MAY

# CASA COASTER

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*Neighborhood*

★ The Kravis Center in West Palm Beach accepts a mere 10% of volunteer applicants. **A7**

## FEATURED

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A marathoner and a musician and settle into the south tower. Meet Erin, Marcie and Jeff . **A8**

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SOUTH FLORIDA'S #1 POOLSIDE AMUSEMENT

## Starch madness



JOHN BATTISTA

**'TIS THE SEASONING: Over 30 residents contributed to a potluck on April 7.**

# Food festival to feature VIP tent

Every June for four decades, the Aspen Food & Wine Classic is set against the spectacular backdrop of the Rocky Mountains and features three days of celebrity chefs, cooking demonstrations and tastings. This year, tickets start at $2,950, plus the airfare to Colorado and hotel rooms that start at $2,082 for the weekend.

For local foodies hoping for something more accessible, Boynton Beach is answering the call with food from Sushi Bang Bang against the backdrop of city hall.

The first-annual Taste of Boynton Beach takes place May 16. Officials are calling it "the most anticipated culinary event of the year," a very aspirational tagline for its first year.

*Please turn to page A6*

# Association settles lawsuits with commercial owner

In 2015, Andrew Podray of American Housing Enterprises acquired 11 empty storefronts on the ground floor of Casa Costa. Two years later, he filed suit against the condominium association of which he owns over 4%, alleging that he was being overcharged and denied the rights to control parking spaces in the garage that he purchased.

In 2020, he added a second lawsuit, claiming that the association altered its rules to prevent him from accessing his roof to make equipment repairs. Both lawsuits named former board members personally and claimed millions of dollars in property devaluation.

The conflict was complicated by ambiguities and conflicts within association governing documents that were drafted over a decade ago and still reference "Promenade," the name given to the property by a developer that lost it in a foreclosure. A deal with the city that made over a hundred parking spaces public expired in 2021, when Mr. Podray sought to divide them up across the commercial tenants to which he'd leased.

Valet service, originally intended solely for customers of the storefronts in the 2010 declaration, had been repurposed for residential use. Various boards and property managers were inconsistent in segregating expenses – including reserve spending – among commercial and residential owners.

With both trials headed to juries in the last months, Mr. Podray was seeking damages over $9 million. Rather than face uncertainty, the parties agreed to settle their differences over parking rights and money.

*Please turn to page A5*

OPINION

# Solve the storage crunch

**BY MARNA ATKIN**

What's the one thing that everybody in Casa Costa can agree on?

Lack of closet space! There is simply not enough space. Since we can't make our closets any bigger, the best we can do is look for additional storage. Some of us have rented storage cages, but even that is proving not to be enough. No matter how much we say we're not going to collect things, we end up with beach chairs, suitcases, strollers, playpens, car seats, winter clothes, bottles of water, toilet paper, paper towels, anything and everything.



We all complain that we just don't have enough room for everything. The storage cages scattered throughout the building are expensive to rent, and there aren't enough for everyone at any price.

I've discussed this problem with friends who live in other high-rise buildings with similar storage space storage challenges, and there's hope!

First off, many high-rises allow residents to leave their grocery carts in their parking spaces. In our particular case, there is room between the curb and the fence or the wall, depending on where you park. I've asked around if folks here would feel comfortable doing that or are they worried about theft. Some say that the building is safe and secure while others said they don't trust it.

Another idea is pre-approved, uniform storage bins, which come in several sizes, are lockable and could fit easily into your parking space. I found some for around $150. We should keep the look standardized, just as we do with our keyless door locks, so the garage won't look messy or cluttered. Our rules currently prohibit anything other than motor vehicles in parking spaces, but we should consider an exception for optional bins.

With all the positive changes coming to Casa Costa – new carpets, new paint, new façade – let's not limit ourselves to dated rules that hinder further quality of life improvements. CC

**LETTER TO THE PUBLISHER**

## *Resort suite hosts should be part of the solution*

I've been following the conversation in these pages on how Casa Costa welcomes resort guests, starting with a call for major changes ("Shut the transient cabinet," Jan. 2024). As a long-time owner and host of several resort suites -- as well as a resident myself -- I've been thinking about this issue for years.

I appreciate the outpouring of ideas from owners who don't own short-term rentals, but let's not create a solution in search of a problem. I agree that the current check-in process for guests is not a smooth one. This is due to the property's design and the rules we've put in place. Now that we can install a keyless lock on the front door, there is one less thing to juggle.

As hosts, my husband and I over-communicate with upcoming guests about the rules of the road here, but we tend to book for three-month minimums, so our guests tend to pay attention. Maybe an orientation video, map and welcome info (with commonly asked questions) would help guests who are here on a nightly/weekly basis?

My suggestion is for the resort suite owners to come together and share ideas along with the board on how to make the check-in process more seamless. Resort guests can play an important role in creating a vibrant community, whether they stay here for a night or for months. Improving their experience is a win for everyone. Many of my previous guests have purchased a condo in Casa Costa because of quality experience here.

**MICHELLE NATELLA**

*The author owns seven units at Casa Costa and has hosted short-term rentals here since 2013.*

CASACOASTERNEWS@GMAIL.COM

# CASA COSTA MADNESS




**FINAL FOUR: Greg Reed picked the UConn Huskies, Bryan Benilous the Alabama Crimson Tide and Josefina Corripio the Purdue Boilermakers. Susan Gladstone betrayed her ACC heritage by picking the North Carolina State Wolfpack, who ended up winning our hearts with their plus-sized center and post-season winning streak.**

**March Madness ended with the Huskies beating the Boilermakers in Arizona, but the team still retreated to Connecticut, where the all-time low temperature is -32 degrees, so who are the real winners? Thanks for playing, Casa Coasters!**

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# Hey! New app grabs attention of drivers and restaurants



**MISTER B'S NEIGHBORHOOD**

While enjoying dinner at NYPD Pizza recently, my attention was drawn to a new design on the pizza boxes: a bold statement of "HEY! JAG: The Food Delivery App Powered by its Community." Intrigued, I asked Mohamed Kaada, the restaurant's owner.

His animated description of HEY! JAG revealed it to be more than just a food delivery app; it seemed to be a culmination of years of dedication and innovation. Captivated by his enthusiasm, I requested a follow-up conversation to delve deeper into this interesting venture.

As with many innovations, HEY! JAG emerged in response to the challenges of the pandemic. Nervous patrons had stopped coming into Mohamed's restaurant in Lake Worth Beach and the cooks were standing around with fewer orders to prepare. A savior was the rise of delivery apps, which kept the lights on, but demand was still down 60%.

Mohamed launched Simple Virtual Kitchen as a way for restaurants to moonlight as chicken wing joints. Storefronts faced a slowdown, but still had the kitchen equipment and professionals to operate at scale. SVK provided the recipes, packaging, branding and customers by promoting the "ghost kitchens" on Uber Eats, GrubHub and DoorDash. His portfolio of virtual brands grew to include Chinese food, hoagies and pizza. Over a hundred restaurants in Florida eventually signed on, sharing a portion of the revenue in exchange for proven recipes and a parade of delivery orders.

The problem with the math is the delivery apps, which can eat up to 50% of profits while also taking a confusing cut of the income to drivers. But Mohamed didn't give up.

Motivated by a commitment to fairness, he recognized the need for change. HEY! JAG was conceived with a clear mission: to bolster the earnings of both restaurants and delivery drivers without inflating the cost of food for customers. If this were the extent of HEY! JAG's pitch, it would blend into the sea of other delivery services. However, as I discovered, HEY! JAG distinguishes itself significantly.

First, let's get this out of the way. What's up with the name? It turns out there's a deeply personal story behind it.

Growing up in Algeria amidst the turmoil of a civil war, Mohamed and his family endured tremendous hardships. While most of his family sought refuge in Paris, Mohamed and his grandmother remained in Algeria, navigating the challenges of wartime existence together. His grandmother affectionately called him "jag," a term that symbolizes resilience and triumph in the local dialect.

Mohamed reflected: "To me, Jag embodies the spirit of overcoming obstacles and emerging stronger than before. Whenever I hear that name, I can't help but think of my grandmother."

He added "HEY!" to his childhood nickname to emphasize a growing list of on-demand services in the app he built.

Firstly, there's the food ordering aspect. Local restaurants are seamlessly integrated into the app under the moniker JAG FOOD, allowing users to place orders effortlessly.

Once an order is placed, a designated delivery person collects the food and transports it to the customer's location. While this process is no different from the rest, what sets HEY! JAG apart is its approach to driver compensation.

Mohamed emphasized, "It's all about community – we bridge the gap between the driver, the restaurant and the consumer to ensure everyone is content." HEY! JAG guarantees a minimum payment of $8 per delivery to the driver. If the delivery fee and tips fall short of this threshold, the app

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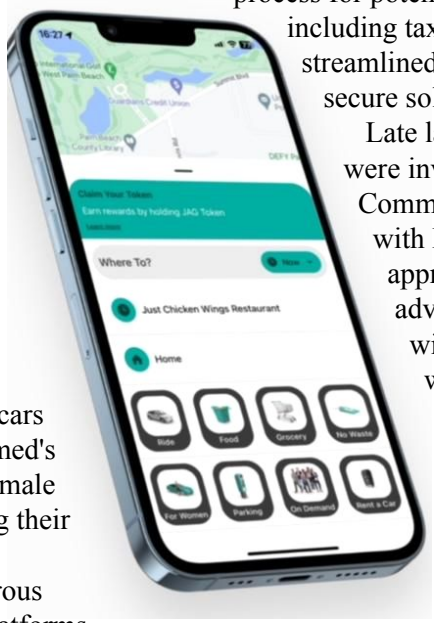

J.T. HARRINGTON

# App tackles food waste too

*Continued from page A4*

makes up the difference. This innovation incentivizes drivers to prioritize HEY! JAG orders, fostering a mutually beneficial ecosystem.

JAG RIDE represents another dimension of the app's ecosystem. Within this segment of the app, customers can seamlessly request rides, much like other ride-sharing services. However, again, a key distinction lies in the driver's earnings: JAG RIDE drivers receive a remarkable 85% of the fare, a substantial increase from the 30-40% he says other platforms offer. Once again, this enhanced earning potential serves as a strong incentive for drivers to choose JAG RIDE. The service is slated for launch in Minnesota to start, filling the void left by Uber and Lyft due to minimum wage laws.




Then there's JAG QUEEN – a form of the rideshare service exclusively for women, with cars driven by female drivers. Conceived by Mohamed's wife, Karima, JAG QUEEN aims to provide female riders with a sense of safety and comfort during their journeys.

The couple notes that research reveals numerous complaints of harassment on other rideshare platforms, making JAG QUEEN a valuable addition to the HEY! JAG family.

JAG HEROES represents yet another innovative facet of the app, fostering unique connections between restaurants and the community. Recognizing the common dilemma of leftover food often going to waste, JAG HEROES offers a solution. Delivery drivers and community members can subscribe to receive alerts about surplus food available from participating restaurants. Restaurant owners can then post details about their surplus food on the app, allowing users to visit the restaurant and collect the leftovers. This initiative demonstrates HEY! JAG's commitment to bridging community needs with those of local restaurant owners.

Additionally, still in the development phase but set to launch soon, is another exciting feature called JAG JOD (Jobs on Demand). This segment enables gig workers to showcase their skills on the app, while businesses seeking temporary employees can easily connect with them. The app facilitates the vetting process for potential employees, who upload their credentials, including tax forms, onto the platform. All payments are streamlined through the app, offering a convenient and secure solution for both employers and gig workers.

Late last month, Mohamed, Karima and the team were invited by the French-American Chamber of Commerce to showcase their groundbreaking work with HEY! JAG in Miami. Their innovative approach, prioritizing both technological advancement and sustainability, has garnered widespread attention. Engaging in conversation with Mohamed and Karima about their venture left me marveling at how they balance their commitments to the pizza restaurant and bakery. It's evident that they are industrious entrepreneurs dedicated to ensuring the success and fulfillment of everyone associated with their endeavors. CC

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# Seven-years in, lawsuits settle at last

*Continued from page A1*

Among other items, the agreement permits Mr. Podray to assign parking spaces to each business, an ability that he claims will support capacity for four restaurants and also his ability to sell off the commercial units to individual owners. The settlement also credits the commercial unit owner's account to compensate for shared expenses that don't apply to his ground-floor spaces.

"This was a mess," said Jake Harrington, board president. "I am glad to have closure on this long-simmering threat to our community. Now I hope we can get more enduring businesses moved in to the storefronts." The board approved broad settlement terms at a closed meeting on Jan. 29. Following continued negotiations with Mr. Podray and his attorney, the board discussed a draft of the settlement on April 10 and a version was eventually signed by all parties on May 1. The association and five other defendants were represented by Harris Katz, a managing partner at Goede, DeBoest & Cross, PLLC. CC

BOYNTON BEAT

# Event is free for foodies and adult-only vendors

*Continued from page A1*

City officials expect 2,000 guests to attend the free event and to enjoy live music and shopping for handmade jewelry and unique home decor. Food vendors will offer dishes for $5 and the city is asking participating chefs to create a special discounted prix fixe menu at their restaurants in the runup to the event, akin to "restaurant week" specials in New York City and elsewhere.

The menus are expected to include specialty drinks that guests rate. The winning concoction will be declared the signature cocktail of the festival.

Thirteen local restaurants are signed on to serve food and drinks in a VIP tent. Reader favorites like Café Frankie's, Driftwood and Josie's Ristorante are included. Tickets for the VIP tent cost $40 in advance but sold out a week ago. VIPs will enjoy better seating, hobnobbing with mixologists and goodie bags "filled with deluxe treats and surprises."

Typical of events organized by the city, Taste of Boynton Beach will include a photo booth, live bands and rows of vendors. Organizers are inviting sellers of "wood carvings, lotions and miscellaneous trinkets," among other items. While Boynton isn't charging eligible vendors for the space, sellers of children's toys are not invited. The event is not advertised as adults-only per se – except the VIP tent – but the focus on elevated food and alcohol shows that organizers are planning for an older crowd.

The city is also seeking sponsorships. For $5,000 – less than the cost to attend the Aspen Food & Wine Festival – your logo can be on the stage as the presenting sponsor for Boynton's version.

## CITY HAS MORE PLANNED

Though new downtown development is mired in lawsuits and zoning arguments, Boynton brings bands to its new amphitheater near city hall the first Friday every month at 5 p.m.

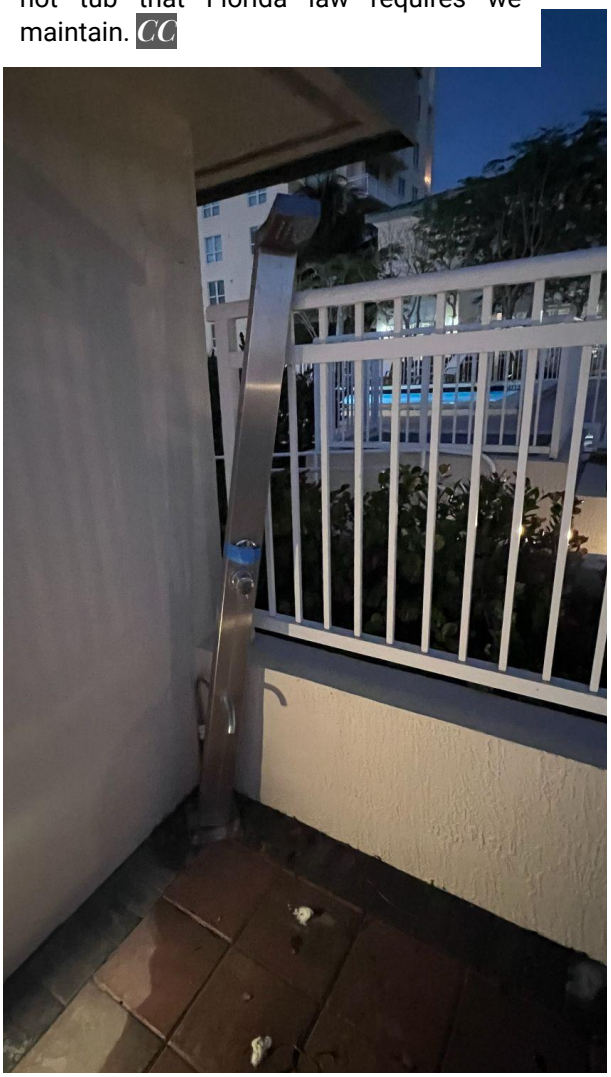
On May 3, Big City Dogs Band brings classic rock and blue tributes. On June 7, the Valerie Tyson Band (slogan: "We Bring the Happy") brings a show of pop hits, classic rock and reggae. First Fridays @ 5 are free to the public and have food trucks.

The CRA is bringing back Rock the Marina on June 1. The free, family-friendly live music event in the afternoon promotes the entire marina ecosystem: charters like fishing, scuba and cruises, boat and Jet Ski rentals, as well as the three surrounding restaurants: Two Georges, Marina Café and Banana Boat. Organizers say participating businesses will offer promotions all June long. The event also highlights marine conservation efforts. *CC*

# DUNCES OF THE MONTH



**SPRING BREAKERS**: Someone high-fived the women's steam room light fixture to its demise in April, shortly after someone managed to bend the rinse shower by the hot tub that Florida law requires we maintain. *CC*



DANILO CAJINA

# Behind the curtain at Kravis Center

**AS TOLD BY GARY GREEN**

I loved going to shows with my wife when we lived in New York. After she passed away and I returned to Casa Costa, I had to figure out how to occupy myself as a single man after 32 years of marriage.

I am regularly chasing a ball during the day (tennis, pickleball, golf, bowling) but the nights were tough. I read in the paper that Delray Beach was holding a volunteer fair with opportunities at animal shelters, food pantries and local arts venues. I spent a year volunteering for jazz shows at the Arts Garage in Pineapple Grove and off-Broadway performances at the Delray Beach Playhouse on Lake Ida. The gigs were showing up a half-hour early and cleaning up after the shows.

After doing these gigs for a year, I read that Kravis Center was looking for volunteers. I jumped at the chance. I filled out an application and drove to the performing arts facility in West Palm Beach – along with about 300 other people. I didn't realize it was a competition, including an interview and a test. The organizers explained that they only accept 10% of applicants. It's tougher to nab a volunteer spot at Kravis than to be accepted at The Juilliard School. Of course, after COVID-19, there is now a bit less competition.

I sized up my competition. I was on the younger side, which I think helped. When it was my turn to be interviewed, I talked up my experience at the Delray Beach Playhouse and the Arts Garage. Once I'd passed the first round, we had two three-hour classes, followed by a written test. I found the test much easier than they made it out to be. There were basic customer service questions that anyone with common sense should know such as a scenario about what to do if a guest is wearing a big hat that's blocking the view of the stage. A lot of it involved the seating chart – I'd memorized the layouts of the various levels and doors, so I aced it.

The primary volunteer positions are greeter, ticket-taker and usher for the main theater that seats just under 2,200. There are around 35 of us each night, as well as a dozen paid supervisors. The Kravis also has two smaller venues and office jobs, but you can't watch the big shows from there.

There's something going on nearly every night at Kravis, from concerts to kid's stuff to comedy. They hold less popular events like poetry readings in the smaller halls. The primary season, when the Broadway plays come through, runs October to April. This season ended with Hamilton nine days ago. Most of the Broadway shows sell out, and tickets are reasonably priced because the organization has generous sponsors, including the city itself.

**It's tougher to nab a volunteer spot at Kravis than to be accepted at The Juilliard School.**

Many in Palm Beach County wanted a major performing arts center since the 1950s, but it took four decades to pull it off. Its name honors Raymond F. Kravis, a geologist and philanthropist from Oklahoma who spent winters in Palm Beach. His son, Henry, became famous in the 1980s for a lavish lifestyle and using a ton of debt to buy up public companies like RJR Nabisco.

Volunteering at Kravis does takes commitment: Volunteers are asked to pick at least one night a week, and we need to show up at least an hour before the doors open – every week during the season. I was very happy to do it for the great shows and talent I got to see for free. When you can't make a show, you need to try to find a colleague to replace you. They have a website set up to help volunteers swap schedules.

Once volunteers arrive, the bosses tell us about the show and when the breaks are, so if guests arrive late, we know when to usher them in so there's less interruption. Friday was never opening night for shows that ran for a week, so by the time my night rolled around, the bosses knew how sensitive the cast is to the various no-no's like taking photos or video, and told us accordingly.

They try to keep us busy before guests arrive, stuffing inserts into the playbills, but we also have free time to catch up on emails or read as we take turns manning the doors before the theater opens. Ticket-takers usually miss the first ten minutes of the performance because they need to wait for late arrivals and hold them from going to their seats so as to not interfere with the opening scene. But then we can sit and enjoy the show. We sit on the steps, in a chair or in an unsold seat so long as it's on the aisle.

The biggest pain was during the pandemic because Kravis required masks and some guests were grumpy about it. Also, in general, people with walkers don't want to give them up. I've really never had a big challenge with a guest, and even if I did, the protocol is to find a paid supervisor to step in. They really don't expect so much from us volunteers, although we are expected to smile, be pleasant and know the layout of the theater.

Aside from giving up one night per week, they made me buy a black tie and name tag from them ($10) and wear black pants and a white shirt. If I am unfortunate enough to be assigned to the greeter position, it comes with a burgundy jacket that probably hasn't been laundered since the place opened.

All in all, it was a wonderful experience to meet other volunteers, the staff, the patrons and to see great entertainment for free. *CC*

*Apply to volunteer at Kravis.org.*



## COASTER WELCOME WAGON





**Erin Delande**, a recent addition to the Casa Costa community, shares her living space in the south tower with her faithful companion Marcie, an eight-year-old beagle.

Originally hailing from Boston, Erin had long called Fort Lauderdale home before settling in Boynton Beach. Her professional journey began as a dental hygienist, later transitioning into dental sales, a career that conveniently places Boynton Beach at the heart of her sales territory, significantly reducing her commute.

Passionate about running, Erin recently participated in the A1A Publix Half Marathon. If you happen to spot Erin and Marcie strolling around the building, extend them a warm welcome to Casa Costa.

Originally hailing from Pennsylvania, **Jeff Goffman** spent several winters in South Florida. He previously owned a marketing agency and is now an independent consultant specializing in digital marketing. Residing in the south tower, he is contemplating making Florida his permanent home. A proud parent of two adult children, Jeff is a seasoned and versatile musician. He had the honor of opening for Cheap Trick at the renowned "Beatles on the Beach" event in Delray, he's showcased his musical talents at Johnnie Brown's in Delray and is eager to entertain the Casa Costa community at an upcoming social gathering. Although his primary instrument is the piano, Jeff's repertoire extends to six different instruments, and he composes his own music. Let's extend a standing ovation to Jeff as he becomes a part of Casa Costa.

*– John Battista*

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