

# opinion

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**A VERSE FOR TODAY**  
And above all things have fervent love  
for one another, for "love will cover a  
multitude of sins."  
**1 Peter 4:8**

# Good strides made on homelessness

Here's the good news about homelessness in Jacksonville:

- It has been reduced by 30 percent over the past four years.
  - Our city has no shortage of tireless social service professionals, dedicated agencies and strong leaders — like Cindy Funkhouser, Dawn Gilman and Shannon Nazworth, among others — committed to the battle.
- Here's the bad news:
- There are still an estimated 300 (or more) people sleeping on Jacksonville streets each night.
  - There is still a fear that we may squander the improvement we've made if we fail to ratchet up our resources and strategies.
- Here's the encouraging news:
- A promising new partnership has been formed to dramatically tackle the above challenges.
  - It's an initiative with real potential for success because it already has been successful in another large Florida city, Orlando.

## ORLANDO SUCCESS STORY

Recently, Jacksonville University's Public Policy Institute hosted a breakfast seminar to herald its partnership with Changing Homelessness (the lead nonprofit advocating for the area homeless) and Lead Homelessness (a national group launched and led by renowned homeless advocate Andrae Bailey).

Under the partnership, the three entities will work together — and with the Mayor's Office, which already has a homelessness task force in place — to promote a bolder game plan to reduce our city's homeless numbers. And the charismatic Bailey was the ideal person to lead the kickoff seminar.

As the CEO of the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness from 2013 to last year, Bailey was tasked with attacking homelessness in Orlando.

Bailey rallied community and elected leaders across Orlando, including longtime Mayor Buddy Dyer, to make

a true commitment to defeating homelessness.

Three years later, the results have been amazing:

- Homelessness has been reduced by 60 percent in Orlando — with more than 1,000 previously homeless veterans now in housing.
- Both local government and major organizations in the Orlando area have made massive financial investments — most notably Florida Hospital, which made a three-year, \$6 million pledge to support the anti-homelessness campaign.

Bailey said while it's unrealistic to expect a city to have no homeless people, it can make homelessness "rare, brief and onetime in nature" for individuals.

The key, Bailey said, relies in how successfully a city follows what he called the "12 dynamics that can end homelessness in a community."

## TWELVE KEY STEPS

Bailey said the 12 ingredients are:

- Commitment from top elected officials.
- "You need top elected officials to be involved, or there will always be a ceiling on what you can accomplish," Bailey said.
- Adopt the "Housing First" model.
- The main priority must be getting homeless individuals into stable housing as quickly as possible, Bailey said, and speed up their ability to find help for the problems — mental health challenges, physical disabilities, etc. — that likely led to them being on the streets.
- "No city in the United States has ever made statistical progress on homelessness without using the Housing First model," Bailey told the audience.
- Make sure the philanthropic community is an active participant.
- Embrace advocacy that changes what people believe about homelessness.
- "People don't make the choice to be homeless," Bailey said. "So we have to change (that perception)."
- Engage the business community.
- Constantly analyze how you're spending money.
- Harness the voice of faith leaders.



Mayor Lenny Curry and daughter Bridget, 7, helped volunteer Percilla Eberhart serve Thanksgiving meals to the homeless last year at the City Rescue Mission. (Bob Self/Florida Times-Union)

An ordained pastor, Bailey said faith leaders help a community embrace its moral responsibility to reduce homelessness.

- Learn from other cities and states.
  - Utah has significantly dropped its homelessness rate by adopting the Housing First model while Cleveland provides round-the-clock shelters that also give homeless individuals easy access to needed services.
  - Focus on reducing the number of veterans who are chronically homeless.
  - Create a long-term governing structure for addressing homelessness in the city.
  - That will ensure that the anti-homeless effort will be on stable ground even as elected officials change.
  - Use data to ensure accountability.
  - Keep refining your strategy to ensure that resources are in place for the long haul.
- The 12 steps are ambitious — perhaps even daunting. But they are 12 steps worth pursuing to bring our city one step closer to declaring victory over homelessness.

## Mandarin

### Consider property owners' views on zoning changes

Amanda Williamson's recent article about the Mandarin zoning changes proposed for the Dockside Estates project was entirely accurate, professional and unbiased.

As a long-time resident of Mandarin and a participant at the last two zoning meetings regarding this property, I feel betrayed by City Councilman Matt Schellenberg's position. He maintains that keeping the current zoning would be "unfair" to the current property owner and the new developer because they have a right to sell and develop property as they see fit.

Nowhere in Mandarin does a property owner have this right. The city has enforced restrictions on property owners about all sorts of items.

For example, you can't just cut down certain trees, you can't build certain structures and you can't build beyond a certain height.

Several years ago Mandarin residents overwhelmingly endorsed the idea of one house per acre on certain parts of Mandarin Road. Then the residents approved the Mandarin Overlay regulations with the notion that Mandarin should be preserved as a "historic and scenic corridor." People move to Mandarin because of its sylvan environment.

Instead of a strict interpretation of the RR-1 acre zoning rules, perhaps Schellenberg and the City Council should consider the wishes of Mandarin residents most impacted by a zoning change.

Schellenberg is quoted as saying we are just talking about 12 other houses — but those 12 houses could set a zoning precedent that current Mandarin residents do not want. Also while the property is 9.3 acres in size, almost 2 acres of that space is devoted to a required retention pond, which means the 21 total houses will be on about 6.75 acres after you subtract roads.

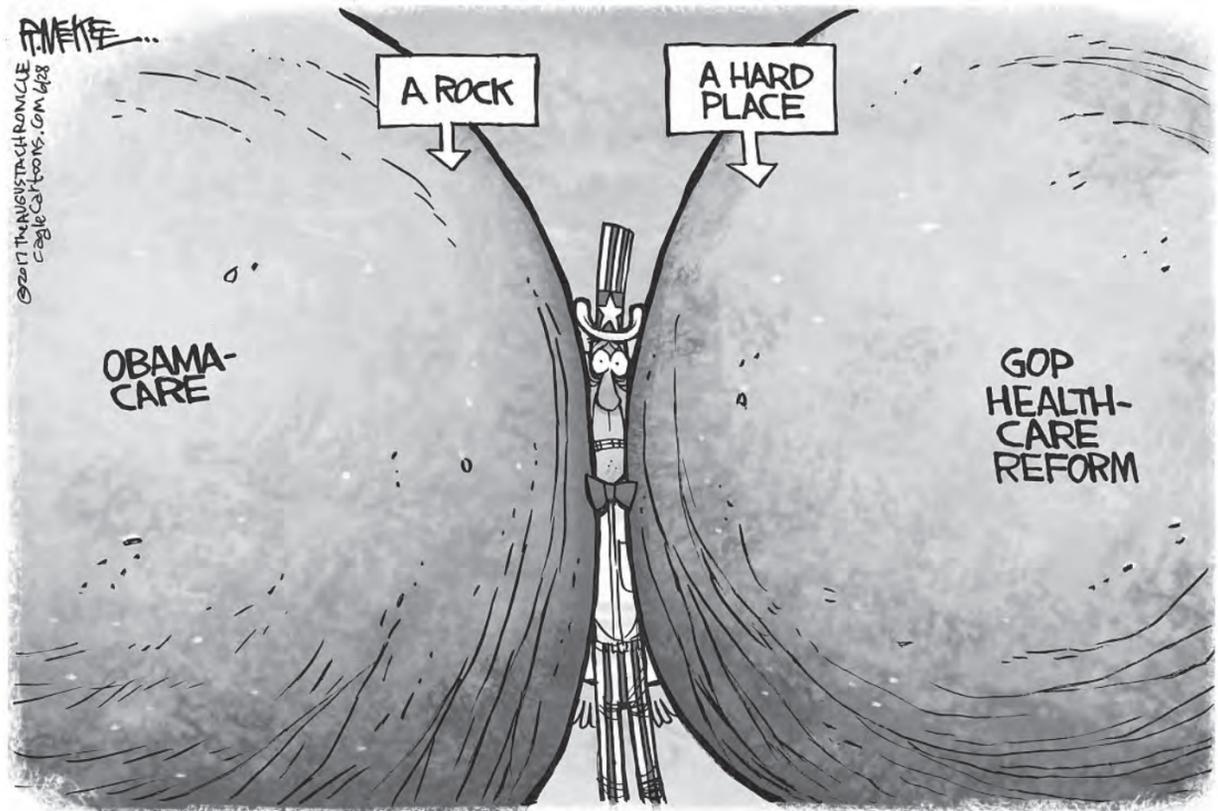
My second point: How is it possible that the city's traffic division can change a small, country road less than a half-mile from two-way to one-way without input from those residents most affected by this change?

The current two-way designation forces all drivers to slow down to a safe speed, changing this to one-way will allow for increased speed through this narrow corridor. The road is considered substandard now; allowing faster traffic will accelerate its decline.

Lastly, be assured that Mandarin residents are not against this property being developed. We are against it being developed in a manner directly opposed to the spirit, character and historic nature of this area.

**Joe Melanson**, Mandarin resident

## Another view: Rick McKee The Augusta Chronicle



## Letters from Readers

### REFUGEE FROM IRAQ

#### WELCOMED IN JACKSONVILLE

My family and I were forced to leave everything behind after our lives were threatened due to my husband's work with American companies in Iraq.

As with many refugees, I would have preferred to remain in my homeland. It was 2010 and my family felt very unsafe. Therefore, we applied for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

It was a long and involved process with intensive screenings and security checks.

We had an interview with the Department of Homeland Security and intensive screenings that included Homeland Security and the FBI. Finally, we had health screenings and were approved to travel to the United States.

We received welcoming help from the community here in Jacksonville. Today, we are proud citizens of the United States.

**Basma Alawee**, teacher, Florida Refugee Congress delegate, Jacksonville

### ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

#### OUT WITH MEAT, IN WITH TOFU

For the millions of environmentalists and scientists who are up in arms over President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw our nation from the Paris climate agreement, I have one simple question to ask: Have you and your family adopted a vegan diet?

If not, then your hand-wringing over climate change is hypocritical.

Livestock and their byproducts are responsible for 51 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions — and animal agriculture is a leading cause of almost every environmental problem.

So don't just rail about policy issues beyond your control. Just take action by controlling what you can — the environmental footprint of your diet.

If just a simple majority in the Paris agreement signatory nations removed animal products from their diets, we would

be well on the way to reversing rising temperatures without one single advancement in energy technology.

If you're serious, you'll go vegan.

**Dick Stokes**, Gainesville

### HEALTH CARE

#### A INTRIGUING SOLUTION

Cut out the insurance companies! Each hospital should offer any resident living in a ZIP Code within 25 miles of it the right to join a "Hospital Membership Program" that would allow that person to come in for any medical need.

Hospitals must become full-service medical facilities, so each person would be charged a monthly membership fee based on age — \$50 monthly for up to age 13, \$75 for ages 14 to 26, \$100 for 27 to 45, \$125 for 46 to 55 and \$150 for 56 to 67.

After that, it's Medicaid. The money would come directly to the hospital every month; it wouldn't have to spend money dealing with insurance companies in order to receive payments.

And doctors would be paid salaries so they could provide care based on need — without resorting to doing unnecessary surgeries and procedures to get more money.

This would create "Community Hospitals" that serve us and not insurance companies.

People who travel and need medical care nationwide could buy insurance. Hospitals could have networks to cover their members who are away from their primary hospital.

With an average rate of \$100 per person, a hospital with 50,000 members would have monthly income of \$5 million.

National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey Statistics show that for every 50,000 residents there are 56 ambulance visits per day, and that's the highest end. The average large hospital can handle that easily. Add another 100 non-ambulance visits per day, and that is still easy for a large hospital.

Even if these numbers were increased

by 25 percent, the average hospital would profit at least \$500,000 a month.

If we do not move to a national single-payer plan, this is the only option that will work, that will keep costs to consumers affordable and keep health care private.

**John Beatty**, Atlantic Beach

### CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS

#### JUST GET RID OF THEM

Jacksonville should follow the lead of New Orleans and rid itself of all Confederate statues and monuments.

And it's time for Robert E. Lee High School to change its name.

Such memorials — and the Confederate battle flag — are insulting to African-Americans, to our country and to Old Glory herself. Let us stop celebrating the evil legacy of racism and violence that has haunted us for so long.

**Scott McCorkle**, Ponte Vedra Beach

### THE AMERICAN LEFT

#### STUCK IN ITS BUBBLE

The losing left is still trying to sell us their agenda by continuing the same rhetoric of unfounded, canned comments as a base for its standard attacks on the fabric of my country.

A self-serving Miami Herald liberal columnist commented on "the devastating agenda of the Republican Party."

The only devastation would be to the failing policies put in place when Nancy Pelosi was House speaker and Barack Obama was president of the United States.

Another example is the comment about "police randomly killing African-Americans" when the facts of most cases show that these shootings could have been avoided by showing respect to police when they are trying to do their jobs.

Hopefully, the lies and hypocrisy we have been subjected to for so long from fake news — and the formerly "mainstream" media — will continue to be diminished.

**Kelly Morrow**, Jacksonville

### LETTER POLICY

Letters of about 200 words are preferred. Letters are edited for space, clarity and newspaper style. All letters should include a name, address, occupation and telephone number.

**Email:** letters@jacksonville.com  
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