

# The Pyramid Experience

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## Sunshine City Rock Band Hits The Road

By Danny Wood  
Performing Arts Coordinator

The Sunshine City Rock Band went on an epic journey this year. We traveled across the red hills of Tallahassee, through the swampy Gator territory of Gainesville, all the way to the neatly cut hedges of Orlando to play our music to new audiences. It was our first tour, and it went very well.

Our first stop was at the ARC of Alachua County in Gainesville. Alachua ARC is an Adult Day Training center with a wonderful spacious building where clients with developmental disabilities work on a large array of skills.

Sunshine City performed to a cafeteria full of excited fans who weren't afraid to cut a rug or sing along. We received great compliments, a bunch of requests and free lunches.

Our next stop was a Disney resort hotel in Orlando to perform at the annual Family Café conference. The two days we spent there were filled with meeting friends, making fans, swimming, and checking out the booths.

Bass player **Blake Russell's** favorite part of Family Café was the archery booth. "I kept on hitting the bulls-eye," he exclaimed. "It was fun."

On the way home, we stopped back in Gainesville to get a bite to eat and to explore the Uni-



*Sunshine City Band at the Swamp at The University of Florida.*

versity of Florida football stadium. Diehard Gator fans, bass player Blake Russell and drummer **Nate Sailor** really enjoyed this, and we spent 45 minutes taking pictures to help everyone remember this highlight during an already memorable trip.

The football stadium left a strong impression on Mr. Russell. "It was fun going out of town with my favorite rock band friends, and especially going to the stadium."

Mr. Sailor added, "Stepping onto the Gator field was magic in the making. It was a dream of mine since I was a little boy, and it's the best thing that's ever happened to me."

## A Celebration With The Arc In Orlando

By Sheri McCammon  
Program Coordinator

The Arc National Convention in Orlando last fall provided a day of learning, camaraderie and dancing with the stars for four Pyramid Tallahassee students.

**Marsha Richardson, Kalindia Jackson, Lloyd Smith and Jerry Faulk** took full advantage of the jam-packed day, while making time to eat by the pool and relax in the hot tub.

The occasion was the 60th anniversary of the Arc, the nation's largest advocacy organization for people with disabilities.

Students from each of the six Pyramid centers attended, thanks to the generosity of Arc Florida and community supporters in each Pyramid city. Dinnertime provided them a time to meet new friends and renew old friendships with their Pyramid colleagues around the state.

Students visited the many exhibits about services and products for people with disabilities, and attended educational sessions.

Tallahassee's students chose sessions such as "Living Safe in Your Community," "A New Generation of Civil Rights Music," and "Anti-bullying Strategies."

When asked what his favorite session was Lloyd Smith said, "I liked learning safety tips like not to open your door to strangers."

The students also attended the opening ceremony where they heard inspiring speeches from Arc board members. They emphasized the importance of self-advocacy and urged students to take control of their lives.



*Left to Right: Marsha Richardson, Lloyd Smith, Kaliinda Jackson and Jerry Faulk enjoy a quiet moment at the ARC Convention*

Actresses **Robin Trocki** and **Lauren Potter** from the hit television show *Glee* received The Arc's Inclusion and Image award for breaking down barriers and increasing awareness.

The students eagerly listened to the actresses, both developmentally disabled, as they spoke of their challenges and successes.

Ms. Richardson stated, "I enjoyed meeting the actresses from *Glee* and learned the importance of self-advocacy."

The highlight was The Arc's Anniversary Celebration dance. The students got dressed in their party attire and headed to the ballroom.

They met the *Glee* actresses up close and personal. Mr. Faulk did not miss his chance to dance with Ms. Potter as they both got on stage and danced for the crowd.

## Old Traditions and New Endeavors

**By Lana M Smith  
Director**



*Ms. Smith*

This year marks my five-year anniversary at Pyramid. As I sit here thinking of what message I would like to send out to our readers and faithful supporters, my mind becomes bogged. So much has happened in a relatively short period of time.

When I first came to Pyramid there were two traditions that I was exposed to right away. One was the annual Pyramid Studios performance at The Moon and one was the annual trip to Cape San Blas.

Because of budgetary constraints, the Cape San Blas trip has been on hold for two years after a 12-year run. On the other hand, The Moon performance just seems to be getting bigger and better every year—and Pyramid Tallahassee has become an integral part of what once was an exclusive Studios extravaganza.

Many things have been tried. Some worked, others didn't. Out of the experiments have come a number of endeavors I hope will last a long time.

This year marks the second year the Florida Highway Patrol recruits have visited. The excitement generated is intoxicating and the relationship mutually beneficial. Students and recruits get the opportunity to make positive impressions on each other.

It was also the second year for the Pyramid Tallahassee vs. Studios Talent Show. Out-

side judges anointed Tallahassee the champions both years.

The event signals the emergence of a full-blown arts program that includes a remarkable rock band, jug band, dance troupe, vocal ensembles and a full range of visual arts.

For the second year, Pyramid Students have celebrated the season of giving by giving back to their community. Last year, students gathered hundreds of canned goods for Second Harvest. This year, students will be gathering care package items to send to our troops overseas.

This is third year our students got the opportunity to teach FSU Medical School students how people with disabilities can thrive through art and music with a performance at the FSU Medical School auditorium.

Monthly visits from Comfort Pets, Easter and Halloween Parades, fresh vegetables from the garden and hot meals from the kitchen on Fridays are just a few more things that are helping us define our program.

The rock band, Sunshine City, performed at the Family Café in Orlando last summer, and in the fall, performed for the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council in Orlando. Both were paid gigs. Other students attended The Arc National Convention in Orlando.

Many Pyramid supporters have had the opportunity to attend the four Family and Friends Nights that were new to our schedule

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## Traditions

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this year. These events have provided our up-and-coming performers with the opportunity to step out on stage and test the waters.

Also new to the calendar this year was a Haunted House and Halloween Dance in Oc-

tober, and a MedFest sponsored by the FSU Medical School in November. Students got medical exams and health and nutritional information.

Traditions are important. They establish a rhythm and stability that allow students and staff to feel grounded and also gives everyone some-

thing to look forward to.

My hope is that Pyramid will continue to make its mark on the Tallahassee community as it is my passion to share the contributions of the people we serve with others.

So here's to old traditions and new endeavors.

## Mr. Barnes Is Passionate, Prolific And Gifted

**By Maureen Raftery**  
**Visual Arts Coordinator**

His artist bio describes him as a passionate man and a naturally gifted artist.

No one familiar with **Anthony Barnes** would disagree. He will take a blank piece of paper and pencil and create an amazing rendition of a Christian religious event such as Judgment day or the Crucifixion.

Sometimes he portrays angels or churches with parishioners entering the doors.

Prolific is another word that describes Mr. Barnes. When inspired, he can easily complete a drawing in one sitting. Adding color extends the time to completion, but his intent focus drives the speed to the



*Mr. Barnes hard at work.*

finish even still.

Over the last couple of years, Mr. Barnes has expanded his possibilities. Eager to develop artistically, he has ventured into new territories investigating subject matter, media, and techniques.

Beautiful, proud, and strong women are a frequent theme, but his repertoire has also extended to animals and cars.

Mr. Barnes experimented with watercolor and acrylic paints, charcoal, and pastels.

Recently he used the properties of various papers such as Yupo, Mi Tientes and Fabiano Tiziano to enhance his work, matching papers with media for specific effects.

Mr. Barnes is one of Pyramid Tallahassee's most consistent creators of marketable art. He values his ability to make money as a working artist, and promises to delight his audiences as he continues to grow artistically.

"I want to do the right thing and do better." he said.

## Dancers, Musicians Dazzling At The Moon

By **Danny Wood**  
Performing Arts Coordinator

Some of the best performers in North Florida came together at the Moon in August to put on the original musical comedy, *The Serendipity*.

The Pyramid Tallahassee Dancers and Sunshine City Rock Band were glad to have the opportunity to share the stage with performers from the Tallahassee Swing Band, Pyramid Studios, Pyramid Fort Walton Beach, and Pyramid Pensacola.

The show opened with a tuxedoed appearance by Sunshine City, which played a selection of their biggest hits and set the tone for the evening with songs like “Ain’t That A Shame” and “You Can’t Always Get What You Want.”

They delivered one of the best sets they’ve done so far before leaving the stage to make room for the big production.

“I loved wearing the tux.,” said guitarist **John Madden**. “We looked sharp, and we put on a good show.”

The play itself was a love story set in a jazz-era theater. Costumes and props evoking the late 40’s and early 50’s were everywhere, and there was plenty of early rock and roll and big band energy throughout the show.

Dancers **Joanne Page, Marcus Miller, Marsha Richardson, Merrill Diggs, and Tim**



*Tim Poole and Joanna Page electrify the crowd of nearly 1,000 at The Moon.*

**Poole** from Pyramid Tallahassee helped add to this energy with their dazzling performances to the songs “It Don’t Mean a Thing,” “Yakety Yak” and “At the Hop.”

Mr. Miller said “I liked the show we put on. It was exciting and excellent.”

As they gracefully twirled, spun, and swung each other across the stage, it was clear that their hard work and dedicated rehearsing had paid off.

Sunshine City drummer **Nate Sailor** said of the Pyramid Tallahassee dancers, “The audience was into it. They couldn’t have come up with a better dance for 1,000 people. They were outta sight!”

## Kia Shows Appreciation for Pyramid Artists

By Lana M Smith  
Director

This marks the second year **Melanie Lee** from Kia Auto Sports gave her support as an underwriter for the Pyramid annual summer show at The Moon.

Ms. Lee's support however didn't end there. When given a selection of Pyramid student artist prints to choose from as a thank you for being an underwriter, Ms. Lee couldn't choose just one, so she bought 5.

A few days later, I received a call from Ms. Lee requesting more art. It turns out that she had all the prints framed, including a separate frame for each student bio and decorated their offices at the dealership.

A few weeks later, Pyramid artist **Carmen Ramos** decided to stop by The Kia dealership after she had heard about Ms. Lee's interest. She was impressed with the display. "We were excited to have her," Ms. Lee said.

The more we learn about Ms. Lee and the staff and family at Tallahassee Kia Auto Sports, the more impressed we become with their generosity.

In addition to the support they have given Pyramid, Ms. Lee and her staff find the time to volunteer and fundraise for The Salvation Army, Elder Care Services, Early Learning Coalition, The Cancer Society. Kia also sponsors a Relay for Life team from the FSU business school.

Their support is not just writing checks; it also



*Kia's Melanie Lee (second from left) and her staff pose in front of the art purchased from Pyramid-trained artists on display at Kia Auto Sports.*

includes bell ringing and delivering meals on wheels. Ms. Lee has been delivering meals for eight years.

When asked why she is so committed to giving to her community, Ms. Lee responded: "Giving back was something my dad taught us as kids. Tallahassee helped my dad 25 years ago" when he started the local dealership.

He clearly instilled a sense of giving back to his children and others around him.

On March 19, Kia Auto Sports sponsor a fundraiser for Pyramid. The fundraiser includes radio marketing, an art show and performance, and dealership proceeds from car sales.

So that's why we say "We will see ya at Kia."

## Bank Makes Grant To Pyramid

The Capital City Bank Foundation has awarded Pyramid Tallahassee a grant of \$500.

The money will go toward a sound system for Pyramid's rock band, jug band and vocal ensembles.

"We were very appreciative that Capital City found our program worthy of their support," said Lana Smith, Pyramid Tallahassee director.

Capital City Bank Group is a Tallahassee-based bank with branches in north and north central Florida, Georgia and Alabama.

Over the years, the foundation has assisted dozens of non-profits throughout the region the bank serves.

"... by donating valuable

## A Haunting Success For Halloween

The Halloween Haunted House and Dance at Pyramid was an amazing success.

Pyramid staff created a Haunted House with the likes of Pirates, Zombies, Vampires, and Dr. Frankenstein. The units were transformed in a matter of hours with the help of staff and volunteers.

There was a great balance of



*Tiffany Parker (left), Cap City vice-president and marketing manager, presents check to Pyramid Chief Operating Officer Marilyn Yon.*

funds to worthwhile organizations such as this," said Tiffany Parker, market manager, "Capital City Group Foundation can help build stronger communities."

creepy but not too scary so that many, young and old could enjoy the display.

"I laughed at the idea of a haunted house when it was suggested because I knew how much work it would be, but it worked out well beyond my expectations," said Pyramid Director **Lana Smith**.

## Physical Exam Offered By FSU Med School

Special Olympics and the FSU College of Medicine will team up on Friday, Jan. 14, to offer free physicals.

The Medfest will be held at Raa Middle School from 9:45 a.m. to noon, and continue at Pyramid Tallahassee from 1-3:30 p.m. Participants will go through a series of three stations.

Participants will receive a health talk by medical students followed by physicals.

Participants will leave with a physical exam report that can be used for participation in Special Olympics events. The report will also have recommendations for caregivers.

If you would like more information about this event, please call or e-mail **Lana Smith** at 850-574-4978 or [lsmith@pyramidinc.org](mailto:lsmith@pyramidinc.org).

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We believe in what we do.  
We make a difference.

## Coming Up

**January 14 Medfest at Raa Middle School & Pyramid Tallahassee**

**Friday: 9:45-noon 1:00-3:30 p.m.**

**January 28 Friends & Family Performance and Art Exhibit at**

**Pyramid Tallahassee 6:30 p.m.**

**March 19 Kia Auto Sports Fundraiser at 2755 W. Tennessee St.**

**Time to be announced**

## An Abundance of Produce

By **Jim Prater**  
Community Coach

L A R G E is the key word for Pyramid Tallahassee's organic gardeners last summer as giant pumpkins and soaring sunflowers dominated the landscape.

Gardeners **Karen Pederson, Marlon Hughes, David Ingham** and **Sunee Couver** tended the pumpkin patch, which produced several

pumpkins including a 100-pounder. Gourds and sunflowers were also grown with the assistance of **Arthur Henry, Lloyd Smith, Benny Robinson, Joanne Page, Tim Poole** and **Nyone Johnson**.

Pyramid students enjoyed munching on the sunflower seeds and raw organic lettuce, sweet peas, carrots, cantaloupes and watermelons.

The fall planting produced



*Giant Pumpkin tended by Benny Robinson, Joanna Page, Nyone Johnson, Joe Page (l-r)*

string beans, more sunflowers, sweet potatoes and leafy greens.