



# THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



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## Plan Board looks at dock definitions

In the wake of controversy over the proposed Fish Island dock, our Planning and Zoning Board (PZB), meeting today, will be taking a closer look at dock types and definitions. The session begins at 2 p.m. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall.

After months of public hearings, denials by both PZB and City Commission, a lawsuit, and mediation, the commission accepted a settlement in July for the dock on the Matanzas waterfront south of the SR 312 bridge. The agreement reduced the dock size, moved it closer to the bridge, and made other adjustments.

Part of the controversy was on how definitions of community dock and marina applied to the Fish Island dock. The board started discussion at its September meeting, then decided to have city staff bring back ideas for its October meeting.



### **Picturing our city**

Our St. Augustine Sister Cities Association has announced its first annual art competition for St. Johns County schools, themed on "What St. Augustine Means to Me."

The competition is part of its mission to educate both our residents and those of our sister cities about the history, culture and economy of the cities. Our sister city and founder's birthplace, Aviles, Spain, is likely to reciprocate with a similar competition.

### **Tourism - what we need to hear?**

If our County Commission approves a Tourist Development Council recommendation, St. Louis consultant PGAV Destination Consulting will have until next March to try to herd a roomful of cats - many diverse interests - into a Master Destination Plan for our county's tourism.

Its \$300,000 contract, to complete a study by September, was stalled in April by concerns with its Phase I report, its "Analysis." Phase II - Product Development - was due in July, and Phase III - Implementation - in September.

PGAV's work was suspended in June, prompting the TDC to recommend an extension to March. At a recent Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting, St. Augustine Mayor Joe Boles said, "Don't tell us what we want to hear but what we need to hear."

A number of initial PGAV findings are not likely to change in that final report:

- The diversity of the destination creates irrelevance (in trying to focus on a single county brand).
- (Ranked) below average are cultural events/festivals and fun things for kids to do.
- The county includes at the core of its visitor experience the oldest city in America ... but it is not widely recognized.
- Paradoxically, too, while St. Augustine is the oldest city in America, we do not believe it is advisable to develop a positioning that is based solely upon history. (It) should only serve as a backdrop for a brand experience ...
- The multitude of museums and historic sites ... tell the same story, but don't always do it particularly well or with consistency.

An exchange years ago between St. Augustine and Aviles resulted in the tile tableau in the west garden of Government House, with a similar tableau in an Aviles park, produced and exchanged by students in each city.

Details of this year's art competition are on our city [website](#).

- The number of information centers offers both a challenge and opportunity to cross-promote areas of the county.

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## Youth agency plans new home

St. Augustine Youth Services (SAYS) has been quietly serving emotionally disturbed young people for 20 years in a home nestled on residential Saragossa Street.

That home will become apartments for young adults in the program as SAYS moves forward with plans for an expanded facility on Lewis Speedway, close to a middle school and high school as well as emergency services.

Ten years of fundraising has brought more than \$1 million, and the permitting process is nearly complete.

SAYS is a nonprofit serving boys six to 18 in residential therapeutic services due to abuse and or neglect. Its staff of 40 includes a board-certified child psychiatrist, licensed clinical psychologist, master's level therapist licensed mental health counselor, trained houseparents and a youth counselor.

In addition to the Saragossa Street location, SAYS has a TRAILS Program in St. Augustine Shores. To learn more and contribute, visit the SAYS [website](#).

## *The goal - excellence for our students*

"The last five years have completely changed my life. If it weren't for the scholarship program, I might have been one more student who drops out of school and just another statistic. My school ended up being a perfect fit for me. It was the first time in my life that I actually believed in myself!"



Words from Denisha Merriweather, an 11th grade scholarship student attending Esprit de Corps Center for Learning in Jacksonville, and inspiration for students here as a non-profit "School of Excellence" takes shape in St. Augustine.

St. Paul AME Pastor Ron Rawls and a team of volunteers are at work developing staff, location, and curriculum, and scholarships for the school, which will begin with kindergarten in January 2010, adding 1st grade in the fall of 2010 and a minimum of one grade a year thereafter.

Denisha was commenting on the [Step Up for Students](#) program that provides scholarships for students in low-income families.

The program was established by our state legislature in 2001 to give corporations a dollar-for-dollar state tax credit for the contributions to the program. In 2009, the legislature extended the tax credit to insurance premium taxes and renamed the program the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship.

Reverend Rawls' team will continue its work October 13 at 5:30 at the ML King Avenue church.

## *A Worthy youth*

St. Augustinian Jordan Usina has been named Grand Worthy Associate Advisor of the Florida Grand Assembly of Rainbow for Girls, the first time since St. Augustine Assembly #42 received its charter in 1950 that a member has been selected to the State's highest honor.

Rainbow was created in 1922 for young women whose fathers were members of the Masonic Lodge, and today has more than 850 assemblies throughout the world. Rainbow's practices and programs are based on teachings of faith, hope, and charity.



Jordan Usina

**The St. Augustine Report** is published by the Department of Public Affairs of the City of St. Augustine each Tuesday and on Fridays previewing City Commission meetings. The Report is written and distributed by George Gardner, former St. Augustine Mayor (2002-2006) and Commissioner (2006-2008) and a longtime newspaper reporter and editor. Contact The Report at [gardner@aug.com](mailto:gardner@aug.com)

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