

The Florida Times-Union

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\$2



HOW FUN IS GETTING DRUNK?

Researchers trying to find booze-happiness sweet spot **Health, E-1**

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GATORS NOT SUSPECTS – YET – AFTER BODY FOUND
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Remarkable Seniors Julian Robertson

The play is the thing that transformed a life



Provided by Cathy Jones

Julian Robertson had trouble reading and writing but is now a playwright, an actor and a graduate of Douglas Anderson School of the Arts who has a four-year scholarship to Juilliard School in New York.

Douglas Anderson graduate overcame learning, health, financial issues and is heading to Juilliard

By Denise Smith Amos
denise.amos@jacksonville.com

Douglas Anderson graduate Julian Robertson knew he wanted to act when as a youngster he sensed he could play dead better than the actors on TV.

Testing that theory, he frightened his mother so bad one day she enrolled him in a summer theater camp.

There, a director who also was a playwright asked for volunteers and Julian asked to play the lead. Julian was a slow reader and had no idea how much work it would take just to memorize his part, but he did it.

Julian struggled with reading and writing

throughout elementary and middle school. Test questions “terrified” him, he hated reading aloud in class, and he didn’t know much about spelling, grammar or composition.

“I struggled to just be able to make sense of the text,” he said. “My strength was in improvising.”

Julian’s mother talked him into auditioning for LaVilla School of the Arts and from there he got into the Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, where he has acted in numerous plays and written seven, including two which were performed.

This school year he was cast in every play at school, but he missed the first one when

JULIAN continues on A-4

ABOUT THIS SERIES

Remarkable Seniors looks at outstanding high school students who overcame a wide variety of difficulties to graduate with success. In tomorrow’s story, a Bishop Snyder High School student flourishes after he lost his sight when his father tried to kill him.

Judge may decide on write-ins this week

Suit argues Leigh is a ‘sham candidate’ to help Corey

By Larry Hannan
larry.hannan@jacksonville.com

A large number of people in Jacksonville, including civil rights leaders, believe Kenny Leigh is a sham candidate who filed as a write-in to help 4th Judicial Circuit State Attorney Angela Corey get re-elected.

Circuit Judge James Daniel now must decide whether Leigh’s intent in becoming a write-in candidate for state attorney matters under the law.

Daniel heard motions Tuesday to dismiss a lawsuit filed against Leigh, best known for running a family-law practice that only accepts men as clients, and Corey’s campaign manager, Alexander Pantinakis.

Pantinakis filed Leigh’s candidacy paperwork shortly after Republican Melissa Nelson. By having an opponent in the general election, it closed the primary election to the 440,000 people in Clay, Duval and Nassau counties who are Democrats or have no political party affiliation.

Daniel did not issue a ruling but said he would seek to get one out in the next few days. Elections officials have told Daniel they want the lawsuit dealt with by June 24 so they can start printing ballots.

Corey is running against Nelson and Wes-

LAWSUIT continues on A-4



Daniel



Leigh

Suicide attempt by man accused of killing priest

Murray, taken into custody April 13, tried to hang himself, sheriff says

By Doug Stutsman
Augusta Chronicle

Steven James Murray, the man accused of killing a St. Johns County priest, attempted to hang himself Tuesday evening at the Burke County jail, according to Burke County Sheriff Greg Coursey.

Murray was taken to Burke County Medical Center about 6:30 p.m. and was later returned to jail. Coursey said Murray tried to hang himself with a bed sheet.

“He’s been upset that smoking isn’t allowed in the jail,” Coursey said. “He keeps asking to smoke a cigarette.”

Murray, 28, was taken into custody April 13. The body of the Rev. Rene Robert, who had been missing, was found April 18 in a wooded area in the northern part of Burke County, Ga.

According to Coursey, Murray will remain on suicide watch at the jail.



Murray

Part of Curry’s pension pitch: 30 percent property tax hike

Mayor says it’s possible if voters don’t approve half-cent sales tax to pay off the city’s pension debt

By David Bauerlein
david.bauerlein@jacksonville.com

After The Chat’s co-hosts riffed on topics like the latest episodes of Dancing with the Stars and The Voice, the daytime talk show welcomed Mayor Lenny Curry to the soundstage at First Coast News to chat about pension debt and taxes.

The following day, Curry took a seat inside WJCT’s radio booth and fielded questions from callers during the quarterly broadcast of Policy Matters hosted by Rick Mullaney, director of Jacksonville University’s Public Policy

Institute.

As different as the forums were, Curry drummed home the same message: Jacksonville is on the brink of going over the “financial cliff.” But if voters pass a half-cent sales tax on Aug. 30, the city can take a giant step toward solving its pension problems once and for all. Opposing the sales tax, Curry warned, will mean ugly alternatives, such as a whopping 30 percent increase in the property tax rate.

Curry, who vows that a property-tax rate increase won’t happen on his watch, is the first Jacksonville official to say such a large tax increase would occur at some point if voters don’t approve the sales tax. In the past, discussions of property tax increases have focused on a much smaller amount.

CURRY continues on A-4



Bruce.Lipsky@jacksonville.com

Mayor Lenny Curry talked about his half-cent sales tax to fund the city’s pension program during a visit to “The Chat.”

Weather
Watching the tropics
Forecast on A-2

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70 Thursday morning's low

DAILY DEAL!

Florida Adventure Sports: Flight and picture package for \$104 **Details, A-2**

Classified D-4 **Health-Fitness** E
Comics E-2 **Legals** C-7
Crosswords D-5, E-2 **Money** D
Editorials A6 **Obituaries** B-4

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JULIAN

Continued from A-1

his appendix burst and he suffered kidney failure last fall.

Ultimately, Julian overcame his fear of words the way he tackled his financial challenges and even homelessness, through determination, a passion for acting and help from generous people, he says.

In ninth grade, a teacher required each student to read aloud to a partner for at least 10 minutes a day. Like with “cold reading” a play, they were to look at each sentence, process it and then recite it looking at their partner, not the book.

Julian, who borrowed books from juniors and seniors, said he had to look up words in a dictionary, “but by the end of ninth grade I could read.”

He overcame his writing fears his sophomore year, when a teacher noticed he liked to rap with his friends and he began turning that into poetry. He said she was the first to tell him he was a good writer but he should practice it every day.

That year he challenged himself by stringing multiple vocabulary words into one, long “Shakespeare-like” sentence every school day. By the end of the year, he was writing plays, including his first comedy.

For someone who once struggled with spelling, grammar and organization, he said he found it easy to write plays.

“I have lots of ideas but I don’t necessarily have them distilled down into a single thought,” he said.

“I get scattered concepts and details that don’t not necessarily fall together. I end up writing an essay that goes 18 different ways. But plays have characters who can be thinking in 18 different ways.”

Some of Julian’s writ-



Provided Cathy Jones

Julian Robertson finds writing plays is an easy way to express his ideas.

ings are about being a young black man making his way in the world. The themes are universal.

“Everybody spends a lot of time in their life figuring out what their purpose is,” he said. “What’s the reason I’m here? There’s got to be something. What’s out there for me?”

Julian once thought football would be his future. When he was younger, his older brother urged him to shoot for the pros and his mother urged him to play in high school to win a football scholarship.

The plays could wait, she said.

He argued they couldn’t, and he promised her he’d still get a scholarship.

It was yoga – not football – that had convinced him to pursue a life of the mind rather than of sport.

In seventh grade he hurt his back doing yoga and became paralyzed and numb from his legs downward. Though it lasted five or six hours and doctors told him he’d be all right, “it was crazy scary,” Julian recalled.

Julian doesn’t talk much about his other great challenges, such as his fam-

ily’s financial struggles, his grandmother’s illness, his father’s absence and the six months he shared a school friend’s home.

Sometimes hints would come out in his plays, said Kevin Covert, Douglas Anderson’s theater department chairman.

“Julian has been homeless, gone hungry and has had to go without many of the things most of the students at our school take for granted,” Covert said. “He does this with dignity and a positive attitude that humbles everyone who knows him.”

After Julian recovered from his burst appendix, he auditioned for and won a finalist spot in the National YoungArts competition, which included a week of workshops and master classes in an arts program that boasts such alums as Viola Davis, Kerry Washington, Nicki Minaj and Josh Groban.

There, Julian gained confidence in his abilities. Soon afterward, he was trudging through a New York City blizzard to audition at the The Juilliard School in New York.

Julian’s shoes had holes, so by the time he reached the audition he was late, his pants were wet, he

thought he had frostbite and he had to borrow a friend’s shoes, which were too small.

He underwent three rounds of auditions, including a final call-back a month later, before Juilliard accepted him and offered a full-tuition scholarship for four years.

Julian still must raise tens of thousands of dollars for room, board and other fees.

His mother set up a GoFundMe site (“Help me send my Julian to Juilliard;” <https://www.gofundme.com/27mcmrvw>) and Julian has written and is producing a play that will be performed this summer to raise money.

Julian said he is grateful and inspired by his mother, “who has a heart big enough to move a bus” and by his friends and their families and the artists and educators he has worked with.

He said it’s hard to ask for help, but he has learned there are many generous people out there. And it’s frightening to pursue your art even when it’s your passion.

“But you have to be intrepid, fearless,” he said.

Denise Amos: (904) 359-4083

MORE REMARKABLE SENIORS

Madison Moyer has become “the student example” for the



Automotive Career and Technical Education academy at Clay High, a program dominated by males, said Frank Mancuso, an automotive teacher. She “achieved just about every accolade possible so far in the program.” She has won an automotive service excellence brake certification, a Clay County Cruzers scholarship and a Construction Career Days scholarship. A member of the National Honor Society, Madison plans to attend the Florida Institute of Technology for mechanical engineering this fall.

Victor Mills is a “driven, determined, focused, ambitious” student leader,



says Mia D. Harris, guidance counselor at Westside High. He ranks in the top 10 percent of his class and won many prizes for academics and extracurricular activities. He serves as a sergeant of the Aerospace Air Force ROTC, and is in the National Honor Society and is a Best Buddy leader. He also is a member of the 5,000 Role Models of Excellence program.

Almetric Tucker says her school’s smaller class sizes let her focus on studies



and developing “tools for a successful life.” She has consistently made honor roll and ranks 10th in her graduating class. A first-generation college student, Almetric plans to study nursing and to play basketball at Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville.

Larry Hannan: (904) 359-4470

Trump reveals donations to veterans

Some checks sent on day of report questioning disbursement

By Jonathan Lemire & Jill Colvin
Associated Press

NEW YORK | Under pressure to account for money he claimed to raise for veterans, an irritated Donald Trump lambasted the news media Tuesday for pressing the issue and listed charities he said have now received millions of dollars from a fundraiser he held in January.

Phone calls to all 41 of the groups by The Associated Press brought more than two-dozen responses Tuesday. About half reported checks from Trump within the past week, typically dated May 24, the day The Washington Post published a story questioning whether he had distributed all of the money.

Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, told reporters at a testy news conference in New York that the fundraiser, held at the same time as a Fox News GOP debate he was boycotting, raised \$5.6 million. He previously had declined to disclose which charities had received the funds, and his campaign has gone back and forth about how much was raised.

“The money’s all been sent,” Trump said at the news conference at Trump Tower on Tuesday.

He repeatedly criticized the press for making the money an issue, saying reporters “should be ashamed of themselves” for asking where the money had gone.

Throughout the event, Trump slammed the media as “unbelievably dishonest” and “sleazy” for its treatment of the issue. He said repeatedly that he didn’t want credit for the fundraising but seemed peeved that he wasn’t thanked for it.

“Instead of being like, ‘Thank you very much, Mr. Trump,’ or ‘Trump did a good job,’ everyone’s saying, ‘Who got it? Who got it? Who got it?’ And you make me look very bad,” Trump complained, taking on reporters in the room. “I have never received such bad publicity for doing such a good job.”

The Trump campaign listed donations to 41 veterans groups, including one that had not yet been sent money due to a vetting issue. The Associated Press spoke or left messages Tuesday with each of the organizations.

K9s for Warriors, the Nocatee-based group that pairs veterans suffering from PTSD with service dogs, received \$50,000 from Trump.

Among the checks sent out on May 24 was \$1 million from Trump himself, sent to the Marine Corps-Law Enforcement Foundation, a group that provides scholarships to the children of Marines and federal agents killed in the line of duty. Trump’s campaign had previously told the newspaper that Trump’s promised \$1 million donation had already been distributed.

Trump’s campaign manager Corey Lewandowski had originally told the Post that the event had raised about \$4.5 million — less than the \$6 million originally announced by Trump — because some who’d pledged contributions had backed out. Lewandowski also said all the money had been given out.

Trump had claimed during the fundraiser that he’d raised \$6 million through a combination of pledges from wealthy friends, the public and \$1 million from himself after the splashy telethon-style fundraiser he held in Iowa in January in place of the Fox debate.

But his campaign refused for months to disclose which charities had received the money, leading some news organizations and critics to question whether the money raised was less than he had said.

David Bauerlein: (904) 359-4581

LAWSUIT

Continued from A-1

ley White, both former employees. All three are Republicans, but the Aug. 30 primary would have been open to all registered voters in Duval, Clay and Nassau counties if Leigh did not file to run as a write-in candidate.

Attorneys Bill Sheppard and Samuel Jacobson filed a lawsuit on behalf of several people who are not Republicans and asked the court to rule that “Leigh’s sham candidacy is not ‘opposition’” and the primary should be open to all voters.

Leigh, who represented himself in court Tuesday, argued his intent didn’t matter and that under the law Daniel had no right to question his motivation. He cited previous rulings by the Florida Supreme Court that denied requests to reopen a primary after a write-in candidate filed.

At one point Daniel asked Leigh if he wanted to win the election. Leigh responded by saying there was no proof he wasn’t running to

win and that his motive for filing as a write-in candidate was irrelevant.

Attorney Lindsey Brock, who represents Pantinakis, also told Daniel that going forward with the lawsuit would lead to a “slippery slope” where the legitimacy of most write-in candidates could be challenged.

Brock also said Leigh didn’t have to win the election to be a valid candidate. Daniel said he agreed with that, but expressed concern that Leigh’s actions suggest he actually wants Angela Corey to win.

Leigh, a registered Republican, donated money to Corey’s campaign as well as had her campaign manager file his paperwork. Pantinakis has previously said he drove to Tallahassee and filed Leigh’s paperwork in his role as a Republican Party state committeeman, not as Corey’s campaign manager.



Corey

Sheppard and Jacobson argue Leigh’s candidacy disenfranchised all the registered voters who are not Republicans. They also say the evidence of fraud is high because of Pantinakis’ role in filing the papers and Leigh’s previous history of being a Corey supporter.

Daniel said his ruling would likely be based on whether Leigh was providing meaningful opposition to the winner of the Republican primary and seemed to imply that he was trying to figure out if Leigh was planning to run a real campaign for state attorney. The judge said if Leigh has no intention of running a campaign, he struggles to see how that’s meaningful opposition.

Daniel also appeared to reject the suggestion that Leigh’s intent didn’t matter, at one point saying previous Supreme Court rulings never said that judges couldn’t look into the intent of write-in candidates.

Tuesday’s hearing was packed with civil rights supporters. Afterward

state Sen. Audrey Gibson, D-Jacksonville, said everyone should get a say in who the top prosecutor is in Jacksonville.

“It’s important that everyone gets to weigh in,” Gibson said.

Jacksonville NAACP Chairman Isaiah Rumlin also said the Florida Legislature needs to change the law to keep this from happening again.

Gibson, Rumlin, former state Sen. Tony Hill and Neil Henrichsen, chairman of the Duval County Democratic Party Executive Committee, all said they believed Leigh was a sham candidate who got into the race to help Corey get re-elected.

Voters amended the state Constitution in 1998 to say primaries must be open if the winner of the primary will face no opposition. In 2000 then-Secretary of State Katherine Harris wrote an opinion that said write-in candidates can close primaries. This year the Florida Supreme Court ruled that write-ins don’t need to have a legitimate chance

to win to count as opposition.

Corey has said she didn’t know anything about her campaign manager filing Leigh’s paperwork until after it happened.

But Corey also said it wasn’t a big deal because anyone who wants to vote in the election can reregister as a Republican until the end of July.

Hill, who attended Tuesday’s hearing, said that wasn’t realistic.

Democrats have primaries for the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate they want to vote in and will not be able to cast ballots in those races if they reregister as Republicans, Hill said.

Daniel also expressed doubt when Leigh and Brock argued that no one was being disenfranchised because they could all become Republicans by Aug. 1 and vote in the state attorney’s race.

“For many people their political affiliation is key part of who they are,” Daniel said.

Larry Hannan: (904) 359-4470

CURRY

Continued from A-1

The four co-hosts of The Chat, which broadcasts live each afternoon, reacted with surprise and dismay when Curry said a 30 percent increase would happen at some point without a half-cent sales tax.

“Please don’t do that,” co-host Henny Stewart said.

“So vote yes,” Curry said.

The other horrible option, he said, would be to restructure the city’s debts like Detroit did. Detroit declared bankruptcy.

Over the next three months, Jacksonville residents can expect to hear that choice put squarely before them as Curry stumps for the sales tax.

If approved by voters, the half-cent sales tax for pension debt would take effect immediately after the half-cent sales tax for the Better Jacksonville Plan expires in 2030. Curry says that wouldn’t be a tax increase because the overall sales tax would be the same as it is now.

As for Curry’s warnings of a 30 percent property tax increase, the mayor’s

office said Tuesday that figure is based on the huge amount of pension debt carried by the city. The city has about \$2.85 billion in unfunded liabilities for its police and fire, general employees and corrections officers plans.

The city is paying \$260 million this year for pension contributions, and most of that is to pay down a portion of the pension debt. If the city had no pension debt, its cost would be \$75 million.

“That gap far exceeds a 30 percent millage rate increase and will continue to widen as years progress,” mayoral spokeswoman Marsha Oliver said.

The city will pay about \$280 million next year for pension costs. The city hired an actuarial firm to provide year-by-year projections through 2045, showing what impact future pension costs will have on the city’s budget.

A 30 percent increase in the property tax rate would generate a huge amount of money.

This year, the city’s portion of the tax rate (excluding schools and other taxing entities) is 11.44 mills,

or \$11.44 for each \$1,000 of taxable property value. A 30 percent increase would add another 3.43 mills to the tax rate. One mill raises \$47.6 million, so a 3.43 mill increase would generate \$163 million for city coffers.

John Winkler, president of the Concerned Taxpayers of Duval County, said he’s never heard anyone but Curry say the city would need a 30 percent property tax rate for its pension costs.

“It’s an arbitrary number,” he said. “It’s a red herring kind of argument. It’s a straw man.”

He said “you can pick any number you want” that the city could be spending for other needs besides pension costs and say that’s how much the city would have to raise property taxes.

And he said it’s not clear how a sales tax that takes effect after 2030 would do anything for the city’s finances until then.

One option would be for the city to decide on a year-by-year basis to borrow money that would be repaid when the sales tax starts.

The borrowed money would pay a portion of the city’s annual pension contribution.

When Curry appeared on the Policy Matters radio show, a caller asked if the city would use that option to “borrow to the hilt.”

Curry said borrowing is a possible scenario, but it wouldn’t necessarily happen. The city could continue with “really tight, austere” budgets until the pension tax kicks in, he said. If the city were to borrow, that would be done on a vote by City Council with public hearings as a “check and balance for the taxpayers and the citizens,” he said.

The mayor also fielded several questions about what kind of retirement plans city employees would have if voters approve the sales tax.

Curry said the city would close the existing pension plans to new employees and create brand-new retirement plans for them. The details would be hammered out in collective bargaining with unions.

He said his plan will ensure pension problem is solved “once and for all.”