

Tangled Web

Jacksonville bloggers cover food, fashion, football and more

BY NATALIE WEARSTLER

Since 2006, **Metro Jacksonville** has posted extensive articles about the city's history, neighborhoods, transit, urban issues and dining and nightlife scene. The team of contributing writers is relatively small, and the site's design certainly isn't the flashiest in town, but the wealth of info contained in its archives is hard to beat.

Tony Allegretti lives, eats and breathes Downtown Jacksonville, literally and figuratively. He's posted hundreds of articles at his blog, **The Urban Core**, since launching it in August 2005. And these days, he has plenty to write about as the recently-appointed director of downtown engagement for the JAX Chamber.

Many food blogs take the highbrow approach, peppering reviews with sophisticated foodie lingo. Not Dave McDonald, author of **JaxFood-Critic**. He's a self-proclaimed average guy who prefers to focus on neighborhood hotspots over white tablecloth bistros, and his archive of posts is impressive—especially since he only launched the blog in December 2011.

Earlier this year, Gary Mills, the online entertainment editor of *The Florida Times-Union*, watched as his popular **Dining Notes** blog at Jacksonville.com

amassed its millionth page view. His roundup of restaurant reviews, menu changes and news about openings and closings is far and away the most comprehensive in the city.

Carrie McLaren, author of **Carrie With Children**, is one of the most active "mommy bloggers" in Northeast Florida. She started writing as a way to share the story of her youngest daughter, who was born with Down syndrome, but her site has evolved into a sleek destination for family-friendly travel tips, product reviews and parenting stories.

When Amanda Zitzman completes a shift at First Coast News, her day is far from done. The fashionable on-air personality is the author of **Pink POLISH**, a blog that tracks national and local designers, models and style trends.

Blythe Brumleve can keep up with any guy in NFL trivia and video games, and she's proud of it. Her blog, **GuysGirl**, covers a little bit of everything, from a Tiffany & Co. app that lets users "try on" the Super Bowl ring to gameday hairstyles and Avengers-inspired cocktails.

The Haiku Life is the personal blog of Anthony "Birdie" Birdashaw, a Jax resident who shares his

daily 17-syllable musings and sets them on a backdrop of his own comics. Over the past several years, he has penned more than 23,000 verses.

Kris Chislett, author of **Jacksonville Wine Guide**, writes his reviews, pairings, news, facts and interviews in a refreshingly approachable way. He admits to generally opting for the \$20-\$30 bottle, unless someone else is buying; but since he's a Certified Sommelier and Certified Specialist of Wine, even his cheap recommendations are good.

We have to give due credit to local NFL blogs for expanding Jaguars fandom into the nether regions of cyberspace. **Black and Teal** has a massive following, but smaller blogs like **Big Cat Country**, **The Jaggernaut** and **Jaguars Gab** also serve as safe havens where fans can exchange ideas and opinions between games.

Our own in-house staff writer, Kerry Speckman, keeps her bespectacled eyes on the city's pop culture scene and blogs about it at **The Specktator**. Whether she's stalking celebrities, finding a way to mention Tim Tebow or sharing upcoming events, *The Specktator* always has a good piece of gossip to share. *J



FROM LEFT:
BIRDIE BIRDASHAW,
KRIS CHISLETT &
BLYTHE BRUMLEVE