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Press release : 2016 : 11 : 10 : Library, Poynter Institute and Weekly Challenger to Archive Community History

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LIBRARY, POYNTER INSTITUTE, WEEKLY CHALLENGER TO ARCHIVE COMMUNITY HISTORY



From left: Rep. Darryl Rouson and Cathi Cardwell, dean of the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library.

People were smiling, hugging, and shaking hands at the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library at USF St. Petersburg this week. The library, in collaboration with The Weekly Challenger newspaper and The Poynter Institute, hosted an Open House on Nov. 7 to celebrate a partnership that will establish a physical and digital archive of the 50-year-old community publication.

"It's a treasure trove of our history, and when I say our history, I don't mean just black people—I mean the entire city of St. Petersburg is chronicled in these pages and in these stories that the paper has told," said Rep. Darryl Rouson, who helped to secure legislative funding for the project. "And I'm elated that the University of South Florida has dedicated students, faculty, and resources to making this happen."

The paper, which was founded in 1967 by Cleveland Johnson Jr, has served as the voice for Pinellas County's African-American community, covering important historical issues such as school desegregation and corporate hiring practices. The publication is now under the leadership of Lyn Johnson, his youngest daughter.

According to Jim Schnur, librarian of Special Collections and University Archives, the physical collection will be housed in the Special Collections area of the library and consists of about 800 issues dating back more than 25 years, donated artifacts, and more than 10,000 photographs.

"I'm excited about this project, not only in helping Lyn and the readers of The Weekly Challenger, but also about its potential to be a model; a model for ethnic publications across the state of Florida," said Tim Franklin, president of The Poynter Institute. "We're providing vital information to their communities across the state."

"As a native of St. Petersburg who went to USF and USF St. Pete, and who's spent a lot of time doing African-American history as part of my research, having this resource here is incredible," said Schnur. "The relationship we have with the Johnson family and the University of South Florida, through the great work of Rep. Rouson and the Florida legislature, is amazing. We hope this continues for many years, and we hope that we can build upon it as a resource that we'll have for many generations to enjoy and appreciate."

"I am truly proud of USF St. Petersburg's role in this collaboration. In addition to contributing to the preservation of an African-American newspaper in Florida, this partnership provides a unique learning opportunity for our students," said USFSP Regional Chancellor Sophia Wisniewska.

[Read more about the Open House](#) in an article by The Weekly Challenger.

Library, Poynter Institute, Weekly Challenger to Archive Community History

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