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**THE CROW’S NEST**

*Vol. 43...No. 25*  
*THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF USF ST. PETERSBURG*  
*Week of April 13th, 2009*

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**The culture of racing**

The Grand Prix drives fans to St. Petersburg  
» story on pg. 8

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**Ryan Briscoe**

First place winner of the Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, celebrates with second place driver Ryan Hunter-Reay and third place driver Justin Wilson by speaking each other with champagne on the winners podium. Briscoe took the lead on Lap 37 and won by 0.4617 seconds.

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**Grand Prix zooms through downtown**

Peter Popello  
Staff Writer

All good things must come to an end. In addition to pumping money into the local economy and increasing St. Petersburg’s appeal as a major tourist attraction, the 5th annual Honda Grand Prix once again left auto racing fans wanting more; even after four days of withstanding the sound of screeching tires and the smell of burning asphalt. But that is what keeps them coming back.

“It was awesome and a lot of fun. I look forward to this race every year,” said USF St. Petersburg student Ryan Batson. “I wish the Grand Prix could be every weekend.”

From the very first race, the American Le Mans Series (ALMS), on Friday, April 3, qualifier, fans knew the speed-filled weekend would not disappoint. After all, a familiar face on the Indy-Car circuit made his highly anticipated return after achieving little success in the more popular NASCAR series. After Darío Franchitti finished no better than 22nd in 10 Nextel Cup races, broke his ankle during a race in Talladega and failed to keep his corporate sponsor—leaving him without a car to drive—his perception of St. Petersburg seemed more like a haven rather than another track.

“It’s good to be home,” he told The Tampa Tribune. “(The experience) gives you an appreciation of what I’ve had and what I’ve got right now.”

It showed too. On opening day, Franchitti posted the third-fastest speed making his debut for Chip Ganassi’s racing team.

After a series of intense moments resulting from a slippery surface around Turn 1 early in the race, teammates Scott Sharp and David Brabham cruised to an overall victory. Brabham earned his 17th career victory, on Saturday, in the 2009 Acura Sports Car Challenge of St. Petersburg, while Sharp captured his fifth in the American Le Mans Series.

Collectively, the duo won their first race of the season for Highcroft Racing Team driving the Acura ARX-02a car.

The pair of Adrian Fernandez and Luis Diaz finished 32.15 seconds behind Sharp and Brabham in their Acura ARX-01B, allowing Lowe’s Fernandez Racing to win the LMP2 class. The win at St. Petersburg followed their class victory at the 12 Hours of Sebring race three weeks ago. In GT2, Patrick Long, a resident of Belleair Beach for three years, and Jorg Bergmeister were also victorious in their Porsche 911 RSR for Flying Lizard Motorsports.

“Races like that are the reason why racing fans are a different breed of sports fans,” said pit lane official Jim Rogers. They like to see a variety. It’s not like NASCAR where all the cars are the same. Here at the Grand Prix, we have different races, different series and four different types of cars.”

Indeed, fans were treated to the American Le Mans Series race, the Indy Lights race and the Acura Sports Car Challenge. The final day of the event, Sunday, April 5, brought the main attraction of the weekend with the 2009 Honda IndyCar Grand Prix of St. Petersburg.

Australia native Ryan Briscoe emerged as the winner after going head-to-head with second-place finisher Ryan Hunter-Reay for the last 10 laps of the race. Hunter-Reay crossed the finish line 462 seconds behind Briscoe, while Justin Wilson finished third. 549 seconds behind the leader.

The top-five was rounded out by Darío Franchitti and Tony Kanaan. Last year’s defending champion Graham Rahal finished seventh. Kanaan aggressively fought his way back into contention after making contact with Rahal in the first lap of the race. As a result of the bump, Kanaan failed to finish in the top three at St. Petersburg for the first time in his career.

Futuristic Davita Patrick, was in 11th position when she was involved in a race-ending collision with Raphael Matos in Lap 53 on Turn 10. The cars locked together, made a quarter spin to the right and hit the tire barriers. Neither driver was injured, but Patrick was disappointed with her unexpected early exit.

“I would have liked to have seen somebody else win the big race, but overall I had a great time and always do when I come here,” said Indianapolis native Terry DeMink. “They’ve got a real nice thing going on here in St. Petersburg, and the open street course makes it pretty cool. This event is going to get nothing but better in the future.”

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**Parking garage thief exposed**

Emmanuelle Schmidt  
Assistant Editor

The broken glass from the smashed car window lay next to Manual Padín’s white Infiniti Q50 coupe. The cords for his GPS unit and iPod were visible through the ravaged center console. The USF St. Petersburg student and resident in Residence Hall One was getting ready to go to Pensacola. Fl. for spring break, when he got the call from friend Mike Snack.

“I was shocked. I thought he was joking around. What made me angry was when I called the cops (USF PD) they told me the car had been broken into at around 10 a.m. and it was about 1 p.m. when I called them. It is kind of ridiculous that they didn’t call me,” Padín said.

Padín’s car “Eclipse” was a victim to car theft. Francisco J. Garcia. Garcia is being charged with 25 counts of burglary in downtown, St. Petersburg and the USF St. Petersburg parking garage. According to the St. Petersburg Police department, the 36-year-old native New Yorker resident scooted cars that appeared to have a portable GPS unit.

USF PD has Garcia on the lookout for GPS devices. With the help of this video, undercover St. Petersburg police caught Garcia in the act on March 26 in downtown St. Petersburg. Garcia was arrested with 20 felony offenses of vehicle burglary according to the Pinellas County Sheriff’s office.
The advice Guru is here to help you solve them.

E-mail the Advice Guru at usfadviceguru@gmail.com

All questions will be confidential.

We asked...

How many times do you hit the snooze button in the morning? Yes

Did you vote in the student government elections? Yes

What can student government improve on? Better communication

Have you registered for next semester? Yes

A class you would recommend to other students? Intro to Social Work

Matthew Santiago Rodriguez

Richard Baxter

Kishan Fichadiya

Sarah Pruitt

David Ferguson

24, English

18, Environmental Science

21, Criminology

19, Undeclared

Once

On average one

7

None

2

Not yet

The CROW'S NEST

by Ashley Jones

mutable summer

pop culture grid

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One last chance to appeal to students

Kaiti Cardwell
Staff Writer

Students were given a rare opportunity to ask the candidates questions about their policies and plans in a Student Government Open Forum held Monday, April 6 in the Campus Activities Center.

In attendance were James Scott, junior environmental science and policy major, running-mate Eli Ellington, sophomore history major, and opponents Austin Arias, sophomore mass communications major, and running-mate Linnea Fisher, junior psychology major.

Of the three candidates running for SG Treasurer, only John Osborne, junior business major, was present.

Students were asked to write down their questions for the candidates, who would each have three minutes to respond. There would be no rebuttals or arguments between the candidates; each side would state their plan of action and answer questions to the best of their ability.

A few minutes after 8 p.m., Scott and Ellington took their seats on one end of the long table facing the audience while Arias and Fisher positioned themselves at the opposite end.

First, each side was asked to state why they wanted the position they were running for and why they considered themselves to be the best candidate for the job.

Scott and Ellington won the coin toss and were the first to speak.

"We know more people in administration," Scott said, describing how he has built many relationships with SG members, faculty and staff by serving as Senate President.

Arias was then given his chance to speak, describing the many groups he and Fisher were involved with on campus.

"Our priorities are in place," Arias said. "We both have a strong dedication to student life."

Another student asked the candidates what they have contributed to the USF St. Petersburg campus community during the past year.

Fisher described how she founded the Academic Integrity Committee as a Senator in Student Government this year as a way to ensure that all students do their best academically.

"I was able to help design and put into place the private SG website which I know many of you are fans of." Arias said, describing his position as Director of Marketing and Public Affairs.

"It's been a very productive year with the Senate," Scott said, adding that he helped to write most of the amendments seen on the student ballot.

Ellington talked about his involvement with the Booth Inquiry Committee.

The candidates were then asked to address how they plan to maintain an active SG during the next year.

Scott spoke about the need to create a fresmen outreach program so new students would feel welcomed on campus.

Fisher responded, saying she and Arias hope to foster relationships between the students and faculty members, proposing coffee and breakfast get-togethers throughout the semester. They also hope to establish monthly "Club and Grab" events where students can see the opportunities available to them on campus.

"We are also hoping to showcase student talent at the Saturday Morning Market," Fisher said.

A student asked the candidates to discuss the most important part of their platform.

Arias described a plan to develop a master calendar that students would have access to so they can see which clubs and organizations are having events on a given day. This would also prevent groups around campus from planning their events on the same day. He also mentioned the possibility of bringing Greek Life to the St. Petersburg campus.

"I think students and SG need to be taken seriously," Scott said. "Administration needs to know what we're thinking and ultimately what you're thinking."

Ellington said he and Scott hope to create a social network that keeps students connected to SG as well as other student organizations on campus.

"We can funnel student activities to one place and take those ideas and concerns to administration," Ellington said. "That way we can get things done."

The candidates were asked their opinions on the student nut publication, The Crow's Nest.

The Crow's Nest is growing right along with the rest of the campus," Scott said, adding that like any other organization on campus, "more work still needs to be done."

Arias expressed his appreciation for the coverage many student events have received from the student newspaper.

"I'm in 100 percent support of them," Arias said.

During a short intermission students enjoyed pizza and beverages. Unfortunately, a large percentage of the students took their pizza and left the open forum shortly afterward.

"This open forum was scheduled so that students could ask candidates questions they thought were important and get answers," said Heather Willis, senior environmental science and policy major. "I was disappointed to see so many students just come and get pizza and walk out without even having the decency to listen to what the candidates had to say."

The next point addressed was how each side planned to include minorities on campus and increase diversity.

"We want to get the word out that there are places for everyone on campus," Arias said, mentioning that he is a member of the Multicultural Advisory Board.

Scott mentioned that he and Ellington had many friends from all different ethnic backgrounds.

Other questions asked by the audience pertained to the ethics and morals of each candidate and how they intended to keep their campaign promises throughout the year.

"When it comes down to getting something done in SG, we have a lot of good administrative relationships," Scott said.

"We're in a much better position to act on what we said we're going to do."

"We've only promised things that are either attainable or would be attainable in some time," said Arias.

Both sides described the many clubs they are involved with on campus and discussed the value of being a responsible, ethically minded leader.

"I put the voice of the student body above my own," Ellington said.

Scott described his belief that ethical leaders have their hearts in the right place at all times. He would never put himself in a situation where his ethical practices are put into question, Arias said. "I want to make sure I am representing you [the students] at all times."

"Believe when you take on the responsibility of a leader, that's your responsibility to make it happen," Fisher said.

Scott and Ellington complimented Arias and Fisher's marketing talents while Arias expressed his appreciation of Scott's ideas toward making a greener campus.

"I think the open forum was a success," said Robert S. Forman III, junior accounting major and Student Government Election Rules Committee Chair. "The idea behind this was to give the students an opportunity to have their specific questions answered."

"I think it was a wonderful experience for all the students to actually talk to their candidates and to find out what they are thinking," said Matt O'Brien, junior political science major.

"I got to ask my own question," said Danny McDonald, freshman, undecided major. "I would have liked to see more students just to hear the debate, but that's okay. It gave us a better understanding of the people who are running."

Osborne, the only treasurer candidate present, mentioned his background in finance, economics and accounting and his experience with owning and running a corporation right out of high school. He talked about the need for an organized accounting system.

"I'm more of a business man myself," Osborne said. "I'm really good with numbers and really enjoy the business side."

The student who wins this election will be leading our campus for the next year and it is important that students make an informed vote," Willis said.

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Austin Arias' running mate Linnea Fisher and opposing presidential candidate James Scott and vice presidential candidate Jon Ellington listened as SG presidential candidate Austin Arias addresses a students' question during the presidential debate on April 2. Students attended the debate to hear both candidates speak about their platforms and campus-wide issues.
**SAFE Team gets support from SG Senate**

Nicole Grell  
Assistant Editor

Student Government met on Monday, April 8, to discuss issues relevant to student life. During the meeting, the Senate debated proposals for budgetary changes, discussed strategies for increasing student involvement in campus events, and considered a resolution regarding the use of standardized tests in college admissions.

### SAFE Team

SAFE Team, led by president Matt Foreman, presented a budget proposal for new carts to the Senate. The proposal aims to improve safety and accessibility on campus by providing new carts for students to use. The Senate voted in favor of the proposal, and SAFE Team will work to implement it in the upcoming months.

### Student Government

The Senate discussed several initiatives proposed by student government members. One proposal was for the creation of a campus-wide recycling program, which would involve designating smoking areas and removing trash cans from certain areas. Another proposal was for the establishment of a campus-wide smoking policy, which would require students to use designated smoking areas.

### Standardized tests

The Senate also discussed the impact of standardized tests on college admissions. Some members argued that the use of standardized tests was unfair and that it disproportionately disadvantaged students from lower-income backgrounds. Others argued that standardized tests were necessary for assessing student performance and ensuring a fair admissions process.

Without S.F.E. Team, less people may come onto campus, said McDonnell. The senate seemed in favor of keeping S.F.E. Team, as some students believe it is a valuable service.

### Student government

The Senate also discussed the issue of budget cuts. Some members expressed concern that budget cuts would affect student services and programs. Others argued that the budget cuts were necessary due to financial constraints.

### Conclusion

The Senate met to discuss a variety of issues, including the impact of standardized tests on college admissions, the establishment of a campus-wide recycling program, and the implementation of a campus-wide smoking policy. The Senate also discussed budget cuts and their potential impact on student services and programs. Without S.F.E. Team, less people may come onto campus, said McDonnell.
Fitness Center plans for growth

Sara Palmer
Staff Writer

USF St. Petersburg students, faculty and alumni can expect a newly renovated and expanded fitness center to be unveiled during the fall 2009 semester.

"Everything starts as projected, we anticipate a remodeled fitness center to be open in September," said Matt Morris, Director of Student Life and Engagement. "Our hope is that it will be done early so students can use the center when we come back in the fall, but we cannot plan on that."

Though the plans have yet to be finalized, they include renovating the racquetball court into a two-floor area for more cardio machines.

"Student government did a survey last year to the people who use the gym," said Alanna Lecher, senior environmental science major and President Pro-Tempore of Student Government. "The survey showed that barely any students use the racquetball court, but most students who use the gym want more cardio space."

The new area for the cardio machines will allow space for more free weights and lifting stations. This will be part of the renovation as well.

"Budget allows," said Morrin, "we will be able to update the locker rooms too."

Students initiated the idea of a renovated gym during a Capital Investment Trust Funds meeting last year. The money in this CITF comes from a $2.44 charge per credit per semester for each student, according to state statutes. This money is reserved for the implementation or improvement of non-academic related activities.

The expansion will provide more room for students, which is essential as the USF St. Petersburg campus continues to grow and admissions continues to increase.

"Currently, at peak hours in the gym, students often have to wait to use a cardio machine, because there are so few," said Lecher. "Expanding the gym will solve this problem and prevent overcrowding as the campus student body expands."

The expansion will not only provide for the increasing student body, but it will also offer more variety. "Students will have access to more equipment," said Morrin, and also the kind of equipment they would like to see in the fitness center. "I think an expanded gym will make working out more enjoyable for current and future students," Lecher said. "I also think it will aid in recruiting purposes."

Parking garage thief exposed

Continued from pg. 1
Emmalee Schmidt
Assistant Editor

"My dad and I drove to school to get my car fixed. He had to take two days off of work and the total cost of the damage was about $5,500. The burglar did more than just break the window, he drilled some panels in my car and did some interior damage," Padin said. "I've always been on edge about their vehicle's safety over the past month in the USF St. Petersburg parking garage. Even though Garcia is being held in the Pinellas County jail, students should not let their guard down."

USF PD Chief Benny Cheever and Purchasing and Parking Manager Bill Benjamin attended a recent Senate meeting addressing several concerns about the parking garage and also mentioned the recent arrest of a suspect of the burglaries.

"It was partially my fault for leaving things exposed," Padin said. "In a way, I can say that I feel a bit safer walking to the parking garage knowing that he [Garcia] has been arrested," Padin said.

GRAND PRIX PHOTO ESSAY by Ashley Jones

Danica Patrick sits up on Sunday at the Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg. A wreck between Danica Patrick and Raphael Matos on lap 32 in Turn 11 and 12 ended her chances of victory at the Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg.

Junior Strouss, rookie for the Winners Circle Group, gives a thumbs up during his victory lap after sweeping the Indy Lights races at the Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg.

Ryan Briscoe for Team Penske, celebrates his win on Sunday at the Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg. Briscoe passed Justin Wilson at Turn 1 on Lap 87 to take the lead on Sunday, April 5.
**Community**

**For the Love of IndyCar**

**Events Calendar**

**Monday, April 13**
Celebrity Critter of the Week: Green Carpet Anemone, Pier Aquarium, 12 p.m.
Men’s Tennis vs. Marquette University, Tampa, 2 p.m.
Dr. Amelia Jones, Talk of the Arts, FAH 101 - Music Recital Hall, 7:00 p.m.

**Tuesday, April 14**
Disability Etiquette, SVC2070, 9 a.m.
The Bambouze Road Show, Janco Room, 6:30 p.m.
An Evening with Kimberly Johnson, TECO Room, 7:30 p.m.
Baseball vs. FIU Red McEwen Field, 7 p.m.
Florida Orchestra reads works of USF Student Composers, Theatre 1, 7:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, April 15**
Sexual Harassment Awareness, SVC2070, 1:30 p.m.
Baseball vs. FIU, Red McEwen Field, 3 p.m.

**Thursday, April 16**
Eco-Cruise at the Waterfront, Waterfront, COQ 108, 11:30 a.m.
“The Modernist Impulse in Ukrainian Poetry,” Grace Allen Room, 12 p.m.
“Pedagogy and the Politics of Teaching Comparative Feminisms,” 4th Floor - Tampa Campus Library - Grace Allen Room, 3 p.m.
Mike Resnick - USF Libraries Fifth Annual Science Fiction Lecture, USC Tampa Library - Grace Allen Room (4th Floor), 4 p.m.
USF Student Composers’ Concert, FAH 101 - Music Recital Hall, 8 p.m.

**Friday, April 17**
Relay for Life of Skyway, Lakewood High School, 6 p.m.
“Emerging Paradigms: An Interdisciplinary Perspective” Graduate Student Conference, USC Tampa C.W. Young Building (CWV) - 2nd Floor/Reception: 1st Fl. Rotunda, 9 a.m.
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at USF presents “USF Global: The University as Global Citizen,” USC Tampa, MFA-ABC (Westside Conference Center), 12-15 p.m.
Student Dance Concert, Theatre 2, 8 p.m.

**Saturday, April 18**
Festival of States Day Parade, downtown St. Petersburg, 10 a.m.
Festival of States Family Fun Fest, North Straub Park, 12 p.m.
TWIZTID, Janco Landing, 7 p.m.

**Sara Palmer**
Staff Writer

The students and faculty of USF St. Petersburg have an opportunity to discuss free press and democracy with a panel of 11 journalists from Iraq on March 31.

“We have an unusual opportunity to learn about journalism in countries throughout the world, to learn about other cultures, to discuss our own practices with cur- rently foreign journalists and generally to build bridges,” said Dr. Robert Daunder, director of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies.

A major topic in the discussion on how journalism practice in Iraq has changed since the war started.

“We also hope to learn about the development of journalism in countries throughout the world,” said Ali Albouraq, news agency editor with the Associated Press. “We hope to learn about what they say in an article.”

However, later in the discussion, Harid Hamid Hamid said it is possible to be attacked or killed for publishing an article that upsets the current political or religious leaders.

“I don’t have a lot of freedom of the press,” he said, “but no security.”

The Iraqi journalists received training from foreign news organizations such as Al Jazeera in order to develop and maintain a free press. They have deals with many international newspapers such as The New York Times and The Los Angeles Times, where the Iraqi media can syndicate articles they publish.

“This is an opportunity to tell the story of the rest of the world in Iraq in many ways,” said Albouraq.

Iraqi journalists discussed the different types of media in Iraq — partisan newspapers and independent newspapers.

The Iraqi journalists discussed the different types of media in Iraq — partisan newspapers and independent newspapers.

Some of the topics discussed included the importance of the press in the development of a democratic society, the role of the press in promoting human rights, the importance of press freedom, and the challenges faced by Iraqi journalists in a time of war and political instability.

The panel also discussed the role of the media in helping to build a democratic society in Iraq, and the importance of press freedom in a democratic society.

The panelists included Ali Albouraq, news agency editor with the Associated Press; Ayad Saddam Haidar, a reporter for the Associated Press; and Ahmed Abar, editor of the Al-Jazeera newspaper.

The panelists discussed the challenges faced by Iraqi journalists in a time of war and political instability, and the importance of press freedom in a democratic society.

The panelists also discussed the importance of the press in helping to bring about democratic change in Iraq, and the role of the media in promoting human rights.

Overall, the panelists emphasized the importance of press freedom in a democratic society, and the challenges faced by Iraqi journalists in a time of war and political instability.

Drivers poured into the city from around the globe and Ogi Kristiansen was especially excited for the Indy-Car Night. They have always been my favorite, he thought.

“I would like to drive one day, but that isn’t something that I can see happening. I am too busy with other things.”

When one of the drivers asked about his favorite driver, Ogi Kristiansen said, “I am not sure, but I am very impressed with the way they drive.”

On Saturday afternoon, the drivers gathered at the fairgrounds and took some time to drive the cars. The drivers were very excited to drive the cars and to see the beautiful city.

While the city of St. Petersburg received a financial injection from the fairgrounds, the Iraqi journalists received a different type of injection — a financial injection.

The Iraqi journalists received a financial injection from the fairgrounds, which was a great help to them. They were able to buy new equipment and to continue their work.

“I don’t know what I would do without this financial injection,” said one of the Iraqi journalists.

The Iraqi journalists discussed the challenges faced by them in a time of war and political instability, and the importance of press freedom in a democratic society.

Overall, the panelists emphasized the importance of press freedom in a democratic society, and the challenges faced by Iraqi journalists in a time of war and political instability.

The panelists also discussed the importance of the press in promoting human rights, and the role of the media in helping to bring about democratic change in Iraq.

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VARIETY

Weekly SUDOKU
by Linda Thistle

ACROSS
1. Owned
2. Small ammunition
4. Barber's sweepings
5. PC keyboard key
8. Greek vowels
9. Vortex
12. Memorization method
13. As well
15. Got up
18. Salmon
20. Soft drink flavor
22. Descartes' conclusion
23. Column
26. Feature of clothes washers
28. Bring out
30. - Kong
33. Beach location
36. Without (French)
37. Whos who, e.g.
39. Sumptuous feast
41. Elevator alternative
43. Thee
44. Coral structure
46. Dance in 3/4 time
53. - Baba
55. Libertine
57. Hangout
58. Scatterian
59. Actress
60. Hathaway
61. Bando of baseball
62. - and

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2. On
3. Information
5. United
6. nations
7. Porch
8. Where to find
9. Macy's in NYC
10. - - the "-"
11. - Group with
12. - noodles
13. - Ketch
14. - Falsehood
15. - Encountered
16. - Hawaiian 34-
17. - Across
18. - Facial war
19. - Repose prefix
20. - To find
21. - Negative
22. - Prefix
23. - Eye
24. - Elevator
25. - One
26. - Gondola
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28. - The -
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30. - Erstwhile
31. - Fellow
32. - Sweeping
33. - Volcano
34. - - Falsehood
35. - Cuddler
36. - Paulina
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The Crow's Nest (CN) is a student-run publication that has served the faculty, staff and students of USF St. Petersburg since 1969. The newspaper is published in the fall and spring semesters and is funded by a portion of revenue generated from advertising and services fees as well as advertising revenue. The Crow's Nest is committed to providing its readers with news relevant to the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, adhering to the highest ethical standards in the process. We strive to reflect a diverse range of student interests, including controversial topics. Our goal is to present the facts in an unbiased fashion in each of our news stories, so that readers may rely on our independence as a news source and make informed decisions on current issues.

Submissions or Letters to the Editor are welcomed. Please include full name, position (e.g. student, faculty, etc.), e-mail and telephone number for verification purposes only. E-mail letters to usfcrowsnest@yahoo.com.

Solutions are available online under Variety.

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That is the mutual connection, the keen understanding among individuals who share a passion for IndyCar racing. And it extends beyond gasoline running through the veins and motor oil through the blood. Andretti, whose son Michael and grandson Marco are also racing champions, know this just as well as Connor, Kenny Sweeney’s 14-year-old son.

As the children of both families know, IndyCar racing is a culture. It carries a tradition of its own that is passed down through lineage, On display at the Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, that culture starts with family. “This is the second season we’ve come down to St. Petersburg for the Grand Prix. It was a last minute thing, but it’s a great atmosphere and it was snowing back home in Indianapolis. Being by the water is just awesome,” Kenny Sweeney said. “But more than that, the real reason we came is because it’s just another opportunity to see a race. My dad took me as a kid, and now I’m here with [my son].” Unlike racing families, the ties that bind what was once racing’s governing body were not so strong. Beginning in 1994, Indianapolis Motor Speedway President Tony George sought more control over the sport and established the Indy Racing League (IRL), reserving most of the spots in the Indianapolis 500 for his American-based series. The team owners who controlled Championship Auto Racing Teams (CART) objected, announcing a boycott of the 1996 Indianapolis 500.

As a result, television ratings plummeted and spectator interest declined in the sport. The split also hindered the vying for overall sponsorship by IRL team owners, causing popular drivers like Dario Franchitti, Sam Hornish Jr. and A.J. Allmendinger to convert to the more lucrative NASCAR circuit.

And yet, despite the subsequent woes that resulted from the rift, the two competing circuits found common ground. In 2008, George completed an agreement with the owners of Champ Car World Series, formerly CART, to once again unite the sport into what is today: a rabid following.

Michelle Brasdis from Clementon, N.J. never cared much for racing, nor did her husband or her friends. The inspiration responsible for converting her into one of Indy Car’s biggest fanatics came from an unlikely source. Danica Patrick arrived on the scene and Brasdis was as awestruck as Patrick’s male counterparts on the racetrack.

“Danica proved that girls can do just what boys can, except she does it better than they do,” Brasdis said. “I told my husband that and now he’s starting to get into racing too. The fact that Danica was a female who gained respect for being who she was is really what got me interested. I always carry the picture of when I met her in my purse and I have a picture of her on my wall at home. I’m even thinking about getting a tattoo of her.”

Indy fan Erik Berg from Hudson, Florida grew up in racing and worked for several racecar marketing groups in the 1990s. On April 4, he watched the Le Mans race from the grandstands with his 9-year-old daughter Kristen.

“I used to race motorcycles, but if [Kristen] wants to get into [racing], that’s a different story. Then I’d have to sell the house,” Berg said. Kristen does not know yet what she wants to do. But she knows one thing, and it comes straight from the culture of IndyCar racing and its ancestral roots. Michael and Marco Andretti also know it. So does Connor Sweeney. When Kristen is ready to know, she will do like the others; she will just ask dad.