Crescent Heights Neighborhood Association Newsletter

Winter Edition 2023

# Crescent Heights Couple Go the Distance to Renovate Old Home

by Jennifer Vogtner

It's January, a time when our thoughts are drawn to renewal and revitalization. Particularly in Florida, this time of year can feel more like early springtime than the dead of winter. Around the neighborhood, holiday decorations are coming down, dry leaves are being swept from walkways, and new flowers are blooming cheerfully in pots on front porches.

For some in Crescent Heights, the theme of renewal has been a constant in their lives for many months. Along with all of the new construction happening on our streets, some neighbors have opted to renovate their classic older homes instead. You can see the marvelous results of their efforts in varying stages of completion as you walk the blocks. One such couple, Kristin and Tom Kowaleski, are nearly finished with an 18-month renovation of their charming two-story bungalow on 27th Ave N.

Kristin is a commercial real estate attorney at GrayRobinson, P.A. Thomas served 20 years in the Marine Corps and retired in 2021. He now works for Jacobs on MacDill Air Force base. They were living in California when they purchased the home in 2019, but were eager to move to St. Petersburg once Tom's military service concluded.

Their renovation began in July 2021, and as Kristin put it, "It was like pulling the thread of the sweater and completely unraveling it." With the help of The Hug Co. (a firm that helps design and manage subcontractors) the couple removed some interior walls to reveal a more open plan for the ground floor. In doing so, they discovered that the second floor's support was resting on a window instead of a beam, and the electrical system was in grave need of an update.

Even through the heaviest construction, the couple managed to have a little fun with it. Kristin remembers, "It was funny to have the 'haunted house' in the neighborhood for Halloween of 2021, when we unexpectedly had to pull off all of the siding and the front of the house and you could walk right through the walls."

The house was ready to move into by the summer of 2022, but the work was far from done, as the outside began to undergo a facelift with new pavers, new landscaping, and pool resurfacing. "Thomas is incredibly handy and is completing the last finish work when he has time outside of work." says Kristin. "We are probably 95 percent done, with some smaller projects to finish."

Looking back on their efforts, Kristin stressed the need for patience and dedication. "We ended up becoming our own project managers, inspecting the house every day and catching mistakes before things went too far, but it definitely added a lot of stress to do it ourselves."

Now that they are in the home stretch, Tom and Kristin can finally start to dedicate more spare time to their hobbies of sports, cooking, music, and wine, and they are looking forward to adding some new occupants to their address. "We have no pets yet, but now that the house is mostly done, we would like to get one or two dogs."



# Join, Donate & Support • CHNA for 2023

Are you a homeowner or renter in Crescent Heights? Wonderful! You're cordially invited to join the Crescent Heights Neighborhood Association (CHNA). Membership includes invitations to porch parties and business socials, business discounts, emails with important neighborhood and city news, a vote on important neighborhood issues, and more. Help us make your neighborhood a vibrant and engaging place to live.

Membership is \$25 a calendar year. Join online at myCHNA.org (we accept PayPal), or bring cash or a check to any neighborhood meeting or event, made payable to CHNA. We accept additional donations, too!

Crescent Heights Neighborhood Association, Inc., is a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit corporation. Donations to the organization for which no goods or services are received are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Your membership contribution may or may not be tax deductible. Please consult a tax advisor regarding your specific tax situation. Updated email addresses needed for all members since 2017. Please go to mychna.org to update or add your email address to receive important updates.

# Important Contact Information

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**Contributors:** Darlene Asselin, Sharon Dubble, Bill Richkus, Jim Tomlinson, Salvador Valles

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# President's Corner • Salvador Valles

With the start of the new year, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce our 2023 board and acknowledge some of our volunteers. We welcome back familiar faces to the board, including Bill Richkus as Treasurer, Rob Asselin as Secretary, Amy Youngs as Events Director, and Ziba Mohammadi as Membership Director. In addition, I am pleased to introduce our new Vice President, Bebe Ocano. 2023 will be my second and final year as President. I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge a few others who are not on the board but who have devoted a great deal of time helping us with our communication channels and who will be returning in 2023. Thank you to Jennifer Vogtner and Wendy Smith, Newsletter Editor and Newsletter Design Layout Director respectively, for their dedication in producing our quarterly newsletter. Also, a big thank you to Bob Lehrer and Nancy Warner for their help in coordinating the distribution of the newsletter. Thank you to Amy Kelso for her continued help maintaining our Facebook page, and welcome to Brian Merrill, our new Webmaster. And finally, I want to thank Nioma Brown for spearheading the tree inventory project.

As I mentioned in my last message, at our November neighborhood meeting we invited Nicole Roberts, a representative from the Downtown Partnership, and Cheryl Stacks, the City's Transportation Manager, to present the project known as the St. Pete Straza. The project, led by a group called Car-Free St. Pete, proposes to transform existing streets into a three-plus-mile loop that combines the elements of a street, a plaza, and a park. According to Ms. Roberts, the long-term view of the project is to create more safe areas to walk or bike downtown, free from car traffic.

The map (shown on page 7) shows the envisioned Straza route circling close to popular destinations such as The Dali Museum, Tropicana Field, Mirror Lake, and the St. Pete Pier District. It also shows alternative connections to the USF St. Petersburg campus and Uptown District, utilizing 4th Avenue South and Arlington Avenue.

According to Ms. Roberts, the vision for the Straza is different than Central Avenue. She notes that the Straza will be quieter, more park-like, and less dependent on

commercial activity. Some retail and cafes are envisioned, but it is not intended to be a continuous commercial corridor like Central Avenue. While the Straza is not currently part of the City's existing master plans, Car Free St. Pete is attempting to garner



support for the Straza by doing presentations before community groups like ours, as well as businesses already located on the proposed route.

At the meeting, Ms. Roberts addressed some common concerns, including the potential impacts on small businesses, the loss of parking, and traffic flow. Car Free St. Pete maintains that these types of projects have been shown to help small businesses instead of harming them by creating more desirable conditions to allow visitors to spend more time and visit more shopfronts. She also argued that traffic flow would not be impacted because the proposed routes are relatively low-traffic corridors. This is speculative since there do not appear to have been any studies completed to evaluate the potential impacts.

Questions from neighbors in attendance concerned bike safety throughout the city, including routes from our neighborhood to the downtown area. The Straza does not address questions related to bike and pedestrian safety outside of the proposed Straza route; however, Ms. Roberts indicated that the group is assisting the City with its Complete Streets plan, which is focused on making all streets safer for everyone. She also indicated that the group is hosting events that promote education on road safety.

We now look to 2023 and are excited for what is to come. We plan to continue with our annual neighborhood and family events, as well as porch parties. I am hoping to come up with some neighborhood beautification projects. If you have any ideas for what you would like to see from the neighborhood association or a topic for a neighborhood meeting, please let me know. Feel free to email me at crescentheights.president@ gmail.com with any suggestions.



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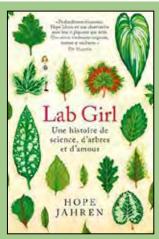


# NOOK



**Book Group 1** meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month from 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Leader: Maureen Camphire Contact: maurcamp@verizon.net



# Lab Girl by Hope Jahren February 2023

Hope Jahren is an awardwinning American geochemist and geobiologist at the University of Oslo, and Lab Girl is her revelatory treatise on plant life—but it is also a celebration of the lifelong curiosity, humility, and passion that drive every scientist.

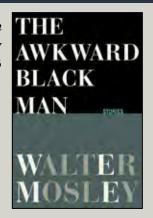
Book Nook Leads:

Maureen Camphire and Sharon Dubble

The CHNA Book Club has been wildly successful! As a result, we now have two Book Groups, each with its own distinct membership.

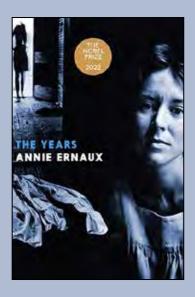
> The Awkward Black Man by Walter Mosley January 2023

Bestselling author Walter Mosley has proven himself a master of narrative tension, both with his extraordinary fiction and gripping writing for television. The Awkward Black Man collects seventeen of Mosley's most accomplished short stories to showcase the full range of his remarkable talent.



Mosley presents distinct characters as they struggle to move through the world in each of thesestories—heroes who are awkward, nerdy, self-defeating, self-involved, and, on the whole, odd. He overturns the stereotypes that corral black male characters and paints a subtle, powerful portrait of each of these unique individuals. Touching and contemplative, each of these unexpected stories offers the best of one of our most gifted writers.

**Book Group 2** meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 7:00-9:00 p.m. Co-leaders: Melinda Borthick & Sharon Dubble Contact: chreads@gmail.com



# The Years by Annie Ernauxby February 2023

This book is considered to be the defining work of this Nobel Prize-winning French memoirist. A new kind of autobiography emerges like a collage - at once subjective and impersonal, private and collective.



# My Sister the Serial Killer by Oyikan Braithwaite January 2023

Korebe is accustomed to cleaning up after her younger sister's dead boyfriends. But what will happen when the man Korebe secretly loves becomes the latest of her sister's suitors? Sharp, explosive, and hilarious.

Flying Solo by Linda Holmes March 2023

The author hosts Pop Culture on NPR, and her new novel is described as a down-to-earth art heist twistier than Ocean's Eleven. A perfect book for someone who feels a little separate from the flock.



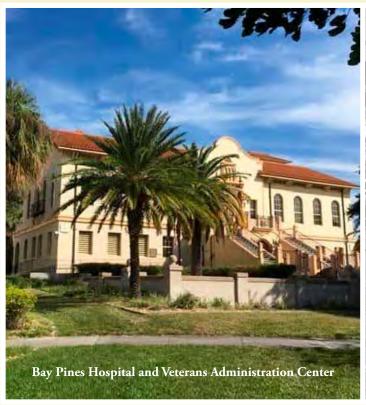
# ORIGINS • A local history column • Jim Tomlinson

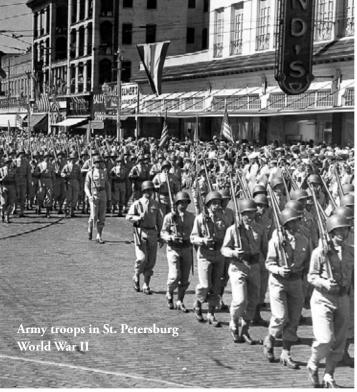
Hello friends and neighbors. Some time ago I was asked to write an article describing the history of the Crescent Heights neighborhood to consist of about 500 words. My reply was, "How does one write about the history of the neighborhood without describing the events that helped bring the neighborhood into existence?" Subsequently, over time, four separate articles beginning with the Native Americans and continuing through the 1920s in St. Petersburg have been posted in the Crescent Heights Newsletter. In this fifth installment, we pick up our history in the mid-1920s as the era of the Boom years comes to a close.

The Boom years were driven mostly by the speculation of wealthy investors. Land and structures were being built and sold at a tremendous rate, sometimes bought and sold on the same day. During 1920 the city consisted of 11.05 square miles. By 1925 it consisted of 53.22 square miles. This rapid growth couldn't be sustained indefinitely, and a steep decline in land prices began in 1926. Building slowed dramatically, merchants weren't selling their inventories, and many banks were weak or closing. By 1929 The Great Depression struck the nation and devastated the already weak local economy. Every bank in St. Petersburg closed. Money was in such short supply that the Citizens Emergency Committee was established and issued scrip for goods in lieu of cash. Jobs in St. Petersburg were so scarce that signs were posted at the city limits stating, "Warning - Do Not Come Here Seeking Work - A City's First Duty Is to Employ Its Own Citizens." Many businesses entered bankruptcy, and many homes were foreclosed on. The home in which I live now, known then as the Remington home, was foreclosed on in 1930 and sold for back taxes for the whopping price of \$12.50!

With the entire nation suffering economic depression, the U.S. government created federal dollars to help struggling communities. Funding was made available for a major project constructing the Bay Pines Hospital and Veterans Administration Center. Other projects included the construction of the St. Petersburg City Hall, upgrading Albert Whitted Airport, water and sewer projects, and the first phase of the St. Petersburg Junior College as it was named then. The official Federal Works Progress Administration was established during the late 1930s. During this period there began some improvement in recovering from the Great Depression. St. Petersburg and Pinellas County began encouraging the tourist industry again, as the area gradually became more urban.

On December the 7th, 1941, the United States entered World War Two. St. Petersburg was selected as a location for the basic training of the Army Air Corps. Albert Whitted airport was used for training aviators, and the Pinellas County Airport (now St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport) was constructed for additional cadet training. A total of 119,057 military personnel passed through the area during the war years. This vast amount of soldiers and pilots were housed in the area's hotels, as well as a tent city established in the city's Jungle neighborhood area. This influx of military activity helped the area fully recover from the Great Depression, and things continued to improve during and beyond the war years. Many of the soldiers would return to Florida after the war, and another population boom and growth took hold during the late 40s and early 50s. In the sixth installment, we'll look at how St. Petersburg grew and changed from the 1950s through the 1970s. Wishing all a happy New Year.







St. Pete Straza (from page 3) Map of the three-mile loop. Image: Urban Arts Inc. for Car-Free St. Pete.



# Neighborhood Updates

## The World Cafe is coming to Crescent Heights!

Our Membership Director, Ziba Mohammadi, is currently in the planning stages of bringing the concept of the "World Cafe" to Crescent Heights. According to World Cafe's website, "The World Cafe is a method which makes use of an informal cafe setting for participants to explore an issue by discussing it in small table groups. Discussion is held in multiple rounds of 20-30 minutes, with the cafe ambiance intended to allow for more relaxed and open conversations to take place." Those interested in helping plan and attend a neighborhood World Cafe session are encouraged to contact Ziba at membership.chna@gmail.com.



### Lights in the Heights!

On Saturday, December 17th, friends and neighbors gathered for a truly decadent holiday celebration! Resplendent with lights, music, costumes, a mini-bonfire and Santa, the centerpiece was the most incredible grazing table that stretched for at least 25 feet! Good times were had by residents of all ages, not to mention some of our four-legged friends who were dolled up for the occasion. Even a friendly pet parrot came out for the festivities. The best holiday decorations contest prize was shared by the Meza Family (455 26th Ave N) and Mark Francen and John Delvitto (450 26th Ave N). Santa also awarded Mark & John a prize for the spectacular "Happy Holidays" banner that stretched across 26th Ave N that he said he could see all the way from his sled. Our gratitude goes out to Amy Youngs, event coordinator, and Leah Herzwurm, our sponsor for this event. Thanks to Rob and Darlene Asselin for all they did and to everyone else who helped and participated! Images by; Dante Vogtner





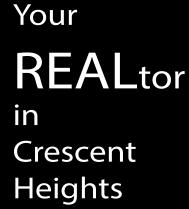
























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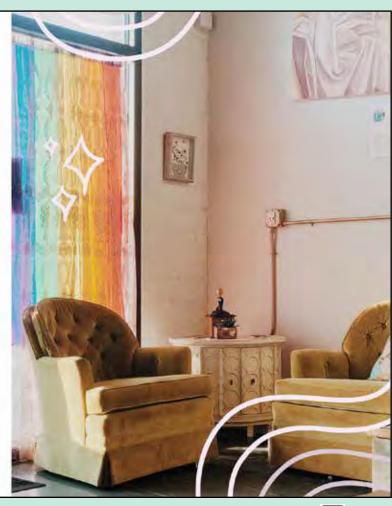
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# Nature Watch South

### The Sounds of Nature • Bill Richkus

After living for four decades in the vicinity of the Chesapeake Bay, the fall/ winter natural sound I was most accustomed to was that of the migratory Canada goose. By the thousands in signature V-formations, the geese would announce their fall arrival with deep throated honks, echoed by all the members of the numerous flocks. Their presence in the area was similarly broadcast throughout the winter during their daily excursions to feeding grounds, and their vocalizations rose to a fever pitch as they left on their spring migration to the north. Here in the Tampa Bay area one can daily see beautiful V-formations of birds passing overhead in the early morning and evening, but there are no sounds to be heard. The pitch-black cormorants, angel-white ibises and brown pelicans that make up most of these flocks save their subtle grunts and clucks for arguments amongst themselves as they are feeding or roosting. Our most distinctive migrant and winter resident, the regal white pelicans (who also fly in V-formations) seem to be totally silent, at least based on my observations (a side note-their appearance at Fort DeSoto and Crescent Lake this year was surprisingly early, much to the enjoyment of many!). However, while our most charismatic migrant remains silent, a number of other winter visitors add to the cacophony of sounds generated by them and our regular resident birds.

St. Pete appears to be a favorite hangout for winter flocks of the fish crow. Smaller than the American crow, you can hear the call of the fish crows all around our neighborhood. Instead of the harsh "caw, caw" of the larger American crow, this smaller crow sounds like it has a cold, a very nasal "ugh, ugh." The fish crow isn't a true migrant, but flocks tend to develop in coastal areas in winter, then disperse inland in the spring. The abundance of the crows in downtown St. Pete is often striking. I often see large congregations of crows around the intersection of 4th St. N and 38th Ave N, with tens to hundreds perched on the power lines, looking malevolent, like those in Hitchock's movie "The Birds." But our crows, rather than attacking people, are more interested in attacking dropped French fries or other edible refuse deposited by uncaring people.





Grackle

Another, but smaller, black bird that appears in St. Pete in significant flocks this time of year and contributes to our soundscape is the grackle. Their calls have been described as a combination of squeaks, whistles, and croaks, sometimes compared to the sound of a rusty gate opening. It's quite an auditory experience when you have several hundred emitting these sounds all around you!

The year-round abundance of blue jays in our neighborhood contributes to the sounds you can hear on a daily basis. What has been surprising to me, after living in the Northeast most of my life, was that our St. Pete blue jays have a sound repertoire much more varied than that of the northern jays. In addition to the raucous "jay, jay" call you can hear when the birds are mobbing a hawk or owl, our jays make trills, chirps and chime-like sounds, many of which I had never before heard from these beautiful blue birds.

One lovely sound I look forward to toward the end of winter is that of the screech owl. I've always wondered why these diminutive owls, common in Crescent Heights, were given their name, since the only time they actually screech is when startled or threatened. In the late winter, as the males' thoughts turn to mating, they make a soft, melodious trilling sound, so soft it is hard to believe it comes from an owl. And, of course, the mockingbirds serenade us with a wide range of sounds from nearly every corner tree or shrub year around. So the next time you are walking through the neighborhood, try to tune out the sounds of leaf blowers, cars and airplanes and tune into the lovely sounds of nature.

Fish Crow



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# What Our Clients Are Saying

"From the day I met Leah, I was impressed with her professionalism." She had already handled 3 houses with our family and they were all just as happy as we were. She prepared me for the steps of the process and put me at ease with her plan to handle all of the arrangements. There was a major windstorm while the house was under contract and she helped negotiate the minor repairs that needed to be accomplished after the storm. I believe her greatest strength is her honesty and integrity. Even though I live on the East coast of Florida, I would ask her to handle my sale in the future, if ever needed."

### - Charles E.

"We made a very fast move out of state and initially wanted to list the home ourselves to avoid the additional fees associated with listing with a realtor. Leah was recommended to us through a friend and we decided to meet with her and discuss the process and what value her team could bring. I was blown away by how responsive she was from the onset. It became even more clear within the first couple of minutes of meeting her in person that she was incredibly well prepared, a fantastic communicator, and would bring an abundance of value to the process. We cannot praise Leah and her team at Compass enough for her help making the process incredibly painless. Her connections and preferred vendors are all amazing and did a fantastic job. She has completely changed our opinion on the stereotype against brokers. The only downside is that we can't use Leah and her team again out of state!"

-Drew G.



Leah Herzwurm

706.910.9909 leah@herzwurmhomes.com @herzwurm\_homes

# Volunteers Make "Help a Neighbor Day 2022" A Resounding Success

In what is becoming an annual tradition, neighbors came together on November 19th to help a fellow Crescent Heights resident make significant improvements to their home. More than a dozen volunteers assisted the City's Neighborhood Team, or N-Team, which is a City funded team that assists residents in need to address property maintenance issues which also helps to improve the community.

As the N-Team had already completed other work including building a ramp and repairing and replacing wood on the home exterior, neighbor volunteers focused on the final phase of the project, which was to paint the exterior walls and trim. With everyone pitching in, the painting was completed quickly, and by noon everyone was able to enjoy an impromptu pizza party before cleaning up. We'd like to thank the CHNA for coordinating the event and providing refreshments, the N-Team staff, Jim Fiala and Mark Solinski, who led the team that day, and all the neighbors who came out to help, including Emily Kapes, Jennifer Vogtner, Salvador Valles, Gregory Garbers, Ted and Kathy Newman, Remi Salter, Keven Benik, Wendy and Kevin Smith, Thanh Seybold, Nicholas Meza, and Margaret Karisny.

### A Letter of Thanks from Mrs. Matechik

I want to express my gratitude to all the CHNA volunteers who helped the City of St. Petersburgs N-Team give my home an exterior makeover. With their help my little old 1941 house that we have lived in since 1997 was given an exterior paint makeover. She is now so beautiful and rightfully so. The N-Team built a huge ramp for my disabled husband who has a prosthetic leg and uses a wheelchair. They also put in new front porch, steps with handrails and an adorable gate. It is more than I could have imagined. The kindness that has been shown to me cannot be put into words.. When I see my little old house transformation courtesy of so many people I hold my head high and I am so proud to be a part of the CHNA and all it stands for... Neighbors helping Neighbors.

With much gratitude and appreciation. Barbara & John Matechik and our dog BoBo.



Photo taken prior to painting the house

# Period Poverty Project Darlene Asselin

Menstruation is a fact of life for half of the world's population over much of their lives. But poverty and lack of access to period products affect many women in the world, including in our country, state, and here in our community. Take a look at some of the statistics around what is now being recognized as "Period Poverty." In Florida, one in six women and girls between the age of 12 and 44 live below the poverty line. Feminine hygiene products are not covered by food stamps, but while Florida stopped charging sales tax on these products in 2017, many women need to make decisions balancing other critical needs with the biological fact of menstruation. According to the Orlando Sentinel, 20% of female students missed school or left early because of lack of access to period products as their families struggle to meet basic necessities such as food, rent and utilities.

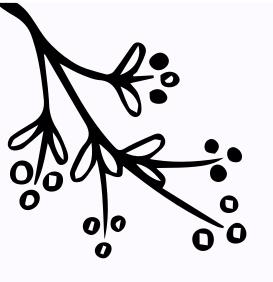
Here in St. Pete, sanitary products are often requested by families who come to Daystar Life Center for food, rent or utility assistance (https:// daystarlife.com). Due to limited supplies, volunteers often break packages open to count out pads or tampons to distribute to clients.

Crescent Heights Book Club members are helping restock period supplies. Many members agreed to contribute a package of sanitary napkins or tampons at their monthly book discussion group. We also plan to collaborate with Babycycle, a local diaper bank affiliated with the national Alliance for Period Supplies. We're calling on our neighborhood to donate generously to our drive by dropping off feminine hygiene products to Maureen Camphire's house at 835 26th Ave N for distribution. You can also donate directly to Daystar or Babycycle. (https://babycyclefl.org/donate)

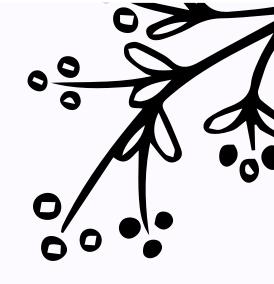
We are also currently looking for a coordinator for a letter writing campaign to our legislators to ask for their support on pending Legislation SB 242 and HB75 (Learning With Dignity). This legislation in Florida would make period products free in schools. This is a health care necessity and feminine products are not luxury items. Please contact Maureen Camphire at Maurcamp@verizon.net to volunteer. Additional information is available about this topic at the national program, Alliance for Period Supplies. You can donate directly to this cause via allianceforperiodsupplies.org.



Nancy Wildfeir-Field and Maureen Camphire







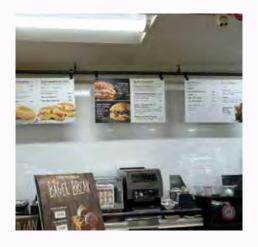
# **EINSTEIN BAGELS**

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# October 6th Porch Party hosted by Steve Berrett and Scott Andariese







Halloween Block Party























Please go to our website; mychna.org to see all the great costumes!

# CHNA Calendar of Events

# It's a New Year! Lets..

# Neighborhood Events:

January Book Nook Group One: January 24th; 7:00-9:00 pm Contact: maurcamp@verizon.net Group Two: January 10th 7:00-9:00 pm Contact: chreads@gmail.com

Valentine Family Day Saturday, February 11; 2-4 pm Amy Youngs' home, 785 25th Ave N. More information to come.

February Book Nook Group One: February 28th 7:00-9:00 pm Contact: maurcamp@verizon.net Group Two: February 14th 7:00-9:00 pm Contact: chreads@gmail.com

Neighborhood Meeting Monday, March 13; 6:30-8:00 pm. Location and agenda to be determined.

### Events Around Town:

Health Care Navigators Assistance for various healthcare programs Saturday, January 7; 10:00 am-4:00 pm West Community Library

Festivals of Speed Sunday January 22; 11:00 am-3:00 pm Vinoy Park

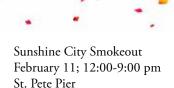
Tampa Bay Senior Expo Wednesday January 25; 10:00 am-2:00 pm The Coliseum

St. Petersburg Shrimp & Music Festival Friday - Sunday January 27-29; Times vary Williams Park

Fit City: Glow in the Park 5K + 1-Mile Walk Saturday January 28; 5:00-9:00 pm North Straub Park

Raptor Fest Saturday, February 4; 10:00 am-4:00 pm Boyd Hill Nature Preserve

Inside the Mind of a Female Hiker Thursday, February 9; 6:00-7:00 pm Osprey Roost at the Terry Tomalin Campground 3010 31st St S



Localtopia 2023: A Community Celebration of All Things Local February 18; 10:00 am-5:00 pm Williams Park

Awakening Festival Saturday and Sunday March 11-12; 10:00 am-7:00 pm North Straub Park

Advocacy Support Group Friday March 10; 6:30-8:00 pm Walter Fuller Recreation Center

St. Pete Saturday Morning Market 9:00 am-1:00 pm Al Lang Stadium

Saturday Morning Shoppe 1st Saturdays; 10:00 am-3:00 pm 1 Tropicana Dr.

Kubrick Magic Theater Thursday, Friday & Saturday, 6:00-8:00 pm 1211 1st Ave N.

Indie Flea 1st Sundays 12:00-4:00 pm 14 18th St S.

St. Pete Walking Mural Tour Every Saturday; 10:00-11:30 am 501 Central Ave.

Family Yarn Crafters Every 2nd & 4th Saturday; 12:00-2:00 pm South Branch Library

Florida History Speaker Series First Thursdays; 7:00-8:00 pm Hammock Hall at Boyd Hill Nature Preserve