

# **“PITCH PERFECT” FEATURED SPEAKER AT BOYS & GIRLS CLUB GALA**

## **2009 Speakers Forum to Spotlight Investment Banker and Singer Carla Harris**

*By: Steve Pajcic, Jacksonville Attorney & Amelia Island Homeowner*



Amelia Island will host leading investment banker, singer, author, and community service advocate Carla Harris on Friday, November 20, 2009. The talented Jacksonville native and Morgan Stanley Managing Director will be featured at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Boys & Girls Clubs Speakers Forum to be held at The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island.

It was almost 30 years ago when I got the call about Carla Harris. I don't remember who the caller was, but he asked if we could give a college student a summer job. My brother Gary and I had just started our law firm and still only had a handful of employees – and didn't need any more.

I asked “why” and the caller said, “Well she's a freshman at Harvard”. I said, “I went to Princeton and Gary went to FSU.” He said, “her mother's a teacher and her father's a fisherman.” I said, “okay.”

Carla knocked it dead that summer and then came back at Christmas to sing “O Holy Night” with me at our little firm's holiday party (she was always pitch perfect). She then went on to much bigger things.

Jacksonville has produced several famous Americans, such as James Weldon Johnson and A. Philip Randolph, and Carla seems to be cut from the same cloth. She's an artist, entrepreneur and philanthropist who grew up in Jacksonville and made her mark in New York City.

I've employed and coached almost a thousand students over the last 30 years, including one who went on to be the FSU football captain and others who became judges and millionaires (not the same students!). No one compares to Carla.

Carla went on to graduate Magna Cum Laude from Harvard in economics and then from Harvard Business School. Then, like James Weldon Johnson and A. Philip Randolph, she moved to New York City. In a few years she reached the pinnacle of American business success: she made managing director at Morgan Stanley. That same year she released her first CD, which was a bestseller on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and was featured on the CBS Evening News.

I had lost contact with Carla, but was following her fame with Jacksonville pride. Then my son was thinking about a summer job. I told him that “if your goal is economic success, there's only one career choice – New York investment banker”.

He said “what does that mean?” I called Carla and she generously invited us to lunch at her home. She told Michael how hard she had worked and all the deals she had made in order to become a managing director at Morgan Stanley. Michael decided to go to law

school, but we both went to see Carla singing with her Harlem choir.

Like James Weldon Johnson and A. Philip Randolph, Carla left Jacksonville to achieve success and fame. Unlike James Weldon Johnson and A. Philip Randolph in their lifetimes, Carla has been able to reconnect with Jacksonville. She visits her family several times throughout the year and on holidays. She has established a scholarship for Bishop Kenny students. She contributed to Nat Glover's campaigns for sheriff and Mayor.

Then, not too late in life, Carla married her high school bowling team buddy and sweetheart, Victor Franklin. Economics and artistic success have always played second fiddle to her family.

In November, Carla will be the featured speaker at the Nassau County Boys and Girls Clubs annual dinner. I have no doubt it will be inspirational. I have no doubt I will cry.



*Steve Pajcic was born and raised on Jacksonville's westside by his carpenter father and mother who left teaching to raise six children. After attending Princeton University and Harvard Law School on scholarships, Steve returned to Jacksonville and started the law firm of Pajcic & Pajcic with his brother Gary. Steve focuses his volunteer activities and charitable giving on providing education and afterschool opportunities for disadvantaged children. He also maintains a weekend home on Amelia Island.*

*For more information about tickets to the gala fund-raiser, which also features a cocktail reception, sit-down dinner, and silent auction, please call the Boys & Girls Clubs of Nassau County Foundation at 904-261-8666 or visit their website [www.bgc Nassau.org](http://www.bgc Nassau.org). Ticket sales close November 13, 2009.*