

VIEWPOINT

The Business Journal welcomes letters to the editor

Send letters to the Jacksonville Business Journal
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EDITORIAL

ONE SPARK TRAVAILS ARE A WAKEUP CALL

JB Each One Spark festival has been marked by a giant sculpture floating in the Hemming Park fountain – a duck, a fish, a shark.

If a sculpture is created for the next iteration of the event, the Titanic might be the most appropriate choice.

While even the One Spark board – whose members have poured time and money into the event for three years – is uncertain about what will happen with the event in years ahead, it's clear it is on its last legs: The one-day, midweek event that will be the 2016 version is a far cry from the weeklong extravaganza One Spark had become.

With the amount of money the organization hemorrhaged since 2013, a scaled-back (or nonexistent) version makes sense from an investment standpoint. The pivot to a venture capital-focused, entrepreneurs-and-investors chatfest could well be the best move for the people behind it.

But that solution ignores why anyone cares about One Spark in the first place: The excitement on the streets, the fun of seeing entrepreneurs trot out their dreams, the mixture of music and art and technology, the idea that Jacksonville was bootstrapping its way into a sense of place – those were the draw.

From the get-go, it was never clear exactly what One Spark was or wanted to be. While it tried to position itself as part of the tech ecosystem, the first high-profile companies to garner investments because of One Spark included a guitar strap maker and a family farm, not exactly the future Facebooks of the world.

The one thing it did succeed at was showcasing the urban core and showing what Jacksonville could be. The impending demise of One Spark would mean Jacksonville has lost its closest attempt at having our version of San Antonio's Fiesta, of Tampa's Gasparilla.

Here's the wake-up call: For better or worse, One Spark was the best example of a publicly embraced, privately operated, creative idea coming to fruition in Jacksonville.

Who will step in now to fill the void left by its diminishing?

BUSINESS PULSE SURVEY

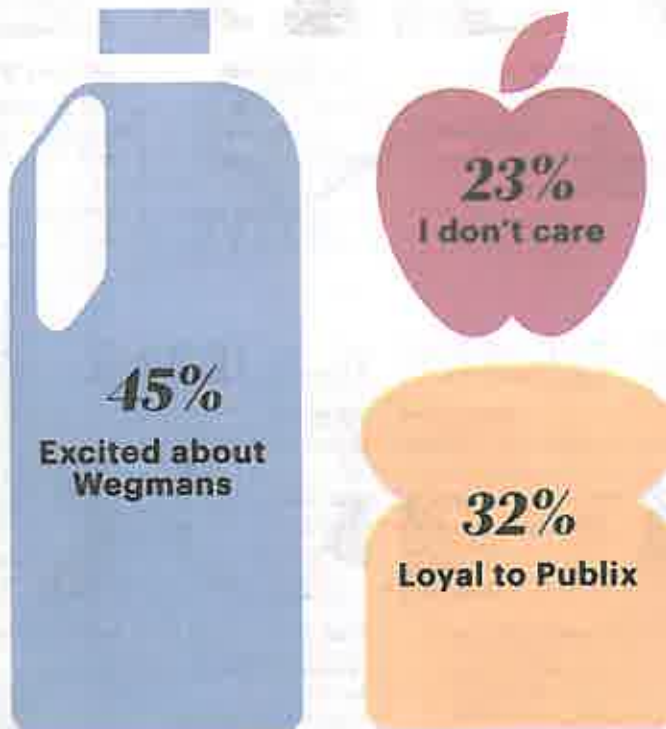
WE ASKED

WOULD YOU SHOP AT WEGMANS OVER PUBLIX?

► 32% I'm way too loyal to Publix to shop anywhere else. Pub-Subs give me life.

► 45% I'd dump Publix for Wegmans in a heartbeat. Wegmans is amazing!

► 23% I don't get why people are so obsessed with either grocery chain.



NEXT WEEK'S POLL QUESTION

DO YOU THINK MAYOR LENNY CURRY'S OFFICE SHOULD INVEST IN DOWNTOWN?

► Yes, I think Downtown needs to continue its momentum

► No, pension is the more pressing issue for now

► No, private investors and developers should step up

► I'm undecided

VIEWPOINT

Break the cycle – support health insurance for all children

With the start of Children's Week in the Florida Legislature, and hundreds of students pouring into and around the state's Capitol building, it's a pertinent time to remember those who don't have as strong a voice as the legislators: our children. How well are we as a state caring for our kids?

Working in the health care industry gives me direct and personal insight into the welfare of our health system for the millions of children living in Florida. Fortunately, thanks to the work of dedicated organizations like Florida Healthy Kids, which provides affordable, child-centered care to school-aged children 5 through 18, many children are getting access to health care their families can afford. With support from lawmakers, our children are a top priority. However, there's more work to be done.

Every day, uninsured children check into hospitals around the state. Many families are unfortunately in financial positions where they feel that health insurance is a luxury they cannot afford. For the children in these families, preventive care and illness visits are often not possible. These uninsured children frequently end up in the emergency



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room only after injuries or illnesses have worsened to a critical level. One injury can mean financial ruin for many of these families.

While the number of children in Florida with no health insurance has dropped significantly in the past decade, more than 350,000 children in the state still have no coverage. In Duval County alone, about 12,960 children are uninsured.

Without health insurance, families can't begin to afford well-child check-

ups and prescriptions like asthma inhalers. Children need to have a "medical home," a regular primary care physician who knows their medical history and understands their family's needs, concerns and goals.

The statistics are alarming, but I remain optimistic. Florida Healthy Kids gives families comprehensive coverage so that children can receive both preventive and emergency care without their families going bankrupt. The services available through the Florida KidCare program include dental, vision and behavioral care to ensure the continued health of our state's young citizens and residents.

Florida lawmakers have supported Florida Healthy Kids for 25 years, and there's more collaborative work left to do for those who still don't have insurance. We must continue working to break this cycle of lack of access to health care for Florida's children. Only then will our state's future generations be able to fully succeed.

For more information about Florida Healthy Kids and Florida KidCare, please visit www.healthykids.org and www.floridakidcare.org.