Fort Pierce Visionaries

by Sue Dannahower

The following feature was to originally run during Black History month in February. Most of the interviewees were born and raised in Fort Pierce. Each of the special individuals are very involved supporting positive issues they believe in. They have worked hard throughout their lives to make our community a desirable place to live, work, and enjoy.

Larry Lee

Larry is involved in so many organizations in his community he is referred to by his friends as “the Mayor.” He served on the board of the former Barnett Bank, Nations Bank, and Fort Pierce Community Redevelopment Agency. He currently serves on the board of Harbor Federal Savings Bank, United Way of St. Lucie County, Unity Property Development Corporation, and the Port St. Lucie Chamber of Commerce.

A native of Statesboro, Georgia, Larry married his college sweetheart, Alice. They are the proud parents of daughter Latasha. Their family are members of the Goodwill Presbyterian Church where Larry serves as an elder.

He graduated from Fort Pierce Central in 1972 where he was a member of the Cobras 1971 State Championship football team and was the star linebacker. Larry graduated Livingstone College in 1976 with a B.S. Degree and was All-Conference in his senior year. After graduation, Larry signed a professional football contract with the Denver Broncos.

After his experience with the Broncos, he taught school and coached football and track. In 1979 he became a Job Placement Counselor at IRCC and taught at his alma mater, Fort Piece Central High School. He began his State Farm Insurance Agency 18 years ago and has since been featured in several national ad campaigns. For the majority of his career with his agency he has qualified for the State Farm Million Dollar Club.

Larry is also co-owner of WFLM-104.7 FM and WIRA-1400 FM which was the first radio station in Fort Pierce.

His love of music and community lead him to co-found the Fort Pierce Jazz Society and develop the Treasure Coast Gospel Fest, a musical festival that raises
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I recently read a very delightful and much deserved article on Doris Tillman, Main Street Manager and her efforts to save and renovate the 1923 Sunrise Theatre. The article was written by Jon Ward, who has the idea of saving the Sunrise to thank for all that we have today and I am certain more in the future. With criticism and praise for her hard work throughout the years on this project, Doris has much to be proud of today. Downtown is enjoying the economic benefits of being discovered. If it weren't for Main Street Fort Pierce, the Sunrise probably would not be a part of our environment today. With the positive influence of the theatre, Fort Pierce is being elevated to a new level of prominence. Yes, the once vacant building is shining bright in downtown with lights, shows and theatre goers - Doris and Tom, Thank You.

Now that the paint is dry at the Sunrise, Main Street is shifting renovation focus to its new digs, The Backus House. The Backus House serves as Main Street's office and is slated to be fully renovated. As with any project, it takes time and money - that is where we need your help. Fundraisers are planned over the next several months to assist with renovation and purchase of the historic structure. I hope we can count on you as a Main Street supporter to give to our "new" home and make the Backus House an outstanding jewel in our community.

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Main Street Fort Pierce, 466-3880

❖ SATURDAY & SUNDAY, MARCH 3 & 4 ❖
18th Annual Backus Festival
Backus Gallery & Museum, 465-0630

❖ SATURDAY, MARCH 4 ❖
The Merry Widow
Sunrise Theatre, 461-4775

❖ WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8 ❖
2nd Wednesday Walkabout
5:00 to 8:00 PM
Downtown Business Association, 465-7080

❖ SATURDAY, MARCH 11 ❖
Bo Diddley & The Fabulous Thunderbirds
Sunrise Theatre, 461-4775

❖ FRIDAY, MARCH 17 ❖
Coffee With The Mayor
Main Street Fort Pierce, 466-3880

❖ TUESDAY, MARCH 28 ❖
Susan Anton
Sunrise Theatre, 461-4775

❖ TUESDAY, MARCH 28 ❖
Pilates Classes
Monday, 7:00 to 8:15 PM
Pt. Pierce Community Center, 462-1792

❖ SATURDAYS ❖
Ft. Pierce Farmer’s Market
8:00 AM to Noon
Marina Square on Melody Lane
Market Manager, 940-1145

❖ THURSDAYS ❖
Fort Pierce Bike Night
6:00 to 9:30 PM
2nd Street – Downtown Fort Pierce
Yellowfin Grill & Raw Bar, 468-7071

❖ SATURDAYS ❖
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461-0880
Sunday Afternoons 3:00 to 7:00 PM
Music by “Barely Broken”

❖ GOVERNOR’S GRILL ❖
466-6900
“Open Mike Night”
Tuesdays, 9:00 PM to Closing
“Blues Night at the Grill”
Wednesdays, 8:00 PM
“Ladies Night”
Tuesdays, 10:00 PM to 12:00 AM
Live Music – Friday Evenings
Live Jazz with Matrix – Saturday Evenings

~Event Spotlight~

WHO: Main Street Fort Pierce
WHAT: 5th Annual Sandy Shoes Festival
WHEN: Saturday, March 25
WHERE: Ft. Pierce Amphitheatre & Veteran’s Memorial Park Grounds
INFO: 772-466-3880
The Big Move

by Pam Gillette

On February 1, 2006 at 9:00 a.m., the two-story white frame house with turquoise shutters, also known as Marker #8 on the Zora Neale Hurston Dust Tracks Trail, opened its doors to its new owners—Main Street Fort Pierce. With the help of Sunrise Ford, Conkling & Lewis Construction, the St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Trustees, and the Fort Pierce Utilities Authority, 18 years of desks, computers, files and other stuff collected by Doris Tillman was transported a few blocks north of Main Street’s former office to its fourth and permanent location—The Backus House. Those who have moved before know most moving days are filled with lots of lifting, but the highlight of our moving experience was lifting the 2000 pound safe that follows Main Street wherever they go. Many thanks to the Electrical Department at Fort Pierce Utilities for bringing in the heavy equipment to lift the safe onto a truck and bring it to its final home (we hope).

With the desks in position, computers hooked up, and boxes all over the place, Main Street opened the front door to our Board of Directors on Wednesday, February 2nd. These people, along with Doris Tillman, had the vision to look into the future and see the potential of the Backus House. Beanie Backus was a man who loved art, music and friends. He opened his home to everyone. Main Street Fort Pierce is hoping to continue the traditions Beanie Backus started by opening the house once more to art, music and historically preserving the last home and studio of this local artist before his death.

Main Street is in the process of raising money to restore The Backus House to its original condition. Many fund raising opportunities will take place over the next months and with the help of the community the Backus House will be opened to the public again. Welcome to your new home Main Street.
MAIN STREET FORT PIERCE

Membership

Main Street Fort Pierce, Inc., a 501©3 not-for-profit corporation, has encouraged and participated in the revitalization efforts of downtown Fort Pierce for the past 18 years. The efforts of many have paid off. Downtown Fort Pierce is now recognized as one of the most desirable locations to live and work on the Treasure Coast, as well as, in the state of Florida.

The Main Street program was created by the National Trust of Historic Preservation in the early 1980s. The program was designed to revitalize the historic commercial districts that were threatened to extinction by urban sprawl. The four-step Main Street approach is used by over 1,600 communities across the United States and its model has been studied internationally.

The success of Main Street Fort Pierce over the past 18 years is due to the faithful commitment of current and past members of the Main Street board of directors, the City of Fort Pierce, local community organizations, local businesses, and general public support. Currently, the program consists of twelve volunteer board members and two full-time employees. During its existence, Main Street Fort Pierce has held approximately twenty-six downtown promotional events each year, educated public school children about the history of the area, won numerous local, state, and national awards, restored historic buildings including the Sunrise Theatre, recruited businesses to the downtown area, held downtown charrettes to encourage the public participation in revitalization efforts, created outdoor art programs, and helped fund an award winning image campaign along with the Downtown Business Association, the Community Redevelopment Agency, and the City of Fort Pierce.

APPLICATION

Membership Levels: (check one)

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☐ Family ............................. $50
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☐ Medium Business (11 - 50 employees) . . $250
☐ Large (51 or more employees) .......... $500
☐ Sponsor (any of the above categories) . . . $1,000
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☐ I would like to become a Main Street volunteer.

Please call with information.

Please complete form, detach and return with membership payment to:
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For information call 772-466-3880 • www.mainstreetfortpierce.org

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Michelle Hughes
Licensed Insurance Agent
The Economic Impact of the Sunrise Theatre

by Doris Tillman

With the doors open and the curtains drawn, the town was all-a-buzz with the opening of the Sunrise Theatre. People were looking for restaurant reservations, getting their clothes cleaned, and shopping for outfits for the big night.

What was the effect from the first few events of the Sunrise Theatre opening? Was there impact on local businesses prior and during the first three events? Here is what some of the businesses had to say.

The Tiki Bar didn’t notice an increase before Saturday, January 14th’s and Sunday, January 15th’s performance due to cold weather, but did have a 20% increase in business after the show. Govenors Grill enjoyed a 30-40% increase in their dinner crowd on Saturday and 100% on Sunday because they don’t usually stay open on Sunday’s. Their after show crowd, however, was small. Café LaRonde felt a decrease on opening night, but made up for it the second night and for the performance of the Opera.

Brewer’s Café has had tremendous increases, even having to turn people away. Pizzoodles got off to a slow start, but once they discovered what patrons wanted, they started having an increase in business. Cobbs Landing can’t compare since they are a new restaurant, but have been having very good dinner crowds when there are performances.

Alisari’s, a downtown women’s clothing store, reported an increase in sales after Christmas as a result of the Sunrise Theatre opening. It is just one of many restaurants and shops, in and around the downtown area, that have noticed a positive economic impact as a result of the opening of the Sunrise Theatre.

Continued on next page...
Every two years the Main Street Fort Pierce Board of Directors meets to discuss future goals during a board retreat. This year former Florida Main Street Coordinator, Laura Lee Corbett, facilitated the retreat held at Fort Pierce City Hall.
Sunrise Theatre
In Beautiful Downtown Fort Pierce

Bo Diddley & the Fabulous Thunderbirds
March 11, 2006
On Saturday March 11th, one of the few men who can legitimately claim to have given birth to rock will hit the Sunrise stage as we welcome Rock and Roll Hall of Fame member Bo Diddley. The Fabulous Thunderbirds will open this evening of gritty, hard driving blues and rock.

Bjorn Again
March 24, 2006
On Friday, March 24th we'll present our most delicious guilty pleasure. Just as the musical “Mama Mia” was inspired by the songs of ABBA, the band that inspired Abba founders Bjorn and Benny to write the show was the phenomenal BJORN AGAIN. After 18 years of touring across the globe performing well over 3,000 shows, and after being recently hand picked by Cher to open her final European Tour, the act described by Time Out magazine (NY) as being “maybe the most entertaining live rock show in the world today,” and by Rolling Stone as being “fabulously flawless” is headed for Fort Pierce.

Ramsey Lewis & Angela Hagenbach
April 15, 2006
The Fort Pierce Jazz and Blues Society welcomes three time Grammy award winning pianist and composer RAMSEY LEWIS to the Sunrise stage. Opening for Ramsey is internationally acclaimed ANGELA HAGENBACH, whose sultry vocals currently set the Kansas City jazz scene on fire. Banish those tax days blues with the Treasure Coast’s most significant jazz event of the season.

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Wednesday, February 8 turned into an evening of wide-eyed, delightfully surprised visitors at the Sunrise Theater: visitors that live just over North Beach Bridge, that is! The North Beach Homeowner’s Association [N B-H O A] held its “Annual Gala” at the theater. Diane Andrews, Secretary and coordinator for the event, sent a hurried email two days prior regarding the overwhelming response. This event was open only to the N B-H O A members and bus service was to be available out on the Island to bring attendees to the Theater. Reservations mounted to a point where Diane had to suggest that anyone who could drive should do so. The buses would be full!

Every business owner in our Historic downtown should be lighting up over this kind of news. The Ft. Pierce DBA might want to consider incentives to North Beach homeowners who bring their shopping business to Ft. Pierce. (Some shop owners already do this for all their loyal customers.) Buses during season may become an easy, effective way to bring people into town for evening events.

There are 1,200 members [roughly 2,400 people] in the N B-H O A and that represents about 38 communities. There are still another 3,800 people living on the Island, either...
Craig Mundt, President of NB-HOA is very well known by our County Commissioners and staff. He attends meetings and works weekly with them to stay abreast of our County’s fast developing area. Mundt as President is joined by Diane Andrews as Vice President and Secretary, Jean Downing and Bill McKenney also serving as Vice Presidents, Peter Wittkuhns as Treasurer and Executive Board members are Jeff Mitchell and Jerry Freeman. This team of volunteers embraces the meaning of “community activism.” Their volunteer efforts brought a lot of homeowners into the downtown’s newest, brightest addition, The Sunrise Theater, for the first time.

David Jenkins, Sunrise Theatre’s Executive Director, spoke candidly to the receptive NB attendees on Wednesday.

“The Theater has a long way to go in reaching financial success, but I’m not here to ask you for a donation this evening,” Jenkins said light heartedly. “What I do want you to do is purchase tickets right now for upcoming performances.” Jenkins went on to explain that by everyone buying tickets and supporting the shows they like, the Theater can cut back on promotional expenses, which are very costly. Then the Theater becomes a win-win for everyone much faster. So, your donation is to purchase early!”

Jenkins concluded with questions from the audience. Everyone was highly complimentary of the beauty and the size of newly renovated Sunrise Theater.

Actually, a lovely side note came from a couple of guests. I won’t mention names, but they either had their first date at the original theater and their first kiss!

As a regular downtown Ft. Pierce Shopper from North Hutchinson Island, I feel the Sunrise Theater is like a new kiss for Historic downtown Ft. Pierce. If you haven’t had a chance to catch a performance yet, I encourage you to take your sweetie, support the Sunrise Theatre and even sneak a “first kiss” all over again!
March: Month of Festivals in Downtown Fort Pierce

by Joanne Davis

Even though our winters in Fort Pierce can be compared to warm summers in some areas of the world, most Floridians can tell a slight change in the seasons signaling that Spring is on its way. Maybe this is the reason the month of March is packed with festivals in downtown Fort Pierce. Early spring in south Florida usually brings almost perfect weather. It is not too hot and the chill of our “winter” starts to melt away.

The first festival to open the month is the 18th Annual Backus Festival, named after A.E. Backus, a lifelong resident of Fort Pierce and a famed landscape artist. The Backus Festival is a magnet to some of the finest artists in the state of Florida. Tents filled with spectacular drawings, beautiful paintings, unique pottery, and curious sculptures are scattered beneath the shaded, waterfront grounds of the Veteran’s Memorial Park behind the Backus Gallery & Museum. This two day event begins on Saturday, March 4th with sidewalk chalk artists, art booths, food, beverages, and finishes on Sunday with the Backus Brunch, an all-you-can-eat unbelievable buffet. After the Brunch, the winner of this year’s Backus painting raffle drawing is announced and the festival continues until Sunday evening. For more information please call 465-0630.

In addition to the monthly Street Festival, Friday Fest on March 3rd, Main Street Fort Pierce is organizing the Sandy Shoes Festival on March 25th. This festival is free to the public and features music, food, arts & crafts, children’s activities, an Iron Chef Competition, and the famous Grapefruit Squeeze-Off competition. This year’s featured entertainment is the Atlanta Rhythm Section. The local band, Storm Rider will open and fireworks will...
follow the featured performance. For more information about this event, please call 466-3880.

With the Sunrise Theatre performances (www.sunrisetheatre.com), the weekly Saturday Farmer’s Market, and the many festivals of March, downtown Fort Pierce is alive with activities for people of all ages.
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How Sweet It Is for 80 Years in Downtown Fort Pierce
by Kathleen McKee

On Avenue A sits a “little jewel” that has stood through hurricanes and 80 years of history. Sweet’s Jewelers is celebrating its 80th birthday this year.

The business began in 1926 by the Sweet family and was sold in 1943 to John Noelke from Missouri. John owned a jewelry store in Missouri that is still operating today. When John died at age 99 his five children inherited the business. His granddaughter, Jan Russell works in the store today. Her mother, Rosalie Arnold, has run the business for years.

Jan shared a story that took place during World War II when South Hutchinson Island was closed to only military personnel. On payday many of the men would stop at Sweet’s to buy jewelry to send home to loved ones.

The business philosophy of Sweet’s has not changed over the years. Their goal has always been to accommodate the customer to the fullest with an emphasis on honesty. They have a loyal customer base. Because of this philosophy the family has never considered expanding to other locations. Anita Young, sales and Michael Huff, jeweler and custom designer, have been with the company for many years.

Sweet’s Jewelers has been in the same location on Avenue A for 80 years.

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... continued from page 15

Jan said their best sellers are diamonds and antique reproduction slide bracelets. There are many unique fine jewelry items that cannot be found in other stores. Additional items include pearls, watches, crystal, clocks, watchbands, diamond add-a-link bracelets, nautical designs, children's jewelry, pen sets, picture frames, money clips, and key chains. Sweet's also does repair work and cleaning. Visit Sweet's Jewelers, 772-461-4686, downtown Ft. Pierce, 209 Avenue A, for all your jewelry needs. Business hours are 9:30-5:00, Monday-Friday, and 9:30-1:00 on Saturday. Be sure to wish them a happy 80th birthday.

Joanne M. Curdy welcomes Nate Rubel to her team at RE/MAX Midway. Nate's background is in residential and commercial development. His experience is greatly needed in our fastest growing market of new homes and businesses. Call us for all of your real estate needs. 772-429-3587/3588

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Investing in the Ft. Pierce Real Estate Market

**Question:** Do you think purchasing property in or around the downtown Ft. Pierce area is a good investment in this real estate market?

**Answer:** [Sunrise Realty] Let’s go back to Real Estate 101: Location, location, location! Wonderful things are happening throughout the downtown and surrounding areas of Ft. Pierce. If you can afford it, be a part of it!

**Question:** With so many homes presently on the market, are you seeing prices dropping or increasing?

**Answer:** [Stone Real Estate] The market is changing from a “Sellers’ Market,” when only a few properties are for sale, to a “Buyers’ Market,” with approximately 85 homes for sale on Fort Pierce Beach. This gives buyers the opportunity to shop and choose from a wide variety of amenities, floor plans, location, style and size. Prices are not dropping but are becoming more competitive to entice the buyer to a seller’s property. We are seeing prices of sold properties leveling off with the influx of the number of homes for sale. The good news is the A1A project is getting underway and when the project is completed, home prices on the island will see another increase. The island is a good area to live and to invest.

**Question:** Why is “price per acre” so important to determine when purchasing property?

**Answer:** [Re/Max] Price per acre is important for development with the zoning to determine the return on the investment per unit.

For example, if a buyer is purchasing 10 acres of multi-family zoned 5 units to the acre, they will want to make sure they can get 50 units in at a good price so when they build townhomes or condos it will work into a budget of what they need to sell the units for.

These same questions are important to a seller also, so we can determine what their property is worth. St. Lucie County is one of the fastest growing counties in the country. We have many developers and investors calling us everyday. So now is the time to sell if you have any land or commercial buildings small or large, give us a call.

How many times have you found yourself with a tough question? Now you can “Ask A Professional.” Send your questions to Main Street Focus “Ask A Professional.” We’ll ask one of our Main Street professionals to reply, and we will publish the answers right here in the Focus—where we can all learn from them.

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Sunrise City Realty, your downtown realtor, “Making Waves in Real Estate,” is located in the Historic Arcade Building, 101 North US 1, Suite 127 or at 468-7722.

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Donna Benton

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Joanne McCurdy with Re/Max on Midway Road in Fort Pierce specializes in vacant land, commercial properties and preferred residential properties. To discuss your real estate needs with her, please call the Re/Max Midway office at 772-429-3588.

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funds for local youth, drug rehabilitation and a ministry to feed the hungry. He is a founding member of St. Lucie Dream Builders, a non-profit organization currently developing 25 home subdivisions for low-to-moderate income families. He also started a boy scout troop and serves as an important role model to area youth.

Larry was recently selected to be featured in a book, “The Influentials,” by Jon Berry and Ed Keller. He was also featured in Black Enterprise, a national publication featuring successful minority business people.

For all of his accomplishments, Larry truly is a down-to-earth individual. Within moments of meeting him, his warm smile ensures an instant friendship.

What aspect of your community involvement are you most proud of?

“I returned to my hometown in 1979 after being away for 7 years. I had 2 goals in mind; I wanted to do all I could to improve race relations and help improve the image of my hometown. I feel very good about several areas of involvement. They are the St. Lucie Chamber of Commerce, several investment groups that I organized to help with race relations and the improvement of Fort Pierce’s image, being cofounder of the Fort Pierce Jazz Society, serving on Boards of the Chamber of Commerce, the Boys and Girls Cub, the Fort Pierce Redevelopment Agency and on the board of Harbor Federal. I am very proud of the commitment Harbor Federal has made in the redevelopment of downtown Fort Pierce. I am so proud of so much. It is so difficult for me to describe what I saw as a child growing up and what I see now. We are on the right track.”

What do you see in Fort Pierce’s future?

“The future of Fort Pierce and St. Lucie County is very bright. I think now we as a community are beginning to see what a great place Fort Pierce is. It is my hope that one day all of us that live in St. Lucie County realize our true potential and work together. I dream of the day that all races and segments of our county work together to continue to make our community even better.”

Zanobia Jefferson

Zanobia moved to Fort Pierce from Chicago in 1950. She received a B.S. degree in Biology with a minor in Art from Fisk in Nashville, Tennessee. She wanted to become a Medical Illustrator but after viewing several surgeries she decided against that occupation.

She taught at Florida A & M University during World War II in the Biology Lab. There she met her husband, who later became the Principal of Fort Pierce Central High School. They moved to Fort Pierce in 1950 as newlyweds and had five children: four daughters and a son.

Zanobia taught at the old Means Court School, Francis K. Sweet, and Lincoln Park. As a teacher, she cared about her students and supported them beyond the classroom. She formed a strong bond with the famed local artist, Beanie Backus, and often took her students on field trips to visit him and study his art form. Later she also took them to the Fort Pierce Art Gallery which was since renamed the A.E. Backus Gallery. Zanobia encouraged her most promising students, like Alfred Hair, the original organizer of the Highwaymen Artists. When Alfred was in sixth grade he came to Zanobia for art lessons. She was instrumental in his working under Backus’ wings. Alfred started making Bean’s picture frames and took lessons from him. Zanobia encouraged Alfred to take on other artists in order to sell mass quantities of paintings. Harold Newton, from Vero Beach, soon became affiliated with Alfred; in total there were about 20 original Highwaymen.

Zanobia is most proud of the fact that she encouraged the development of the Highwaymen and that she encouraged all of her children to finish college.

Zanobia is a big supporter of many community organizations. She has been on the board of Backus Gallery for over 20 years. She has been a member of the Sunrise Theatre Board throughout its restoration and remains a board member now that the Theatre has opened its doors. She was a charter member of the Opera Society, Alpha Kappa Alpha and LINKS, a group dedicated to improving the quality of life in the community.

In 1998 Father Chris of St. Anastasia Catholic School commissioned her to produce a symbol of diversity—3 races are represented all which are praying. She did so with sculptures of a “white boy,” “Spanish girl” and “black girl.” They sit on a pedestal on the ground of St. Anastasia. They were completed in conjunction with Pat Cochran, a bronze sculpture—took them 6 months to complete. She said, “at times I could feel the Lord’s strength flowing through my hands.”

What do you like most about Fort Pierce?

“Everything is close at hand. I am very happy at the opening of the Sunrise Theatre. This will open up culture experiences for young people. Being from
Chicago my parents often took me to the Symphony and Opera. I’ve missed that cultural experience in Fort Pierce. This type of entertainment has a civilizing factor—it calms the nerves.”

**Duke Nelson**

Duke Nelson has served his community and his country for most of his life. He is a lifelong resident of Fort Pierce. He grew up on a farm on Shinn Road with his mother and his sister, a retired school teacher.

Duke graduated from Lincoln Park High School in 1954. At Lincoln Park he was the captain of the football team, Student Council President, and was the Salutatorian of his class.

After high school he join the military and retired as an Army Lieutenant Colonel with more than 22 years of active duty. During his enlistment, he worked as a fellowship officer for 4 years at Redstone Arsenal and the Army Missile Command toward putting the first man in space, trained over 500,000 forces for worldwide deployment, and headed a U.S. delegation in an 8-nation international consortium for the production of surface to air missile systems.

After leaving the military, he attended Florida A&M University where he became involved with the Student Government. Duke earned a Bachelor of Science degree and continued his education by attending the George Washington University. There he earned a Masters Degree in Management/Engineering.

After Duke graduated from college, he taught Math & Science at his alma mater, Lincoln Park. He also set his sights on improving his hometown by running for office. Duke has been a Fort Pierce City Commissioner for over 11 years.

During his years on the Fort Pierce City Commission, Duke became the Governor’s Appointee to Fort Pierce Fire District and the St. Lucie Children’s Services Council. Some of his other civic involvement includes serving on the St. Lucie Land Acquisition Committee, the St. Lucie County Housing Finance Authority, the Ft. Pierce Housing Authority, the First National Bank Advisory Board, the Alpha Phi Fraternity, the NAACP, and many more organizations.

He is most proud of his accomplishment implementing and finding the monies to pave over 54 miles of sidewalks and roads. He went to the Federal Government for revenue sharing to re-appropriate funds to this cause.

Duke says “these are exciting times.” He is excited about the downtown area’s growth, and sees the town as being open to growth and the posture over the next years.

The current commission is postured to be attuned to the increase in population, double the city budget, and the increase the city’s actual land size. The commission is committed to be more responsive. Nelson says “I am excited to be part of this.”

**Marjorie Harrell**

I caught up with Marjorie at the A.E. Backus Gallery while she was preparing for their annual sidewalk calking contest.

Marjorie was born in Fort Pierce to Robert & Phyllis Harrell. She has 8 siblings (6 girls and 3 boys). She and her siblings were the first black family in Fort Pierce to all graduate high school. Her mother received an award upon the graduation of their last child. Marjorie and her siblings also all went to college. Marjorie was the only one that did not work in the tomato fields. After graduating from Lincoln Park High School in 1961 (where she was a student of Zora Neale Hurston’s), Marjorie graduated with a B.S. in Home Economics and Science from Florida A&M University in 1975.

As Marjorie states herself, “I’m into everybody’s business. If you sit back and wait until life comes to you, you will miss it.” She does not sit back, but takes a very active role in the community. This is her second year as Chairperson of the Zora Neale Hurston Festival to be Continued next page...
... continued from page 21

held the week of April 28th. There are many events leading up to the festival. One such event is the H attitude, a fedora affair celebrating Hurston’s love of hats. The winner of the H attitude contest is on the poster for the following year’s event. Zora Neale Hurston was one of the classic contemporary writers in American literature and spent her final days in Fort Pierce writing for the Fort Pierce Chronicle and substitute teaching at Lincoln Park Academy. The Zora Neale Hurston stamp was unveiled in Fort Pierce. Marjorie pushed for this since this is where she had a home, a business, and where she is buried.

Like Zanobia Jefferson, Marjorie also knew the Highwaymen founder, Alfred Hair. In fact he was like a brother to her and they grew up together. Her home had his paintings all over the walls.

Since the Sunrise opened its doors to the public, Marjorie has become a strong supporter of this performing arts venue. As a Sunrise Theatre Volunteer, she introduced kids to the theatre’s manager. She has volunteered for all shows except for the opening night. On that evening she sat and enjoyed the show.

Marjorie currently works as a substitute teacher at Westwood High School. Her goal, in August 2005 was to teach just to keep her certificate current; however, she found teaching so rewarding that she has continued to substitute on a daily basis. Kids state that “she’s the coolest substitute teacher in the whole wide world.” Marjorie states: “Some kids come with lots of baggage. I want to contribute and help develop their lives.” She encourages children to invest their earnings for their future and is very proud of her “Read & Recovery” program, which takes kids reading below grade level and raises their reading competency to equal or above average.

She is most proud of raising her three children; 2 daughters and 1 son. Marjorie also has 2 grandchildren.

When asked about the future of downtown Fort Pierce, she stated that she is excited but doesn’t want “out of town” corporations taking public access beyond the reaches of local people.

When asked to describe Marjorie, City Planner Assistant and local historian, Tim Harrington, says, “she has a little bit of Zora in her,” and Marjorie added “and a bit of Doris Tillman, too.”

Havert “Coach” Fenn

Besides being a role model, teacher, and coach to countless numbers of school children for decades, Coach Fenn is a remarkable public leader for St. Lucie County and, especially Fort Pierce. Yet for all his accomplish-
ments, Coach Fenn is a very modest man. When I arrived at his house to interview him, he proudly showed me framed pictures of black leaders that he was inspired by. He takes these with him when he visits local schools to speak about black history.

Coach Fenn was elected as a St. Lucie County Commissioner and was responsible for many important decisions during his terms. He was instrumental in relocating the New York Mets to Port St. Lucie for Spring Training in the early 1980s. At the time, he was the Vice Chairman of the County Commission. Coach Fenn had the most sports experience of all the commissioners so he was put in charge.

Some of his other accomplishments while in office include passing a bond that allowed the County to purchase 20 acres around the Port of Fort Pierce. Judge Barnes, then Commissioner Barnes, worked in conjunction. He envisions the area being developed into a community park with fishing, boating and recreation. He also made sure that the County Courthouse was not removed from downtown Fort Pierce during the 1980s when all the anchor stores moved and the Sunrise Theatre closed. He felt moving the courthouse would be the demise of downtown Fort Pierce.

Even though Coach Fenn has retired, he remains an active community supporter. He currently serves on the Sunrise Theatre Board of Directors and is involved with other organizations that promote our area. He is always looking for ways to make our community even better.
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Lee, who is senior vice president, leads our Fort Pierce commercial lending team. During his 20-year local banking career, he has helped countless local companies meet their financial needs. A member of the Treasure Coast Builders Association and the Fort Pierce Rotary Club, Lee understands this area – and this area's businesses.

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Happenings at the Library

What is Waggin’ Tales?
It is a reading program designed to help children increase their reading skills. Children will read to a therapy dog for a period of 20 minutes. Our volunteers will assist the children as necessary in learning to read. Children may bring in their own books to read or one will be selected by the volunteer.

Computer Classes
"Basic Windows and the Internet" Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 9:15-10:45 a.m.
For additional information please contact Reference Services at 462-2187.

Children's Programs
Pre-K Jamboree for Ages 4-6 years, Wednesdays 1:00-1:45 p.m.; Toddler Time for Ages 18 months-3 years, Fridays 10:00-10:30 a.m.

Great Library Book Club
1st and 3rd Thurs. 10:00 a.m., Ft. Pierce Branch Library. Call Joan Simplício, Adult Services Librarian for more information, 462-2787.

Lakewood Park Book Discussion Group
First Mondays at 3:00 p.m., Lakewood Park Branch Library. Call Carol Shroyer, Branch Manager, for more information, 462-6870.

Free Monday Movies @ your Library
Every Monday at 2:00 p.m. Classics, Literary based, Foreign and Suspense films. Ft. Pierce Branch Library.

Young Adult Book Club
Third Saturdays of the month. Sponsors lively discussions including favorite fantasy novels, mysteries, renaissance literature, Florida history, writing workshops. For readers 9 years old and up. Get a schedule at the Ft. Pierce Branch! 462-2787.

"Featured" Local and Florida Author Book Signings
Authors vary locations and times, please check with the library to see who will be visiting next.

Treasure Coast Writers' Guild
Guest Speakers. Interested in publishing, marketing or locating editors for your writing? 4th Fridays at 2:00 p.m.

Library Events
Author Marshall Frank former Homicide and CSI Commander for the Miami-Dade Police discusses his new murder mystery novel, Latent, on March 10, 2006 10:00a.m. at Morningside Library, 2410 Morningside Blvd, Port St. Lucie and 2:00 p.m., Fort Pierce Branch Library, 101 Melody Lane, Fort Pierce; free. For more information, call 462-2787.

Diabetes Workshop “It Could Be You?” Carol Casanova, MS, RN, Director of the Lawnwood Diabetes Center discusses diabetes symptoms, diagnosis, care and management at the Fort Pierce Branch Library, 101 Melody Lane, Fort Pierce, 1:30 p.m.; free. For more information, call 462-2787.
Java Charlie’s Celebrates Second Birthday

Charles Brinkman and Georgiann Spencer hold a Birthday Cake in celebration of the Second Birthday of Java Charlie’s.

Java Charlie’s opened its doors, February 13, 2004, and has grown steadily during the past two years. Charles and Georgiann wish to thank the many hundreds of customers who gave their good wishes and all those who have patronized Java Charlie’s to make it the great success it is.

Photo by Jody Wilson
Meet Main Street Focus Volunteer, John Culverhouse
by Thondra Lane

John Culverhouse has a knack for making the most of opportunities. The Fort Pierce native turned his interest in politics and involvement in the Political Action Club at St. Edwards School into a variety of volunteer positions, including a delegate spot at the Florida Democratic Convention and a stint as a White House Intern.

But it’s not just politics that John is passionate about. He’s also turned his enthusiasm and drive to travel (21 states and 18 foreign countries at last count), meteorology (he’s even been a weather watcher for WPBF-TV in West Palm Beach), and—of course—photography.

Name: John B. Culverhouse, Jr.
Role At Main Street Focus: Photographer.
How You Got Involved With Focus: Photographed the Fort Pierce Centennial. Since then covered Main Street special events including parades, festivals, Friday Fests, and Farmer’s Markets.
Birthplace: Fort Pierce, Florida.
Favorite Thing About Downtown Fort Pierce: The waterfront. On the busiest days you can take in the sunshine, tropical breeze, and beautiful blue Indian River and feel like you’re on vacation. We’re very lucky to be a part of this community.
Favorite Main Street Fort Pierce Activity: The downtown Holiday Parade when everyone is happy. It’s fantastic to see everyone out supporting the community.
Other Civic/Charitable Activities: Director, Public Relations, St. Lucie Historical Society; Storm Spotter, National Weather Service Office in Melbourne; American Red Cross.
Mardi Gras Fever in Downtown Ft. Pierce
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“A Tribute to Backus”  
On Exhibit February 22 – March 18
In honor of A.E. Backus’s 100th Birthday, the Gallery will exhibit 65 Backus originals from the collection of Florida Atlantic University as well as selected paintings from private collections. Vintage photographs of Backus’ life and archival memorabilia from the Gallery’s collection will round out the exhibit.

“Celebrating Vanishing Florida”  
On Exhibit March 21 – April 8, 2006
Artists Explore the Nuances of the Florida Landscape in Oil. Featured exhibitors include Jackie Brice of Jupiter, Michael G. Enns of Coral Gables, James Gibson of Ft. Pierce, and Dorothy Starbuck of Santa Rosa Beach. Sculpture of wild creatures by David Price of Lake Wales.

“18th Backus Art Festival”  
March 4 – Sunday March 5
This is the largest Art show in St. Lucie County; over 75 artists, musical performances, tasty food and cold beer grace the Gallery’s oak shaded grounds for this two-day art extravaganza. On Sunday enjoy the legendary “All You Should Eat” breakfast. Rounded out by the drawing for an original Backus painting.

“The Art of Dressing Well”  
Saturday, March 25th
Join a select group of 50 fashion divas for a gourmet luncheon and fashion show of the latest spring couture styles. In store trunk shows and a free makeover by Laura Mercier add to the festive mood of a wonderful afternoon. This elegant event sells out early so book today. Tickets $100 per person.

“Bare Foot and Blue Jeans – An Evening with Carl Hiaasen”  
Saturday, April 1st
Miami Herald columnist and Florida’s most popular author comes to Ft. Pierce for an evening of conversation, laughter and fun. Join his many fans at the newly restored Sunrise Theater for this once in a lifetime opportunity.
Following his performance at the Sunrise Theatre, 200 fortunate Hiaasen aficionados will gather at the Gallery to party with Hiaasen for an evening of the finest Florida fare, flowing libations and live music. Ticket prices and availability to be announced.
Backus Gallery Celebrates A.E. “Beanie” Backus’s 100th Birthday During “Backus Bash” Event

Longtime Sunrise Theatre volunteer, Sue Dasso, poses with Beanie Backus look-a-like, Greg Frederick.

Deb Piowaty, Anita Prentice, Jenny Piech-Street
To view upcoming Sunrise Theatre performances, please visit www.sunrisetheatre.com
Marjorie Harrell met me with her sister, Gloria for a tour of Lincoln Park. They are natives of Ft. Pierce and although Gloria does not live here full-time, she has bought a home just down the street from their childhood home in Lincoln Park and renovated and landscaped it beautifully. It is a great model for what the rest of the block could become. Marjorie not only lives here but is a very active community supporter. When I walked in, she was in full swing preparing for a Zora Neale Hurston Festival, wrapping up things for Black History month and getting events lined up for the next Friday Fest, which would honor Black History month. In addition to participating in a variety of civic activities, she also teaches High School.

Marjorie and Gloria’s parents moved to Ft. Pierce in the 1920s boom era, when the hub of the African-American community centered between North 9th Street and North 8th Street, from Avenue B to Avenue D. At that time the community stretched all the way to the Indian River. In the early to mid 20th century, the Lincoln Park community thrived with active residential neighborhoods and numerous black-owned businesses.

Mrs. Harrell remembers sitting on her parents back porch with Alfred Hair, arguably the most famous of the Highwaymen, watching him paint and then hang his works up to dry on their clothesline in the back yard.

Gloria drove as Marjorie narrated our tour of the neighborhood, which now stretches from Orange Avenue to Avenue Q, from US 1 to 33rd Street. We drove slowly by the Lincoln Park Recreation Center, which was built in the 1950s exclusively with funds raised within the neighborhood. The original structure cost a total of $5,000.00. Need has now outgrown the building’s size through the hard work of the current director Denise Sirmons. “She gives a lot of kids experiences they would never have, and makes sure kids have...
something to eat every day, who might otherwise be hungry,” says Marjorie.

Both Marjorie and Gloria believe this vibrant neighborhood history can lead to a bright future for Lincoln Park and its citizens. Although Marjorie is concerned about property values escalating as long time residents get priced out of their neighborhoods, she does have a vision of how the residents might be lifted up along with the property values around them.

She dreams of seeing a public-private partnership that would enable residents to improve properties through grants, while allowing a neighborhood organization to buy the homes that owners are not interested in improving. The organization could then use these homes as a training ground for young people to have part-time jobs and learn trades as the properties are renovated. These then could be sold back to community residents for under market value if they should commit to staying in and maintaining the home.

This is a similar model to other successful neighborhood preservation organizations. One is a highly successful Community Land Trust in Key West, where property values have priced all but the very wealthy out of the market. The Bahama Conch Community Land Trust buys properties in the Bahama Village neighborhood, renovates them with neighborhood teens learning trades such as carpentry, plumbing and drywall, and then sells or leases them to local teachers, firefighters, service workers, and others who would be completely priced off the Key. The motto for this Land Trust is “Helping the community become the beneficiary of change rather than its victim.”

With committed neighbors like Marjorie Harrell and her sister Gloria on the side of Lincoln Park, a fantastic idea like that can certainly take place here. For more information, www.bcclt.org.
River Runnings
by Dan Dannahower

The Indian River Lagoon, commonly referred to as the Indian River or just “The River” by locals, is known by scientists to be one of the most diverse ecosystems in existence on our planet. The abundance and variety of habitat it provides to a multitude of sea creatures make it a limitless playground to residents and visitors alike. From Dolphin and Manatee watching to hunting that lunker Snook, trout, or redfish, there’s something for just about everyone who enjoys the outdoors in our beautiful waterway.

Fishing is far and away the most common activity on the river and for good reason. Limitless opportunities exist from sitting on the bank with a cane pole to trolling the inlet for the “really big ones”. Bottom fishing may provide snapper, sheepshead, or flounder. Trout and redfish can be caught with live bait or jigs from the shore, by wading, or from a boat on the grass flats and mangrove shores throughout the river. Snook, one of Florida’s premier gamefish, are often caught along sea-walls, in the turning basin between the bridges, and near structures like docks and bridge pilings. These are just a few of the many species you might find in our river that provide a fun fishing experience and put a healthy meal on the table.

A number of methods are available for trying your luck in the river. Numerous access points are available along A1A on the east side of the river and along the west side between the two bridges and at various locations further north and south. Both north and south bridges are popular spots for shore fishermen. The south jetty has a paved walkway and is another popular spot that can provide access to ocean going fish that enter the inlet to feed.

If you own a boat or have access to one the entire river becomes your playground. The turning basin between the two bridges harbors just about every fish in the Atlantic Ocean at one time of the year or another. Fishing the grass flats and spoil islands can result in a nice string of trout and redfish. Bottom fishing along the InterCoastal Waterway and other ledges and cuts can produce nice strings of snapper, sheepshead, and other bottom delicacies. If you fish from a boat you need a Florida Salt Water Fishing License. For a small fee you can obtain one at www.myfwc.com or by calling 888-347-4356. It takes only a few minutes and you are legal to fish immediately. An additional two dollar Snook permit is required if you want to keep a Snook.

Whatever your preferred method, a number of local bait and tackle shops are available and can provide you with not only tackle and bait but a plethora of information on what’s biting, what’s not, and how to catch what...
ever your after. Their business is helping fishermen catch fish. Ask and listen and you will receive a wealth of how-to that comes free with your purchase of a few hooks, sinkers, or live shrimp.

For the ultimate experience a number of river fishing guides are available to help you with that trip of a life time. These professionals know what’s biting, where to go, and how to fish for success. Denny Gillispie, one of these professionals, was kind enough to help me with information on guided river fishing. He can be reached at 772-370-0230. Typical river charters run around $275-$300 for a five hour trip. Everything is provided, license, bait, tackle, and a camera to record your experience. Bring your own lunch and you’re good to go. Other river charters can be found in the yellow pages or at your local marinas.

Whether fishing from the shore, a boat, or on a guided river trip, the Indian River offers a great chance to catch some nice filets for the Barbie or just have a relaxing time dreaming about that big one that’s gonna bite next!
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Drink Specials

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