

## HAPPENINGS

### SPOKEN WORD AT FUEL

Spoken word is featured on the first and third Tue. of each month at Fuel Coffeehouse, 1037 Park St., Jacksonville. 425-FUEL.

### SPOKEN WORD AT THE RITZ

Spoken-word performances are featured at 7 p.m. on the first Thur. of every month at The Ritz Theatre and LaVilla Museum, 829 N. Davis St., Jacksonville. 632-5555.

### UNHEARD WORDS

Open-mic poetry is held from 8-11 p.m. every second and fourth Tue. of each month at Tamerry's Sports Club, 10696 Lem Turner Road, Jacksonville. Admission is \$3 for students, \$5 for general audiences. Poets are admitted free. 722-1647.

## COMEDY

### THE ATLANTIC THEATRES COMEDY CLUB

Cowboy and Tim Pulnik appear April 13-15 • National comedians appear every weekend • Women and members of the military are admitted free every Thur. • 751 Atlantic Blvd., Atlantic Beach. 249-7529.

### THE COMEDY ZONE

Hypnotist Ricky Kalmon appears April 11-22 • National comedians perform every Tue.-Sat. • Admission ranges from \$6-\$14 unless otherwise noted • Located in the Ramada Inn Mandarin at I-295 and San Jose Blvd., Jacksonville. 292-HAHA.

### GYPSY COMEDY CLUB

Professional comedians appear at 8 p.m. every Thur., at 9 p.m. every Fri. and at 9 p.m. every Sat. at Gypsy Comedy Club, 828 Anastasia Blvd., St. Augustine. Admission is \$10.50. For reservations, call 461-8843.

### HOT RODS GRILL COMEDY PARK

Professional comedians appear at 8 p.m. every Thur., and at 8 and 10 p.m. every Fri. and Sat. Admission is \$5 on Thur. and \$12.50 on Fri. and Sat. 789 Blanding Blvd., Orange Park. 272-6010.

### improvJACKSONVILLE

Improv comedy is featured at 8 p.m. every Wed. and Thur. and at 8 and 10 p.m. every Fri. and Sat. • Brown Bag lunch shows are held the first and third Fri. of each month • Located in The Jacksonville Landing, 2 Independent Drive, Jacksonville. 361-5779 or 535-0670.

## SPORTS

### JAX SUNS BASEBALL

The Suns take on the Montgomery Biscuits at 7:05 p.m. on April 11 at the Baseball

Grounds of Jacksonville, located in the Sports Complex, downtown Jacksonville. Games continue against the Biscuits at 1:05 p.m. on April 12, and at 7:05 p.m. on April 13, 14 and 15. 358-2846.

### CO-ED VOLLEYBALL

St. Johns County Recreation and Parks Department is registering players for A and B League volleyball at Ketterline Gym, 60 Orange St., St. Augustine. 209-0377.

### TENNIS LEAGUE

Senior men's and women's, junior and adult leagues are forming at Huguenot Tennis Center, Jacksonville Beach. To sign up, call 247-6221.

### JACKSONVILLE LADY JAGUARS FLAG FOOTBALL

The women's and girls' teams of the Jacksonville Lady Jaguars Flag Football are looking for new members. Programs are for girls ages 7-11, 12-14 and 15-18 years old, and women 19-36 or older. 949-0934.

### FENCING CLUB

The FCCJ Fencing Club meets from 7-9 p.m. every Tue. and Thur. in Room C202 at FCCJ's Kent Campus, 3939 Roosevelt Blvd., Jacksonville. 381-3691.

## KIDS' STUFF

### STORY TIME AT THE LIBRARY

Toddler story time is held at 10 a.m. every Wed. and Thur., preschool story time is held at 11 a.m. every Wed. at Southeast Branch Library, 6670 U.S. 1 S., St. Augustine. Admission is free. 827-6900.

### CHILDREN'S TRIBAL BELLY DANCE

Classes are forming for girls 5 and older at Riverside Children's Art Center, 2841 Riverside Ave., Jacksonville. The first session runs from 5:30-6:30 p.m. every Thur. through May 25. 389-1751.

### GIRLS ON THE RUN

Spring registration is open for Girls on the Run of Northeast Florida, an after-school program for third through sixth grade girls that combines running and training for a 5K (3.1 mile) run/walk. Spring programs begin in February, held at various locations throughout Northeast Florida. 321-4315.

### BORDERS STORYTIME

Storytime for kids is held at 10:30 a.m. every Fri. at Borders Books and Music, 8802 Southside Blvd., Jacksonville. 519-6500.

### RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS

Free lessons in rhythmic gymnastics are offered for children 5 and older at 11363 San Jose

Blvd., Jacksonville. 537-1888.

### SWIM TEAM DEVELOPMENT

A development course for children in competitive swimming is offered at various times throughout the week at the Church of the Good Shepherd pool, 1100 Stockton St., Jacksonville. To register, call 403-4007.

### TREE HILL NATURE CENTER

Nature tours are featured from 10 a.m.-noon on the first Sat. of each month • Hours: Mon.-Sat., 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission is \$1 for adults, \$.50 for children. Children younger than 4 are admitted free • 7152 Lone Star Road, Jacksonville. 724-4646.

### YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT CLASSES

"Creative Movement" (ages 5 and 6) is offered from 4:30-5:30 p.m. every Mon. at The Florida Ballet, 123 E. Forsyth St., Jacksonville. For registration, call 353-7518.

## BUSINESS EVENTS

### WORKSOURCE ANNUAL CAREER FAIR

The Annual Career Fair is held from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. on April 12 in the Library Courtyard at the Career Development Center, FCCJ's Kent Campus, 3939 Roosevelt Blvd., Jacksonville. 381-3594.

### SOUTHSIDE BUSINESS MEN'S CLUB

The Southside Business Men meet at noon every Wed. at the University Club, 1301 Riverplace Blvd., Jacksonville. The speaker at the April 12 meeting is Ron Barton, who will discuss upcoming city plans. 737-2900.

### CHAMBER BEFORE HOURS

The Ponte Vedra Beach Chamber of Commerce gets together at 7:30 a.m. on April 12 at Elizabeth's Café, 1500 Sawgrass Village Drive, Ponte Vedra. Admission is free for members and first-time guests. 285-2004.

### BEACHES TOASTMASTERS

The Beaches Area Toastmasters Club No. 2862 meets at 7 p.m. every Mon. in the Watson Realty building at 115 Penman Road, Neptune Beach. 610-8807.

### WOMEN BUSINESS OWNERS

The Women Business Owners of North Florida meet on the first Thur. of every month at the Epping Forest Yacht Club, located off San Jose Boulevard in Jacksonville. 641-5005. A Beaches Breakfast is held at 7:30 a.m. on the third Tue. of every month at Shelby's in Neptune Beach. 241-5566. ☉

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## inyourcorner

# FOR THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE?



BY EDDIE FARAH

It used to be that government worked for the people. Citizens voiced their needs while public officials, duly elected by that citizenry, represented the wants of the public in a bill that would be debated, go to committee and then be voted on.

But government for the people and by the people seems to be as passé as George Washington and his fabled cherry tree. In the film "The Corporation," by Canadian filmmaker Mark Achbar, the corporation is seen as a psychopath, imposing its will on the rest of us without a second thought about societal welfare.

Today it's the lawyers who work for the large, well-heeled Washington law firms representing the corporations making public policy. Here's how it happens: A piece of legislation, such as a budget bill that everyone agrees must be acted upon, is passed by both houses and goes to a conference committee.

Then, usually in the dead of the night, a blatantly anti-consumer or anti-environment portion is tacked on. To oppose the budget bill brands the conscientious lawmaker as contentious and obstructive. The end result is that corporations get the legislation they want and gain immunity from liability under state law.

Known as federal pre-emption, the end result lets corporations off the hook by pushing federal standards that threaten to deprive citizens of the pro-consumer rights established under state law. Even if the corporation is guilty of gross negligence and puts a product in the public hands recklessly, federal pre-emption makes the corporation immune from any liability and the costs associated with that liability.

It's been used to protect drug companies from a label that was insufficient or auto companies from a design that was deficient. Federal pre-emption, in the form of the proposed National Uniformity for Food Act of 2005, could nullify Florida law requiring a warning on shellfish containing potential pathogens. State and local government would not be able to regulate or label foods produced with questionable technology, including irradiation, antibiotics or genetic modification. In California, labels that warn the public that a product contains chemicals known to cause cancer or birth defects has been targeted by the food industry under this bill.

Agencies controlled by the White House are also guilty of government for special interest, particularly when there is a blatant revolving door between government and regulatory agencies.

For example, Jacqueline Glassman, the acting head of the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration, was a senior attorney working for Daimler Chrysler before she became NHTSA's chief counsel in 2002. Congress directed NHTSA to toughen new roof-crush standards. Instead, NHTSA proposed a weak roof-crush safety standard that fails to protect the public, but protects automakers from liability under state tort claims.

"The notion that we can take and take and take and take, waste and waste, without consequences, is driving the biosphere to destruction," says Ray Anderson, CEO of Interface, the world's largest commercial carpet maker, as shots of biological and chemical wastes pouring into the atmosphere roll across the screen in "The Corporation."

Externalizing costs to satisfy the corporate goal without the ability to accept responsibility for its actions and or feel remorse — that's the definition of a psychopath. Unfortunately, it's also the definition of too many corporations whose goal is to make as much money as quickly as possible without regard to societal responsibility. With the weight of Washington, the federal government becomes nothing more than the big stick.

Over the last three decades, states have strengthened laws protecting consumers and the environment. Now all of that stands to be overturned. State attorneys general have called corporate behemoths on the carpet for reckless behavior. Trial lawyers and their D.C. lobbyists are working to fight insurance companies and corporations that want to have government for the corporations. Despite their bad rap, who else can the public turn to for protection, if government is not for the people?

It's imperative that citizens get involved in local races and elect politicians who care about the government for the people and by the people — government on which our Constitution was founded. EF

Be sure to catch Eddie Farah's live call-in radio show noon to 1 p.m. every Saturday on 690 WOKV AM! The call-in number is 340-0690.

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