

## **A GovStuff Foundation Special Report**

# **Follow the Money | East Volusia's Power Base**

Every area has one. Some are valued as the building blocks of a strong community – some reviled as snatching control from the hands of citizens and putting special interests first.

They are called many things – power brokers; cabals; good ole' boys (and girls); money grubbers, dictators, string pullers and more that's less nice. To some they are the prime example of enlightened self-interest, in which leaders look beyond their own needs to support the financial, social, educational, moral, health and infrastructure needs of their communities.

Generally they work behind the scenes, making public appearances only when orchestrating showings of support of issues and actions whose outcomes have been largely determined in the back rooms. They are the people would-be candidates check with to see if they will be supported or quietly blackballed.

As past listings of "influential" leaders in East Volusia by a variety of media have shown, naming the power people is a highly subjective pursuit. The make-up of any list changes with time and some who seem destined to make a big difference flame out or implode. The partners of Bray and Gillespie; Bill Geary; Felix Amon or David McGrath are examples. Attorneys, whose talents often make major contributions, must be excluded since those talents are mainly available to the highest bidder. Similarly, key employees may be highly motivated, but rarely take positions and push issues without the prior blessings/direction of those who sign their paychecks. (On *GovStuff Live!* it's described as the rule that Paychecks Buy Silence.) The professional managers of the cities and counties are exempted because their loyalties and vision come not from personal investment in the communities and people they serve, but in providing the smooth operations they are well paid to orchestrate, protecting the interests of the elected officials who have hired them. To many they are mercenaries. Local newspapers, radio stations and talk show hosts, are dependent on advertising dollars and access to information, controlled by businesses of the Pyramid group. This relationship, and occasional supportive employment offered individuals to supplement income, has been cited as keeping some stories out of circulation and adding a favorable tone to others.

GovStuff's criteria is based on those who:

- Could be successful almost anywhere – here because they want to be.
- Have had a lasting track record of involvement.
- Are involved beyond their business or special interest.
- Regularly work with others when interests coincide.

In naming the individuals and their organizations GovSuff believes represent those most capable of making change or maintaining status quo, it should be noted that none function in a vacuum. Each has a network of personal and corporate connections, often based on service on the boards of corporate or community entities. When functioning in unison, this linkage energizes a Power Pyramid. **We invite anyone who feels they have been overlooked and belong in the Pyramid to let us know.**

To illustrate our power structure, GovStuff has created the pyramid below. It recognizes the effective use of money, influence, contacts and the strategy to combine them. Though money is only one factor, the graphic reflects generally the dollar assets of the participants devoted to East Volusia.



In alphabetical order, GovStuff's nominees are:

**John Albright** – President and CEO of Consolidated Tomoka Land Company since 2014, John P. Albright has been instrumental in providing land and promoting investment for major housing expansions and high profile projects such as the recently opened Trader Joe's distribution center and the rapidly rising Outlet Mall adjacent to I-95. To enhance its interests as a major landholder/developer and assure a community conducive to growth, Albright has maintained Consolidated Tomoka's community involvement.

**George Anderson (GA)** – As Daytona Beach's hospitality industry accelerates its shift from mom and pop properties to corporate ownership and management, often from a distance, George Anderson's deep roots take on added importance in the preservation of local flavor and protection of local investors. A quiet force behind a range of political activity with countywide impact, Anderson is regarded as one it is better to have with you than against you.

**Kevin Bowler** - President of Daytona Beverages since its inception in 1995, Kevin Bowler has a lengthy record of Chamber of Commerce leadership, service to United Way and youth organizations and support for a variety of projects involving Pyramid participants. His son, Chris, is both a business and community partner, active in economic development and community causes, along with other family members and company executives.

**J. Hyatt Brown** – The insurance conglomerate Hyatt Brown heads could be successful in any location. It is in Daytona Beach because the family roots run deep, and Brown became a state power player representing the area in the Florida Legislature, where he served as House Speaker. Until recently business associates like Charlie Lydecker and Anthony 'Tony' Grippa, have often lead causes and garnered support candidates he backs. Their recent departure from Brown and Brown may lead to a more prominent community role for Brown's son, J. Powell, who succeeded his father as president and CEO in 2007 and other long-time associates. Hyatt Brown shares interest and involvement with his wife Cici, known for her support of healthcare and on the Hyatt and Cici Brown Museum of Art, which houses examples of their personal collection. Together they emphasize the arts and take a lively interest in economic and environmental issues.

**Theresa Doan** – Long a business and land owner in the beachside Main Street area, Doan is protective of the small businesses that kept the local economy alive as Florida’s growth had little impact on Daytona Beach. She often follows George Anderson’s lead on issues affecting the beachside segment of the local business community and in shaping positions on proposals that might change the nature of the beach or the businesses that border it.

**Lesla France Kennedy (LFK)** -- The granddaughter of ‘Big Bill’ France is the face of NASCAR and the International Speedway Corporation to the Daytona Beach Community, and, though she has been proclaimed the “most influential woman in motorsports in America” she makes time to be involved in local affairs, from supporting candidates likely to be favorable to Daytona International Speedway’s growth and diversity to the work of the NASCAR Foundation. She is the point person, supported by her mother, Betty Jane France, uncle Jim France (one of the few home-grown of the 37 billionaires who call Florida home) along with top NASCAR, ISC and DIS personnel. Linkage to the power structure is strengthened by the presence of Hyatt Brown and Mori Hosseini on the International Speedway Corporation Board and Glenn Ritchey on the Board of the NASCAR Foundation. It is considered not by accident that Ritchey and Kevin Bowler are the only two members not directly involved with Speedway operations on the five member Board of Supervisors who govern the Community Development District supporting the multi-purpose One Daytona development across from Daytona International Speedway.

**Mori Hosseini** – Consistently ranked among the nation’s 100 top home builders, Hosseini’s ICI Homes has grown since the London educated Iranian native founded it in 1975 after completing studies at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Any consideration of Hosseini’s role in the area must include his family, especially his wife Forough, who in addition to other community roles, founded Food Brings Hope, a major community effort to support needy young people, and by literal force of will and the muscle of the Pyramid to get government to do what managers wanted to avoid by supporting Hope Place, conversion of a former school to shelter and assistance center for homeless teens and families. Hosseini’s sister, Miriam Ghyabi, a successful transportation consultant, serves on numerous environmental, infrastructure and economic development related boards and committees. A past chair of the Florida

University System Board of Governors, he is current vice chair of the University of Florida Board of Governors as well as chair of Embry-Riddle's Board. Perhaps most important, he is recognized as wielding Volusia's strongest influence on appointments impacting the area by Governor Rick Scott.

**L. Gale Lemerand** – Entrepreneur Gale Lemerand brought a branch of expanding insulation company to Daytona Beach in 1978 and decided to stay, making the city his headquarters and being active in its growth ever since. He sold Gale Industries in 1995 but has continued investments that today have him at the helm of some 30 restaurants including Stonewood Grille and Tavern, Houligan's, Peach Valley Café and Pie Five Pizza. With his alter ego, Jill Simpkins, daughter Larabee, other family members and business partners, Lemerand supports a wide range of local causes, working often with sometime partner Mori Hosseini, and other Pyramid participants

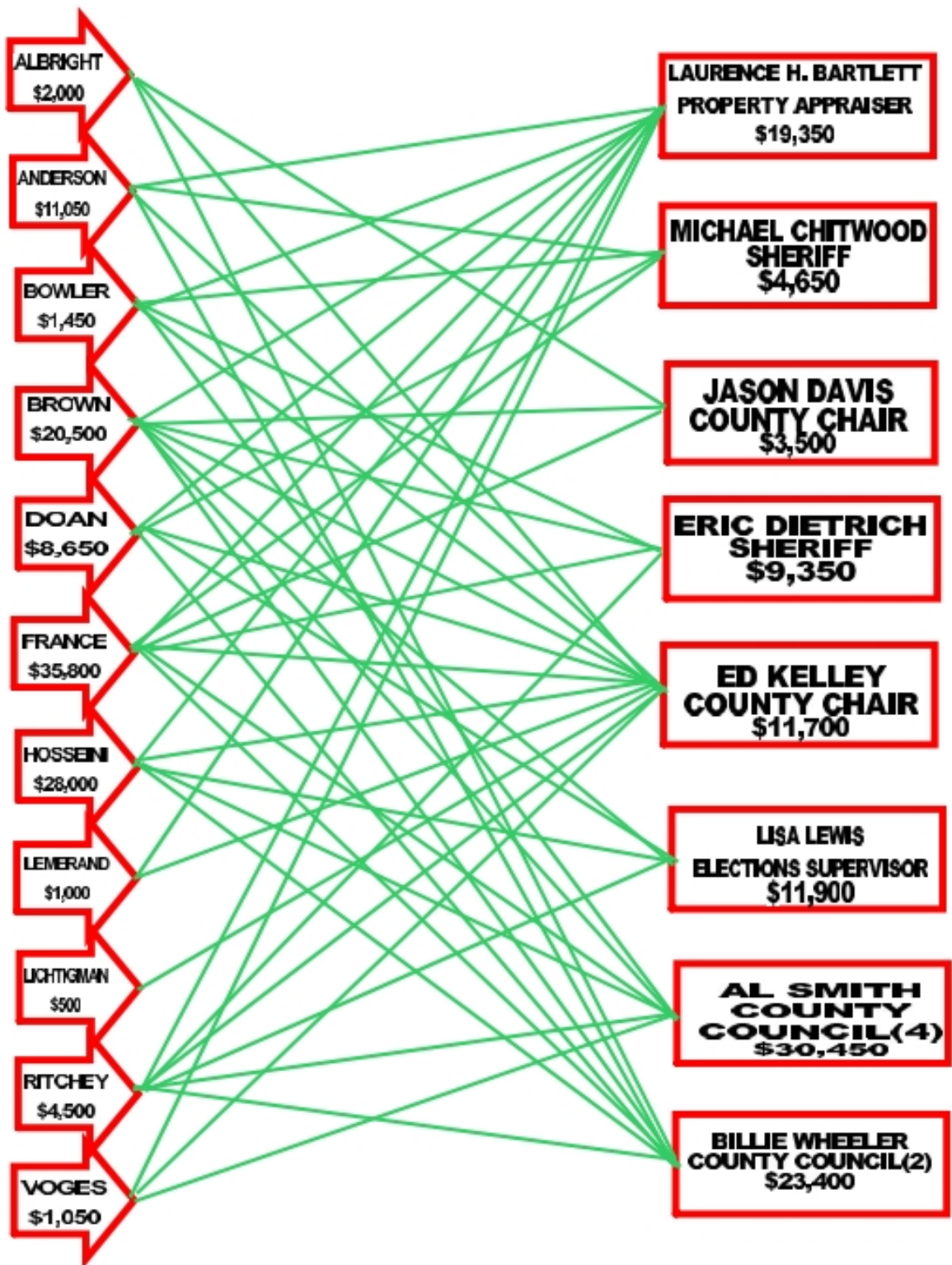
**Charles Lichtigman** – Longtime head of the Charles Wayne Organization, a land/development group with projects all across Central Florida, has been a behind-the-scenes player with deep roots. He is known to work with the other Power Pyramid members, collectively and individually, and has a network of business and social contacts who regularly follow his lead. He is an officer/director of some three dozen corporations reflecting major investment in the area, primarily through housing.

**Glenn Ritchey** – Ritchey came to Daytona as a struggling musician looking for beachside gigs and remained to become one of the most successful auto dealers in the nation, mayor of his city, and one of the most involved and honored of its residents. A link to Ritchey can be unearthed in nearly every effort to improve the economy by adding better paying jobs without undermining the tourism base. He draws heavily on input from the Speedway in the positions he takes and is a bridge from ISC to the community. He heads and has long served on the Halifax Health Board and is a strong supporter of the Council on Aging among many civic commitments.

**William (Bill) Voges** – As Chair and CEO of the Root Company, a family investment firm stemming from a fortune made as creator of Coke’s famous hourglass bottle, Bill Voges presides over an organization with revenues estimated in excess of \$7 million a year and is liaison between Root family members, local government leaders and community organizations. He is interconnected with other Pyramid members through service on corporate and social service boards, joined by company President Phil Maroney in building and maintaining selective involvement, especially in image and lifestyle areas. He was a politically active attorney before joining Root and is a Stetson grad who has maintained close ties with both the DeLand campus and Gulfport Law School.

**There is nothing illegal or unethical or immoral about what these individuals and their associates do. For them it is a part of doing business. The activities we note are a part of their work ethic and everyday business practice.**

As an example of this group’s use of its money and backing, from June 1, 2015 to June 1, 2016 there were eight candidates to whom they anted up \$114,500. Not all the members gave to all the candidates, and some gave to other candidates and party committees. Support was given in the name of the individuals identified here, their family members, and multiple corporate entities. Because those entities are far flung (the Motor Racing Network writes checks from its Concord, N.C. headquarters, for example) and not all employees or relatives are well known, it is difficult to track down all the support generated through the Pyramid network. The chart that follows tracks the contributions easily linked to Pyramid interests. The giving will no doubt rise substantially as the actual election nears, with at least one allegiance having shifted by July, as those for other offices also get support.



In most cases, contributions like these, while substantial, did not dominate the total support received by the candidates. In the period reviewed, the exceptions were County Council Candidates Billie Wheeler, running in District 2, who got about 43% of her support from Pyramid sources, and District 4 contender Al Smith who received \$30,450 of his \$33,500 total.

To prove that point, below is a fund raising invitation boosting the re-election bid of Daytona Beach Mayor Derrick Henry. International Speedway Corporation produced the event and ten of the 11 Pyramid members and associates were among the co-hosts. The fundraiser upped the investment ante of the Pyramid which was responsible for approximately 50% of the \$35,900 raised by the Mayor through June 30.

The table following the Derrick Henry invitation shows contributors to upgrading the area in front of Daytona Beach's iconic Oceanside band shell and re-naming it Ritchey Plaza in honor of former Mayor and Pyramid member Glenn Ritchey. Of the \$215,377.56 contributed for Ritchey Plaza, \$112,000 came from the Speedway and its related interests, and 79% of all contributions can be linked to the Pyramid.



PLEASE JOIN US FOR A FUNDRAISER IN SUPPORT OF  
**DERRICK HENRY**

FOR

**MAYOR OF DAYTONA BEACH**

**JULY 13<sup>TH</sup> • 5:30 - 7:00 PM**

BILL FRANCE ROOM AT THE DAYTONA INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY  
TICKETS AND TOURS BUILDING

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**CO-HOSTS**

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<b>George Anderson</b>	<b>Tony Grippe</b>	<b>Frank &amp; Barbara Molnar</b>
<b>Ronnie &amp; Lore Bledsoe</b>	<b>Mori &amp; Forough Hoessein</b>	<b>Joe Petrock</b>
<b>Kevin Bowler</b>	<b>Dr. Edison Jackson</b>	<b>Tim Phillips</b>
<b>Hyatt &amp; Cloi Brown</b>	<b>Larry Kelly Sr.</b>	<b>Bert &amp; Julie Reames</b>
<b>Gary &amp; Lisa Crotty</b>	<b>Lisa Kennedy</b>	<b>Glenn &amp; Connie Ritchey</b>
<b>Theresa Doan</b>	<b>Charles Lichtigman</b>	<b>Bud &amp; Cyndi Ritchey</b>
<b>Rev. Ronald Durhan</b>	<b>Blaine Lanaberry</b>	<b>Glenn Ritchey Jr.</b>
<b>Jeff &amp; Lori Fesser</b>	<b>Gale Lenznerand</b>	<b>Dr. Michelle Scott Carter</b>
<b>Dr. Bud Flauchaus</b>	<b>Nancy &amp; Lowell Lohman</b>	<b>Tad Serbousek</b>
<b>Betty Jane Franco</b>	<b>Charlie Lydecker</b>	<b>Bobby &amp; Lee Thigpen</b>
<b>John &amp; Wilma Graham</b>	<b>Sandy Miller</b>	

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Contributions Are Greatly Appreciated. Suggested Minimum Contribution of \$250 per Guest.  
Maximum Contribution per Person or Business Allowable by Law is \$1,000.  
Contributions can be made to Derrick Henry for Mayor of Daytona Beach.

**PLEASE RSVP TO P.J. McDERMOTT**  
**AT 388.681.4001 OR P.McDERMOTT@ISCMOTORSPORTS.COM**

Political Advertisement Paid for by Derrick Henry for Mayor of Daytona Beach

<i>Date</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Contributor Name as listed</i>	<i>Dollar Amount</i>
9/11/2014	John Graham	Lesa and Ben Kennedy	25,000.00
9/11/2014	John Graham	Jill Simpkins	10,000.00
9/11/2014	John Graham	Hyatt and Cici Brown	10,000.00
11/25/2014	John Graham	James L Kotas	50.00
11/25/2014	John Graham	Ms. Keefer	250.00
11/25/2014	John Graham	Charles and Pamela Carbiener	500.00
11/25/2014	John Graham	Gary and Lisa Crotty	10,000.00
11/25/2014	John Graham	Michael G. Helton	10,000.00
11/25/2014	John Graham	Betty Jane France	25,000.00
11/26/2014	John Graham	Rev & Maureen Durham	100.00
11/26/2014	John Graham	Paula K Votaw	500.00
11/26/2014	John Graham	R E & Katie Lee Thigpen	1,000.00
11/26/2014	John Graham	Susan & David Schandel	1,000.00
11/26/2014	John Graham	Douglas Daniels	250.00
11/26/2014	John Graham	Consolidated-Tomoka Land Co	5,000.00
11/26/2014	John Graham	LPGA	1,000.00
11/26/2014	John Graham	Lassiter Transportation Group	1,000.00
11/26/2014	John Graham	Crotty & Bartlett PA	500.00
12/3/2014	Bobbie Yarborough	Bright House Networks	5,000.00
12/19/2014	Cheryl Coxwell	Jim & Sharon France	25,000.00
1/8/2015	Cheryl Coxwell	Interwest Construction Inc	10,000.00
1/22/2015	Cheryl Coxwell	Coastal Ear, Nose & Throat PA	10,000.00
2/5/2015	Cheryl Coxwell	William J Voges	1,000.00
2/10/2015	John Graham	Daytona Beverages, LLC	10,000.00
2/10/2015	John Graham	Daytona Beach Kennel Club Inc	400.00
2/10/2015	John Graham	Kelly White	825.56
2/10/2015	John Graham	Beth Lemke	250.00
2/13/2015	Cheryl Coxwell	Walter William Brent Dewar	10,000.00
2/13/2015	Cheryl Coxwell	Bayshore Capital Inc	10,000.00
2/13/2015		Wholesale Lighting Inc	500.00
2/19/2015	Mailed to CODB	Cobb Cole	5,000.00
2/25/2015	Cheryl Coxwell	L. Gale Lemerand	10,000.00
3/5/2015	Mailed to CODB	Checkered Flag Committee Inc	5,000.00
3/17/2015	Mailed to CODB	Gateway Bank	1,500.00
4/10/2015	Cheryl Coxwell	Ronnie Bledsoe	10,000.00
5/8/2015	Cheryl Coxwell	Daytona State College	500.00
5/8/2015	Cheryl Coxwell	George and Gretchen Anderson	1,000.00

## **THE BOTTOM LINE**

The sad fact of the matter is that few whose pocketbooks and lifestyles are affected most by local office holders look behind the ads and commercials and direct mail pieces to learn who they're electing. The promises that are being made are likely less important than the track record a candidate has built in business and civic life and who is funding their campaign.

GovStuff isn't making judgements. The Pyramid members are hardworking and successful; care about our area, and use the power of association to bring about change. They pay taxes that fund local governments and give beyond that to make things better for all of us. We can debate if that good is offset because their actions also benefit their business interests and personal wealth, but what's beyond debate is that they, along with anyone else you'd like to add to our list, are a fact of our lives in East Volusia. Which makes this information worth knowing about.

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