician bends a note."

When not showing his work, Pennisi has lectured at Hodges University and Florida Gulf Coast University. His works have also been exhibited in shows from New York to Louisiana in places like the Baker Museum, Artist Naples, and the Boca Museum of Art. Now it has arrived in The 'Burg at the St. Pete Opera House.

"It's a great space for exhibiting my work, and I found out about it from a friend of mine who recently had a show in there," he says. "For those who want to see me at work, I am doing live demonstrations at 7:30 pm for the November and December art walks."

Pennisi says his hope is for the viewer to "experience and see the image through their own eyes. To not just think 'there's a picture of fruit in a bowl' but to look at it like a Rorschach test and respond to what they see in the picture. I'm often surprised at what someone will see in contrast to what I was thinking in making it." ⬣

*To get a feel for the show, check out his website at pennisiart.com. More at stpeteopera.org/mirella-cimato-gallery. Pennisi's work will be featured through December 30.*

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# Listen Up: RadioStPete Celebrates the Season and More

*Nanette Wiser*




Winding down the year, RadioStPete took second place as a Finalist for Best Radio Station for the second year and Best Radio Station from *Creative Loafing's* Best of the Bay. Other highlights included participating at myriad events with Localtopia on the horizon for February 2027.

Celebrate the holidays with RadioStPete / Sunshine 96.7 FM for our third annual Holiday Happy Hour featuring The Petty Experience, a tribute to the legendary music of Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers. Enjoy an evening of unforgettable songs, great company, and community spirit at Bayboro Brewing in St. Petersburg on Wednesday, December 9, 7-9 pm. Your ticket helps support RadioStPete, St. Petersburg's nonprofit community radio station bringing local music, local voices, and community stories to the airwaves. Click The Petty Experience button on the top of RadioStPete.com for tickets.

At the annual September Board Meeting, RadioStPete Sunshine 96.7 FM celebrated multiple milestones, revamped programming channels (Sunshine 96.7 FM also online and RadioStPete Online Channel 2) as well as welcomed new board members to the organization. Joining current board members Joe Bourdow, President; J Kolb, Vice President; Karen Carmichael, 1st Vice President; Todd Leiser, Secretary; Aron Bryce, Brooke Beeler, Stephen Riordan, and Mike Jones are Debbie Reeser, Domenico Pontoriero, Stacia Schrader, and Sydney Richmond. The management team is composed of Joe Bourdow, Station Manager; J. Kolb, Music Director; Karen Carmichael, Development Director; Todd Leiser, Secretary; and Nanette Wiser, News Director.

Says Bourdow: "We are two great, listener supported, and non-profit 24-hour internet radio streams offering a unique variety of locally produced and syndicated programming. We are especially proud to welcome listeners in downtown St. Pete to Sunshine 96.7 FM, a local radio station playing the best work of over fifteen hundred home grown singers, songwriters, and bands regularly playing in our Tampa Bay area."

Our content and music shows are available at RadioStPete online (phone, tablet, computer) or via the free app; ask Siri on your Alexa or Google enabled speakers to "Play RadioStPete." You can also tune in to Sunshine 96.7 FM within 10 miles of downtown St. Pete. ⬣


## Back on the Right Foot

Joan, a long time resident of St. Petersburg now in her mid 80's, was getting worried about the increasing challenges she was having with the pain in her feet and the loss of balance she was experiencing more every day. The burning and cramping she was feeling was keeping her from sleeping and making her avoid walking for anything that wasn't necessary. What originally began as a minor inconvenience a decade ago, became life altering this past year. Even though she is otherwise very healthy, the sensations in her feet began to make it hard to enjoy life.

"I was exhausted from the constant pain and unable to sleep most nights. I may have retired 20 years ago, but I still have a busy life I want to live. I was prescribed some medications but I've never used anything more than Tylenol for pain. I feel fortunate that a friend in my condo told me about her successful treatments at St. Petersburg Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine. She described how Dr. Mann's treatments helped her peripheral neuropathy and balance issues. When he clearly explained to me how acupuncture treats neuropathy it made me confident that he could help me too."

Joan started her treatments in August. By Halloween she was recounting that the tingling and constant daily pain were gone. "I don't feel the burning anymore, and the cramping in my toes rarely wakes me up at night," said Joan. "My feet feel great and I am much more confident in my balance. I'm able to walk around downtown if I want to now. It's so beautiful this time of year!"

Dr. Matthew Mann, DAOM, AP uses the evidence-based science of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine with other integrative techniques like ATP Resonance Biotherapy™ that assist in improving circulation. Blood flow is critical when trying to treat damaged nerves. Dr. Mann has been practicing acupuncture and East Asian medicine for over a decade. He offers non-surgical, non-drug options, specializing in complex chronic cases of pain and internal medicine.

If nerve pain is keeping you from living your best life this holiday season, give Dr. Mann and his caring team at St. Petersburg Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine a call at 727 - 235 - 0435.

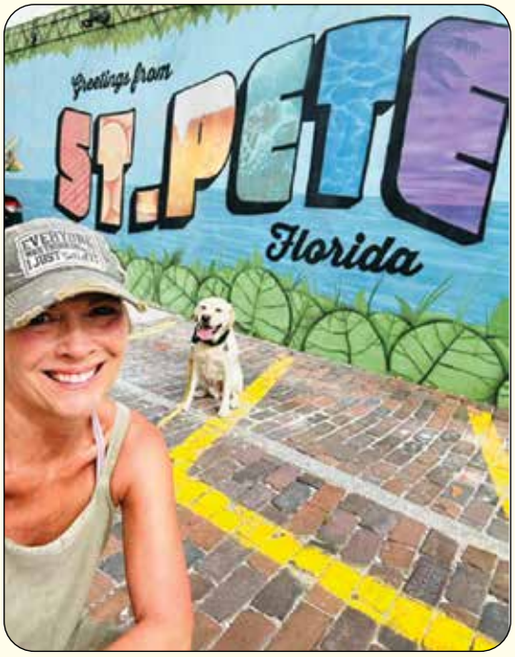
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*Tonya Mazurek with Kodak, downtown St. Pete*



*Christy and Amanda with pups Doechii and Bubba, Magnolia Heights*



*Jason with Griffy, Uptown*



*Gail Falkingham and Louie, Downtown St Pete*



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Jack and Hopie ask you to share your People and Pets photos!
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*Danielle Schaffer with Marbles and Magin, Crescent Heights*







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*The former* St. Petersburg Times *building, circa 1955, where Santa made his first appearance in 1928*



*Pioneer flyer Johnny Green flew Santa's plane at the first event in 1928.*

**Courtesy of St. Petersburg Museum of History**

– the prime suspect being City Publicity Director John Lodwick. At any rate, the *Times* gave their full backing to this celebration of the season that would also help boost holiday sales for local businesses.

Santa arrived on November 30, but the *Times* promoted it for days in advance. Santa's travel schedule for the "5,000-mile" journey was announced and his progress reported daily in the paper. The five-day trip by plane of course began at the North Pole. The first stop was reported as "probably at some little island on the edge of the Arctic circle"; the second day "at some trading post in the Hudson bay country"; the third day Detroit, and the fourth Atlanta. Fictitious journalists provided the *Times* with special reports on receptions for Santa at each stop. Finally it was announced, "Friday morning, while everyone is still asleep, the big plane, on its trip from the land of eternal snow and ice to the land of Sunshine and flowers, will speed away, and is expected to arrive over the *Times* office in St. Petersburg about 10 o'clock Friday morning." On the day of arrival suspense was further boosted for the waiting crowd by bulletins in the *Times*' ground-floor window on the plane's progress from Atlanta.

"Exactly at 10 o'clock Santa's plane came up from the horizon in the north-west. The kiddies were the first to see it and cheering throats were heard on every hand. Not only the children, but the grown-ups caught the spirit of the occasion."

As the plane came into sight, it was discovered that Santa had picked up famed local aviator Johnny Green. Green owned a "flying boat" (seaplane) named the *Betty,* had a hangar near the Pier, and worked for the Board of Trade to promote tourism. The *Times* noted, "Santa had telegraphed ahead the night before asking Johnny to aid him, and this the local flyer was only too glad to do."

Green flew over the *Times* building a few times and then "brought the plane about with a graceful swoop," the newspaper reported. "Down across the top of the *Times* building it came, with Santa, one leg out, ready to step off. A second later it reappeared and Santa was gone. He appeared a second later at the edge of the roof… waving his greetings to those below and throwing… candy kisses."

After the spectacular landing on the roof, Santa descended by elevator to the ground floor where he was mobbed by well-wishers, both adults and children. He then toured the downtown by car with a motorcycle police escort.

Somewhat buried in the *Times* coverage of the event was the following: "But if anyone wants to start an argument, just ask someone how Santa got out of the plane and onto the roof…. Some insist they saw Santa step from the wing of the plane to the roof as it passed over; others contend that the plane stopped on the roof long enough for Santa to get off; still others claim that Santa was really in the *Times* building all the time, and that he wasn't in the plane at all; while still others claim it was a 'dummy' that stood on the wings of the plane, waving and throwing candy kisses to the ground – take your choice or make up one to fit your own wishes, but at any rate all St. Petersburg must admit that Santa Claus is and always will be – so long as love controls the human heart."

## Tough Act to Follow

So how did the city follow that act the next year? Santa arriving again in an airplane? Well, how about a blimp? Yes, in 1929, Santa again visited the city, but this time in the Goodyear Blimp named *Vigilant*. A front-page *Times* article heralded the event several days before the arrival with the headline, "Blimp Flying to City with Jolly Old Man."

These flights from the North Pole to St. Pete were to continue for decades. Bringing a blimp to be stationed in St. Petersburg was one of Lodwick's many schemes to grow tourism. And not only did the Goodyear blimp make its inaugural arrival in December 1929, but it arrived with Santa Claus aboard. Schools were closed at 1:30 pm so young people could be there. The crowd was estimated at to be at least 20,000, and likely thousands more. "It is safe to say that there was a representative there from every family in the city and its suburbs," reported the *Times*.

## Ten Years Later

In 1939 the city again celebrated Santa's arrival, but this time also held a separate Christmas Parade sponsored by the Merchants Association. That parade included 1,200 people, including bands, drum and bugle corps, Mother Goose characters, clowns, a police escort, the American Legion color guard, and four floats bearing the Queen of Christmas, a Living Christmas Tree, Santa Claus, the St. Paul's Boys Soprano Choir, and International Choirs. The parade was held at night and was said to have attracted between 40,000-50,000 people.

A parade on the scale of 1939 does not appear to have been repeated until 1954. That year the Chamber of Commerce and the Merchants Association joined the *Times* as sponsors and organized the expansive Santa Parades that we yearly see today. The 1954 parade was marketed as the "Suncoast Santa Claus Parade," to appeal to a regional audience. In addition to Santa, it included 20 floats, six bands, and "plenty of majorettes and pretty girls in formals." Spectators were estimated at an astounding 75,000 – roughly half the population of the city.

## Santa's Transport

Over the years Santa has arrived by every means of transportation – the Goodyear Blimp, a seaplane, by boat that docked at the downtown Pier, on a train flatcar surrounded by real snow, by plane and parachute, and in a "great big king-size beribboned box" on a truck. When he arrived once by seaplane, Old Kris walked a narrow bridge from the rocking



*Snownem in last year's lighted parade*

**Courtesy of the St. Petersburg Parks and Recreation Department**




**Courtesy of the St. Petersburg Parks and Recreation Department**




*In 1928, the* St. Petersburg Times *stoked interest for days with updates on Santa's progress to the 'Burg.*




*A cartoon from the November 25, 1928 issue of the* St. Petersburg Times *shows the first Santa landing, by plane on the roof of the Times building.*




*The* St. Petersburg Times *was a long-time sponsor. An ad in the* Times *shows Santa at the inverted pyramid pier for the 1980 event.*

seaplane to the seawall in Vinoy basin where he fell into the bay with "full gift pack, whiskers, tasseled hat, and all." When Santa arrived by train flatcar with snow, a fierce snowball fight broke out among kids waiting to see him. And once when he was coming ashore by boat at the Pier the boat broke down and he had to be rescued by the Coast Guard. In 1944, a war year, Santa toured the city in an Army command vehicle.

Peggy Harris and her twin sister Patty Harris Burgin, served as Santa's helpers in 1946 and 1947. At the time they were attending junior high school. It was the tradition to give Santa's helpers special nicknames. There was Dot and Dash, "Aw Shucks" and "Gee Whiz," and Rumple and Stiltskin. Peggy's and Patty's names were Kate and "Dupli-kate." That year Santa's tour started at the old Million Dollar Pier, riding on a flatbed truck. The tour took Santa to Bayshore Drive, then up Central Avenue to 22nd Street, down to 7th Avenue South where there was a stop, and then to Lakeview Avenue terminating at the American Legion Crippled Children's Home (predecessor of todays Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital).

Peggy remembers crowds of children coming right up to the truck as she and her sister handed out wrapped taffy. She still recalls the event vividly: "It made me so happy. It was such a happy occasion. It was so wonderful."

## Changing Parade Dates

In 1956 the Chamber reported the Santa Parade was moved from December to late November, and, "as a result we believe our merchants enjoyed more and better Christmas business…" In 1960 the parade was held prior to Thanksgiving, causing one angry resident to write to the *Times*, "Have all of us completely lost our minds?... This is commercialization of something sacred and beautiful that is being ruined… please lets save Christmas. Save it for the kids."

By 1970, sponsorship of the parade had passed to the Downtown Business and Professional Association and the *Times* and *Evening Independent* newspapers. And, by 1980, the parade was solely sponsored by the *Times* and *Independent*. The city assumed sponsorship through the Parks and Recreation Department in 2001.

## Denis Burns Remembers

Denis Burns has been the city's recreation special events supervisor since 1997. He is a native of St. Pete and, as a kid, saw many of the city's seasonal events, including the annual Santa Parade. His is a dream job, as Denis explains: "As a child, I have fond memories of my family taking me downtown to watch the local floats, community groups, and participants coming together for this special event. Years later, as an adult working for the City of St. Petersburg, I had the opportunity to help plan and execute the parade, allowing new generations of families to create their own holiday memories. It was especially meaningful to be part of an event that I had once experienced as a child."

## Holiday Trifecta

The Santa Parade is now part of a trifecta. This year's Santa Parade will be the 98th, counting from Santa's landing on the roof of the *Times* building in 1928. The event, also known as the Illuminated Night Parade, will be held on Saturday, November 28, starting at 6:30 pm. Rather than candy kisses, decorative beads will be distributed to the watching crowd. The parade begins at Albert Whitted Park, adjacent to the airport. It continues down Bayshore Boulevard east of Straub Park, continues east on 5th Avenue turning in front of the Vinoy Hotel, and then continues on, ending in North Shore Park. Last year it's estimated that about 10,000 people watched the parade with another 5,000 to 10,000 packed into Straub Park. Some 64 organizations participated with floats and vehicles. City personnel anticipate the number of participants this year to be even greater. Organizations interested in participating in the parade should contact Special Events Supervisor Deardis Peters at 727-893-7734.

After the parade the mayor lights the Holiday Tree at North Straub Park. This is followed on Saturday, December 5, from 9 am to 2 pm by the Snowfest at North Straub Park. Typically, Snowfest includes toboggan slides for adults and children, inflatables, arts and crafts tents, food trucks and more.

City Recreation and Programming Superintendent Rick Craft has held general responsibility for the Santa Parade since 2014. He reflects, "To me, the significance of the Santa Parade goes far beyond the floats, marching bands, and holiday festivities. It's about the memories we create, the traditions we pass down, and the sense of community we share. It's one of those special events that connects our city's past with its present and reminds us that, while St. Petersburg continues to grow and change, some traditions remain timeless."

Happy Holidays all! ⬣

---

*Will Michaels is former director and trustee of the St. Petersburg Museum of History and the author of* The Making of St. Petersburg *and the* Hidden History of St. Petersburg. *Email him at wmichaels2222@gmail.com.*




Courtesy of the Kids and Kubs Senior Softball Club




Courtesy of the St. Petersburg Parks and Recreation Department

# More Room to Create: Morean Arts Center Plans Next Chapter








*Laura Flint*



*Left: The Chihuly Collection is currently across the street from the main Morean Arts Center building. Right: For Executive Director Howayda Affan, the project is an opportunity to build on the Morean's longstanding mission. Below: The Morean Arts Center moved into its current home in the 1990s. Bottom: Design Concept Presentation.*

For more than a century, the Morean Arts Center has helped residents discover art not simply as something to admire, but as something to experience, learn about, and create themselves. Now the organization is preparing for a new chapter that could significantly expand how it will serve the city.

In a new proposed expansion, the Morean is looking at a five-story, approximately 42,150-square-foot redevelopment on Central Avenue that will bring the Morean Arts Center and the Chihuly Collection under one roof. The facility would include expanded exhibition galleries, classrooms, a Children's Learning Center, a glass studio, and other spaces designed to connect visitors with art and artists alike.

For Executive Director Howayda Affan, the project represents an opportunity to build on the organization's longstanding mission while responding to a city whose arts and cultural offerings have grown considerably. "This redevelopment is about more than creating a larger building," Affan said. "It is an investment in the future of arts education, artistic expression, cultural tourism, and community connection. We want to ensure that the Morean can continue serving residents and visitors for the next 100 years and beyond."

According to their website, the Morean traces their history back to 1917, when Margaret Tadd and her daughter, Edith Tadd Little, founded the Art Club of St. Petersburg, which was inspired by the work of their husband and father, J. Liberty Tadd, an art educator who founded the Florida Winter Art School the previous year. Margaret and Edith looked to make art education available to a broader audience. From its earliest days, the organization integrated education through its exhibitions as school children were introduced to art through exhibition tours. Classes for both children and adults became a lasting part of the organization's work.

Over the decades, the Art Club evolved alongside the city. In 1972, it merged with the Arts Center Association, eventually becoming known as the Arts Center. In the early 1990s, the organization moved to the 700 block of Central Avenue, where support from the benefactor Beth Morean helped bring several buildings together into a more unified home. In 2009, the organization adopted the Morean Arts Center name in recognition of the Morean family's support. Since then, the Morean's reach has expanded far beyond its main Central Avenue location.

The organization now encompasses contemporary art exhibitions and classes, a glass studio, the Chihuly Collection, and the Morean Center for Clay in the Warehouse Arts District. The Chihuly Collection, featuring the work of internationally renowned glass artist Dale Chihuly, opened in St. Pete in 2010 and moved to its current Central Avenue location in 2016. Its arrival helped spur added interest in glass art and the development of the Morean Glass Studio, where visitors can watch artists show the techniques behind the art. The proposed redevelopment is the next step in bringing these varied experiences closer together.

Today, the Morean's facilities are spread across multiple locations. The new building would create a more integrated destination, allowing visitors to experience the Chihuly collection alongside contemporary art, ceramics, glass, as well as hands on learning. Affan sees particular potential in connecting the experience of viewing finished artwork with understanding how it is made.

"We see an opportunity to connect the Chihuly Collection's extraordinary exhibitions with hands-on learning, artist demonstrations, educational programming, and opportunities to engage more deeply with the creative process," she said. "Rather than experiencing these offerings

as separate destinations, visitors will have a more cohesive cultural experience that encourages exploration and discovery."

The proposed building would also provide added room for exhibitions, artist talks, demonstrations, and collaborations. For local and emerging artists, that could mean more opportunities to exhibit work and engage directly with the community. "Artists are the heart of the Morean's mission," Affan said. "We want this building to be a place where local and emerging artists feel supported and where visitors can develop a deeper appreciation for the people and processes behind the art they experience."

Education remains central to the Morean's plans. The proposed facility would provide improved classroom environments and opportunities to expand programming for children, families, schools, and adults. The Morean also intends to build on existing efforts to make creative experiences accessible through scholarships, free family art-making programs, and community partnerships. For Affan, this goes a step further: "The goal is not simply to offer more classes, but to create more meaningful opportunities for people to learn, experiment, develop skills, and discover the role that creativity can play in their lives."

The proposed redevelopment has been estimated at approximately $33.7 million. Pinellas County has committed $2.2 million in tourist development funding toward the project, providing an important source of support for the redevelopment. Affan also noted, "We are building a strong foundation through our capital campaign, with active engagement from major philanthropic foundations, and our Capital Campaign Committee is working to expand philanthropic support and bring together partners and resources needed to realize this ambitious vision."

The construction schedule is contingent on design, permitting, and funding milestones. The Morean's current goal is to begin construction in 2027, with the initial phase expected to take approximately 18 months. A second phase is anticipated for the 2028-2030 period, although its parameters and timing will depend on progress with the first phase and the required approvals. The organization also plans to stagger the redevelopment to minimize disruption to its existing operations and continue providing educational programs, exhibitions, and artist support during the transition.

The proposed expansion comes as St. Pete continues to strengthen its reputation as an arts and cultural destination. For the Morean, the challenge is to grow alongside the city while preserving the community-centered mission it has sustained since 1917. Affan envisions an organization that can welcome more visitors, support more artists, develop new educational opportunities, and deepen its partnerships across the region.

"The Arts Center has spent more than a century making art accessible, supporting artists, and creating meaningful opportunities for people to engage with creativity," she said. "Ten years from now, I envision building on that legacy to continue as one of Florida's premier destinations for arts education, contemporary craft, glass art, and innovative, community-centered cultural experiences."

The project is about more than a new building or a larger collection of galleries, said Affan. "I want the Arts Center to remain a vital part of what makes St. Pete special, while reaching new audiences, creating new possibilities, and ensuring that future generations have the opportunity to experience, learn about, and create art." ⬣













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# 'Tis the Season for Art

*Brandy Stark*

We may not get wild fall color, but the muhly grasses are purple and it's less humid, so the holidays must be near! Whether you're looking for a gift or just enjoying the cooler air, here are some local art spots to explore and get into that Yuletide spirit.

### Art Centers

**Florida CraftArt:** *Unwrapped: Handmade Holidays 2026*. 510 Central Ave. Sept 19-Oct 24. floridacraftart.org

Florida CraftArt's annual juried members' holiday exhibition, featuring Florida-based crafters, is back! Sales of handmade gifts and artwork supports the talents of statewide creatives, and everything here is unique.

**Morean Art Center:** *Signs and Wonders: Holiday Show and Sale*. 801 Central Ave. Nov 14-Dec 31. moreanartscenter.org_

One of the longest-running local artist holiday shows is back for another season. Find multiple categories of handmade works, from ornaments, functional pottery, and jewelry to sculptures and paintings. Make the holidays colorful while supporting the locals!

**Morean Center for Clay:** *The Subtlety* and *Mug-Nificent*. 420 22nd St S. Nov 14-Jan 2. moreanartscenter.org

There are two shows going for the holiday season: One invites patrons to purchase a handmade mug from which to partake in cozy holiday yumminess; the other features an exhibition by two artists in residence, Dani Lewis and Lily Denhoff, who share the work they have created during their first year at MCC.

### Museums

**Museum of Fine Arts:** *Art Unbound*. 255 Beach Drive NE. Starting Nov 21. mfastpete.org

The MFA is reworking its permanent exhibit to bring works from different cultures and eras together around shared human experiences. New stories, unexpected connections, and rotating installations await.

### Galleries

**ArtLofts:** *Small Wonders*. Nov 1-Dec 31. 10 5th St N.

*Small Wonders* celebrates the art of the compact, the layered, and the beautifully complex. Come and explore entries from our local arts community.



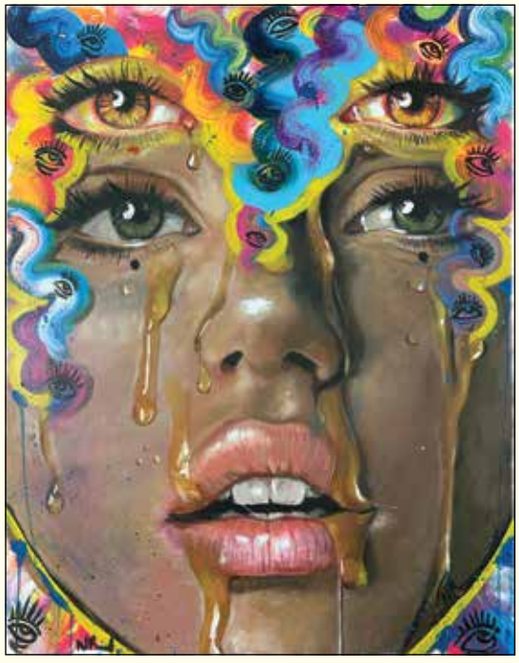
*Terry Scopelliti's* Male Scapes 315



*Cynthia Longobardi's* Night Garden

**The Werk Gallery:** *Eye of the Beholder* featuring Cynthia Louise Longobardi & Nikita Rosalind and *Body Language*. Nov 6-29.

*Eye of the Beholder* presents Cynthia Louise Longobardi's elongated figures set in surreal landscapes of oddities and animals that reveal our innermost desires, emotions, and insecurities; Nikita Rosalind's color-saturated figure painting seeks to connect us to the universe at large. *Body Language* features 15 artists interpreting the nude figure and how the body is used to communicate emotions and ideas.



*Nikita Rosalind's* Sweet Honey Waves

### Spots Around Town

**Bar@548**: *Backstage*. Nov 7-Dec 5. 548 Central Ave.

Explore culture and fandom through our local artists as they interpret the energy behind the curtain, the love of sound, and the connection between the arts. December is the annual *Deck the Walls* exhibit, including decorated skate decks.

### Events

**Coastal Creative:** *Sunscreen Fantastic Fest*. Nov 28. 9 am-10:30 pm. 2201 1st Ave N. coastalcreativetv.com

This is the inaugural event featuring nearly 40 officially selected horror, science fiction, fantasy, and thriller short films. There is also a cosplay costume contest, special effects makeup demonstrations, and live podcast recordings.

**First Presbyterian Church**: *Veterans Tribute*. 701 Beach Drive NE. Nov 18. Doors open at 5:30 pm; presentation is at 6 pm. Refreshments and Q&A are included. fpcstpete.com

Susan McLean will present *Veterans Tribute: Donut Dollys–Tales from the Front*. McLean, an author and former Red Cross Donut Dolly, shares personal stories of serving US soldiers while under fire in Vietnam.

On Dec 13, the church presents a free annual concert, *The Many Moods of Christmas*, at 4 pm. They will also be accepting donations for the St. Pete Free Clinic.



*AGalban's exhibit includes works inspired by La Sagrada Familia in Spain.*

**St. Thomas' Art Project:** *The Sacred Pilgrimage: Gaudi and Galban*. Through Dec 1. 1200 Snell Blvd. stthomasstpete.org/art-project.html

Twenty-five paintings by Cuban American artist and physician AGalban, inspired by Antoni Gaudí's iconic Sagrada Família, are on exhibit in this unique church setting – the works reimagining the basilica's Passion façade, paired with architectural photographs.

**Vinoy Park:** *Shopapalooza Festival*. 701 Bayshore Dr. NE. Nov 28-29, 10 am-5 pm.

The largest holiday market in the Southeast is back, featuring over 350 local makers and small businesses. Attendees can also visit with Santa, eat specialties from food trucks, and kids can create their own one-of-a-kind make-and-take items. ⬣




Shopapalooza returns for another celebration of local business in The 'Burg.

# MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR



## Natalie Martinez
**700 Beach Dr. NE**

**How long have you lived in St. Pete and where are you from originally?**
Eleven years. I am originally from Dayton, Ohio, born at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, daughter of a retired member of the United States Air Force.

**Favorite spots in St. Pete?**
My favorite spots in St. Pete include Juno & the Peacock for dinner, the Dalí Museum, and Vinoy Park, where I like to watch the sunrise, ride my bike, and spend quiet moments with my grand dog, Montana.

**Most interesting, enjoyable, or exotic vacation you've taken?**
My most exciting vacation was traveling to South Africa in 2024, visiting Cape Town, seeing Table Top Mountain, staying at Zulu Nayla Reserve, and going on a safari.

**Top two places in the world on your bucket list?**
Australia and New Zealand, as I continue with my quest to visit all the continents.

**What famous person, current or past would you like to meet and why?**
I would like to meet Michelle Obama, as she is an example of a highly educated, strong and powerful woman, who is a wife, mother, and public figure who never stops giving back to our country.

**Favorite sport, recreation activity, or hobby?**
Biking and golf

**A great movie you'd recommend or current TV series you are watching?**
*To Kill a Mockingbird*

**If you were a dog, what breed would you be?**
Poodle. Elegant, smart, great companion, and loving.

**Tell us about a situation or a person who has inspired you.**
My mother. She retired after working 30 years at the Dayton, Ohio VA while at the same time raising five children.

**Current book you've read and would recommend?**
Mel Robbins's *The Let Them Theory*

**To be featured in Meet Your Neighbor or People and Pets, email editor@northeastjournal.org**

**Tell us about an accomplishment, current or past, of which you are proud.**
Working with my husband and son in our family businesses for the past nine years.

**Tell us about your family.**
I am one of five children (four boys and myself). I am married to Jose Martinez, and we have two adult children. Our son, Jelani, is in the U.S. Navy and our daughter, Naadia, and her husband, Aaron, and our two grandchildren reside in Chicago, Illinois.

**What do you do for a living? Or, if you are retired, tell us about your career.**
I am a retired pharmaceutical sales manager, employed for 30 years. I worked for Pfizer Pharmaceuticals in New York and New Jersey, and Novartis Pharmaceutics in Tampa Bay. I currently work in my family businesses, two clothing stores in downtown St. Petersburg: Style Clothing, 300 Beach Shops, and Sartorial Inc., 400 Beach Shops. ⬣




# Obama Main Library Renovation Gets National Recognition




President Obama at a St. Pete campaign event in 2012



The library was built in 1963 and is a 43,000 square-foot mid-century modern gem.




The library still houses its 80,000-book catalogue and vast media library, but now offers much more.

*Becca McCoy*

*American Libraries Magazine* selects the standouts in library architectural design each year, and the 2026 list included our hometown hub: the newly remodeled President Barack Obama Main Library. The renovated library was one of 15 projects nationwide to be recognized. Designated "Distinctly Local," the renovation was praised for its embrace of St. Petersburg's waterfront identity through design details and bright, airy gathering spaces.

For residents familiar with the original building, those are delightful upgrades. The library was built in 1963 and is a 43,000 square-foot mid-century modern gem. It has always featured clean lines, organic materials, and an open floor plan. But it also featured asbestos, drainage issues, and aging mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. The renovation took nearly five years and between $17-20 million to complete, but good things come to those who wait.

"I think that [libraries] truly are community anchors, and very much reflective of what the community is telling you they need," said Brooke Breiner, principal and interior designer with HBM Architecture and Interior Design, the Cleveland-based firm that oversaw the renovation, partnering locally with G2 Design. "Libraries today are different than they were 30 years ago, 50 years ago – the focus is not just a house of books…. When we design libraries, we really are thinking of inclusive spaces. We're thinking about the fact that it's a place for everyone. And it's very different depending on the community that it's in."

The President Barack Obama Main Library still houses its impressive 80,000-book catalogue and vast media library. But now it also boasts over 70 public computers, designated and enclosed children and teen areas, an auditorium, a makerspace, study rooms, and the Obama Room.

Said Breiner, "That room was really meant to be a kind of incubator for entrepreneurship. They really wanted to focus a space for you know, teens and young adults have a space for business-minded activities. It's a flexible meeting space that is meant to be inspirational."

The inspiration to rename what was the St. Petersburg Public Library, also known as Central Library, was to honor the 44th and first Black American President. The new name was announced in 2018, and in February 2021, former Mayor Rick Kriseman led the ceremony making it official. At the library's grand re-opening in September 2025, current Mayor Ken Welch said, "This library was named after Barack Obama because his legacy embodies everything this library should represent: the power of education, the importance of facts, the importance of community – and the belief that knowledge can transform lives."

One of the most obvious transformations upon entering the library is its brightness, which was a challenge to achieve, Breiner explains.

"There's a mezzanine. We were not able to eliminate any of the structural posts or the structural shelving," said Breiner. "That was kind of creating a barrier visually and physically between a lot of the collection and that lovely lake view. So, we added some translucent resin panels. We removed the solid wood to really allow as much light to come through from those windows and get further into the library."

Decisions both subtle and striking were made to lead you from the entrance into the space, and to make them, the design team took inspiration from the St. Petersburg Pier.

"When you enter the library," said Breiner, "it's a straight access that leads you back to the lake. We thought about that organizing feature of the pier and created a very intuitive path. In terms of the design aesthetics, we wanted to have that coastal aesthetic, that coastal vibe without feeling too literal and too, you know, beachy."

The library renovation is both fresh and nostalgic, answering to the needs of a modern community space. "We want to make sure we're really hitting that mark with what the community is asking for," said Breiner, adding, "the community is going to tell you what their library needs."

The 2026 Library Design Showcase is the American Library Association's 38th Annual celebration of innovative library construction. At 150 years old, the American Library Association is the world's oldest such institution: a non-partisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering and advocating for equitable access to information for all through America's libraries. ⬣



Mayor Welch said the library mirrors President Obama's belief that "knowledge can transform lives."



"When you enter the library," said Breiner, "it's a straight access that leads you back to the lake."

*The President Barack Obama Main Library is located at 3745 9th Avenue North and is open seven days a week. Find events and learn more at the city's newly designed library website, splibraries.org.*

# Wednesday Nights Are 'Super Cool' in St. Pete




*1.) "When someone buys from one of our vendors, they are supporting a person in their own community."*
*2.) Night Market patrons enjoy an ecclectic mix of local artisans, food, music and more. 3.) St. Pete Night Market is a hit with four-legged friends 4.) The market is a natural fit for Ferg's.*

*Jennifer Amato*

For the past year, Wednesday nights have brought a different vibe in Downtown St. Pete. The founders of St. Pete is Super Cool have put on the St. Pete Night Market at Ferg's Sports Bar & Grill on Central Avenue on the first Wednesday of the month. What started as a means to create fun ways for people to get out, support local businesses, and connect with the community has turned into a movement. Kody Roussert and Soudabah Moayedi, founders of the media company and community platform, host the St. Pete Sunday Market, St. Pete Night Market, St. Pete Street Market, and several special events throughout the year.

"St. Pete already has so much happening on weekends, so we wanted to give people something to look forward to in the middle of the week," Moayedi said of the Night Market.

"We wanted to create something that felt natural for a Wednesday night in St. Pete," Roussert said. "People were already looking for places to meet up, hear music, grab food, and spend time downtown during the week. The St. Pete Night Market gave all of that a regular place on the calendar."

The St. Pete Night Market originally started at The Factory St. Pete, and after a short hiatus moved to Ferg's. "[The Night Market] really found its home there… Ferg's was such a natural fit. There is plenty of room to spread out, food and drinks are already there, and it has that laid back St. Pete atmosphere that works perfectly for the market," Moayedi said.

During the St. Pete Night Market, you'll also find an eclectic mix of local artists, makers, and boutiques selling jewelry, clothing, handmade goods, sweets, food, and more.

"You can actually see where your money goes," said Moayedi. "When someone buys from one of our vendors, they are supporting a person in their own community who created that product or built that business. Those small purchases add up, and they help keep St. Pete creative, interesting and uniquely St. Pete."

Over the past year, the organizers have noticed a mix of familiar faces and new people discovering the market, Moayedi noted – everyone from young professionals and local residents to families and visitors. "St. Pete has such a strong sense of community, and having something in the middle of the week gives people a chance to reconnect, support local businesses and simply enjoy their city together. The people who come out are really what built the atmosphere we have today."

Looking forward to the upcoming holiday season, the St. Pete Gift Grab will be held at Ferg's on Tuesday, December 8, from 6 to 10 pm. It is designed as a fun night to shop local for holiday gifts while still getting that same Ferg's atmosphere people enjoy at the St. Pete Night Market, Moayedi explained.

"We also have our regular St. Pete Sunday Market and St. Pete Street Market dates mixed in," Moayedi said, "So there are plenty of opportunities to shop local and get out into the community through the rest of the year." ⬣

*For more information and the full schedule of events, visit stpeteissupercool.com.*






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**Thank you** to all my buyers, sellers & referrals this year.
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412 Regent Lane N
**Downtown St. Pete** | $1,250,000




275 1st Avenue 3807
**Art House** | $1,230,996




275 1st Avenue 3507
**Art House** | $1,178,137




1109 18th Avenue N
**Euclid St. Paul** | $995,000




2501 17th Street N
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101 30th Avenue N
**Old Northeast** | $680,000




636 182nd Avenue E
**Redington Shores** | $650,000




105 4th Avenue NE 226
**Townview** | $575,000




318 182nd Avenue E
**Redington Shores** | $550,000




761 42nd Avenue N
**Euclid Manor** | $550,000




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