



Newsletter **CHNA**

Crescent Heights Neighborhood Association Newsletter

St. Petersburg's Urban Forestry Initiative: A Commitment to Green Canopies and Tree Health • Darlene Asselin

Lets Plant a Tree!

St. Petersburg's Urban Forestry Group continues its mission to enhance the city's green spaces, recently planting three new trees in our neighborhood as part of broader environmental goals. Thanks to this program, Crescent Heights is the proud new home to a Winged Elm at 520 25th Ave N, a Gumbo Limbo at 460 25th Ave N, and a Sweetgum at 836 27th Ave N. This initiative supports the City's Comprehensive Plan, which aims to maintain 50% green, permeable open space, preserve vegetation, and replace trees removed from public areas. Dean Hay, Senior Urban Forestry Specialist, shared insights on tree selection, planting, and pruning for this program.



Right Tree, Right Place

When planting street or median trees, the city recommends species that thrive in St. Petersburg and avoid root conflicts with infrastructure, like sidewalks and curbs. Proper selection boosts the tree's life, reduces infrastructure damage, and increases community benefits.

You can view the list at City's Tree Selection Page at: stpete.org/residents/sustainability/trees.php

A Holistic Approach to Tree Planting

Tree planting goes beyond simply placing a sapling in the ground. The success of a tree depends on structural pruning, root care, and aftercare. Many trees from big-box stores, called "number twos," haven't been pruned for stability and may have circling roots that hinder growth. In contrast, premium-grade "number ones" are pruned early to ensure strong, stable canopies. These trees, though more expensive, are vital in urban environments where longevity and wind resistance are essential.

The Importance of Root Care

A common misconception is that tree roots should spread naturally, but confined roots often grow in circles, leading to a "root-bound" tree. The Urban Forestry Group inspects and manages tree roots, cutting circling roots to encourage outward growth and a stable foundation. This ensures a strong root system capable of withstanding harsh weather, like high winds during hurricane season.

Hurricanes, High Winds, and Tree Survival

As we know well, St. Petersburg's coastal location means it often faces hurricanes. After recent storms, many residents noticed mature trees protected homes by diffusing wind. Trees like live oaks, with their sturdy structure, offer defense, while weaker trees like laurel oaks are more prone to wind damage. Well-pruned trees have a higher survival rate during storms, with studies showing a 90% chance of surviving hurricane-force winds. Trees planted in groups offer additional mutual protection.

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Support Crescent Heights by becoming a CHNA member today!

Attention all homeowners and renters in Crescent Heights! Everyone who calls this wonderful neighborhood home can help sustain its natural beauty, livelihood and sense of community by becoming a member of the Crescent Heights Neighborhood Association (CHNA).

For \$25 a year, you can take delight in knowing your contributions will help foster a safe, vibrant and engaging place to live for people from all walks and stages of life.

As a member, you'll receive exclusive invitations to special neighborhood events such as porch parties, family-friendly celebrations and business socials. You'll also be the first to know about important neighborhood and city news and have chances to meet local leaders and vote on critical issues that impact Crescent Heights.

Join online at crescentheightsneighborhood.com, or bring cash or check made payable to CHNA to any neighborhood meeting or event. We accept PayPal and additional donations. Questions about CHNA Membership? Contact Ziba Mohammadi, membership chair, at membership.chna.ziba@gmail.com

Stay in the know! Subscribe to CHNA emails.

Each month, CHNA emails subscribers important information about neighborhood news, happenings and events. If you are not currently receiving these monthly updates and would like to, please contact Laura Lorenzen at lauriam5@gmail.com or text 813-431-0478.

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 mayor may not be tax deductible. Please consult a tax advisor regarding your specific tax situation.*

President: Amy Kelso
crescentheights.president@gmail.com

Vice President: Bebe Ocano
chnavicepresident@gmail.com

Treasurer: John Sullivan
chnatreasure@gmail.com

Secretary: Nancy Warner
secretary.chna@gmail.com

Membership: Ziba Mohammadi
membership.chna.ziba@gmail.com

Events Director: Amy Youngs
events.chna@gmail.com

Past President: Salvador Valles

Leads and Chairs

Book Club: Group 1
Joanne Beckman
ejbeckman@comcast.net

Group 2
Melinda Borthick & Sharon Dubble
chreads@gmail.com

Social Media Manager: Amy Kelso
askelso41@yahoo.com

Website Editor: Brian Merrill
chna.website@gmail.com

Public Information Coordinator:
Laura Lorenzen
lauriam5@gmail.com

Communications Director:
Wendy Smith
partypro.wendy@gmail.com

Newsletter Team

Editor: Sara Howe
editor.chna@gmail.com

Design Layout: Wendy Smith
partypro.wendy@gmail.com

Delivery: Bob Lehner
delivery.chna@gmail.com

Contributors: Joanne Beckman, Sharon Dubble, Sara Howe, Amy Kelso, Bill Richkus, Thomas Paterek, John Ficken, Darlene and Rob Asselin

CHNA Merchandise

Show off your neighborhood pride with CHNA merchandise! Visit crescentheightsneighborhood.com to shop flags, t-shirts and tote bags.

Important Contact Information

CHNA President
Amy Kelso
crescentheights.president@gmail.com
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If you have a non-emergency police concern, please contact Code Compliance by phone at 727-893-7373 or online at seeclifix.com/st-petersburg. To report abandoned vehicles on the street, or extended parking by commercial vehicles on the street, please report the issue to the non-emergency number for the St. Petersburg Police Department at 727-893-7780.



CHNA neighborhood graphic by: Peter Bramley (1945-2005)



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CHNA President Amy Kelso

Get Involved with CHNA – Your Neighborhood Needs You!

It's been an exciting year for Crescent Heights Neighborhood Association (CHNA)! Looking through this newsletter is a wonderful reminder of how strong and engaged our community is. Our membership has grown to 165 members, but with approximately 650 residences, there's still plenty of room to expand—not just in membership, but in involvement. We'd love for you to be part of making Crescent Heights even better!

Here are some ways to get involved:

Join the Events Committee – Help plan neighborhood events and bring your great ideas! Meetings are held monthly at the home of Amy Youngs, Membership Director, on the last Monday of the month at 6:30 PM. Contact amyyoungs1981@yahoo.com to learn more.

Be Our Next Newsletter Editor – Sadly, this is Sara Howe's final printed newsletter as Editor. The next newsletter will begin production in mid-April, and we're looking for someone to take the lead. This is a great way to contribute four times a year during our quarterly newsletter cycles.

Write for the Newsletter – We always welcome new contributors! Share your thoughts on neighborhood happenings, local interests, and Tampa Bay events.

Give Back & Get Featured – Volunteer with a local nonprofit and let us know—we'd love to highlight your efforts in our newsletter!

Support Local Businesses – Crescent Heights businesses can join CHNA, advertise with us, and sponsor events through in-kind or monetary donations. Let your favorite local businesses know!

Start or Renew Your Membership – Your dues directly fund events and neighborhood initiatives. With fewer business sponsorships expected in 2025, your support is more critical than ever. Manage your membership at crescentheightsneighborhood.com or email Ziba Mohammadi, Membership Director, at membership.chna.ziba@gmail.com.

Attend Porch Parties & Meetings – Meet your neighbors, share ideas, and stay connected!

Additionally, this is my last year as CHNA President, and we are looking for someone passionate to step up and lead our neighborhood forward. If you've ever considered giving back to Crescent Heights, now is the perfect time!

If you're interested in getting involved, please reach out to me at crescentheights.president@gmail.com. Let's keep building a stronger, more connected Crescent Heights together!

A Letter from the Editor • Sara Howe

Hi neighbors!

It's been an absolute joy being the volunteer editor of the CHNA newsletter for the past year. Thank you so much for trusting me to share your stories, keep you informed and highlight the people and businesses that make our neighborhood so special.

The time has come for me to pass the baton. I'm thrilled to announce that CHNA is looking for its next editor!

This volunteer role is perfect for someone passionate about community engagement and storytelling. The editor is responsible for gathering neighborhood stories, local news, writing and editing articles, coordinating with contributors and collaborating on the design of the newsletter layout. This person will also work closely with members of the CHNA board to collect ads, manage distribution and ensure timely publication.

This is a fantastic opportunity for someone who is interested in getting more involved with the community and shaping the voice of Crescent Heights. If you have strong writing skills and a love for where we live, please reach out to CHNA President Amy Kelso at crescentheights.president@gmail.com.

Thanks for reading!

Crescent Heights was proudly recognized at the Mayor's Neighborhood Awards in January at Sunken Gardens. This event is a true celebration of community excellence and civic pride, bringing together neighborhoods from across the city to recognize the dedication, creativity, and hard work that make St. Petersburg such a vibrant place to live.

The awards ceremony is always a special occasion, as it provides a unique opportunity to highlight the efforts of neighborhood associations, community leaders, and volunteers who go above and beyond to strengthen our city. From community gardens to cultural initiatives, the event showcased inspiring projects that are making a real difference. Before the awards ceremony, attendees participated in a thought-provoking summit, where community leaders and residents exchanged ideas, discussed challenges, and explored new opportunities for growth and collaboration. It was a chance to network, learn from one another, and gain valuable insights to take back to our own neighborhoods.

This year, Crescent Heights Neighborhood Association (CHNA) was thrilled to be recognized for its outstanding contributions to our community. We proudly took home two awards:

Neighborhood Spirit Award – Celebrating our annual Lights in the Heights holiday party, which brought together over 200 neighbors for a night of festive cheer and holiday magic. The event has become a beloved tradition, showcasing the strong sense of togetherness and joy that defines Crescent Heights.

Neighborhood Communications Award – Honoring our active presence on Facebook and through our online newsletters, which keep our community informed and connected. This past hurricane season, these communication channels became invaluable as CHNA and residents worked together to share critical updates, provide resources, and help neighbors in need—demonstrating the power of community in times of crisis.

We are incredibly proud of these achievements and grateful to everyone who contributes to making Crescent Heights such a wonderful place to live. These awards are not just a recognition of CHNA's efforts, but a testament to the dedication of our neighbors—whether you participate in events, volunteer your time, or simply share a friendly wave on your evening walk, you are part of what makes this neighborhood so special.

A huge congratulations to all the neighborhoods that were honored at the Mayor's Neighborhood Awards. The evening was a reminder of how much we can accomplish when we come together with passion, creativity, and a shared commitment to our communities.

As we look ahead to another year, we are excited to keep building on this momentum, strengthening our connections, and continuing to make Crescent Heights a place we are all proud to call home.

Here's to another year of community, collaboration, and celebration!

Neighborhood Spirit Crescent Heights



Crescent Heights celebrated the Holidays with their annual festive Lights in the Heights party with over 200 people in attendance! That's the spirit!



BOOK NOOK



The CHNA Book Club has two Book Groups, each with its own distinct membership. Participation is open to any resident of Crescent Heights. If you are interested in joining one of the book groups, please contact the email address listed below. In the event that the membership is full, you will be placed on the waiting list.

Group 1 meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month from 7:00-9:00 pm
Leader: Joanne Beckman - Contact: ejbeckman88@gmail.com

Book Group 2 meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 6:30 to 8:30 pm
Co-leaders: Melinda Borthick & Darlene Asselin
Contact: chreads@gmail.com

The Book of Lost Friends by Lisa Wingate March 2025

Bestselling author Lisa Wingate brings to life startling stories from actual “Lost Friends” advertisements that appeared in Southern newspapers after the Civil War, as newly freed slaves desperately searched for loved ones who had been sold away.

Tell It Like It Is: My Story by Aaron Neville April 2025

This is Neville’s personal story of overcoming poverty, racism, addiction, and loss through faith, family, and music. He had four platinum albums, three #1 songs, numerous film and television appearances and was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2014. Few people know the challenging and circuitous road that took him to fame.

Your Driver is Waiting by Priya Guns May 2025

Damani is tired. Her father just died on the job at a fast-food joint, and now she lives paycheck to paycheck in a basement, caring for her mom and driving for an app that is constantly cutting her take. The city is roiling in protests--everybody’s in solidarity with somebody--but while she keeps hearing that they’re fighting for change on behalf of people like her, she literally can’t afford to pay attention. Then she gives a ride to Jolene. Jolene seems like she could be the perfect girlfriend--attentive, attractive, an ally--and their chemistry is off the charts. But just as their romance intensifies and Damani finally lets her guard down, Jolene does something unforgivable, setting off an explosive chain of events.

Review of Ann Patchett’s *Tom Lake* By Darlene Asselin is featured on our website at; crescentheightsneighborhood.com

Book Nook

The Braid by Laetitia Colombani March 2025

This book is a powerful, interwoven story of three women from different corners of the world, each facing their own struggles but finding strength through resilience and hope. In India, Smita, a lower-caste woman, dreams of a better life for her daughter and embarks on a dangerous journey to escape oppression. In Italy, Giulia, a young woman working in her family’s wig-making business, struggles to keep the company afloat while grappling with her own sense of purpose. In Canada, Sarah, a successful lawyer, faces the crushing diagnosis of cancer and is forced to confront the fragility of her seemingly perfect life. Through their intertwined fates, *The Braid* explores themes of identity, sacrifice, and the universal search for freedom.

Everyone Who Is Gone Here: The United States, Central America, and the Making of the Crisis by Jonathan Blitzer April 2025

This book explores the historical, political, and social factors behind the ongoing migration crisis from Central America to the U.S., and examines how decades of intervention and exploitation have fueled instability, violence, and poverty, driving millions to flee. This read offers a sobering look at the U.S.’s role in creating the conditions behind the escalating humanitarian crisis at its southern border.

The Magnificent Lives of Marjorie Post by Allison Pataki May 2025

This is a captivating historical novel about the life of Marjorie Merriweather Post, a socialite, philanthropist, and one of the wealthiest women of the 20th century. Born into a family that built an empire around the Post cereal company, Marjorie rises to prominence, navigating personal and professional challenges while becoming a prominent figure in American high society. The novel delves into her marriages, her role as a trailblazer in business, and her impact on American culture and politics.

Neighborhood News

Parking Reminder from December's Coffee with a Cop

At our recent Coffee with a Cop event on December 18 at La Segunda, neighbors had the opportunity to chat with representatives from the City of St. Petersburg about local safety and transportation concerns. One important takeaway? Parking near intersections.

David Hegarty, Neighborhood Transportation Coordinator, clarified that the City of St. Petersburg does not typically install “No Parking to Corner” signs on neighborhood streets. However, this doesn't mean parking is allowed—according to the Florida Driver's Handbook, it is illegal to park within 20 feet of an intersection or 30 feet of a stop sign or traffic signal, regardless of whether or not a sign is posted. It's every driver's responsibility to know and follow this rule to keep sightlines clear and intersections safe.

Enforcement of these parking laws falls under the St. Petersburg Police Department, so please be mindful when parking in the neighborhood to avoid fines and, more importantly, to help ensure safer streets for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians alike.

Thank you to all who attended, and a special thanks to City representatives for sharing valuable information with our community, as well as Community Service Officer Luis Martinez for all he does to keep Crescent Heights safe!

St. Petersburg's Urban Forestry Initiative - cont'd from cover

A Focus on Aftercare

St. Petersburg's program focuses on aftercare, ensuring trees thrive beyond planting. The Urban Forestry Group checks in with homeowners, staking trees carefully and removing stakes after one year to allow root stability. Proper watering is essential, and the group recommends a slow trickle method to avoid waterlogging while ensuring deep soil penetration.

Community Involvement and Education

The initiative also empowers residents by educating them on tree care. This includes teaching pruning techniques to spot and remove weak branches. Community advocates help spread this knowledge, creating a self-sustaining network to maintain local trees. This fosters responsibility and pride in maintaining green spaces.

Looking Ahead

With the three new trees planted in Crescent Heights, St. Petersburg's commitment to environmental stewardship continues. The Urban Forestry Group will monitor, prune, and protect these trees, ensuring they grow strong. This long-term commitment will expand the city's green canopy, improving air quality, reducing heat, and providing habitat for wildlife. Through continued care and community involvement, St. Petersburg is on its way to becoming an even greener, more sustainable city.

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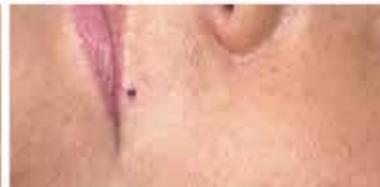
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A Quiet Kind of Magic • Thomas Peterek

If you've ever woken up to a Florida sunrise in Crescent Heights, you know the feeling: golden light filtering through the oak trees, the distant hum of blue jays and cardinals singing overhead, and the gentle buzz of neighbors heading out for a morning jog. It's a little slice of paradise tucked into the heart of St. Petersburg—a neighborhood that marries old-school charm with modern convenience in the friendliest way possible. The place I've been proud to call home for over a decade.

Crescent Heights has roots dating back to the 1920s and 1930s, peppered with beautifully preserved bungalows, Mediterranean Revival homes, and even a few mid-century gems. There's something comforting about strolling down these brick laid streets and spotting century-old architectural details—like original hardwood floors, arched front doors, or the perfect wrap-around porch for sipping a cold one on a hot summer day.

One of my favorite parts of living in Crescent Heights is having everything you need practically within arm's reach. Stroll up 4th Street or down MLK, and in just a few minutes you'll find grocery stores, yoga studios, welcoming coffee shops, and more tasty eats than you can sample in a month. No need for frantic driving, no need for major planning, just a quick walk or bike ride to pick up that last-minute ingredient or grab a lazy brunch on the weekend.

Then of course, there's our beloved neighbor, Crescent Lake, our old faithful. A go-to spot for me time or for hanging out with friends and family. If you're lucky, you might catch a glimpse of turtles sunning themselves, otters playing in the shallows, or herons and egrets searching for a meal. By the way, you're walking on historic ground here—back in the 1920s and 1930s, the New York Yankees used this very park for spring training. Imagine Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig perfecting their swings where we now watch our dogs chase tennis balls.

So whether you're new to Crescent Heights or you've been here for decades, take a moment to appreciate what we've got. We live in a place where the past feels very much present, where convenience meets community, and where the beauty of nature intertwines through our daily lives. Every time I step outside my door, I'm reminded just how lucky we are to call Crescent Heights home. And if you ever need a reminder, just take a stroll around the block—you'll see the neighbors, the live oaks, the old bungalows, and that sparkling lake that's always here when you need it most. Once you experience the Crescent Height's charm, the search for the perfect neighborhood home has ended.

Nature Watch South

Our Backyard Food Chain • by Bill Richkus

The ecological term “food chain” is self-explanatory. Links in a chain are connected to one another, and similarly, most members of an ecological community are linked to each other in some way. Of course, including the word “food” clarifies that we are not referring to the kinds of linkages where one creature helps another in some way. No, here we are talking solely about critters eating each other. While the links of a real chain are all the same, with no top link or bottom link, a food chain has a definite structure. At the bottom is some kind of plant material, since plants are the only members of an ecological community that can convert the energy of sunlight into compounds that support animal life. But the steps up from that base can be many and varied. Some food chains are simple and obvious, such as on the African plains, where various species like zebras and wildebeest feed on grass and are, in turn, fed on by lions and leopards. Most other food chains are less obvious and much more complicated, involving multiple species interacting at many different levels.

I find enjoyment each day when I step out onto our patio and immediately see many anoles of different sizes leaping around, or stoically staring at me with their beady little eyes. Depending on the time of year, many of the anoles were clearly juveniles, about an inch in length, with the sizes of others ranging up to that of full

adults, perhaps five to six inches. If I stood still for a while, or merely observed the little lizards through the dining room window, I would see that many of their movements consisted of foraging activity: a pause in movement, twisting of the head while scanning for prey, a quick dash forward,



Brown Anoles

and a snapping of the jaws as some insect was captured and consumed. This got me thinking about what forage is available to support the large number of anoles that I see just about everywhere, and, in turn, what critters are above the anoles in the food chain and thus benefit from their abundance.

You may recall that most of the little lizards we see are brown anoles, non-native invaders originally from Cuba that have mostly displaced our native green anoles. Both species have similar food habits, although their hunting techniques are somewhat different. Our native green anoles are ambush predators, staying still until a prey comes near them, and then lunging to seize them. The brown anoles, in contrast, are stalkers, moving slowly towards prey before dashing forward to snap it up. Both species feed mostly on insects of a size appropriate to their own size, but they will also eat some vegetation and even small lizards, including their own and each other’s offspring. Some of their favorite prey includes ants, beetles, moths, flies, and mites, but spiders appear to be a favorite food item. In some areas, ants can make up to 40 percent of the total anole diet intake, since they are so abundant and can be found in large numbers in one place. One could only wish that mosquitoes would be more vulnerable to our little lizard friends.

So while we know what the food base is for the large number of anoles that seem to be everywhere, what is less well known are species that occupy the higher links in this backyard food chain. The predators of anoles are not well defined and clearly would differ by the type of habitat in which the anoles reside. One day last year I looked out onto the patio and saw a beautiful brown thrasher, a bird with chestnut brown coloring and a long tail. It was bobbing its head up and down, and, looking closely, I saw that it had an anole in its beak. It was smashing it against the patio stones to make it flexible and easier to swallow.



Brown Thrasher

Another time I saw a blue jay doing the same thing and then flying away with the crushed anole in its beak, probably to feed a young bird in its nest.

I frequently see a beautiful, iridescent black racer snake in our backyard, and this snake is a known predator of anoles.

And since turn-around is fair play, spiders can sometimes capture and eat small anoles. This is a good example of how complex food webs can be, with the relative position within the chain varying depending on circumstances. One interesting fact I recently became aware of was that the anole, like another lizard, the skink, can break its tail off when the tail is seized by a predator. It can then regrow it, albeit not to its original length. I have, in fact, seen a few nearly tail-less anoles in the backyard, presumably lucky survivors of a predator attack.

Think about creatures further up the food chain, such as a hawk that could capture and eat a blue jay or a black racer snake. It illustrates that everything we see in nature is likely connected in some way or another. Nature is both complex and a source of wonder.



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Mention this Ad for a Special Discount!

You may have already noticed this new addition to Crescent Lake Park abutting the dog park. What's your best guess of what this mysterious contraption is? Maybe something to do with satellites, alien encounters, or mosquito reduction?

Close, but this clever device is actually designed to attract Purple Martins, a member of the Swallow family, which are relatively small and highly agile birds that feast on insects often near lakes. Sponsored by St. Pete Audubon and approved by City Parks & Recreation, it was installed by St. Pete's resident Martin expert Mark Frohman, along with Crescent Heights residents John Ficken, Laura Lorenzen, and our lake guru, Jim Bays.

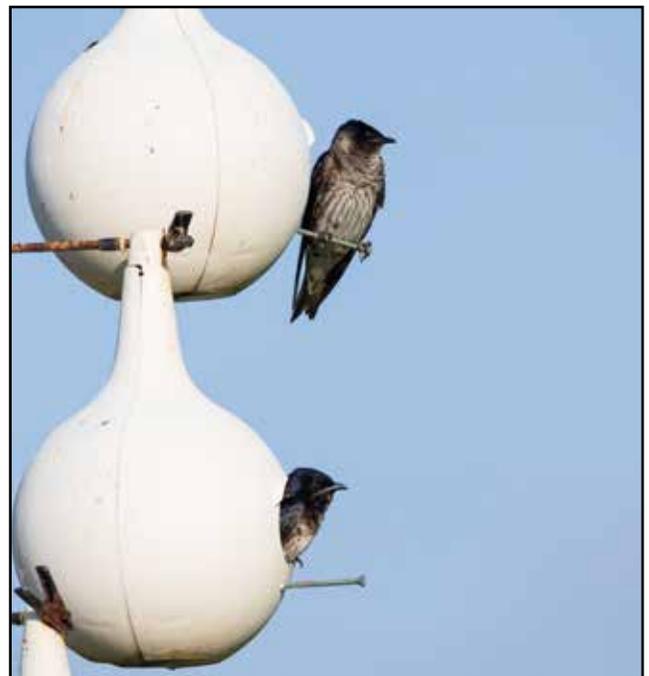
The timing of assembling the Martin nest boxes is crucial. It's this time of year that Martins begin to scout out nesting spots, having returned from their impressively-distant (> 1,000 miles) wintering spots in South America only to find our humble lake.

Fairly unique in the bird world, Martins nest almost exclusively and raise their chicks in human-made gourds or homes just like the one we've installed. Martins favor open spaces near fields or lakes where they can easily gorge on their favorite food source, flying insects. Not only do Martins capture their meals in flight, but they drink in flight, skimming the surface of lakes and scooping water with their lower bill.

According to Mark Frohman, we are hoping the houses will be discovered by Martin scouts in the next month, but it could be a year or two before the birds establish summer residence. Once they've discovered how awesome our lake is, it takes another 4 to 6 weeks to begin nest-building using twigs, straw, leaves and mud. About two weeks after that, the eggs will begin to hatch, and the parents start sharing responsibility for feeding the chicks. Another two weeks later, guess what – the fledgling Martins are mature enough to set out on their own, though they may return to their nests at night to safely sleep.

We are optimistic that Martins will breed in our houses, because these birds have already been spotted in previous springs feeding on insects at our lake. (If you're curious, this EBird link allows you to see all of the birds reported at Crescent Lake <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L676978>).

Also boding well for us, there is a well-established Martin colony only a few miles away next to Lake Maggiore. Martins are truly remarkable and beautiful birds and have earned the adoration of many fans (including Native Americans many years ago). Several Martin-fan websites have popped up including this one <https://www.purplemartin.org/timeline/>



We are so excited about our possible new neighbors, SoUL, which stands for Stewards of our Urban Lakes, (<https://www.soulinc.org>) is offering a \$100 gift certificate for the first person who sends a photograph of a Martin in or around our house. Please send your pictures to Info@SoulInc.org.

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What Our Clients Are Saying

"I had the pleasure of working with Leah and her team on the selling and buying side. I met Leah at a showing and was immediately impressed by her knowledge and professionalism. She has an energy that makes you want to work with her. I was very nervous about the selling process as I had never done it before. Leah made me feel comfortable and at ease. She has great connections and was able to sell my home in less than a day. She made the selling process easy and not overwhelming. She provided regular check-ins and updates. Leah then helped me find my next home. Again, she has great relationships in St. Petersburg. She was able to negotiate a great deal. She then provided the most amazing recommendations for various home services. I trust Leah and her team implicitly. Leah wants the best for her clients and that shows. She is not pushy and not looking for a sale. She wants her clients to be happy. I would recommend her to anyone looking to buy or sell in the Tampa Bay Area."
-Ashley R.

"Leah, Amanda, and Merris were all an absolute pleasure to work with. Throughout the whole process they were very professional, responsive, patient, and knowledgeable. Beyond all those great qualities, what stands out the most is how caring they are. We always felt like they had our backs and truly wanted the best for us. Moving can be very overwhelming, but they went above and beyond to make it as seamless as possible! They were great negotiators and maximized our profit. My husband and I cannot recommend Leah and her powerhouse team enough!"
- Michaela K.

"What can we say! Leah exceeded all our expectations and more. We would consider ourselves real estate veterans in terms of houses bought and sold as we've had MANY. Leah was by far the most creative, energetic and professional agent we have ever worked with. Her attention to detail, her approach to showcasing the home and her delivery via social media channels and neighborhood canvassing are clearly difference makers. In addition, her communicative approach to the process of keeping us informed and abreast of every issue during each phase of the process was truly exceptional. We cannot say enough good things about Leah and her team. We strongly recommend her to anyone looking to buy/sell a home in the Tampa Bay area as she will give 100%!"
- Cheryl H.

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New Ice Cream Shop Brings Sweet Community Spirit to Crescent Heights • Rob Asselin

Crescent Heights is about to get a whole lot sweeter! A new ice cream shop is opening in the neighborhood, and it's not just about delicious frozen treats—it's about community, family, and creating lasting memories.

The shop's owners, a local couple passionate about small businesses and St. Pete's vibrant neighborhoods, are bringing a unique ice cream experience to MLK Street. Inspired by childhood favorites and a desire to offer both traditional and plant-based options, they are excited to fill a long-standing gap in the area.

A Dream Rooted in Community

When the couple first moved to the neighborhood, they quickly fell in love with the walkability, small businesses, and family-friendly parks. However, they noticed a missing piece—there wasn't a great local spot for soft-serve ice cream. When a long-time shop nearby closed its doors, they saw the perfect opportunity to bring something special to Crescent Heights.

Their vision? A welcoming ice cream shop where families can gather, kids can enjoy a post-park treat, and the whole community can come together over something as simple and joyful as ice cream.

A Unique Take on Ice Cream

What makes this shop different? First, they're introducing a special kind of ice cream inspired by a New Zealand-style soft serve machine. This unique process blends fresh mix-ins directly into the base, creating fully customized flavors with every order. Whether you love classic vanilla or a fruity swirl of mango and raspberries, each cone is made to order.

Additionally, the shop is committed to inclusivity, offering both dairy-based and plant-based options. The owners have personal experience navigating dairy sensitivities, so it was important to them to provide a range of choices. They were surprised by the overwhelming community interest in non-dairy options—receiving hundreds of messages from excited future customers.

Flavors & Customization

The shop will start with a simple yet versatile selection: traditional vanilla and chocolate, non-dairy versions of both, and a wide variety of mix-ins. Customers can choose from fresh fruits like blueberries, raspberries, and mangoes, or go for classic toppings like Oreo crumbles and pretzels. To top it off, there will be drizzles like caramel and chocolate to complete each creation.

One of the owners, Steve McGarry, has fully embraced the ice cream-making process, spending nights perfecting the machine's operation and experimenting with flavors. Meanwhile, his wife Sarah is excited to bring nostalgic elements from her childhood ice cream experiences into the shop, ensuring that each visit feels special.

A True Local Business

This isn't a franchise or a cookie-cutter chain—it's a completely original, locally designed business built from the ground up. Everything, from branding to store design, is being created with the help of St. Pete-based artists and businesses. The goal is to create something that truly belongs to Crescent Heights.

The couple also sees the shop as an opportunity to teach their kids about business and hard work. While Steve comes from a tech background and Sarah is a Registered Nurse by trade, they both value human connection and the impact of hands-on work. Unlike their previous careers, this venture offers something tangible that their children can see and be part of—helping them understand the value of entrepreneurship in a fun and meaningful way, while also fostering a deep appreciation for the people and community around them.

Opening Timeline & Future Plans

Like many new businesses, the process hasn't been without its challenges. Permitting delays slowed things down, but with construction now in full swing, they are hopeful for an opening in April or May—just in time for the warm weather. Looking ahead, they're excited to grow and adapt based on community feedback. They envision seasonal flavors, collaborations with other local businesses, and even a mobile ice cream cart for parks and events.

A Sweet Future for Crescent Heights

At its core, this ice cream shop is about more than just frozen treats—it's about bringing people together. Whether it's a stop after a long park day, a weekend family tradition, or a quick indulgence on a hot afternoon, the shop aims to be a neighborhood staple.

With their focus on community, inclusivity, and high quality ingredients, the owners are thrilled to introduce Crescent Heights to a new kind of ice cream experience. Follow [@wildflowericecreamshop](#) on social media or visit [wildflowericecreamshop.com](#) to get the latest updates as they get closer to opening day—because soon, there will be a new go-to spot for sweet, customizable treats right in the heart of the neighborhood!



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Can you tell us a little about yourself and how long you've lived in the neighborhood?

I first explored St. Pete in my college days, mostly hopping the bridge to catch concerts at Jannus Live. After a fast-paced stretch working in Brooklyn and Manhattan, I realized, 'If I can make it there, I can make it anywhere.' And anywhere turned out to be St. Pete after one fateful trip. I saw the first brewery cutting its ribbon, met an art scene packed with creative misfits and big dreamers, and felt the heartbeat of a city truly in love with itself. I moved back here in 2013, knowing I'd found my place to call home, start a business, meet my wife, and dream bigger than ever before.

What brought you to this neighborhood, and what do you love most about living here?

Crescent Heights wasn't the hot spot back then. West of 4th Street, homes were fairly affordable—which is why I could snag one. I actually bought my house after seeing the listing online, without visiting it in person, because something about it just felt right. Fast forward nearly a decade, and that intuition still serves me. Crescent Heights blossomed, but what I love most is that it still feels like a neighborhood with a soul. The people here are invested in each other, in making things better. That's rare.

If you could describe the neighborhood in three words, what would they be?

Creative, welcoming, evolving.

What's your go-to way to relax after a busy day?

Honestly, it's connecting with nature. Whether that's catching up with an old tree friend (yes, we talk to the trees), finding a quiet moment in the garden, watching the cacti bloom, or observing the moon through the oak trees—taking it slow is my recharge button.

What's a hobby or activity you enjoy that people might not know about?

My wife and I are big on slow strolls. We'll grab a cocktail or coffee and spend hours exploring the streets—brick by brick, alley by alley. Crescent Heights is packed with creativity, from native gardens to little free libraries. It's one of our favorite ways to unwind.

Do you have any memorable moments or funny stories from your time in the neighborhood?

As a former Crescent Heights Neighborhood Association President, I had the chance to spearhead some really cool projects. We painted massive murals on favorite walls and planted ocean-friendly gardens on our street corners. That kind of energy—people coming together to make something beautiful—is exactly why I love St. Pete. It's a place where wild ideas are met with excitement and support.

What's a piece of advice you'd share with someone new to the neighborhood?

Slow it down. Explore every street, every alley. You'll find surprises—gardens, artwork, quirky details you'd never expect. And don't forget to meet your neighbors, human and otherwise. This place has a way of surprising you if you give it time to unfold.

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Thomas and his wife, Orshi, on their wedding day, Ninh Binh, Vietnam



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• Neighborhood Events •

CHNA General Membership Meeting

Monday, March 3; 6:30 p.m.

Blush Tea & Coffee

2382 Dr M.L.K. Jr St N

Speaker: St. Pete Police Chief Anthony Holloway

Porch Party, hosted by Karen Chassin & Charles Dew

Friday, March 7; 5-7 p.m.

843 26th Ave N

Porch Party, hosted by Jane & Gary Gibbons

Saturday, April 12; 6 p.m.

800 29th Ave N

Cinco de Mayo Block Party

Saturday, May 3; 2-5 p.m.

8th St between 25th Ave N and 26th Ave N

Monthly Community Night at Outcast Brewing -

1776 11th Ave N - every 3rd Tuesday of the month beginning March 18th at 6 PM. Connect with your neighbors and receive 10% off!

• What's Up Around Town •

St. Pete CommUNITY Festival, hosted by the Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA)

Saturday, March 8; 2-9 p.m.

Azalea Park. All ages are welcome to enjoy a diverse array of activities, entertainment, and food. From live music and performances to a bustling Vendor Village and Kid's Corner, there's something for everyone.

50th Annual Mainsail Art Festival

Vinoy Waterfront Park - April 5-6

Ranked as one of the Top 14 Fine Art & Design Shows in the U.S. by Sunshine Artist Magazine, America's premier art show and festival guide, the Mainsail Art Festival features 250+ Juried Fine Art & Craft Exhibitors.

Tampa Bay Blues Festival

Vinoy Waterfront Park - April 11-13

Artists include Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, Tab Benoit, JJ Grey & Mofro, Walter Trout, Taj Farrant, Ana Popovic, Curtis Salgado, Ruthie Foster, North Mississippi Allstars, Joanne Shaw Taylor, Selwyn Birchwood, and more.

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