



The Optimist

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INDIANHEAD LEHIGH NEWS

INSIDE THE ISSUE

Glowing Neighbors

By Chase Brestle

Road Sharing—How to Keep Our Neighborhood Safe

By Ceci Michelotti

It took a Vision and a Tech Coordinator

By Robin Collins

Help Shape a More Resilient Neneland

By the Resilient Nene Committee

Meet Your Neighbors

By Samantha “Bee” Blaykworth

Featuring:

Sharon Kant-Rauch

Indy Mathews

River Spencer

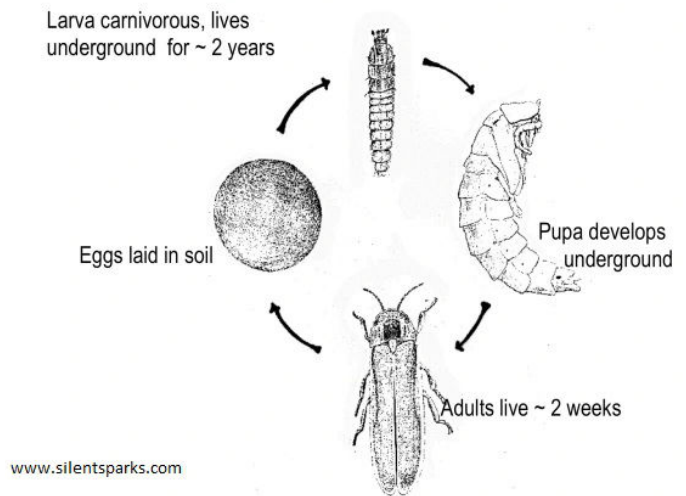
News and Events

Glowing Neighbors

by Chase Brestle

Although our world is full of magic, most of the time it can go unnoticed even by the most observant and ecologically minded eyes, simply because it happens outside the spotlight. For instance, when a plump monarch caterpillar absconds for a few weeks, we only notice its striking beauty some time later when we see her flying around the wildflowers and milkweed in our yards. There's one group of creatures living in the Nene Lands that stands out by proudly showing off their alchemy and flaunting their uniqueness with bright flashes of bioluminescent spotlights. Whether you call them Lightning Bugs, Fireflies, or June Bugs, they are all beetles that belong to the Lampyridae family. This family is a grouping of 2,000 species of insects worldwide, with only 50 species native to Florida. As I write this in late August, there are thousands flashing along our nature trail between Optimist Park and Koucky Park, which is quite a sight to see! If you are lucky and have stewarded your own yard mindfully, you might be fortunate enough to have some outside your own windows.

their lives they have different habitats and dietary needs.



Firefly life cycle

The carnivorous larvae live under leaf litter and eat insects, snails, slugs, worms, and other soft-bodied organisms that cross their paths. For certain species, this stage can go on for multiple years. As adults, depending on the species, they can eat pollen, nectar, or other insects and will only survive for a few weeks to reproduce. The thing that sets these beetles apart from their kin is the intense light-producing chemical reaction occurring in the last few segments of the firefly's body, known as the lantern. To put it simply, this bioluminescence is a process where luciferin reacts with oxygen from the air and is catalyzed by the enzyme luciferase, producing light. Once the sun sets, they use these bright beacons as a form of communication. The flashes are used to communicate with potential mates, deter predators by signifying a distasteful beetle, or even lure in a potential meal.

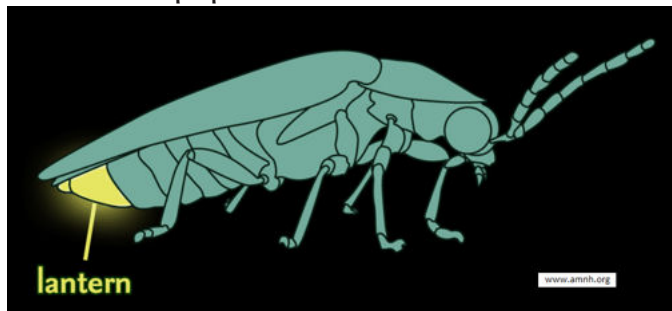
If we want these insects to put on light shows in our yards, we will need to be mindful of how we treat our landscapes and remember to turn off our exterior lights. Due to their life cycle, any broad spectrum insecticide is incredibly harmful to both fireflies and their food sources. Applying specific low impact insecticides only to



Fireflies at night

The life cycle of a firefly is one of the most common life cycle types on the planet. They start as an egg, and, after hatching, they grow through larval phases, shedding their skin as they get larger. They eventually pupate, and, after some time, they emerge as full-grown sexually mature adults. During

plants that need treatment will help prevent the overall population decline of insects.



Firefly's lantern

Providing an appropriate habitat for adults and larvae means supplying leaf litter for the young and a diverse mix of ground cover, grasses, shrubs, and trees for the adults. Different species fly and flash at different altitudes and simply will not live in areas without appropriate habitat. The larvae stage of fireflies depends extensively on a healthy layer of leaf litter, so designating areas for it to accumulate and decompose is a very important feature in an environmentally balanced yard. Native plants are the bedrock for any healthy and ecologically significant yard—from the pollen, nectar, and leaves being consumed as food to the stems, bark, branches, and the leaves being used as shelter. Removing invasive plants returns space stolen from the native plants. Along the nature trail where sections have had invasive removals, a healthy population of fireflies is evident. We are lucky to share our neighborhood with so many different creatures, and with a greater understanding of these insects, we are better positioned to help them thrive.



Firefly in flight



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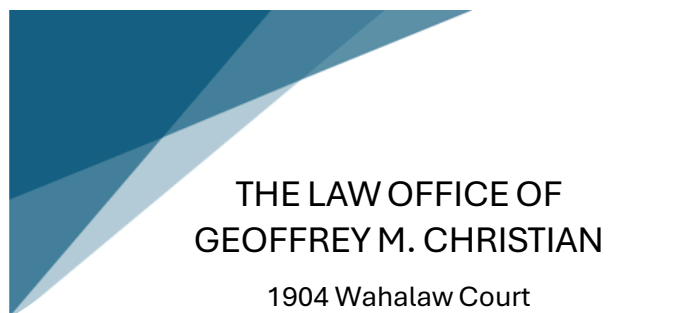


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Road Sharing—How to Keep Our Neighborhood Safe

by Ceci Michelotti

Over the past several months, amid major construction on Magnolia Drive, I have noticed a lot of frustration and fear in our neighborhood about safety on our usually quiet streets. It can be scary and challenging to witness safety issues while feeling very little control or ability to change them. While there are a lot of things neighbors can do—reach out to the IHLNA board for advocacy, contact the city traffic department and City Commission with concerns, etc.—we can feel pretty helpless when it seems very little is being done to protect our neighborhood residents.

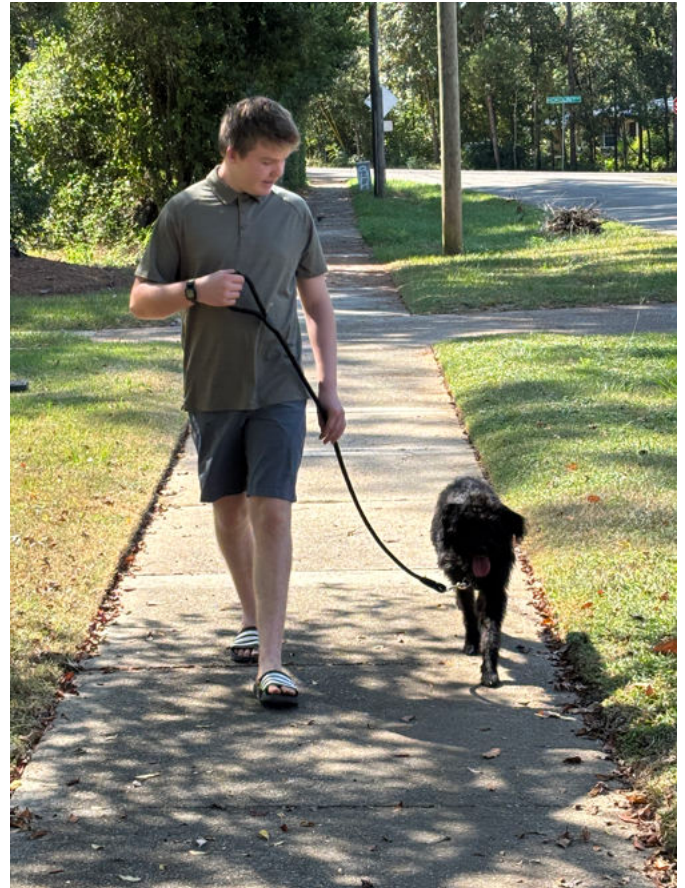
As a member of the IHLNA board, I have been both reassured by the dedication and strong advocacy board members have exhibited for the safety of our neighborhood, as well as frustrated and disappointed at how often this dedication and advocacy falls on deaf ears, or doesn't seem to accomplish as much as we'd like. As a therapist, I am often in the position to encourage clients to reframe helpless feelings by focusing on their own Circle of Control—the things over which they have control and thus the ability to change. These things include our own emotions, thoughts, words, reactions, and behavior. As a human, I try to apply the clinical skills I teach in sessions to my own life. Sometimes I succeed.

Regarding the issue of traffic safety, both in our neighborhood and community at large, there are several things that I do have control over and I'd like to share some of them here. Hopefully, each neighbor working hard to be safe increases our overall safety. We have no control over the people cutting through and making risky decisions on our streets, but we can make sure that we are not part of the problem.

Pedestrian Safety

One area of safety that affects our neighborhood is pedestrian safety. Pedestrians have felt at risk over the past few months, and some strategies may help mitigate that. Did you know it is recommended for pedestrians to walk AGAINST traffic? Of course, it is important

to use sidewalks whenever they are available, but we know in Indianhead/Lehigh, sidewalks are limited. According to the US Department of Transportation, "if there is no sidewalk, walk facing traffic and as far from traffic as possible."



*For increased safety, pedestrians should use sidewalks when available
Photo by Ceci Michelotti*

In addition, pedestrians are responsible for following the rules of the road and all signs and signals. It's best to cross streets at crosswalks, and when that is not an option, to choose a well-lit area from which the pedestrian can see clearly and be clearly seen. Pedestrians should be aware of cars exiting and entering driveways and always be on the lookout when walking around curves in which cars may not have a good line of sight. Plan your walking routes accordingly—I rarely walk up Toochin/West

Indianhead toward Apakin due to limited visibility on that curvy stretch of road. I don't trust drivers to see me in time to slow down and give me space, and also my dog seems to have a death wish and prefers walking toward cars driving close by instead of away from them. At night, it is recommended to wear light clothing and reflective gear and lights. A bright safety vest with reflective strips is never a bad idea. Pedestrians must also stay alert and aware of their surroundings—put your phones away.

Drivers are also responsible to keep pedestrians safe. Drivers should always be alert and aware of pedestrians, minimize blind spots, and pay extra attention during hard-to-see conditions, such as nighttime or bad weather. It is important not to pass cars stopped at crosswalks/intersections or on our neighborhood streets—it's possible they are stopped for pedestrians crossing (or turtles!). Pedestrians have the right of way and drivers must yield to them in crosswalks. If you see a pedestrian walking, give them plenty of space as you drive by—ideally six feet. In addition, be careful when you back out of your driveway—our verdant neighborhood easily hides walkers.

Cyclist Safety

It is important to remember, as drivers, that bicyclists and motorcyclists have the same rights as you do. They also travel with increased risk and vulnerability, due to their small size and lack of visibility. When passing them on the road, Florida law requires giving bicycles three feet of clearance. However, for maximum safety, give them at least a six-foot buffer when possible. Never honk at a cyclist—it is startling and can be dangerous.

For cyclists, having the same rights means you are required to follow the same signs and signals as cars and other vehicles. You must ride with traffic and can take up the lane when there is not a bike lane available. Bicyclists can ride on sidewalks, but should watch for pedestrians and yield accordingly. While Tallahassee law does not require a helmet for cyclists over the age of 16, it is by far the safest choice. Helmets cut head injury risk by about 50%, while severe injuries are reduced by 69% and fatalities by 65%. Always pay attention to cars and don't assume they see you.

If you are new to cycling in Tallahassee, reach out to the avid cyclists in our neighborhood. We have several families/individuals that commute by bike around town and have plenty of tips. When I lived in Boston, years ago, I sold my car and rode my bike everywhere. I loved it. There were tons of bike lanes and paths throughout the city that made bike commuting easy and safe; I just had to watch for parked car doors opening suddenly! Tallahassee cycling is a different beast and I admire those who are committed to it.



*Reflective vests for evening walks
Photo by Jody Winter*

Distracted Driving

Distracted driving is quickly becoming the most dangerous issue on our roads. Some studies show that texting while driving is six times more likely to cause an accident than drunk driving. It's easy to think that sending a text is so fast that it doesn't matter, but according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "sending or reading a text message takes about 5 seconds, which at 55 mph is equivalent to driving the length of a football field without looking at the road." In 2023, distracted driving was the cause of 3,300 traffic fatalities.

I know many of us have stories about being hit, or almost hit, by someone who was looking at their phone. Personally, I used to be guilty of checking my phone or sending a text at a red light. But it was too easy to get distracted and not notice when the light turned green. Or I was tempted to keep the

phone in my hand even as I resumed driving to quickly finish what I was doing. I have since realized how dangerous this behavior is.

My catalyst for change was meeting my current partner, whose son, Anthony, was killed by a distracted driver one month shy of his 20th birthday. Anthony had a bright future ahead of him, which was cut short by a driver looking at his phone, not paying attention to the road (and the kid on a motorcycle) in front of him. Anthony did everything right, safety-wise—he took motorcycle safety classes, wore protective gear, including a good helmet, and followed traffic regulations. Yet in that moment, it wasn't enough to save his life. Hearing his story, and those of so many other families who have lost loved one due to distracted driving, made a big impact on me.

Over the past three years, I have been dedicated to the bipartisan effort to make Florida a hands-free state. Hands-free laws “prohibit drivers from physically holding or supporting a wireless device or engaging in text-based communication, video use, or recording while driving”. We have yet to join the other 30 states, including our neighbor Georgia, that have passed this legislation and are experiencing an almost 30% reduction in traffic fatalities. In my volunteer work in this area, I have met families whose children, teenagers, partners, or parents were killed by distracted drivers. It's absolutely heartbreaking and completely preventable.

One way we can keep each other (and ourselves) safe in our neighborhood and community is to put down our phones while driving. Get a device that holds your phone for you if you need to view the map—they make cheap ones that attach to your dash, windshield, or AC vent. Wait until you are at your destination to check your email or send that text. If you must talk on the phone while driving, make the call before you head out onto the road, and then keep the phone in the holder on speaker or connect it with Bluetooth. Enable the driving mode feature on your phone if it has one. It can be a hard habit to break—I had to put my phone in the back seat for a few weeks to rid myself of the compulsion to check it—but it is worth it to save lives.

Neighborhood Safety

While our safety is, in some ways, out of our hands, there are several things we can do as individuals to make sure our neighborhood is as safe as possible. So, when you're on your evening walk and see someone flying down Atapha without a care in the world for your safety, be glad you are walking with your light clothing, flashing lights, and reflective vest. And know that when you are the driver, you are doing your part by driving the speed limit, keeping an eye on the road, and giving pedestrians and cyclists a wide berth. And always feel free to flip off the drivers on their phones. Thank you to those of you who keep our neighborhood safe!

Sources/Resources:

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/share-road-its-everyones-responsibility>

<https://www.biketallahassee.com/share.html>

<https://newrossgreenway.org/bicycle-helmet-vs-no-helmet-statistics/>

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving>

<https://www.gahighwaysafety.org/hands-free-law/>

<https://apbfoundation.com/>



It Took a Vision and a Tech Coordinator

by Robin Collins

Indianhead-Lehigh is home to a unique and essential organization that helps elders age in place—in their home in their beloved neighborhood. We would not have Neighbor to Neighbor in the Nenes (N3) without the vision and commitment of N3's founder and first president, Betsy Tabac, as well as the knowledge and skills of Judy Rainbrook, the technology coordinator who provided N3 its organizational structure and computer foundation.

Betsy conceived of N3 when she recognized the needs of elders in Indianhead-Lehigh, calling it a “New Initiative for Older Residents”. The vision came to life with the volunteer planning committee created in 2017. After Judy set up an email address and website, and a logo was created, the newly established non-profit organization “opened its doors” in May 2018, offering support to elders in the Indianhead-Lehigh Acres neighborhood.

Betsy explained in the 2018 neighborhood newsletter that “Neighbor to Neighbor in the Nenes, now affectionately called N3, ... serves seniors in our community who choose to stay in their homes as long as possible as they age. By linking elders with needed resources, including neighbors, N3 will enhance the quality of life for everyone in the community.”

A few examples of the free services available to elders in our neighborhood include driving them to the store or to appointments, helping around the house and yard, and calling neighbors to check in with them. Guiding the organization are the many volunteers serving on the N3 board and its committees. More than five years ago, Betsy recruited me as a volunteer on the N3 Publicity Committee, and I can tell you that the volume of Facebook page responses indicates helping our elders is greatly appreciated by the neighborhood residents.

Betsy served as the visionary, president and guiding force of N3. She spearheaded the grant writing project that funds the organization, seeking out motivated and dedicated board and committee members, as well as writing multiple articles for the local

newspaper about N3. I'm sure she did more, but I've never heard her brag. Betsy retired from N3 in 2024. Even in retirement, Betsy has been a resource for other communities working to create their own “Aging in Place” volunteer networks. The current president, Nancy Gines, noted that Betsy is not “left on a shelf”!

Judy Rainbrook was deeply committed to N3 as well. Her roles were often behind the scenes, but she was always involved. She led all the technical development, like the website, email communication structure, and Facebook page. Ed Reid has noted that Judy's expert help contributed greatly to Betsy's ability to deal with the computer side of N3. Judy retired from N3 earlier this year. She continues to assist whenever a tech need arises, and volunteers to serve our neighbors.

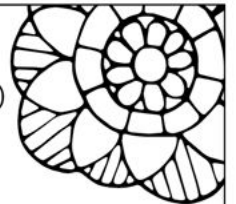
Thanks to the dedication of both women, N3 continues to thrive. Even though Betsy and Judy are no longer involved in the daily work of the organization, the solid foundation they built ensures ongoing support for our elder neighbors. I firmly believe N3 will continue to be an integral feature of our unique neighborhood for many, many years to come. Thank you, Betsy and Judy!

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When the body gets working appropriately, the force of gravity can flow through. Then, spontaneously, the body heals itself. - Dr. Ida Rolf



Help Shape a More Resilient NeneLand

Your story matters. Share it through our community survey.

by Ana Orosco with the Resilient Nene Committee

Resilience begins right here—in our neighborhood. Whether it's checking in on an elderly neighbor after a storm, helping clear debris, or sharing tools during recovery, the strength of our community lies in how we support each other. That neighbor-to-neighbor spirit is not just a nice gesture—it's a key part of Tallahassee's broader resilience strategy.

We're inviting every resident of Indianhead-Lehigh to help us understand how our neighborhood can adapt to a changing climate and what vision of resilience we should bring to focus. By completing a short survey (available online and in print), you'll contribute valuable insight into how local experiences, challenges, and strengths shape our community's ability to respond and recover. **You can follow the link or scan the code to start the survey online:**



<https://tinyurl.com/49carhf2>

If you prefer to complete the survey on the paper version provided in the newsletter, please drop off the completed form at 1312 Eleanor Drive. If you need the survey to be picked up, please contact Ana at 337-292-1693. **The survey will be open until October 24, 2025.**

Why now?

The tornadoes of May 2024 were a wake-up call. Three EF2 tornadoes tore through Tallahassee, causing more than \$50 million in damage. Driving past a lingering blue tarp on a roof is a daily reminder of what passed—and what we still need to rebuild.

But this is about more than just one event. It's about how we grow and adapt over time. In our neighborhood, approximately 87% of the homes were built before the Minimum Building Code Law, and another ~10% before

the Florida Building Code. Some homes also sit in areas more prone to flooding due to the neighborhood's terrain. Understanding what works—and what doesn't—is important to determining what parts of housing codes and tools should be adjusted to better serve our neighborhood.

There are many things that already make us resilient. Neighbor support, advocacy efforts, and the ecosystem we share a home with. Beyond the built environment, there are many levers, strategies, and initiatives that impact how we organize, the resources we can access, and how public systems are cared for. We hope to augment efforts that follow the history of our neighborhood.

What's the goal?

The goal is **adaptability**—changing *with* nature, not against it.

Upgrading and retrofitting older homes can be expensive and complicated. Many resilience improvements aren't required by code and may not feel urgent. By learning from one another, identifying barriers, and mapping needs, we can begin to build a shared path forward—one that reflects our values and lived experiences. We also want to bring forth the idea of creating support groups or pods so that we can more easily share resources and care for one another.

Why your voice matters:

Neighborhoods like ours are the heart of community resilience. We see the changes day by day—in the weather, the wildlife, the water lines. We know which streets flood, which trees fall, and which neighbors are most at risk. Your insight helps connect individual experience with discussions about the direction of resilience codes and policy.

This survey is one step in an ongoing effort to listen, learn, and build together. Whether you've lived here for decades or just moved in, your story helps guide the future of our neighborhood and beyond. Let's build *our* resilience together.

Survey results will be shared on Sunday, November 9, 2025 at the IHLNA General Meeting.



Housing Resilience Survey

This 10-minute survey is a collaboration between the University of Florida and the Resilient Nene Committee to understand what climate resilience means for our neighborhood. Your responses will guide community efforts and support HUD-funded research on improving climate resilience for single-family housing. Participation is voluntary, confidential, and you may skip questions or stop at any time. No identifying information will be collected, and results may be shared in summary form with the Florida chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the Florida Housing Coalition, and the City of Tallahassee. For full details, please review the information sheet via the link: <https://tinyurl.com/byk457v4>.

We appreciate your time and participation. If you have any questions about the survey or your rights as a research participant, please contact Ana Orosco (tricaricooroscoa@ufl.edu) or the UF Institutional Review Board (IRB) at <https://irb.ufl.edu/contact-us.html>.

Home in the neighborhood

Q1) How long have you lived in your current home in Indianhead-Lehigh? _____

Q2) How many people currently live in your home (including you)?

6 years or younger _____

7-18 years old _____

19-64 years old _____

65 years of age or older _____

Q3) What is your current living situation?

☐ Own my home

☐ Rent my home

☐ Other _____

Preparedness

Q4) Do you have a plan in place if you are affected by a natural hazard (e.g. hurricane, tornado, fire)?

☐ I don't have a plan

☐ A basic plan (e.g., preparing right before an event)

☐ A general plan (e.g., sheltering in place or evacuating if needed)

☐ A detailed plan with multiple options depending on the situation

Q5) Do you have an emergency kit ready and available?

☐ Yes

☐ Unsure

☐ No

Q6) Is your home insured?

☐ Yes

☐ Unsure

☐ No

Natural Hazards

Q7) How much capacity do you feel you have to cope with potential natural hazard impacts? (0=No capacity; 5 = Full capacity)

Being dislocated from your home

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Decreased air quality in your home

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Economic hardship

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Flooding damage to your home

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Mental health consequences

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Power outage

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Structural damage to your home

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Q8) How safe do you generally feel in the neighborhood regarding climate-related events?

☐ Very safe

☐ Somewhat safe

☐ Not safe at all

Q9) Regarding climate resilience, do you consider the current building codes:

☐ Too strict

☐ Sufficient

☐ Not strict enough

☐ Unsure



Power Outages

Q10) Do you have access to a backup power source?

- ☐ Generator
- ☐ Home battery storage (e.g., Tesla Powerwall or similar system)
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ None

Q11) How much capacity do you have to cope with potential impacts from a power outage? (0=No capacity; 5 = Full capacity)

Cold stress

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Decreased air quality in your home

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Food spoilage and unsafe food consumption

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Heat stress

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Inability to power medical equipment

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ n/a

Lack of access to refrigeration for medicine

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ n/a

Mental health stress or anxiety

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Home Retrofits

Q12) Would you be able to handle the financial cost of fixing essential systems in your home? (e.g. plumbing leakage, damaged roof or exterior walls, broken windows, etc.)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ No

Q13) Have you made improvements to your home or lot in response to the May 2024 tornadoes? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ Installed a generator
- ☐ Installed a smart thermostat
- ☐ Added operable shutters
- ☐ Added insulation to attic space
- ☐ Upgraded roof
- ☐ Removed trees
- ☐ Upgraded entry door(s) to home

- ☐ Upgraded garage door
- ☐ Upgraded windows
- ☐ Re-graded to direct water away from the building
- ☐ Installed a water collection system (e.g. rain barrel or similar)
- ☐ Installed a water drainage system (e.g. french drain)
- ☐ Installed a fire alarm device or system
- ☐ Installed a plastic barrier and added a dehumidifier to the crawlspace (encapsulation)
- ☐ Installed a weather alert device or system
- ☐ Installed an air quality monitor
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other: _____

Community and support

Q14) Do you feel supported by your neighbors?

- ☐ Very supported
- ☐ Somewhat supported
- ☐ Not supported

Q15) What would make the neighborhood more resilient? (The ideas here came from conversations with neighbors, please include your own ideas that add to this!)

- ☐ Changes to codes e.g. _____
- ☐ Changes to policies e.g. _____
- ☐ Changes to ordinances e.g. _____
- ☐ Changes to infrastructure (e.g. streets, utility service, etc.)
- ☐ Disaster rehearsal
- ☐ Investment on restoration of neighborhood water bodies (Indianhead Creek)
- ☐ Mapping community shareable assets
- ☐ More shading structures in public space
- ☐ Upgrade community building/facilities
- ☐ Offline communication system
- ☐ Public charging stations
- ☐ Shared solar panels
- ☐ Upgrade community building/facilities
- ☐ Other: _____

Thank you for answering this survey!

Meet Your Neighbors: Sharon Kant-Rauch

by Samantha “Bee” Blaykworth

For the past 33 years, **Sharon Kant-Rauch** has called Indianhead Acres home—and she’s been deeply woven into the fabric of the neighborhood ever since.



*Sharon Kant-Rauch
Photo by Bob O'Lary*

“I love volunteering!” she says, and her history proves it. Over the years, Sharon has helped organize an Alzheimer’s Respite Program at Temple Israel, served as a mentor at Hartsfield Elementary and coordinated programs for its new Family Resource Center, helped launch the monthly potlucks at Optimist Park, and has delivered Meals on Wheels this past year. She’s also co-clerk of the Meetinghouse & Grounds Committee at the Quaker Meetinghouse on Magnolia Drive, where she helps distribute

produce from the community gardens to the iGrow garden on Dent Street, organized by Elder Ivy.

Her biggest inspiration is Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker movement, which operated homeless shelters across the country, published a weekly newspaper, and championed peace activism. “I love that combination!” Sharon says.

Of all her volunteer experiences, mentoring has been the most meaningful. “I loved working one-on-one with a student,” she reflects. “I wasn’t able to do it this year but hope to return in years to come.”

Sharon’s path to community life is unique—including a stint as a plumber after completing the Lively VoTech program. She worked in the trade for about three years before moving into other pursuits.

She and her wife, Terry, moved to Indianhead Acres in the early ’90s, drawn in part to the neighborhood’s reputation as a welcoming, gay-friendly community. They raised three children here, and the tradition continues: “My daughter, her boyfriend, and my new granddaughter now live in the neighborhood,” Sharon shares proudly.

Some of her happiest memories center around Koucky Park, the greenway, and community celebrations like Nene Fest—which she now enjoys through the eyes of her granddaughter.

Sharon’s latest personal project is publishing her mystery novel, *One Precious Life*, set right here in Indianhead Acres. It’s available at Midtown Books, Common Ground Books, and My Favorite Books.

Her advice for neighbors? **“If you’re led to do so, become a mentor at Hartsfield Elementary. The kids really look forward to the time with their mentors—**and since you live nearby, it’s easy to get there. And if you’re interested in working on the community gardens at the Quaker House, let me know. We have lots of room to expand!”

Meet Your Neighbors: Indy Matthews

by Samantha “Bee” Blaykworth



*Indy Mathews
Photo by Indy*

This spring, Indianhead-Lehigh welcomed a new neighbor with a creative spark—**Indy Mathews**. After several years near the Lake Ella neighborhood, Indy was drawn to Indianhead’s peaceful, woodsy charm, while still enjoying the convenience of being close to restaurants and live entertainment venues.

Indy’s roots in Tallahassee’s arts scene run deep. As a former volunteer at the Rose Room Cabaret in Railroad Square, they found a vibrant community among local drag, burlesque, and music performers. “I had wanted to become a part of the local arts community for some time,” Indy explains. “The Rose Room gave amateurs and new professionals a space to learn new skills and

refine their talents. It was the perfect spot for just that.”

While Indy hasn’t yet launched a personal project, they have big plans on the horizon—including hosting an introductory belly dance class. “If anything,” Indy says with a smile, “my neighbors will know they have a creative and fun new addition to the neighborhood!”

Beyond the arts, Indy brings a unique and compassionate skill set to the community as a certified death doula, having worked off and on as an end-of-life caregiver.

When they’re not dancing or connecting with fellow creatives, you might find Indy at one of their favorite local haunts, 926 Bar & Grill, or celebrating Pride in the Park. They look forward to meeting more neighbors and building connections with artists in the area.

Keep an eye out for Indy’s future events—and if that belly dance class gets off the ground, they’d love to have some helping hands.

When Death Do Us Part

Take your earth-friendly values with you to bed—your final bed.

One-time fee (\$4,000) is less than the cost of a conventional burial, without chemicals or non-degradable materials, and with minimal energy use.

Opening planned for 2027, within the Hickory Preserve, near Crump and Miccosukee Roads.



Contact@RedHillsCommunityCemetery.com
RedHillsCommunityCemetery.com

Meet Your Neighbors: River Spencer

by Samantha “Bee” Blaykworth

If you’ve met River Spencer, you might be surprised to learn her full name is actually Kim. “I hated it for being too short and not fun,” she laughs. So, at age 50, during a solo river rafting trip, she gave herself a new name—River. “Rivers don’t let things get in their way. They wear them out or go around.”

River and her husband, Troy, moved to Indianhead in 1993, just months before their daughter was born right in their own bedroom. Over the decades, they’ve become a cornerstone of the neighborhood’s spirit of giving. Recently retired from a 35-year nursing career, River now spends her days at 4 Steps Horse Rescue in Fort Braden, where she helps rescue, rehabilitate, and train horses for loving homes or trail riding in the National Forest.

Her dedication to community engagement isn’t new. Together, River and Troy have cooked for the homeless shelter, collected clothes and goods for those in need, fostered dozens of kittens (many of whom found homes with Indianhead neighbors), volunteered at the animal shelter, worked alongside veterinary staff, and even thrown their energy into political campaigns. Troy, she says, has always inspired her. “It’s a core value for him to try to make a difference for others in any way we can.”

River’s nursing career left its mark, too—she created the teaching program for all total joint replacements during her 11 years at TOC, a legacy she’s proud of. “I miss nursing and am always happy to answer questions if I can,” she says.

From their early days as the young couple with a baby on the way to now being, as River puts it, “the old dodgers watching the kids at Optimist,” the couple has embraced the neighborhood’s traditions. River especially loves Final Friday, the annual yard sale, and Nene Fest, where she often lends a hand in the cooking.

While she treasures the sense of community here, her favorite “spot” isn’t

in town—it’s her Fort Braden property. She and Troy love sharing it with others for dog walks, hikes, camping trips, and boat rides up the river. “We’re always looking for company,” she says.

If you’d like to support River’s work, she invites neighbors to visit the rescue—and notes they’re looking for a new board member.



River Spencer
Photo by Robin McDougall



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News and Events

HLNA General Meeting

Sunday, November 9, 4:30 pm
Optimist Park Clubhouse

Indianhead-Lehigh neighbors are encouraged to attend the Neighborhood Association General Meeting on November 9. During the General Meeting, board vacancies will be filled and neighbors will have an opportunity to share suggestions and concerns relating to the neighborhood. Any member of the Neighborhood Association may self-nominate or be nominated by a board member. To learn about board participation, which involves a renewable, two-year term of office, contact the neighborhood association Board of Directors at IndianheadLehighNA@gmail.com.

At this year's General Meeting, we will hear a special presentation by Ana Orosco and the Resilient Nene Committee. We will learn the results of the neighborhood survey they sent out, and collaborate on how to enhance our neighborhood's resilience. It should be a great presentation and conversation—we hope to see you there!

HallowNene

Saturday, October 25, 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm
At Optimist Park

Don't miss the annual Nene Halloween potluck party. Live music by Tao Jones and the Ontological Elephants will kick off at 4:30 pm. Start thinking of some spooky recipes for your contribution to the potluck and keep in mind these contest categories as you plan your costume:

- Best duo/group
- Best babies and tots 0-3
- Best dressed pet
- Most sustainable/creative/upcycled/recycled
- Best traditional Halloween.

Keep an eye on the Indianhead-Lehigh Community Facebook page or your email for more details as the date approaches.



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News and Events

Final Fridays

Experience the vibrant camaraderie of our neighborhood through the Nene Final Friday parties! Each last Friday from September to May, a different neighbor hosts a casual get-together at their home. These gatherings typically feature a potluck dinner and music. It's a fantastic way to unwind, catch up with friends, meet new neighbors, and enjoy the company of our diverse community. To sign up to be a Nene Final Friday host or to find out when and where the next party will be hosted, please email Molly Jameson at mcjam88@gmail.com. Information about upcoming parties will also get posted to the Indianhead Lehigh Community Facebook page.

SAVE THE DATE

Nene Fest 2026

Saturday, April 11, 2026

This year, we are entering the pre-planning phase for Nene Fest a bit earlier than usual. We hope to encourage broad neighborhood participation by making sure that opportunities to get involved are known well in advance.

One of these is to perform on stage at the Fest: if you are interested and connected to the neighborhood, contact Richard Bertram, bertram63@gmail.com.

Similarly, if you are interested in helping with the early stages of developing Puppet Show possibilities—whether potential storylines, choreography, puppet designs, contact Doug Schrock, dpschrock@gmail.com.

As the planning for the festival evolves, we will post updates on the Nene Fest page of the IHLNA website: <https://ihlna.org/nene-fest/>.

Your IHLNA officers

President and VP: duties of these offices are currently shared by several directors.

Treasurer: Melissa Farley

Corresponding Secretary: Ceci Michelotti

Recording Secretary: John Tomasino

Directors: Ashley Arrington, Katie Clark, Jason Khan-Hohensee, Gordon Magill, Ana Orosco, Edward Reid, KC Smith, Eli Wilkins-Malloy

Contact point for IHLNA officers and directors is IndianheadLehighNA@gmail.com.

Membership reminder

The Indianhead-Lehigh Neighborhood Association (IHLNA) encourages residents of Indianhead and Lehigh to join the association by contributing voluntary dues to support neighborhood activities and advocacy which help maintain and enhance the character and spirit of our community as a well-maintained, safe and friendly neighborhood. The suggested membership donation is \$10, or \$5 for 20+ year residents. For details, see ihlna.org/membership.





IHLNA Financial Statement for 2024

Opening balance: January 1, 2024 **\$12,838.91**

Revenue

IHLNA Dues + Donations	\$4,616.89
Spring Optimist ads	\$341.68
Fall Optimist ads	\$530.16
Nene Fest donations	\$250.00
Nene Fest merch + food sales	\$5,875.10
Total Revenue:	\$11,613.83

Expenses

Gandy Printers (membership flyer)	-\$208.03
Gandy Printers (Spring Optimist)	-\$1,232.21
Gandy Printers (Fall Optimist)	-\$1,235.00
Florida Department of State	-\$61.25
N3 recognition	-\$150.00
Neighborhood grill	-\$1,188.52
Nene Fest merch + supplies	-\$3,189.96
Nene Fest City of Tallahassee fee	-\$314.84
Nene Fest sound + stage	-\$3,055.00
4th of July event	-\$431.34
Halloween party band	-\$400.00
City Utilities recognition	-\$75.20
Total Expenses:	-\$11,541.35

Closing balance: Dec 31, 2024 **\$12,911.39**