

REALLY IMPORTANT STUFF



BEST LOCAL TREND Salt Life

When we started seeing Salt Life decals across the back windshield of every SUV, sedan and truck from Fort Clinch to the Matanzas Bay, we had no idea this trend would have such a long shelf life. Started some six years ago by four avid “watermen,” the Salt Life brand has grown to include hoodies, board shorts, beach towels, playing cards, a jewelry line — and now, a restaurant. Salt Life Food Shack in Jacksonville Beach opened earlier this year and offers ocean-inspired fare like ceviche, local Mayport shrimp and something called Caliche’s Poke Bowl. Sound good? Evidently it is. The Shack also won this year’s Best Chowder and Best New Restaurant categories.

BEST LOCAL WACKO Corinne Brown

C’mon, admit it — you love her. The wigs, the sandbags, the crazy House Floor stunts in Gator garb (<http://bit.ly/dhx5L>) — Corinne Brown may be a wacko, but she’s *our* wacko, one who grandstands, orates and occupies enough ethical grey areas that she’d be mistaken for a Chicago pol if it weren’t for that indecipherable Southern drawl. Of course, the only people who think she’s truly crazy are the ones who’ve never seen her at work. In D.C.,

where her longevity and determination to finagle pork for her district are something to behold, her colleagues — Democrat and Republican alike — show much respect.

BEST RIGHTEOUS CRUSADER St. Johns Riverkeeper Neil Armingeon

St. Johns Riverkeeper Neil Armingeon has one mission, and he’s not easily distracted. For him, restoring the St. Johns River is not only possible, it’s the only morally responsible thing to do. Which makes for a tough counterpoint to polluters’ kvetching about cost. This summer, as marine scientists and regulators puzzled over one of the largest fish kills in river history, followed by the arrival of a mysterious white foam, Armingeon emphasized that pinpointing the exact cause (still undetermined) shouldn’t distract us from the big picture: The river isn’t healthy, and we’ve got to reduce the volume of pollutants if it has any chance of returning to health. There are tough, and sometimes costly, choices ahead. Armingeon reminds us that if the St. Johns River matters to us, we’ll find a way to get it done.

BEST GRAFFITI Shaun Thurston’s Five Points Mural

Archeologists have discovered examples of

graffiti in the form of inscriptions, emblems and figures that date back to Ancient Greece. These surviving remnants of public art expressed everything from reverent eulogies on tombs to directions to the nearest brothel. Local artist Shaun Thurston has split the difference, with his aerosol-fueled works touching on everything from the sacred to the profane, sometimes mixing it up in mid-spray. His mural located at the corner of Lomax and Park streets in Five Points is a funky meditation on nature and decay, played out in a tableau that features a giant lizard noshing on an unsuspecting butterfly, rendered in dazzling colors. The block-long piece has led to much discussion among locals and visitors alike, which is probably what great art is all about.

BEST LAWN ART “Go Jags” message on 9A

Two guys, one shared football passion and (we’re guessing) some beer: The outcome is there for all to see, a carefully manicured tribute to the home team, mowed into a patch of grass on the hill where 9A loops north, just beyond U.S. 1. Pals Kevin Pepper and Ryan Montour have mowed the message into the grass two years in a row, even donning orange vests to appear official while at task. Their sign may not survive the creation of a 9B interchange, but then again, there are no guarantees when it comes to football in Jacksonville, a place where “Go Jags” is arguably a mixed message.

BEST LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ABOMINATION The St. Johns River

In the summer of 1977, then-Jacksonville Mayor Hans Tanzler clamped on a pair of water skis and plowed down the St. Johns River to celebrate the city’s closure of the last of 77 sewer pipes that had dumped 15 million of gallons of raw sewage into the river every day. The outlook on recovery was optimistic. People thought it would soon be safe to take daily swims. But those predictions didn’t factor in the next 33 years, during which environmental regulators made allowances for or simply ignored runoff from rampant development, pollutants from industrial plants and the regular mass overflows from JEA’s sewage treatment plants. As a result, the summer of 2010 was marked with reports of algae blooms in St.



Best Graffiti: Shaun Thurston’s Five Points Mural

BEST OF JAX 2010

Johns' tributaries, widespread fish kills — the biggest on record for the St. Johns — and a horrendous, thick white foam that coated the river banks. While scientists puzzled over the cause of these maladies, the reality was obvious. The river is sick. There's big talk of a project for the St. Johns, like the stymied Everglades restoration plan. But nothing will change until we find the will to force polluters clean up their act.

BEST TOURIST TRAP **St. Augustine**

Known fondly to locals as the city that always sleeps — or at least closes up shop at 5 p.m. — St. Augustine is nonetheless a choice destination for anyone visiting Northeast Florida. That fact is a serious thorn in the side of Jacksonville boosters, since the most popular place for out-of-towners to visit isn't actually in their town at all. But any place that draws a slew of tourists is going to set some traps, and the Ancient City has them in abundance. Whether it's T-shirts with off-color jokes, faux historical sites or just a nagging sense that you've been taken, St. Augustine guarantees the full tourist experience — served in a fresh waffle cone.

BEST TRAFFIC HEADACHE **Blanding Boulevard & I-295**

The junction of Blanding Boulevard and I-295 puts drivers in a dark, dangerous and impatient mood. It's a bungled mass of asphalt arteries and capillaries, twisting around in a hellish, soul-killing suburban landscape. Why does it feel so particularly Floridian? Suburbs! Shopping! Interstate access! Everything that's supposed to make life easier is multiplied and metastasized, until it all slows to a painful crawl. Families leaving the tidy suburbs of Argyle collide with consumers descending on Orange Park Mall and tens of thousands of commuters trying to get on and off I-295. Pity the poor guy trying to make a quick getaway after staying the night at the La Quinta Inn. At least he doesn't have to face it every day.

BEST FARMERS MARKET **BEST NEIGHBORHOOD EVENT** **Riverside Arts Market**

Riverside Arts Market has produce, sure — a lot of it locally grown. And it's got aisle after aisle of arts and crafts, paintings, knit caps and charming handmade jewelry. But RAM is about community more than anything else — a place to see friends and co-workers, to while away an hour listening to music on the edge of the St. Johns River, watch jugglers and breakdancers, and drink a glass of fresh-squeezed lemonade before coming back around, head abuzz, with ideas for a carton of lush red beefsteak tomatoes, some plump ears of corn and a bag of organic oak leaf lettuce.

BEST PLACE TO BAG **A HIPSTER** **Five Points**

Oh, the American Hipster! Wasn't it Walt Whitman who wrote, "We genuflect before you as you whizz by on a fixed-gear bike, keffiyeh scarf blowing in the breeze as powder-blue leg-warmers pump in time, seeking sweet reunion of mouth to Pabst Blue Ribbon ..." Oh, that's right — it was Walt Tibman, that vegan kid in the "Tron" shirt. Love 'em or loathe 'em, hipsters are here to stay (until they become unhip — ha ha! Hello, adulthood!) and Folio Weekly readers know that the place to cohabit with the currently

cool is Riverside's Five Points neighborhood. Before you ironically squeeze into that "Dokken" T-shirt, however, bear in mind that Folio Weekly assumes no responsibility if the tastes and subsequent breeding grounds of the fickle hipster have changed prior to publication.

BEST REASON TO LOVE **NORTHEAST FLORIDA** **The Beaches**

Really just referred to as "The Beach" by locals, the towns that compose our killer coastline have their own individual character and funky charms, with favored and acclaimed shops, bars and restaurants, and clubs that cater to satisfy local and townie alike. But the real reason to head east is to kick off those Wingtips and let those "little piggies" touch the sand before jumping into the deep blue (OK — brown) sea. One boon of the economy has been the welcome sight of cheaper rents at the beach (unless you are the landlord); and where else in town can you go on a bike ride and encounter a zonked-out crazy who calls himself "The Mayor," only to see the actual mayor zip by on his own bike moments later? We are truly blessed.

BEST REASON TO HATE **NORTHEAST FLORIDA** **Rednecks**

Though the term was originally used to describe poor Southern white farmers, the global village of the 21st Century has led to the shrinking of our world, ensuring equality so that any close-minded, prejudiced, violent dimwits can proudly be rednecks — regardless of race, sex or age! And thankfully, though there are some serious "A"-game rednecks in Northeast Florida, they are the exception and not the rule. The recent news story about anti-Islam and homophobic Gainesville Pastor Terry Jones and his God bully tactics have helped rewrite the book on rednecks and may lead to the need for a new category — the dreaded Über-neck!

BEST WIFI **Starbucks**

Whether a stroke of genius or just a really sensible marketing ploy by the barista brigade, Starbucks has made free WiFi every bit as much a part of the coffee experience as cream and sugar. In tough economic times, folks who might otherwise say, "screw it, I'll make my own effing espresso" are drawn like moths to the ever-flickering flame of free WiFi. Makes us want to order a triple carmel macchiato with a cranberry and orange scone just to celebrate. □



Best Righteous Crusader: St. Johns Riverkeeper Neil Armingeon