

SWANSON

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“Watching my mom so sick that she couldn’t get out of bed made me feel so helpless and sad,” said Cochran. “Taking martial arts classes starting at 10 years old and learning self-defense moves made me feel strong and bold which was a much-needed contrast to the powerlessness I felt at home.”

Although Cochran had three other half-siblings, they were already grown and gone, so she felt responsible for helping her mom and taking her to doctors appointments when she was older. Even though mom couldn’t get up and go, they bonded through reading literature out loud and acting out the parts of plays right on her bed.

“Because she had so many limitations, she made sure I put no limits on myself so whatever I wanted to do, like learn karate, she encouraged me to do it,” said Cochran.

Her dad, Bobby Brooks Sr., also was one of her biggest cheerleaders, taking her to karate lessons and making sure she learned basic skills so she would be self-sufficient and could rely on herself when needed, like when the he noticed the family car had a flat tire and he called her outside to fix it so she’d know how to do it if it happened to her while on the road.

Everything Dad did, she did, from fishing in Baldwin’s “Big River” creek where she grew up to working on cars. Dad was a Marine, a Vietnam veteran and worked with his dad in construction as a concrete form layer. They did large commercial projects such as laying building foundations at Disney World. Complications from exposure to Agent Orange used as herbicidal warfare during Vietnam War tried to side-track him by compromising his organs, resulting in diabetes and quadruple-bypass surgery. A big guy of little words, he has a soft side and buys food for the homeless people he runs across. Cochran feels her dad exemplified Ralph Waldo Emerson’s words, “What you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say.”

Her parents’ health struggles weighed heavily on her heart and added to the typical anxiety in junior and senior high that most teenagers go through in trying to fit in. She ran across the words that helped her cope and still are an important reminder today, “Peace is the ability to wait patiently in spite of the panic brought on by uncertainty.” Finding martial arts was a needed stress reliever and confidence booster.

Learning, training and eventually teaching classes herself at Young’s Karate out of Trinity Baptist Church resulted in the father-son teachers Young Smith Jr. and Young Smith III becoming like another family to her, encouraging and even promoting the field she now works in as a massage therapist.

Cochran started out at 10 years old learning Taekwondo — known for kicking—and had such a passion and natural talent for it that she trained five days a week. By age 13

she started cross-training into other styles such as Shotokan, a more traditional Japanese style of kicking and punching, and then began learning self-defense techniques like throws, chokes, joint locks and grappling. By age 14 she had earned her first black belt in Taekwondo and began teaching at age 16 classes to kids and adults. By the time she was 23, she had practiced two more styles — Kyusho Jitsu and Ryukyu Kempo — and earned four black belts.

Cochran trained most closely with Young Smith III, who would go around boosting students’ confidence by repeating the mantra, “Fake it ’til you make it.” Students would often freeze or give up mid-training during a new technique frustrated because they could not get it right. Smith would repeat over and over to “fake it ’til you make it” to keep them pushing, pulling, twisting and moving until they find what works.

“I have always loved those words because they translate to everything in life,” said Cochran. “It means to me that if we’re not sure what the right thing to do is at times or how to do it, just keep moving, pushing and trying until we find what works for us.”

In high school, Cochran first took anatomy and biology classes which were the perfect complement to her learning how the body works through karate. Science became her favorite subject and she had a wonderful mentor in her science teacher Charles DaPra at Baldwin High School. He noticed her struggles to fit in and made an extra effort to share comforting words. One day while walking to the cafeteria with him, he shared some wisdom that he hoped would turn around a negative incident, saying, “Jennifer, the only constant in life is change.” These words helped her realize that no matter how bad things seemed to be at the moment, hang in there because things will inevitably change and usually get better.

“I think of his caring and the truth in these words often,” said Cochran.

When Cochran graduated from high school she decided to take a year off to decide what she really wanted to do while working in an office during the day and teaching karate at night. As life would have it, it was always right in front of her. Her karate sensei, Smith III, also worked as a massage therapist and was in the ministry. He taught her massage basics as she observed him in action relieving pain and tight muscles for people.

“He would say to me that he had the knowledge to both break and fix people, because when you’re throwing someone around they can get sore or pulled muscles,” said Cochran. Most important, he taught her balance and how to reconnect to a homeostatic state.

Karate had already taught Cochran discipline, focus and confidence, coupled with her love for science and helping people, massage therapy seemed the perfect way to use all her talents. She graduated from Alpha School of Massage, got her license

they can yield.”

Agnes Danciger, Memorial Park Association president, said the organization didn’t want to put off necessary repairs to the park any longer.

“Our relationship with the city has enhanced and we have an agreement about how each party will help the park,” she said. “Though the city owns the park, we’re there to help protect, promote and enhance it.”

In the future, Danciger said she hopes Memorial Park will be maintained so the community can appreciate it for years to come.

“I want it to always be a quiet place that draws people to its magnificent area on the river and that

in 2006, and because of another wonderful teacher, Michael Garcia, a nurse who stressed the medical side of massage, she decided to center her practice on pain relieving techniques that help athletes and people with chronic aches.

“People tend to think of massage as the traditional gentle all-over Swedish type, but actually there are many specialties aimed at helping various needs, such as deep tissue massage, that helps alleviate pain and tightness,” said Cochran.

Cochran likes to look at people’s pain and stiffness problems as one big “puzzle” with varying techniques or “pieces” needed to give relief and put the puzzle back together in good working order.

“I find the right pieces by reviewing the patient’s everyday life patterns for both work and down time because the things you do over and over again effect your body,” said Cochran. Something as simple as observing someone’s posture when they first come into the office is telling of how the body is out of alignment. Cochran uses various hands-on tools from trigger point therapy to pain management techniques that not only relieves the pain and stiff muscles but also strengthens the opposite muscles so the problem doesn’t return.

She started her massage business working out of Dr. Travis’ Chiropractic Center, whose dedication to helping people in pain and vast medical knowledge was another boon to her knowledge of pain easing techniques. Located in historic Riverside Avenue, it was a special time because she also met her husband, Devin, at a gym that was located next door. Today, Bagel Love, has replaced the center and Cochran is helping people in an office in the Weiss Pharmacy located at the Ortega Medical Arts Building behind the Publix at Roosevelt Shopping Center. You can reach her at (904) 674-1781.

Cochran pulls from her own life experiences and with a black belt’s focused level of excellence does extra research that helps people find physical, mental and emotional respite. When a person is in pain or is restricted in what they used to do athletically or in their everyday routine, it’s easy to get discouraged. Her goal is to not only provide hands-on relief but re-educate people how to do certain tasks and specialized exercises at home to help away from her office.

I love it when people come to me and tell me they’re off the pain pills and can do movements they couldn’t do for a while because I know I have improved their quality of life,” said Cochran.

And that’s why black belt sensei and massage therapist goes so well together. Because they are both centered around a can-do state of mind and a balanced way of life. Cochran demonstrates Bruce Lee’s words every day, “Knowing is not enough, we must apply. Willing is not enough, we must do.”

Share words that have made a difference in your life by contacting Christina Swanson at worddesign@att.net, or current@jacksonville.com.

they enjoy it at numerous times in their lives,” she said. “I hope others see what a jewel it is and that it’s not a neighborhood park, it’s an iconic city park.”

The field at Memorial Park will be closed until February, Houlihan said.

“It takes approximately 90 days for the sod to set and we need sun for the grass roots to be established,” she said. “We really want people to be patient with us and while we know it’s inconveniencing them now, it will be worth it in the end.”

The completion of the entire restoration project is scheduled for January 2017.

Ann Friedman: (904) 359-4619.

OCTOBER 5-11, 2016

THE FIVE

things you need to know

The Times-Union

Vibrators anniversary tour

The Vibrators, a British punk rock band that was formed in 1976, just kicked off their 40th anniversary tour and will be stopping in Jacksonville on Sunday at the 1904 Music Hall.

Special guests include Original Me, Prideless, The Last Sons, 5cent Psychiatrist, The Chrome Fangs and Happy Faced Mistakes. Doors open at 6 p.m. and tickets can be purchased at www.1904musichall.com.

Fiesta de Aviles

Fiesta de Aviles will take place in St. Augustine from Friday through Sunday and feature live music, art exhibits, dancing, costumes, and a special “Running of the Bulls” to celebrate St. Augustine’s Spanish heritage. The event kicks off on Friday Oct. 7 with First Friday Art Walk from 5 to 9 p.m. and continues on Aviles Street, the oldest street in the heart of St. Augustine’s original art district. For more information, visit www.augustine.com.

JU Homecoming

Jacksonville University is hosting its Homecoming & Family Weekend 2016 from Friday through Sunday. Highlights include a new “Student for a Day” experiential learning afternoon and the President’s Welcome Reception on Friday. Saturday includes the River House Run/Walk 5K, a sailing team regatta, evening football game against Campbell, tailgating and more. “Sunday on the St. Johns” winds down the weekend with relaxing activities on the water. For more information or to register, visit welcome.ju.edu/homecoming/schedule.html or call (904)256-7000.

HOLA Jacksonville

The 2016 HOLA Jacksonville Festival on Saturday and Sunday will honor Hispanic Heritage Month and highlight Latino culture. The family friendly cultural event includes Mexican, Panamanian and Peruvian folkloric dancers as well as musicians who will represent genres ranging from salsa, reggaeton, bachata and cumbia. The free event runs from 5 p.m. to midnight Saturday and Sunday at the Jacksonville Landing, 2 W. Independent Dr.

Huge water balloon fight

On Saturday, the University of North Florida is hosting the world’s largest water balloon fight featuring more than 150,000 water balloons and 9,000 participants in order to bring a Guinness World Record to Jacksonville. Admission is \$1, and proceeds from the event will benefit the Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida. The event will be held from 12-2 p.m. at UNF Coxwell Amphitheater, which is located at 1 UNF Drive in Jacksonville. For more information, visit www.jaxworldrecord.eventbrite.com.

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PARK

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CMS Group LLC is managing the second phase of the restoration project, which costs \$283,000, Houlihan said.

The City Council approved a grant for the Memorial Park Association for up to \$200,000 and remaining funds for the project have been raised through private donors as well as from past and present directors of the association.

“We have a city that really cares about this precious element,” Houlihan said. “It speaks volumes of what community efforts are all about and what