

The Florida Times-Union

Tuesday
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Whether as a businessman or benefactor, always-active Bob Shircliff won't sell anything he doesn't believe in

THE SHIRCLIFF WAY

By Matt Soergel
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A couple of times during a rambling discussion about his long life, Bob Shircliff referred to himself as "this little guy from Indiana," just making his way through the big world.

Perhaps. But in Jacksonville, where he's lived the last 49 years, this "little guy" has made a big mark, heading numerous civic boards and leading one fundraising campaign after another — as well as donating large amounts of his own money to causes he believes in.

When asked how much, he just chuckled.

"Well, I've given far less than anybody thinks, and more than my wife thinks."

Besides, much of what he does is persuading others to give money to good causes. "People say, well Bob's raised a lot of money. No, Bob hasn't raised a lot of money," he said. "A lot of good people have raised a lot of money, working together."

He couldn't do anything without other people, he said. "I've tried coming into the office on Saturdays and changing the world, and I can't do it. But if I come in on Monday, and I'm surrounded by really good people, anything can happen. Isn't that interesting?"

Shircliff is 88, and worries about the ugly divides showing up in this country, and frets for the world that's being left for his four grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

And at his age, he said, he feels as if he's slowing down as the world speeds up: An odd feeling. "The drumbeat is just getting faster and faster," he said.

SHIRCLIFF continues on A-3



Philanthropist and civic leader Bob Shircliff has been active in the Jacksonville community he's called home for the last 49 years. Now 88, Shircliff still holds business meetings and remains involved in charitable causes he holds dear. (Will Dickey/Florida Times-Union)

"You can sell things if you believe in them. Whether you're selling soft drinks or you're selling a cause, if you really believe in it, it's easy."

Bob Shircliff

Another Amazon center is coming

Company's second distribution warehouse in city set for Westside

By Chambers Williams
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Amazon will build a second, 1 million square-foot Jacksonville distribution center on the city's Westside in the Cecil Commerce Center, according to plans submitted to the city of Jacksonville.

It's the mystery "Project Velo" that city officials identified as a prospect in September, which they said at the time would employ 325 people to start, but could eventually hire up to 1,200. Plans call for the facility to open in 2019.

The building will be Amazon.com's second distribution center in Jacksonville. The first one announced in July is under construction on the Northside and expected to employ about 1,500 people after opening late next year.

The proposed distribution center for the Cecil Commerce Center, at 13333 103rd St., would be the latest in a string of recent successes for the city as it develops land at the former naval air station.

AMAZON continues on A-3

Attention on possible wrongful convictions

New state attorney Nelson may set up 'conviction integrity unit'

By Benjamin Conarck
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Incoming State Attorney Melissa Nelson said Monday she will consider assigning a group of prosecutors to seek out and reverse wrongful convictions, signaling an openness to a tenet of criminal justice reform that has grown increasingly popular in other parts of the country.

The establishment of a so-called "conviction integrity unit" at the local State Attorney's Office would make it the first in Florida to join an emerging trend that has taken hold in prosecutors' offices spanning Houston to New York.

"That is something that I'm very, very interested in," Nelson said during an editorial board meeting with the Times-Union on Monday afternoon.

NELSON continues on A-3



Nelson

At least 6 killed in Tenn. school bus accident

23 others taken to area hospitals; speed eyed as a factor in fatal wreck

Associated Press

CHATTANOOGA, TENN. | Bloodied students lay on stretchers, while other children walked away dazed with their parents after an elementary school bus crash that killed six Monday in Chattanooga.

Chattanooga police Chief Fred Fletcher said the crash was "every public safety professional's worst

nightmare."

The bus was carrying 35 children from Woodmore Elementary, students in kindergarten through fifth grade, when it crashed about 3:30 p.m., turned on its side and wrapped around a tree.

Fletcher said police were interviewing the bus driver to determine what happened and told reporters later that investigators were looking at speed "very, very strongly" as a factor. The bus was the

CRASH continues on A-3



Chattanooga Fire Department personnel work the scene of a fatal school bus crash Monday in Chattanooga, Tenn. Officials said late Monday there were multiple fatalities in the accident. (Chattanooga Fire Department/Associated Press)

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DAILY DEAL!

Two adult tickets for the Enchanted Christmas Village for \$22 Details, A-2

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CRASH

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only vehicle involved but the crash scene covers a significant area, he said.

The National Transportation Safety Board tweeted that a team would be heading to Chattanooga on Tuesday morning.

Twenty-three students were taken to hospitals, Fletcher said, but he did not have information about the extent of their injuries. Media reported it took about two hours to get the last children off the bus.

Television stations reported that people lined up to donate blood and some donors were asked to make appointments for Tuesday.

Kirk Kelly, interim superintendent for Hamilton County schools, said classes would be held on Tuesday, with counselors available for students and staff.

Hamilton County District Attorney Neal Fletcher said, but he did not have information about the extent of their injuries. Media reported it took about two hours to get the last children off the bus.



A woman escorts three children away from the scene of a fatal school bus wreck Monday in Chattanooga. (Angela Lewis Foster/Chattanooga Times Free Press)

Chattanooga police Assistant Chief Tracy Arnold said officials would not

identify the students who died, or their ages, until parents were notified.

“Our hearts go out, as well as the hearts of all these people behind me, to the families, the neighborhood, the school, for all the people involved in this, we assure you we are doing everything we can,” Fletcher said.

At the state Capitol in Nashville, Gov. Bill Haslam called the crash “a tragic event” and offered assistance.

“We’re going to do everything we can to assist in any way,” Haslam said. “It’s a sad situation anytime there’s a school bus with children involved, which there is in this case.”

SHIRCLIFF

Continued from A-1

Slowing down is relative though. He still shows up at his Riverside office five days a week, wearing a suit jacket and his customary bow tie.

About that bow tie: He laughed when told that the newspaper has plenty of file photos of him from the '60s and '70s and '80s wearing a regular straight tie, like everybody else.

He admits to it. As a young man, he switched full-time to bow ties when he was hauling around returned bottles at his family’s Pepsi-Cola bottling business; as dribs and drabs left in bottles spilled, regular ties quickly got soaked.

But as he moved up in management, he took to a conventional straight tie. He figured it made him look less collegiate, perhaps. More mature. And he could blend in, which seemed important.

Perhaps a quarter century ago, past those concerns, he went back to bow ties. “Damn it, I like my bow ties better,” he said. “I just flat-out stopped wearing my regular ties.”

And blending in no longer seemed so important either.

“From [age] 75 to 85, I had a Lexus sports convertible,” he said. “It was really neat. And then on my 85th birthday, my wife told me I needed something more ‘age-appropriate.’ So I got rid of it and got a regular car like everybody else.”

So now he gets to the office in a white Lexus sedan. Yet he’s still not like everybody else, say those who know him.

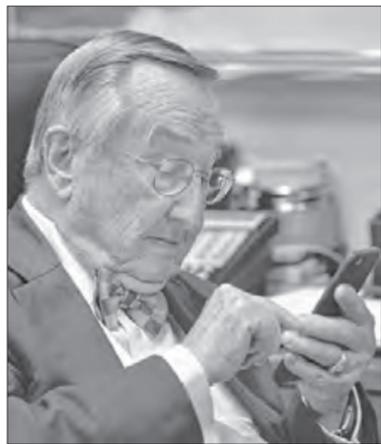
After all, not many people get a street named after them while they’re still living.

In 2007, the city renamed part of Barrs Street in Riverside, in front of St. Vincent’s Medical Center, where Shircliff for years was chairman of the hospital’s board of directors and its foundation. It became Shircliff Way, with a street sign that features a bow tie on it, and now serves as the address for the hospital.

Jane Lanier, president of the St. Vincent’s Foundation, said Shircliff has long been crucial to the nonprofit Catholic hospital. “His philanthropy exceeds millions,” she said. “I wouldn’t give an exact



Philanthropist and civic leader Bob Shircliff, who is a supporter of St. Vincent’s HealthCare, had a street at the hospital’s Riverside campus named for him. A copy of the sign is in his office. (Photos by Will Dickey/Florida Times-Union)



At age 88, Bob Shircliff still shows up at his Riverside office five days a week, wearing a suit jacket and his customary bow tie.

some more, then said: “A friend of mine once told me, ‘There’s no right way to do the wrong thing, so don’t even try it.’ ... I’ve been in business 60, 65 years; I think my success in business has been that my judgment is good and people trusted me. How’s that?”

SMALL TOWN ROOTS TO BIG CITY BUSINESSMAN

Shircliff grew up in a Catholic family in small-town Vincennes, Ind. His father, Thomas Maxwell Shircliff — known as T.M. or Max — was a businessman who made outdoor furniture and wicker baskets for floral displays.

Shircliff said his father was his biggest role model, someone who showed him the importance of following his faith, which to him meant helping others, whether it was giving food to beggars during the Depression or jobs to those who needed them. “He said, ‘Bob, you’ve got to make life better for other people.’”

And his father gave him a career path after opening up a Pepsi-Cola bottling plant in Vincennes, a short while after seeing young Bob enjoying a bottle of the hot-selling drink.

Shircliff began working in the plant as a boy and continued, but for a break at Indiana University, where he met his future

wife, Carol. The first time he saw her, she was sitting in a convertible, “the most beautiful girl I’d ever seen in my life.” They’ve been married 63 years.

In 1966, his family’s company bought the Pepsi bottling plant in Jacksonville, the group’s sixth plant. Shircliff moved down the next year.

The family soon sold its businesses, so its members could retire in comfort. Shircliff, though, was still young, and still interested in working. He moved into other ventures, mostly mergers and acquisitions in the beverage industry, and doing frequent consulting. Even today he has regular business meetings.

And he still drinks a Pepsi a day. “I like ‘em myself, so it’s easy for me to sell it,” he said.

He made a home in Jacksonville, which he likes to say is “a good place to be.” He became involved in civic and charitable groups, chaired the chamber of commerce, served on corporate boards and became active in Republican politics.

He’s received a number of awards over the years, the latest being a Lifetime Achievement Award on Nov. 16 from the First Coast chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

Mullaney, who’s now director of JU’s Public Policy Institute, is a longtime friend and admirer of Shircliff. “If you have a civic-minded concern and you want to make things better in the city of Jacksonville, at the very top of your list you think of turning to Bob Shircliff,” he said.

Shircliff says he’s “been blessed” to be able to donate money and raise money from others for St. Vincent’s, Jacksonville University, the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens, the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra and numerous other groups.

His motivation, he said, comes from his Catholic faith and the example set by his father. Then there’s a belief that’s he backing the right causes.

“You can sell things if you believe in them. Whether you’re selling soft drinks or you’re selling a cause, if you really believe in it, it’s easy,” he said. “It’d be terrible to sell something if you didn’t believe in it, is that right?”

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NATIONAL PHILANTHROPY DAY

Robert “Bob” T. Shircliff received the Life Achievement Award Friday at the Association of Fundraising Professionals Florida First Coast Chapter’s National Philanthropy Day Luncheon. Here are the other honorees:

- Outstanding Philanthropist – David and Linda Stein
- Outstanding Corporation – Florida Blue
- Outstanding Civic Organization – Arlington Rotary Club
- Outstanding Foundation – The Petway Family Foundation
- Outstanding Fundraising/Development Professional – Stanton Cadow
- Next Generation – Flagler College Enactus
- Small Business – The Bailey Group
- Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser – Richard Sisisky

amount, but I think his advice and presence is equal to his financial giving.”

Making the new street Shircliff Way — instead of, say, Shircliff Street — was deliberate, said Rick Mullaney, who was then the city’s general coun-

sel. It was meant to mark the Shircliff way of doing things.

Asked what that is, Shircliff paused. “You know, that’s a good question. I should have a good answer for that.”

He thought about it

NELSON

Continued from A-1

Rather than rely on defense attorneys to bring forward flawed convictions to argue in court, offices with integrity teams have a formalized process to hear directly from inmates and can also review past cases for mistakes. They can then decide on those cases without having to commit to costly and drawn out court battles.

Nelson said she plans to meet with the New York-based Innocence Project, a nonprofit devoted to reversing wrongful convictions, to discuss potentially creating such a unit. She said her main concern is cost. The units have necessitated annual budgets of about \$1 million or more in major urban corridors such as Brooklyn and Los Angeles.

The philosophy behind such units is to shift emphasis away from winning convictions and toward seeking justice on a fundamental level.

Charlie Cofer said he first learned of Nelson’s interest in creating such a unit after meeting with her Friday. He called the fact that Nelson is exploring the idea a very good sign.

“I hope that she is able to do it,” he said.

About 30 conviction integrity units have been launched around the country, more than half of them in the last two years, according to a report by the Quattrone Center for the Fair Administration of Justice at the University of Pennsylvania.

The units are popular in the northeastern United States, Texas, and some western states, but are virtually unheard of in the southeast.

The North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission provides some precedent for such an ideal to take hold in the southeast, but that commission was created by the state legislature, rather than a sitting prosecutor.

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AMAZON

Continued from A-1

The newest facility would be built by Dallas-based Hillwood Investment Properties, which entered into a contract in 2010 with the city for commercial development of 4,475 acres of the 17,224-acre Cecil site. Since then, companies such as GE Oil & Gas, Bridgestone Tire, Saft Battery and FedEx Ground have set up shop, bringing more than 1,200 jobs, said City Councilman Doyle Carter, who represents the district that includes Cecil Airport.

Amazon’s warehouse would be the biggest tenant so far in the Cecil Commerce Center.

City officials said in September that the company’s payroll would add about \$39 million annually to the Jacksonville economy.

The land, which is currently mostly wooded, is owned by the city, and would be sold to Hillwood for the distribution center. It would go for \$8,819 per acre, or a total of \$758,000, a city memo said in September.

In total, Amazon would provide a capital investment of about \$115 million for

equipment, furniture, land and real estate improvements, and in return, would receive a package of local and state financial incentives that would be based on creation of an initial 325 jobs. Average annual salary of those positions was said to be about \$50,000.

Under terms approved earlier by the City Council, the city would provide a “commitment of ... support in an amount not to exceed \$195,000” in tax incentives. That would be matched by \$780,000 from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

The city would also provide \$6.7 million in a “Recapture Enhanced Value” grant — basically a property tax break — and another \$200,000 grant to provide training for workers. The state would provide a \$420,000 training grant.

City, JAX Chamber and Amazon officials declined comment on the project on Monday. The property is already being cleared and Amazon applied for a building permit Friday. No official announcement of the project has been made by either side.

The process for Project Velo was similar to what

happened in the courting of Amazon for the Northside, which was originally dubbed Project Rex by city officials.

The internet retail giant closed a deal to build a distribution center here in July after being courted by the city for years. Amazon is already in the process of constructing the 800,000-square-foot distribution center on a 170-acre site on International Airport Boulevard and Pecan Park Road, just north of Interstate 295. That facility will employ 1,500 people at the distribution center by the time it is operational by the end of 2017.

City Economic Development Office analysts in a September memo touted the benefits of Project Velo to Jacksonville.

“The project location will make jobs accessible to residents in some of Jacksonville’s high unemployment areas. ... Project Velo will also help further the city’s goal of making Alliance Florida at Cecil Commerce Center one of the premier job centers and industrial parks in the Southeastern U.S.,” the memo said.

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Pope extends permission on abortion forgiveness

By Frances D’Emilio
Associated Press

VATICAN CITY | Pope Francis is allowing all priests to absolve the faithful of the “grave sin” of abortion, extending indefinitely the special permission he had granted for the duration of the just-ended Holy Year of Mercy.

Francis wrote in the Apostolic Letter made public by the Vatican on Monday that “there is no sin that God’s mercy cannot reach and wipe away when it finds a repentant heart seeking to be reconciled” with God.

But he also wrote: “I wish to restate as firmly as I can that abortion is a grave sin, since it puts an end to an innocent life.”

Because the Roman Catholic Church holds abortion to be such a serious sin, it was long a matter for a bishop who could either hear the woman’s confession himself or delegate that to a priest who was expert in such situations.

But in 2015, Francis allowed all rank-and-file priests for the duration of the Holy Year to grant absolution for an abortion. The Holy Year, which began on Dec. 8, 2015, ended on Sunday, Nov. 20, 2016, the day he signed the letter.

By permitting all priests to absolve the sin of abortion, Francis was further applying his vision of a merciful church. Last year, he wrote that some women who had abortions felt they had no choice but to make “this agonizing and painful decision.”

“May every priest, therefore, be a guide, support and comfort to penitents on this journey of special reconciliation” after abortion, Francis said in his latest letter.

A top Holy See official, Monsignor Rino Fisichella, told a news conference at the Vatican on Monday that the pope’s words applied also to those who were involved in an abortion.

“The sin of abortion is technically an expression that includes all the people who are involved in an abortion,” Fisichella said in response to a question from The Associated Press. “Thus from the women to the nurse to the doctor and whoever supports this procedure.”

Fisichella added: “The sin of abortion is inclusive. Thus forgiveness for the sin of abortion is all-inclusive and extends to all those who are participants in this sin.”

In his Apostolic Letter, Francis explained his rationale: “Lest any obstacle arise between the request for reconciliation and God’s forgiveness, I henceforth grant to all priests, in virtue of their ministry, the faculty to absolve those who have committed the sin of procured abortion.”

Four cardinals, including archconservative U.S. Cardinal Raymond Burke, recently criticized Francis for what they indicated was ambiguity in past statements on whether divorced Catholics who remarry can receive Communion. Burke and the others expressed fear that Francis was causing “confusion” by saying the matter could be left to the discernment of local priests. Church teaching holds such Catholics are adulterers living in sin, and thus shouldn’t receive Communion.

In the letter on abortion, Francis made plain that there can be no ambiguity in laying out moral principles, even while stressing the church’s merciful side.

Addressing priests in part of the 10-page letter, Francis said: “I ask you to be welcoming to all who, witness of fatherly love whatever the gravity of the sin involved, attentive in helping penitents to reflect on the evil they have done, clear in presenting moral principles, willing to walk patiently beside the faithful on their penitential journey, farsighted in discerning individual cases and generous in dispensing God’s forgiveness.”

“Mercy cannot become a mere parenthesis in the life of the church; it constitutes her very existence,” Francis wrote.