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Orlando Family magazine

DECEMBER 2017



BROOKE SHIELDS

On her career, family life and inspiring young women everywhere

FEELING FESTIVE

A GUIDE TO **CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAYS** IN STYLE

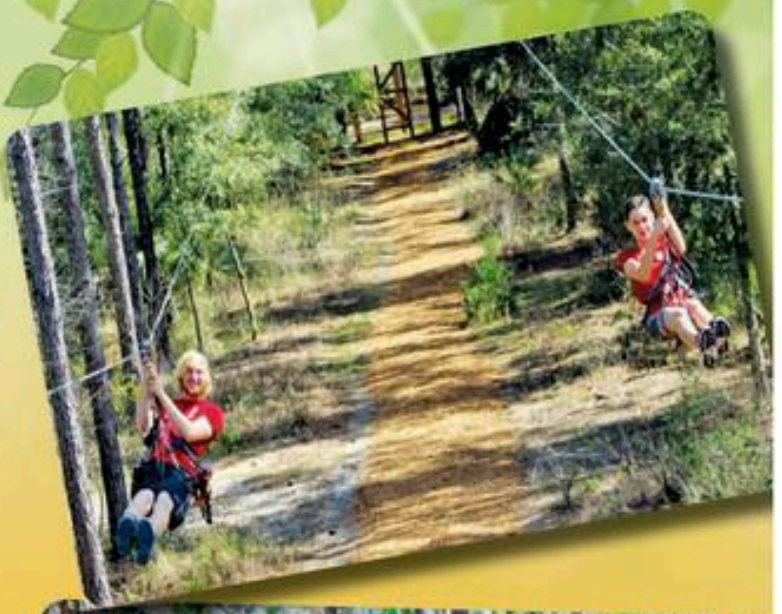
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pg. 16: Miranda Lambert

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For more information visit devereuxFL.org or email FLFosterCare@devereux.org

Devereux FLORIDA
ADVANCED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

contents

Orlando Family DECEMBER 2017

FEATURES

18 Beauty and Substance
Over her many years in the public eye, Brooke Shields has proven to be much more than just a pretty face. Now, she hopes to use her experiences to inspire young women everywhere.

22 Grand Giving
In this time of year to remember those less fortunate, we spotlight 20 area nonprofits helping make a difference in the community and beyond.

28 Home for the Holidays
Your definitive guide of the best ways to celebrate the season, from town traditions to theme park extravaganzas.



DEPARTMENTS

8 Family Matters
WFTV newscaster Martha Sugalski started her Christmas decorating a little early this year.

10 A Sunshine Promise
A Florida lawmaker wants to give students access to free college tuition—with one major condition.

16 Little Bit Country
Before Miranda Lambert takes over the Amway Center in January, she tells us what it's like being one of music's biggest stars.

34 Spreading Cheer
In the world of competitive cheerleading, families are spending countless hours and big bucks for the experience.

DINING

38 Palate

39 Review: Enzo's on the Lake

IN EVERY Issue

6 Home Front

7 *Orlando Family* Stars

Orlando Family Magazine is a free, trusted resource designed to inform, serve, and enrich local families and parents throughout the Greater Orlando area with parenting ideas, fun family activities, and a wide variety of invaluable resource guides. Please send all Editorial Correspondence for consideration to editorial@OrlandoFamilyMagazine.com or mail to 212 Pasadena Place, Suite A, Orlando, FL 32803. All such correspondence is sent on a non-confidential basis and Orlando Family Magazine, LLC shall be free to reproduce, publish, edit, and/or use the content of any such communications, including any ideas, inventions, concepts, techniques or know-how disclosed therein, for any purpose, including developing, and/or marketing of the magazine and/or goods or services identified in the magazine, without compensation to, or acknowledgement of the author. Orlando Family Magazine assumes no liability for any unsolicited materials, including, but not limited to, manuscripts, photographs or artwork. All submitted materials become the property of Orlando Family Magazine, LLC and will not be returned. Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes.



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Home Front

by the Numbers

576 Total acres of land Universal Orlando has purchased to expand the theme park. Universal has not divulged plans for the land but rumors of a new park are circulating.

$50,000 Amount a former female police officer received from the city of Ocoee after a lawsuit regarding gender and racial discrimination.

No. 1 The ranking of Highway I-4 as the deadliest highway in the nation according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

$29.5 million Purchase price that a New York-based investment firm paid for the Shoppes at Celebration Place inside Disney's Celebration community.



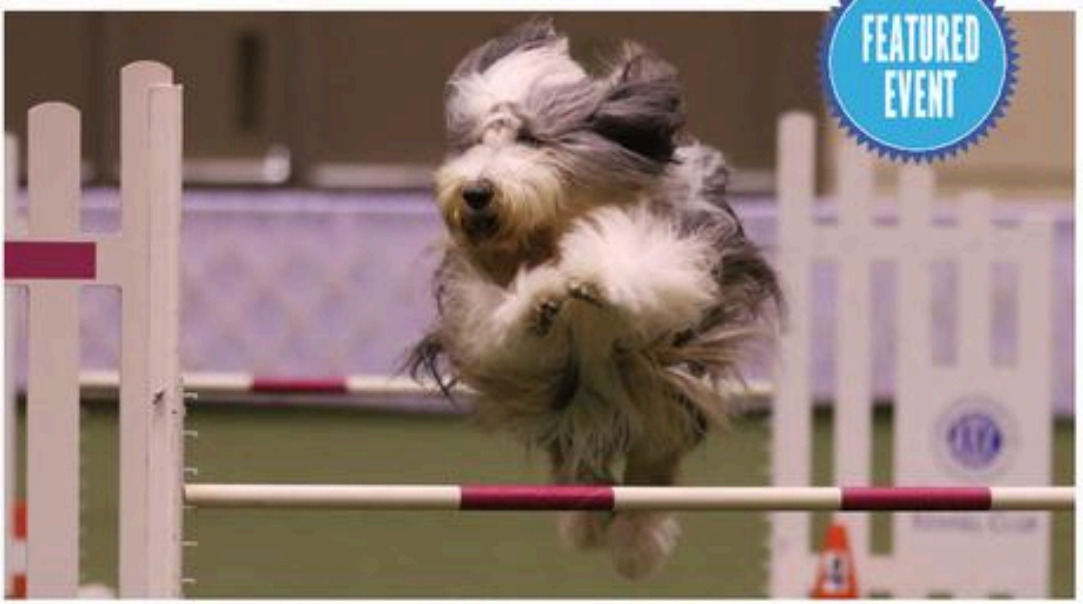
$5,000 Amount on an Amazon gift card that a Winter Garden woman won on *Live with Kelly and Ryan*

$4.8 million Amount Ripley's Believe It or Not! paid for a dress worn by Marilyn Monroe at John F. Kennedy's 45th birthday gala in 1962.

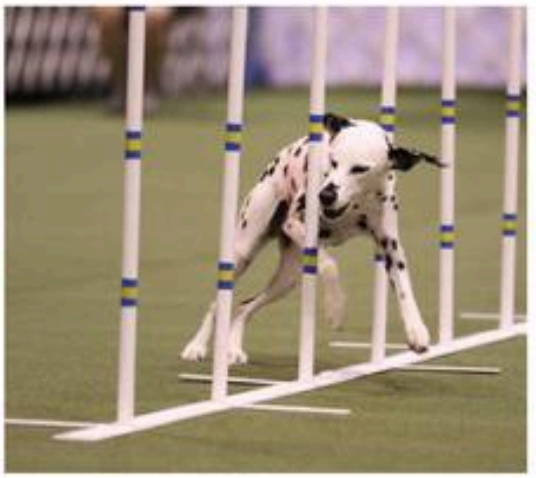
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CANINE EXTRAVAGANZA
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OCCC.NET

Hit

Orange County Public Schools will debut a new magnet school for gifted students in grades second through fifth. The full-time program will have limited capacity to 434 students and children must first be deemed eligible for consideration by the county before parents can apply.

Plans were unveiled for a $30 million library and events center project in Winter Park. Architect David Adjaye, one of *Time*'s Most Influential People of 2017, is the designer of the buildings proposed for Martin Luther King Jr. Park.

A new water park is being planned for Lake Nona and is said to feature a solar-powered water ski park, a climbing wall and a ropes course. The park is slated to open in summer 2018.

SeaWorld has seen a major drop in revenue and attendance from last year. Officials cite a decrease in national advertising along with Hurricane Irma having further impact on the Orlando location.

A camera battery exploded in a passenger's bag at Orlando International, causing a security scare and flight delays.

An Orlando man who allegedly stole a car was also charged with attempting to drown a police dog while fleeing from authorities.

Miss

3 THINGS YOU'LL LEARN

Rep. Shervin D. Jones' proposal to make college tuition free includes having graduates live and work in Florida for the amount of years they were in school.
Page 10



Singer Miranda Lambert reveals the one song she wished she had written.
Page 16

Brooke Shields had paparazzi chase her on the campus of Princeton University while she attended school there in the '80s.
Page 18

DID YOU HEAR?

"If you were about to tell me 10 years ago I was going to be a city commissioner, I would say 'You're crazy.'"

—**MATT MORGAN,** FORMER WWE WRESTLER AND NEWLY ELECTED LONGWOOD CITY COMMISSIONER

DATEBOOK



METROWEST FOOD TRUCK TAKEOVER

Dec. 14 and 28

Twice this month, nearly a dozen food trucks will roll into Veranda Park to help satisfy the cravings of Central Florida foodies looking for the next great bite. Expect plenty of variety from both the savory and sweet side of things as well as live music and other entertainment.

6-9 p.m., 6996 Piazza Grande Ave., Orlando, MetroWestFoodTrucks.com, free

KATY PERRY

Dec. 17

In support of her latest album *Witness*, pop superstar Katy Perry takes the stage at the Amway Center to perform several songs from her vast catalog of chart-topping hits, including fan favorites like "Roar" and "Firework." With a fan base that blends young and old alike, one can expect plenty of singing along taking place in the crowd.

7 p.m., 400 W. Church Street, Orlando, AmwayCenter.com, tickets start at $47.50

WINDERMERE BOAT PARADE

Dec. 23

This annual nautical holiday celebration is one of the season's biggest events as large crowds gather to witness the spectacle of numerous boats decked out in festive lighting make their way around Windermere's Lake Butler and Wausau Bay.

For more information, visit Town.Windermere.FL.US

Orlando Family Stars

Each month, Stars features exceptional students, student athletes, educators and all-around boons to the Greater Orlando area.

STAR ATHLETE

Caroline Crist



The First Academy School senior Caroline Crist won her fourth consecutive cross country title this season, and led her team to victory in the process. Sisters Emily and Isabel had contributed to past team titles, and parents Brian and Stephanie are happy to see Caroline continue the family success.

STAR STUDENTS

Orlando Science Middle School



Select high-performing students were given the opportunity to meet with the esteemed Judge Byron of the Federal District Court of Mid Florida for a special discussion in honor of Constitution Day. Talks included details of the Constitution, and a breakdown of government powers and responsibilities.

KNOW A STAR

Submit your nominees to Stephanie@OrlandoFamilyMagazine.com

by MARTHA SUGALSKI

An Early Holiday Gift

Shh, there is a new man at my house. He is super cute, a tad bit older for me but I really like him! I probably should be quiet about it, but I am not. People may talk, I don't care. Talk. All. You. Want. Tell me that he shouldn't be there. Tell me that it is inappropriate. Ask me if my husband knows? What will the neighbors think? Again. I. Don't. Care. I have been waiting all year long to see my man.



Over the months I have thought about him a lot and when I would get the chance to see him again. It is a tough relationship to have because he lives out of town and, well, he has a Mrs. Plus he is super busy so he really can only see me on the rare occasion. I have missed the twinkle in his eye, his jolly laugh, his cute round belly and his magnificent beard. And now he's paid me an earlier visit than expected.

His white beard and red suit are on full display in our family room. Yup, Santa has arrived. I will proudly say it again. *Santa is at my house.* When that last bit of Halloween candy got tossed in the trash, the pumpkins were put away and sweet Jolly Old Saint Nick came out of hiding from the attic. There was no Thanksgiving cornucopias, no Pilgrims and no Mayflower.

Don't get me wrong, I didn't skip over Thanksgiving entirely. I still gorged myself on turkey, stuffing and pumpkin pie and watched football all day long. But I did so in the comfort of a festive North Pole atmosphere.

I bought as many holiday light projectors as I could find at Home Depot so astronauts aboard the International Space Station can see my house. I am cool with that. And you know who else is cool with that? My kids, they love it. They stare in wonder at the gigantic tree as the lights shine and ornaments twinkle in their glow. They have played with the manger when I told them not to. Unfortunately, baby Jesus had to be super-glued after being dropped by some little hands. They are writing and re-writing letters to Santa. They want to make sure we have carrots for the reindeers. They are wearing their Santa footy pajamas too. I can see the joy in their little blue eyes. Oh but I do think I caught Scrooge, err I mean my hubby giving me the evil eye when I told Alexa to play Christmas music. I was unfazed and cranked it up because it makes me happy, like really *happy*. I even had the gingerbread candles burning.

Go ahead, judge away. But, this has been my plan all along.

As the years have gone by, Santa and his posse come out a little earlier each year. A few days has turned into weeks and this year, it was more than a full month. Guess what? It makes life a little better; certainly brighter.

When the holidays wrap up and I have to say goodbye to my man, I'll be saddened by his departure but overjoyed because of all the extra time we got to spend together this year. Who knows, maybe he'll return before Halloween next year and I will forego pumpkin carving and welcome him back into my arms under the mistletoe.



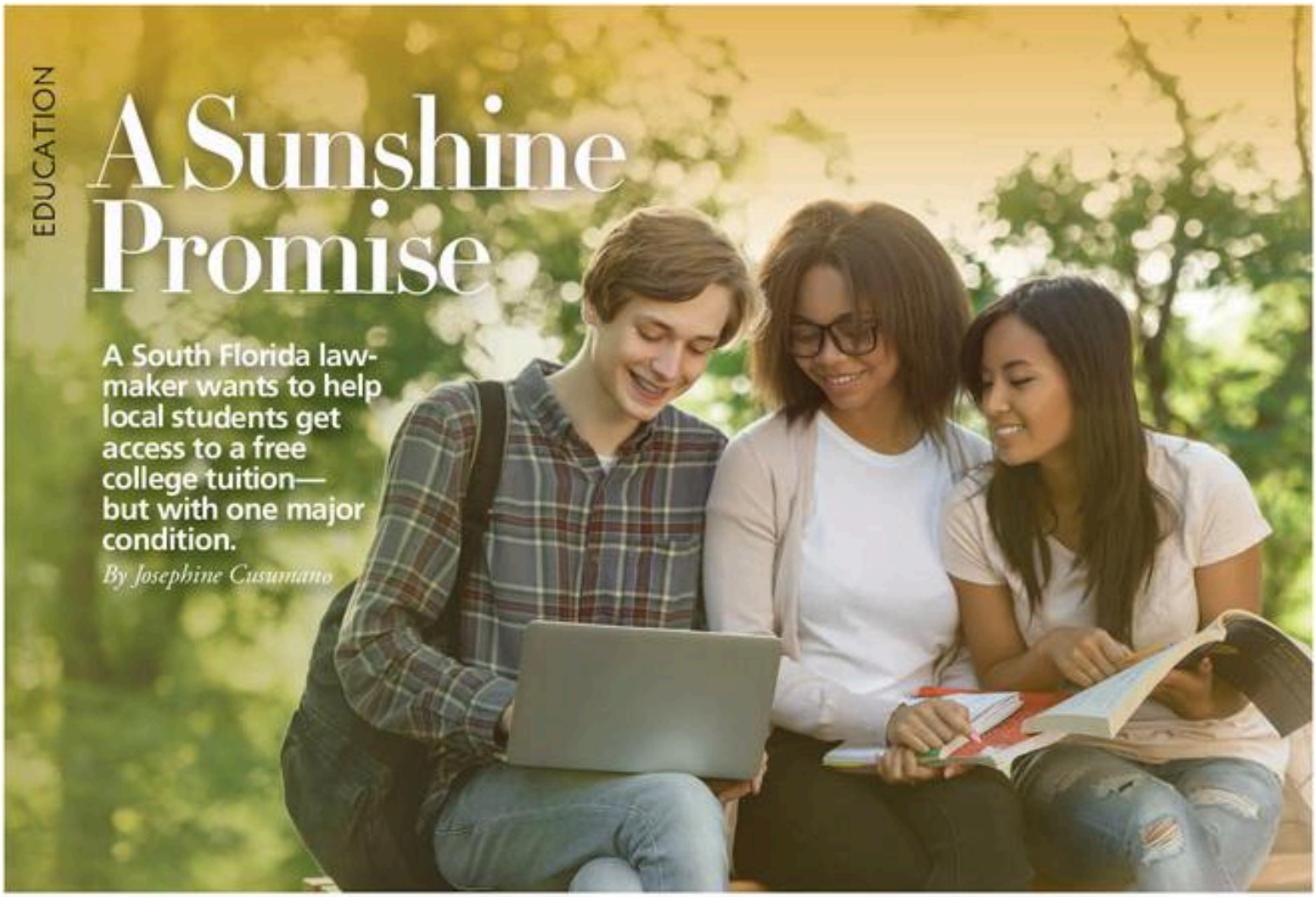
An Emmy-winning member of WFTV's Eyewitness News Team, Martha Sugalski has been a journalist for more than 20 years, and she's spent her entire career in Florida. She's also a married mother of six children, including a set of triplets. You can catch her on weekdays at 5, 6, and 11 p.m. on WFTV, and at 10 p.m. on TV 21.


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A Sunshine Promise

A South Florida lawmaker wants to help local students get access to a free college tuition—but with one major condition.

By Josephine Cusumano



Today, college tuition rates are steadily increasing, leaving graduates with hefty student loan debt. In fact, the total student loan debt as of 2016, according to the New York Federal Reserve, is $1.31 trillion making it the second-highest consumer debt category, right behind mortgage debt.

Looking at these overwhelming numbers, local lawmakers—specifically Rep. Shevrin D. Jones, D-Broward—are thinking of new ways to give local students access to a more affordable education. "When we look at higher education, it's not a conversation that we're having … when it comes to tuition, enrollment and retention of students after their freshman year," Jones explains.

"Community colleges in specific know that almost 79 percent of students attend community college once they come out of a high school because of affordability and preparedness—but more specifically, affordability." In response, Jones recently presented the "Sunshine Scholarship Program" bill, which is similar to the Tennessee Promise Scholarship, which went into effect in 2015.

The "Sunshine Scholarship Program," as it was presented, would provide 100 percent funding of an eligible Florida student's tuition at a Florida College System institution for up to 72 credit hours for an associate degree program and 120 credit hours for a bachelor's degree program, after all federal and state financial aid awards and grants have been applied. In order to be considered for this program, however, students must meet certain conditions, including having an annual household income of $125,000 or less and they must be enrolled for at least 30 credits a year while maintaining a 2.5 GPA.

While the program is applicable to both community colleges and trade and technical schools, there's a catch. "The kick to it is that upon completion of your degree, you owe the state back time, which means you will have to stay within the state to work, basically pay us back for what we've done," explains Jones. "We're really not giving anything away, we're giving you a loan ... to keep your talent within the state of Florida."

If, however, a student leaves the state before that time period is completed, they must repay the state in full, with an annual interest rate. This does not, of course, apply to students enlisted in the United States Armed Forces. The bill, as of press time, is currently waiting for review by the Post-Secondary Education Subcommittee and has already been met with mixed opinions. For starters, some call the program a "handout," while others are in favor of the bill, citing how they wish it had been available to them while enrolled in college.

"It's not a handout, it's a handup," exclaims Jones in response to naysayers. "I think it's a win for any state where you're putting more opportunities in front of people to help them have a better life. … We are creating a sexy appeal—for the lack of a better word—in keeping those individuals here, to show them we really do care about what you do after graduation. … We're educating students within the state and after we educate them, those students are leaving and they're going to more thriving areas. … Being able to leave these opportunities within in the state so those individuals can grow upon them, it's a win for us," he adds.

As for local colleges, Jones explains it would boost enrollment numbers and give those institutions the opportunity to assess their curriculum and create academic fields to help meet the needs of their community. "Colleges and universities need to look at their curriculum and [make sure] it's aligned with what is happening naturally because we just can't teach students the way we used to teach them years ago," he adds.

Fort Lauderdale's Broward College—whose mission is to provide affordable and accessible edu-

cation to any one person who hopes to improve their career—is supportive to say the least. "To understand our position on the Sunshine Scholarship Program, we first have to look at the demographic makeup of the students at Broward College and other community colleges in the state," explains Associate Vice President for Student Financial Services Theresa Cowan.

"Within our student community, 80 percent represent minority populations, 76 percent are attending classes part-time, and more than 85 percent receive some form of financial aid. Also consider that nearly 75 percent, or 48,500 Broward College students, fall under the $125,000 household income threshold outlined in the bill. Our students are moms and dads, displaced workers retraining for a new career, and first-generation



college students.

"If passed, the Sunshine Scholarship Program will have a far-reaching effect on the lives of thousands across the state," Cowan adds. "Money no longer imposes a burden on many looking to achieve their dreams through education, further incentivizing students to focus on their goals and complete their degrees on time. This will only serve to improve our economy by infusing our state's workforce pipeline with eager new future hires."

Parents, on the other hand, have mixed feelings about the proposed bill. Julie Mitchell, an Orlando parent to both a middle schooler and a freshman in college, is supportive, but also has concerns. "As a parent who is active in my local public high-school, this program is extremely enticing as it opens access

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to postsecondary education for many students," explains Mitchell, who also co-owns a college planning company, The College Map, and is an independent college counselor.

"So many students decide not to further their education because they do not recognize the options. … This program sends messages of hope and possibility," she adds. "My only concern about the program is that if a student has to leave Florida before 'time is up'—possibly because of a spouse's relocation for work, ill parent, etc.—and must repay the whole scholarship plus interest. I would hope some exclusions would apply."

On the other side of the debate, Allison Diaz is concerned it would cause students to not try hard enough in school as a result. "It could be positive, but I also see it taking a lot away from the kids that really, really work hard. I do like the fact that it gives people an opportunity not to have so much debt.

"I do have a 23-year-old, who got a college scholarship, carried a 3.5 GPA, played volleyball full-time and was an All-American, but still walked out with $20,000 debt," adds Diaz, who is also a parent to a 17-year-old son.

As for the realistic possibility of her children remaining in the state after completion of their degrees, Diaz says, "I think not having that debt over your head and getting an education where you're able to make a higher income, I think they would do that."

Despite the opposing stance, numbers don't lie. With similar promise programs in New York, Tennessee, Oregon and Rhode Island, each movement has gained positive traction. "According to the 2017 Tennessee Promise Annual Report, community colleges in the state experienced a college-going rate increase of 4.6 percentage points in the first year, a single year increase which is larger than the past seven years combined," states Cowan.

"Additionally, the retention rate of students who received Tennessee Promise funding was substantially higher than their non-program student counterparts at 63 percent compared to 42 percent. It would stand to reason that the Sunshine Scholarship Program would have the same effect in our state, making the dream to attend college a reality for many in Florida."

While Jones waits for the go-ahead on the program, he continues to press the issue of how important this bill is for Florida's future workforce. "Other states have done this in a very bipartisan manner and they understand the need to drive a thriving workforce," he explains. "What are we doing to innovate our workforce, put people into our workforce and drive energy into our workforce? I think this is the way we do that: by empowering through education and moving individuals along, not just through college, but through other industries that include technical and trade schools.

"I think it's going to be heard," he adds with hope. "I want to begin to help students in the next cycle in the fall of next year."

'Tis the Season 2017

Downtown Winter Garden will be transformed into a Holiday Wonderland filled with all the trimmings. Enjoy a ride on Santa's Sleigh, a romantic carriage ride, enjoy live music, carols and theatre, take in a holiday movie and don't miss the holiday lights. Every Saturday in December we will have a Very Merry Farmers Market. A Merry Winter Garden Light Show will be back along with holiday photo vignettes.

The holiday kick off will be a **Holiday Market** on **Shop Small Saturday, from 9 am to 2 pm on November 25.**

CHECK OUT ALL THE HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND EVENT DETAILS AT WWW.WINTERGARDEN-FL.GOV!

November 25	**Shop Small Saturday and Holiday Market** | 9 am to 2 pm
December 2	**A Very Merry Farmers Market** | 9 am to 2 pm
December 2	**A Merry Winter Garden Light Show at City Hall** | 6 to 9 pm
December 8	**A Merry Winter Garden Light Show at City Hall** | 6 to 9 pm
December 8	**Paint it Black Quartet (Christmas Music) on the Plaza** | 7 to 9 pm
December 9	**A Very Merry Farmers Market with Santa** | 9 am to 2 pm
December 9	**Holiday Music and Horse Drawn Carriage Rides** | 4 to 9 pm
December 9	**A Merry Winter Garden Light Show at City Hall** | 6 to 9 pm
December 9	**Sleigh Ride with Santa!** | 6 to 9 pm
December 15	**Key Harmony (Acapella/Christmas Music) on the Plaza** | 7 to 9 pm
December 16	**A Very Merry Farmers Market with Santa** | 9 am to 2 pm
December 16	**Holiday Music and Horse Drawn Carriage Rides** | 4 to 9 pm
December 16	**Holiday Movie – Polar Express** | 6:30 pm to 9 pm
December 16	**A Merry Winter Garden Light Show at City Hall** | 6 to 9 pm
December 22	**Safia Hudson (Christmas Carols/Holiday Pop) on the Plaza** | 7 to 9 pm
December 23	**A Very Merry Farmers Market with Santa** | 9 am to 2 pm
December 23	**A Merry Winter Garden Light Show at City Hall** | 6 to 9 pm
December 29	**Good Times Jazz Band (Christmas Carols/Seasonal tunes) on the Plaza** | 7 to 9 pm

Tis the season (to be jolly) comes from the 1862 Christmas carol, "Deck the Halls."


You *can* measure hope.
Reproductive Medicine Associates is proud to be in your neighborhood, Orlando.
Award-winning scientific breakthroughs, patient-centered care, and an unmatched commitment to success are all now in Orlando. Hopeful parents trying to get or stay pregnant now have the benefit of our global network of experts committed to overcoming infertility and building families one healthy baby at a time.
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RMA
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IVIRMA Global

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Infertility Fact

YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

Did you know that more than seven million Americans are dealing with infertility? While it may not be a subject that everyone is comfortable discussing, it's important to ask the right questions when evaluating your options. It's also important to know that there are many potential paths to parenthood.

Dr. George Patounakis of Reproductive Medicine Associates of Florida, which recently opened in Lake Mary, suggests hopeful parents consider the following questions and answers when searching for infertility care:

Q: When should I see an infertility specialist if I'm having trouble getting pregnant?
A: *The general rule of thumb for women under 35 is that if you've been trying to conceive for more than a year of unprotected intercourse, you should seek treatment from a reproductive endocrinologist or other specialist. That timeframe changes to six months for women over 35. Visit MyFertilityChecklist.com to learn more about the best time to see a fertility specialist.*

Q: Are pregnancy rates or delivery rates more important?
A: *When considering a practice, it's not enough for them to cite high pregnancy rates as many pregnancies do not progress to full term. Live delivery rates are the real goal. Reliable, independent sources, such as the Society for Assistive Reproductive Technology's website (SART.org) let you see the delivery rates of any fertility center you're researching.*

Q: Are all fertility treatments the same?
A: *Treatment options often vary at different practices. That's why patients need to look for a program with the most advanced technology and practice patterns, which translate into high-delivery rates. This includes programs that complete their diagnostic work-up in 30 days or less; offers single embryo transfer with delivery rates at or above national average; routinely performs embryonic screening; accounts for endometrial synchrony during time of embryo transfer, and where embryo culture to blastocyst stage of development is standard.*

Q: Is it likely that I will have twins or multiples if I undergo fertility treatment?
A: *In the past, prospective parents had a high risk of twins or multiples when undergoing in-vitro fertilization (IVF) because more than one embryo would be transferred in order to achieve a pregnancy. Today there are more advanced ways to pick a single embryo with the best chance of success, which has drastically reduced the number of multiple births as well as the health effects and financial burdens associated with multiples. RMAFL uses genetic screening, single embryo transfer and endometrial synchrony to reduce this risk.*

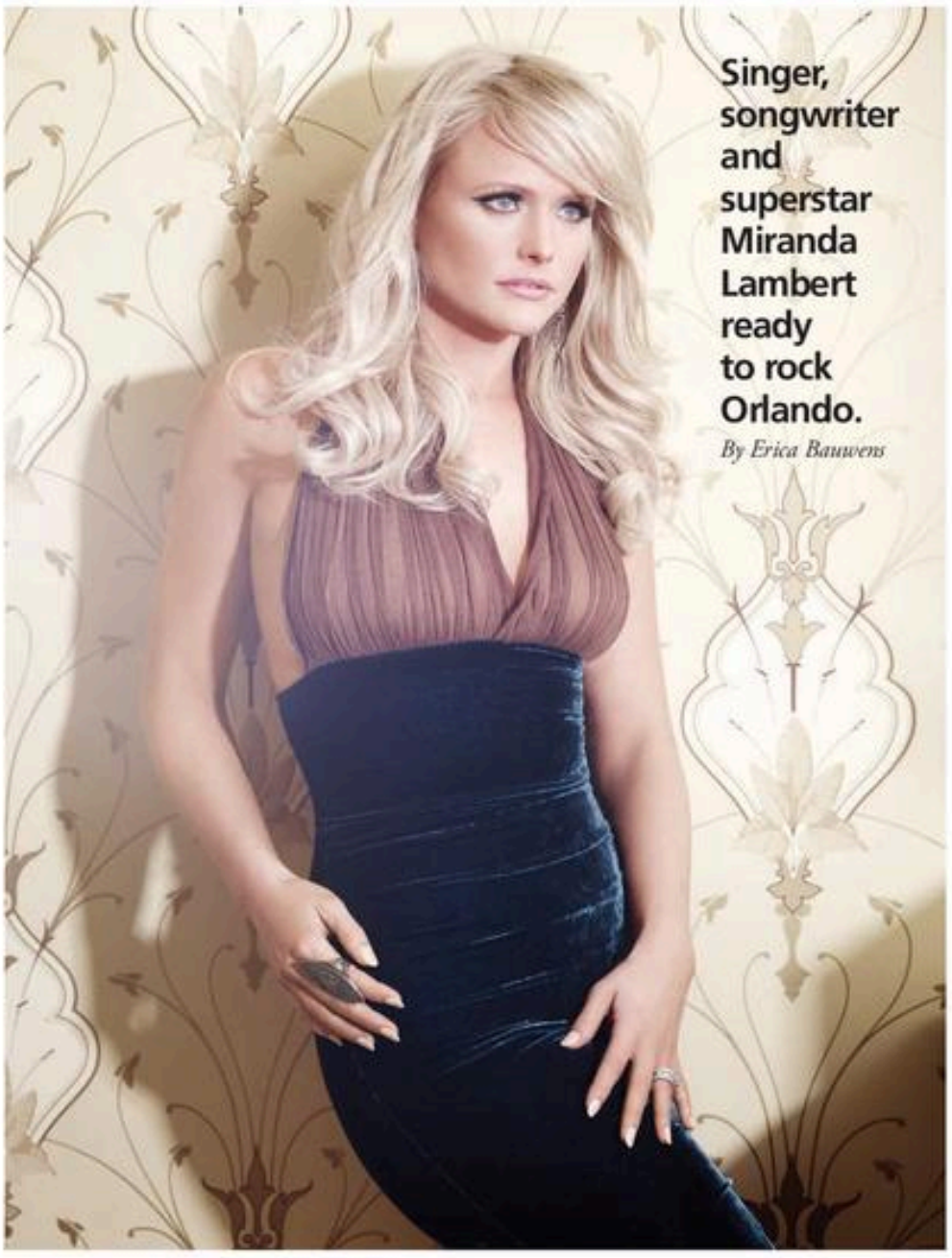
New patient appointments are available today for RMAFL's new office in Lake Mary, FL. The office is located at 400 Colonial Center Parkway, Suite 150, Lake Mary, FL 32746. For more information or to speak with a personal patient liaison, call 407-804-9670 or visit RMA-FL.com.

A Little Bit Country

In just a few short years, Miranda Lambert went from country music's up-and-comer to an international star, capturing audiences across all music genres with her mix of Southern charm and feminine ferocity.

She's hard not to love; at just 34 years old Lambert has proven that she has more than enough depth in the industry. She has two Grammys and 23 Academy of Country Music Awards to prove it.

We spoke with Lambert ahead of her Jan. 19 stop at the Amway Center for her Living Like Hippies tour. Lambert shared her views on the future of country music, her upbringing and tells us the one song she wishes she had written.



Singer, songwriter and superstar Miranda Lambert ready to rock Orlando.

By Erica Bauwens

ORLANDO FAMILY MAGAZINE: You've been recognized with countless awards and accolades for your music, does it ever get old?
MIRANDA LAMBERT: *This is all so unreal and it's hard to believe sometimes that this is my life. Mind blowing really. I'm so blessed and couldn't be happier with my life and getting to do what I love as a job. I love my fans, they are the best.*

OFM: Country music seems so collaborative; do you enjoy getting the chance to work with other artists and would you like to ever create a song with someone outside of the genre?
ML: *Getting to collaborate and create with other artists is wonderful. Being up close and seeing another artist's inspirations for what they do, energizes me. I am absolutely open to working outside of my genre, I love music of all kinds, it all depends on the song.*

OFM: What can your Orlando audience expect from your show?
ML: *Hopefully a great time. The production is very fun, it's big… but more importantly the set list will hopefully inspire the fans to sing along.*

OFM: Do you think country music has become so mainstream that the barriers that may have existed in the past are now gone and that the lines blur between country and pop in some instances? And is that a good thing in your eyes?
ML: *I think country music is mainstream. We have seen that with Taylor Swift and Carrie Underwood, both artists get not only played on other radio formats, but are hugely successful doing it.*

OFM: I've read that when you were younger your family lost your home and had to live in an uncle's farmhouse. How did that experience humble you and shape who you are today with all the success that you've achieved?
ML: *I am sure everything you go through shapes you in some way or another. I have great parents and they helped me build a strong foundation. They've shown me to work hard for what you want to accomplish in life. I always go with my gut to get myself through tough decisions and so far it's worked out.*

OFM: What's your creative process like when you're writing, do you write to music or come up with the lyrics first, how do you piece the puzzle together?
ML: *I've always written about what is going on in my life at that moment, saying what I want to say no matter what. Many songs are written just from*



hanging out with some of my friends who are songwriters. We'll just start talking about something and then a song comes out as result.

OFM: To have this very personal thing like writing a song turn into something that so many people react and relate to, is that one of the most rewarding aspects of the job?
ML: *When someone tells me that one of my songs helped them through a tough time or inspired them to do something, I feel that I have done my job. To know that someone is listening and taking something from my music to make them feel something, is an amazing feeling.*

OFM: What's the one song you wish you wrote and why?
ML: "The House That Built Me" *which was written by Allen Shamblin and Tom Douglas. When I heard it for the first time I felt very strongly about the words as I thought it described my life. I still wish I wrote it! But I am glad someone did and I got to record it.*

OFM: Tell us about having your parents have to get you into bars when you were younger so you could perform; what was that experience like?
ML: *My parents were very supportive of my pursuits in music. It was great to get to do what I loved and felt protected and watched out for by my family.*

OFM: You've said you always wanted to be a country singer and there was never a plan B. In what ways did that push you to make your dreams become a reality?
ML: *I am still doing it every day. I am sure it's like this with any job, you put in the time and the effort and if all works out, you get to do for a living what you love.*

DICKENS
Holiday Celebration
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16
11:30 A.M.
Orlando Public Library, Library Central
101 E. Central Blvd.
Enjoy some fun and festive holiday songs performed by the Orlando Dickens Carolers.
For more seasonal events at a library branch near you, visit ocls.info/winterholidays
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TheBasketCaseOrlando.com

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DRS-Roofing.com

BROOKE SHIELDS HAS SPENT THE MAJORITY OF HER LIFE IN THE SPOTLIGHT AND SHE HOPES HER EXPERIENCES WILL INSPIRE YOUNG WOMEN FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

BY **DEBRA WALLACE**

Beauty Substance

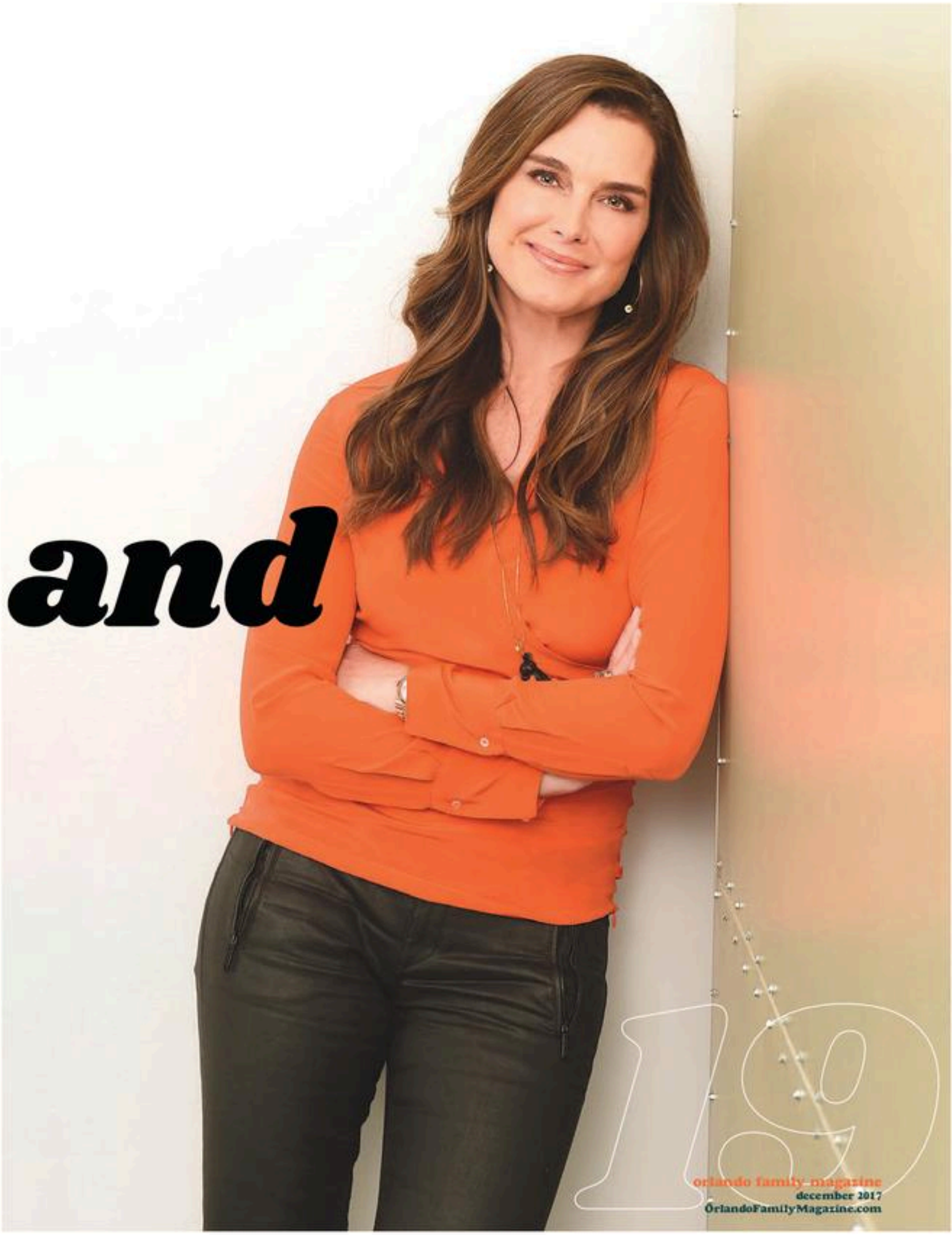
Brooke Shields has a formidable legacy after nearly four decades in the spotlight. Sure, she is famous, possesses a movie-star aura and has graced the covers of worldwide fashion magazines, in addition to starring in numerous films, television shows and Broadway musicals. Yet, when it comes to the beautiful woman in a shimmery orange cocktail dress at her recent Manhattan film premiere, it is easy to see that there is so much more to her than meets the eye.

At age 52, Shields, who began her career as the Ivory Snow baby, is a confident woman, loving mother with strong maternal instincts, and possesses the unique ability to give the characters whom she portrays depth by peeling back the many layers of their psyche. Her presence on screen is undeniable, whether it's starring as a leading lady on a sitcom like *Suddenly Susan* or guest appearing as Miley Cyrus' mother on Disney's *Hannah Montana*.

The former child star is still front and center on the big and small screen, and is committed to use her position to empower young girls and women. She showed her nurturing side during the making of her latest film, *Daisy Winters*, in which she plays a loving-yet-troubled mother opposite 11-year-old Sterling Jerins, an actress nearly the same age now as when Shields got her own start in movies.

Shields also found female camaraderie on the set of *Law and Order: SVU*, where she currently has a guest-starring role. During her work on both projects, she says she was attracted to the "family-like" atmosphere, which was ideal for getting her creative juices flowing.

"If there is a hostile environment we wither,"


and

Brooke Shields beauty and substance

she says, "so it really does take a village for women to thrive."

When she first began her career, fans were so enamored by her breathtaking beauty that she had to prove that she could also step into serious roles. Well, she has, and Shields and her career have not only endured, they have flourished. She is constantly reinventing herself, always discovering deep personal and parental connection with her film and television characters. She is frequently called "a positive role model," both at work and at home.

Currently, she is doing so by drawing on her own experiences as the deeply involved, doting mother of her two daughters she calls "the lights" of her life: 14-year-old Rowan and 11-year-old Grier.

Shields is still passionate about acting, but her New York home life with producer Chris Henchy, her husband of 16 years, and their daughters, is obviously her first priority, and gives her the opportunity to positively impact them. The family has been known to vacation at Disney World. (Oddly enough Shields has some other Orlando ties. The onetime spokeswoman for Tupperware has previously headlined the locally founded company's annual Jubilee, a training convention for employees).

Family life is filled with "love and stability," and she appreciates the continuity of a steady and long-lived career. She is pleased to say that Henchy "is a loving husband and a nurturing father who still makes me feel like I am walking on air. We are a great match."

When it comes to her home life, she says that "being a mom, I discover that there is so much to learn as they get older. While I know that I have to keep in mind that my daughters are not carbon copies of me, the bond we have is priceless."

✻

Beginning her acting career at the tender age of 12 as a child prostitute in Louis Malle's controversial film *Pretty Baby*, Shields has lived her entire life in the spotlight. At the tender age of 16, she had already graced the cover of nearly every high fashion magazine in the world. She was named *Time's* Face of the '80s, and in 2004 *Harpers' Bazaar* anointed her as one of the most glamorous women of all time alongside the likes of Nicole Kidman, Grace Kelly, Coco Chanel and Jacqueline Kennedy.

Despite being a fixture in the public eye, Shields says she wasn't always happy being there, and only over time did she grow more comfortable in her glowing, youthful skin. These days she's just as pleased to snuggle with her daughters on the couch and watch TV.

The 1987 Princeton University graduate earned a bachelor's degree in French literature, with a minor in Italian, and says she often thinks back fondly on her years as an Ivy League student. In fact, she is on the Creative Committee for Princeton's Lewis Arts Center and has given a commencement speech at her beloved alma mater.

During her time on campus, Shields did her best to fit in with the other students, even when her celebrity status would make that difficult. In her memoir *There Was a Little Girl: The Real Story of My Mother and Me*, she recounted the lengths photographers would go to in an attempt to snap her picture.

"The paparazzi tried to sneak onto campus, dressed like what they thought college students looked like, and follow me around. The students were great and they alerted the school and me if anyone saw anybody suspicious. One photographer hid in a vent to photograph me walk to a class; another attempted to bribe a Mathey College freshman to take a camera into the showers and snap me in the nude. They would have been in for a surprise if they tried, because I had taken to showering in a one-piece bathing suit!"

In recent years, the Princeton Administration has asked her to come back to campus to teach. While her busy schedule as a working mom puts that opportunity on hold for now, she's not ruling out the possibility entirely.

"It would have to really make sense, and it would have to be organic. I could see it happening in the future, and they keep inviting me back, which is lovely," she says.

Shields' decision to attend Princeton might have been an effort, like many women, to challenge the misconceptions that she was merely all beauty and no brains. "Someone people think of as a mannequin" without substance, she says.

"I think that most women have that sort of burden, or that obstacle," she explains. "I think women have long had to fight for that. Perhaps, I took it a little too far by going to Princeton, but having the opportunity, I wouldn't have gone anywhere else. It was more about proving it to myself than anyone else. It is finding that type of inner confidence and learning to find the power in that."

She is also fiercely protective of her daughters; so that when she was offered the highly emotional and complex role of the mother in the film, *Daisy Winters*, she paused, not wanting to upset them. In the film, she portrays Sandy Winters, a multi-layered character who is a deeply loving, yet unconventional mother of a precocious 11-year-old daughter, Daisy, played by Jerins, (HBO's *Divorce*, and the films *Patterson* and *World War Z*).

"I did not run and say yes to this movie very quickly," Shields recalls.

"I think I was able to see that it was something that I needed to do, even though I was a bit afraid of doing it. Just the storyline alone and focusing on a girl who was the same age as I was when I started was appealing."

Carrie Preston, best known for her roles on the shows, *The Good Wife* and *True Blood*, sees the movie *Daisy Winters* as a powerful story of "resilience, resourcefulness, and taking your own personal tragedy and turning it into power and empowerment."

In *Daisy Winters*, Preston plays Shields' sister, Margaret, and she greatly appreciated Shields' gracious and inclusive nature. "Brooke is lovely; she is so kind. She has that reputation, and she definitely lives up to it. She is a big-hearted, collaborative and humble person. She definitely has a strong maternal instinct."

Preston adds: "I could see that she and Sterling totally bonded. I could see her take her real-life experiences as a mother and use them with Sterling. She took great care of Sterling, as a child actor, who knows what it's like to be working on a set surrounded by adults."

Already an accomplished young actress, Jerins says that her on-screen mother was extremely supportive of her throughout the film process.

"Brooke was very motherly, and this helped so much," Jerins says. "We had such a great relationship on the set during the entire filming. I learned from her in every single scene that I filmed with her."

In the film, Shields' character of Sandy, the devoted mom, is battling cancer, while trying to maintain a happy home life as a single mother. She says the screenplay and director provided the perfect road map, and she used her instincts for the rest.



With Sterling Jerins in Daisy Winters

On her background as a child actor:

"I remember other actors wanting to treat me like an adult, and I sort of wanted to commune with them as a kid. So, the other actors who I stayed the closest with were those who would draw cartoons with me and sing songs with me."



With the cast of Law & Order: SVU

"So much was said with just a lack of a facial expression, or a silence," Shields says. "I find moments where everything is happening in my own head, but you don't necessarily need to spell it out for people."

Shields was the same age as Jerins when she made *Pretty Baby* and although she says her young co-star didn't really need any coaching, she fondly recalls that innocent time in her life.

"I remember other actors wanting to treat me like an adult, and I sort of wanted to commune with them as a kid. So, the other actors who I stayed the closest with were those who would draw cartoons with me and sing songs with me."

In this new phase of her career, Shields also appears to be attracted to high drama. She recently took on a guest-starring role on the highly acclaimed NBC series, *Law & Order: SVU*, as the grandmother of Noah, the adopted son of New York Police Lt. Olivia Benson [played by Mariska Hargitay]. Shields has long been a fan of the show.

"This show is a part of everybody's family, and because of the topics it really delves into issues that we need to face, so I truly appreciate being here," says Shields.

Her guest-starring role came as a result of Hargitay, one of the show's stars and directors, watching a guest spot of Shields on Ali Wentworth's show *Nightcap with Jimmy*, in which Shields played a comedic, disturbed, multi-faceted character.

Hargitay called Shields and told her they had a dramatic story line they wanted her to explore, saying, "There is so much more to you than we've had a chance to see."

Shields is appreciative of the supportive work environment on the set, especially from the actresses on the show, who play strong female characters and she views as excellent role models.

"I think it's showing that this field doesn't have to be competitive, it can be strong and can go head-to-head, but somebody has your back here, and you are there for each other. That's what women do. I think coming in here this is a good message from my perspective."

With all of her performing experience under her belt, including on Broadway through the years in the musicals *Grease*, *The Addams Family*, *Cabaret* and *Chicago*, Shields says that she has one heartfelt piece of advice for young girls, and women, who want to follow in her footsteps on stage or screen.

"You are really only as successful as you are healthfully ambitious. This can't be a hobby for you; it has to be your passion, and one that you feel is your only option," Shields opines.

"Some people go into this at times thinking it can be a hobby, or an extracurricular activity, but you have to have such an undying passion, that it can't be thwarted," she continues. "So, you can't take no for an answer, and you can't let the rejection halt you. The rejection happens forever, you just work past it."

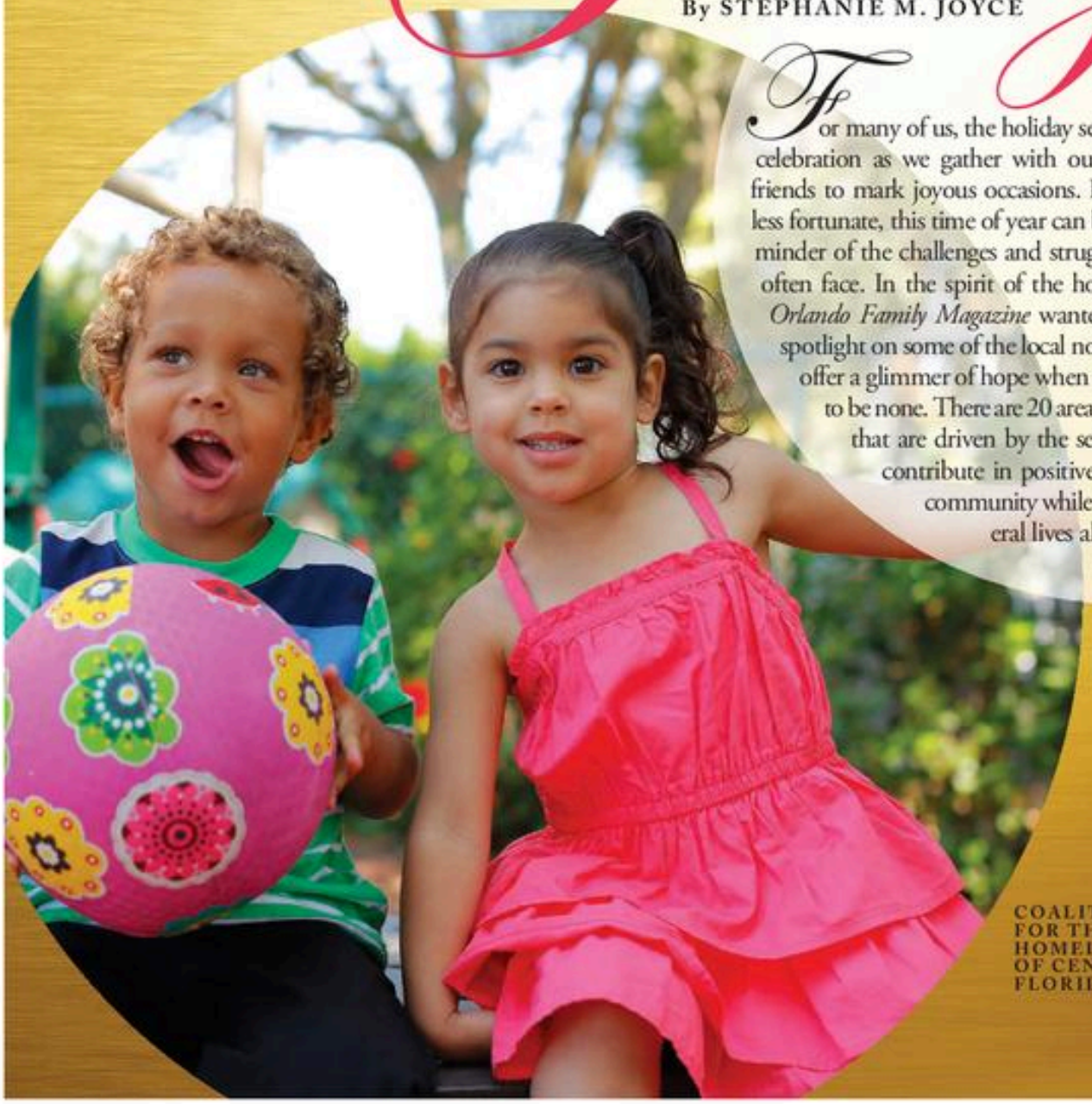


GREATER ORLANDO IS HOME TO SOME OF THE
BEST CHARITABLE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS
THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE EVERY DAY.

Grand Giving

By STEPHANIE M. JOYCE

For many of us, the holiday season signifies celebration as we gather with our family and friends to mark joyous occasions. But for those less fortunate, this time of year can be a harsh reminder of the challenges and struggles they too often face. In the spirit of the holiday season, *Orlando Family Magazine* wanted to shine a spotlight on some of the local nonprofits who offer a glimmer of hope when there appears to be none. There are 20 area organizations that are driven by the selfless need to contribute in positive ways to our community while touching several lives along the way.



COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

A GIFT FOR TEACHING

Their mission is a simple one; to provide free school supplies to the teachers with children who would otherwise go without. A Gift for Teaching partners with several businesses and nonprofits in our city to redistribute excess supplies to children who need it most. Today, they service over 300 public schools and institutions across three counties.

Orlando
(407) 318-3123
AGiftForTeaching.org

AUTISM SOCIETY OF GREATER ORLANDO

The Autism Society of Greater Orlando (ASGO) was founded in 1996 by a group of impassioned parents directly affected by this condition who shared the desire to address a growing need for support. These same individuals developed this organization into what it is today; a large network aimed at providing quality care and resources for those on the autism spectrum in fields of family support, awareness, advocacy and education.

Orlando
(407) 855-0235
ASGO.org

BACK TO NATURE WILDLIFE REFUGE

Founded in 1989, Carmen M. Shaw is the brainchild behind this organization, and her love for animals has resulted in the creation of what is now the largest public wildlife nonprofit in the Central Florida region. Back to Nature Wildlife Refuge now sits on 20 protected acres of conversation land and proudly rescues and rehabilitates several thousands of animals each year.

Orlando
(407) 568-5138
BTNWildlife.org

BEST BUDDIES OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Now operating on an International level, Best Buddies of Central Florida works diligently to foster personal and professional relationships between those with developmental disabilities and those without, and they have an extensive list of programs that tackle the barriers and create benefits for both sides of these partnerships. Servicing the communities that deal with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, autism, Williams syndrome, fragile X, cranial traumas and more, Best Buddies of Central Florida aims to end the isolation that surrounds individuals who are differently abled.

Orlando
(407) 898-0787
BestBuddies.org/Florida

CLEAN THE WORLD FOUNDATION

What started as a passing observation about the leftover bathroom soaps in hotel rooms has now grown into a global nonprofit that has achieved the impossible; Clean the World reduces waste in the hospitality sector and addresses hygienic needs across the globe all at once. An organization that has yet to reach its 10-year mark, Clean the World now collects soaps, conditioners, shampoos and lotions from participating hospitality partners, recycles them into new items, and donates them directly to impoverished groups in developing countries and domestic shelters in our very own backyard.

Orlando
(407) 574-8353
CleanTheWorld.org

COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida has become a community beacon of hope in tackling the need for accessible housing. Founded in 1987, this organization helps transform families experiencing homelessness by providing critical stability, education and training at a time when it is needed most. Coalition for the Homeless serves several hundred men and women in need of their services each night; in addition to training, they provide food, shelter, childcare and counseling for all in need.

Orlando
(407) 426-1256
CentralFloridaHomeless.org

DEVEREUX ADVANCED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

A full-service wellness organization, Devereux has been proudly serving the Central Florida community for over 25 years. They have created specialized service methods for addressing child welfare, mental health, disabilities and other challenges that plague families of today. They now operate in several dozen counties across the state and their efforts include inpatient psychiatric programs, foster care initiatives, counseling and case management efforts and community-based care. Their mission is guided by six principles: compassion, knowledge, collaboration, dedication, learning and progress.

Orlando
(800) 338-3738, ext. 77130
Devereux.org

FREEDOM RIDE

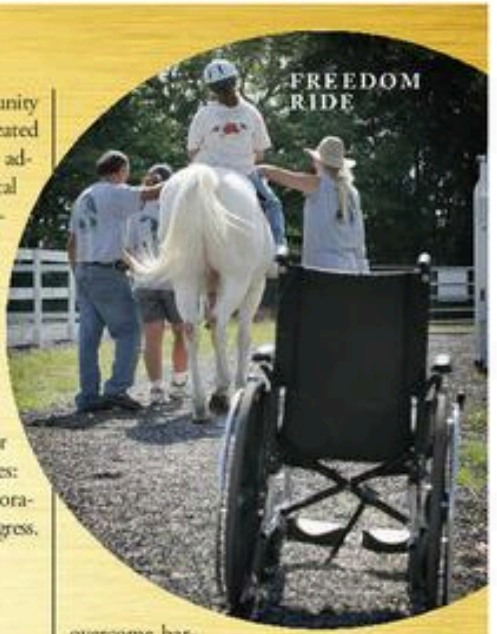
The founders behind the nonprofit organization Freedom Ride believe the best therapy comes atop four very, very large legs. Founded in 1998, Freedom Ride helps all individual with disabilities in Central Florida regain muscle strength, posture, balance and a sense of accomplishment and confidence through affordable partnered riding with their very special horses on property.

Orlando
(407) 293-0411
FreedomRide.com



GIRLS ON THE RUN

A locally founded organization, Girls on the Run fosters positivity through the creation of a community service project for young girls to participate in and the rewards of a fun 5K upon completion. This unique formula allows girls a true opportunity to learn responsibility, overcome barriers, manage emotions, create purpose, build confidence and give back to their community, all while having fun and being active every step of the way. Girls on the Run accomplishes all of this through a 10-week program that spotlights kindness and inclusivity and demonstrates all that is possible when girls come together.



Winter Park
(407) 896-1160, ext. 101
GOTROrlando.org

GUYS WITH TIES

A local nonprofit that was founded by an outstanding group of young professionals, Guys with Ties is redefining what it means to invest in our community. Today, their organization is comprised of over 70 volunteers from boards and ambassadors in a variety of fields including real estate, marketing, entertainment, health care, hospitality and beyond. Their accomplishments include partnerships with several dozen local nonprofits and volunteer work that has amounted to over 150,000 hours.

Orlando
(844) 777-8437
GuysWithTies.org

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF GREATER ORLANDO

A title that has become a household name, Habitat for Humanity is dedicated to improving housing across the board by putting in the labor themselves; this organization

Grand Giving

advocates for fair policies, constructs new homes and rehabilitates existing housing at every turn. They also serve as a community source for resources, training and equal access. A central guiding principle is what keeps their goal alive: Every man, woman and child has the right to a dignified life in safe, quality, affordable housing.

Orlando
(407) 648-4567
Habitat-Orlando.org

LIGHTHOUSE CENTRAL FLORIDA

Vision loss is often labeled as an item that is frequently experienced but widely overlooked, but



Lighthouse Central Florida is working hard to change that reality. Stemming from a vital notion surrounding the needs of the Sunshine State's aging population, Lighthouse Central Florida now has programs to help all individuals experiencing all degrees of vision loss. Today, they offer assistance with medical costs, proven rehabilitation training, volunteer opportunities, specially themed events, community walks and more with the hope that those affected will continue to maintain a confident and dignified role in their community.

Orlando
(407) 898-2483
LighthouseCFL.org

MOTHER'S MILK BANK OF FLORIDA

Becoming a new parent is an exciting time in the lives of women, but oftentimes complications with natural feeding arise and a need for breast milk becomes imminent. Led by a team of dedicated females, Mother's Milk Bank of Florida screens applicants for donations, collects viable milk, processes and pasteurizes all product and redistributes it to infants in need across the state.

Orlando
(407) 248-5050
MilkBankOfFlorida.org

NATHANIEL'S HOPE

It's difficult to turn a nearly unspeakable tragedy into an opportunity to be selfless, but Marie and Tim Kuck used their faith in God and family devotion to do exactly that. After losing their child, Nathaniel, to severe birth anomalies several years ago, they turned their attention to the creation of a charity that would both honor his legacy and provide resources to special needs children. Today, Nathaniel's Hope has several different programs that provide caring support to these children and their families through birthday and Christmas programs, buddy activities, family outings, special events, annual parties and more.

Orlando
(407) 857-8224
NathanielsHope.org

RUNWAY TO HOPE

Runway to Hope has partnered with Central Florida's three largest hospitals to provide support, assistance, and most importantly, hope to families who are battling pediatric cancer. A valuable service to our community, the organization leads the way in collaborative efforts among businesses and philanthropists to achieve funding and awareness for medical costs and future research initiatives. What's more—they also provide food, housing, transportation assistance and fun fashion events to bring light to those who need it most.

Orlando
(407) 802-1544
RunwayToHope.org

RUSSELL HOME FOR ATYPICAL CHILDREN

Inspired by the legacy of Grandma Russell, the Russell Home for Atypical Children is a safe haven for children suffering with brain damage who are without parents nor dedicated individuals to assist in their care. The home has opened its doors many times since its inception in 1951, and the current caretakers are determined to continue this way for many years to come. Today, the Russell Home for Atypical Children offers a sprawling environment filled with nurseries, dorms, play areas, living and dining spaces, and a laundry room and kitchen, all for the care and keeping of every child.

Orlando
(407) 855-8063
RussellHome.org

SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK

Partnering with over an impressive 500 local allies, Second Harvest Food Bank has distributed over 52 million meals to food pantries, abuse shelters, soup kitchens, day care centers and more since their inception. Now, their efforts have expanded to include a culinary training program that allows participants to be placed in fair-wage jobs upon completion.

Orlando
(407) 295-1066
FeedHopeNow.org

THE WAY HOME RESCUE

The need for quality, dependable animal services remains a constant one in our city, but The Way Home Rescue has found a way to do their part in rehabilitating and rehoming cats and kittens who have lost their way. Their success comes in part from their business model; they are not a shelter, but rather a



network of volunteers who provide foster homes to felines in need. Through the loving generosity of these individuals, cats and kittens are rescued, spayed/neutered and given a warm environment in which to thrive before reaching their "fur"ever home.

Orlando
(407) 405-3701
TheWayHomeRescue.org

UNITED ARTS OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

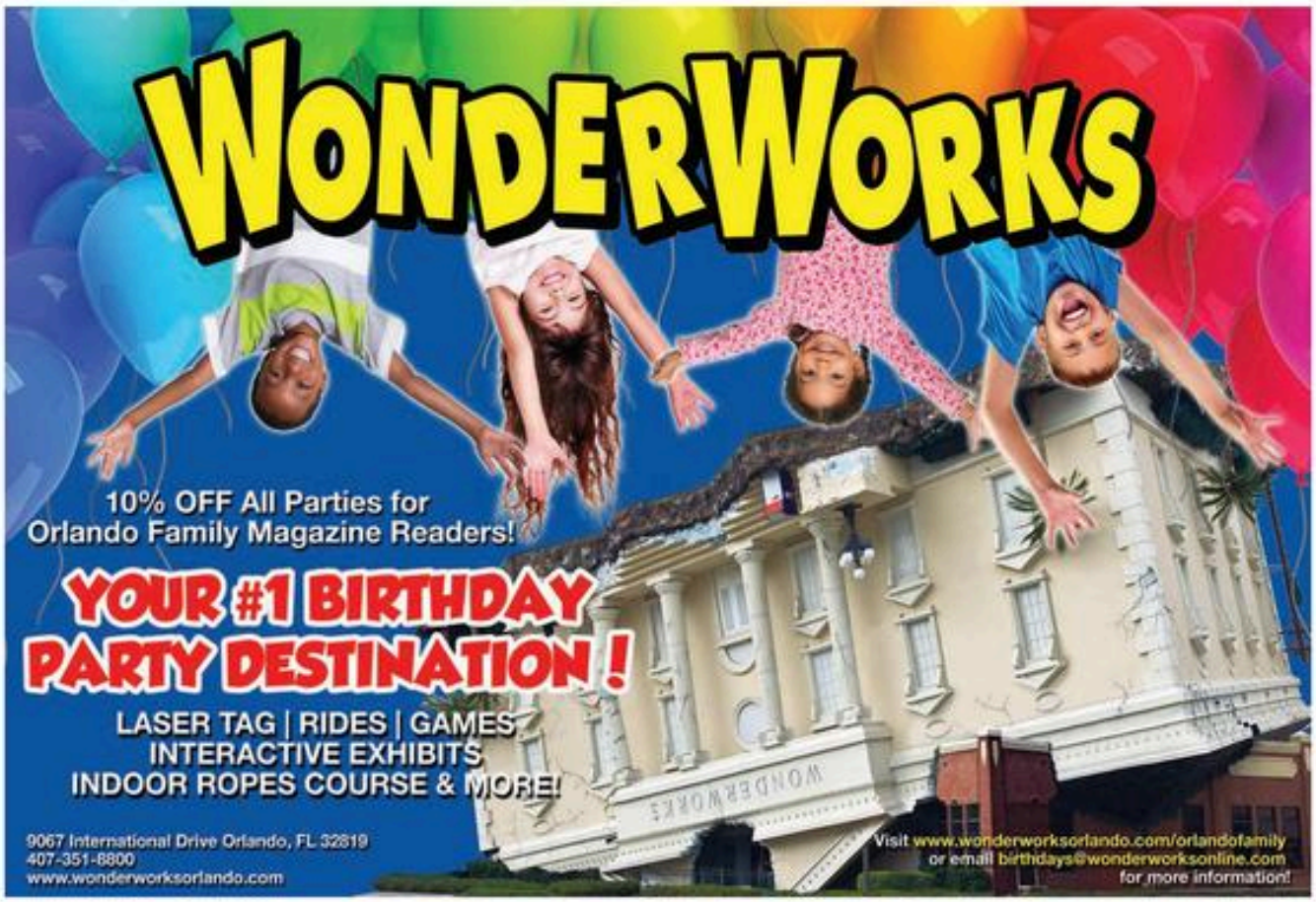
Founded in 1989, this nonprofit enriches our community through the investment in all forms of science, art and history. Since its inception, United Arts of Central Florida has raised over $145 million and invested these dollars into over 70 local organizations that provide unique art and cultural experiences.

Maitland
(407) 628-0333
UnitedArts.cc

ZEBRA COALITION

Zebra Coalition is a community-wide partnership of government organizations, schools, churches and other corporations that share the common goal of helping local at-risk LGBTQ+ youth. This coalition is as diverse as their name suggests; they assist in a variety of issues including bullying, homelessness, drug abuse, sexual abuse, isolation matters and more. The Zebra Coalition now proudly provides everything from drop-in activity centers, emergency housing, mental and medical resources and counseling to clothing, food, and transportation and employment assistance.

Orlando
(407) 399-0774
ZebraYouth.org


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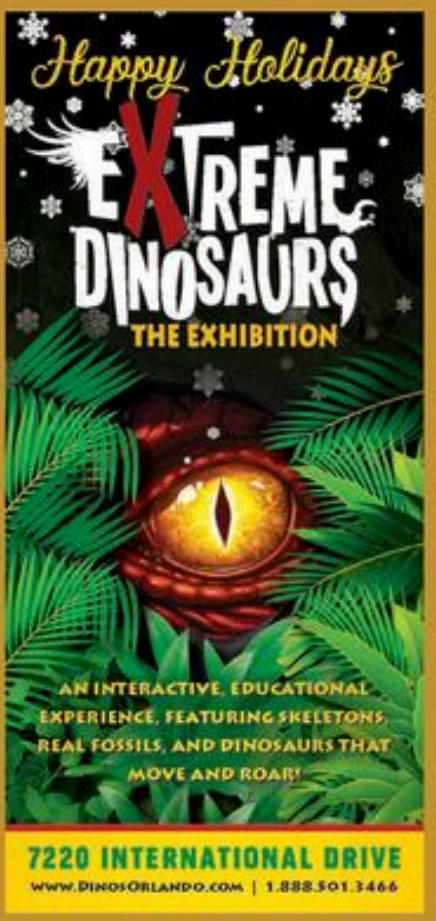

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Your **definitive guide** to the finest in holiday celebrations throughout Greater Orlando

Home FOR THE Holidays

by STEPHANIE M. JOYCE

Baby Boogie Bash: New Year's Eve Day Party

Give the littlest feet in your family a chance to dance in the spotlight and celebrate the last day of the year at Amaya Papaya Play Lounge. This family-focused event will feature disco lights, kid-friendly tunes, story time, crafts, toys, a balloon drop and immersive holiday theming to set the stage for warm introductions to 2018. Ages 0-7 are welcome to attend, and tickets start at $8. A slice of pizza and a drink will be provided to children and parents. ***THIS EVENT TAKES PLACE ON SUNDAY, DEC. 31 FROM 10:30 A.M. TO 1 P.M.***

Back to Nature Wild Winter Wonderland

Get in touch with your wild side and visit the Back to Nature Wildlife Refuge for their 7th annual Wild Winter Wonderland. This festival will feature story-time with Mrs. Claus, food trucks, vendors, crafts, workshops, light displays, treats, animal encounters, Grinch visits and more. ***THIS FREE EVENT TAKES PLACE ON SATURDAY, DEC. 2 FROM 2 TO 7 P.M.***

Baldwin Park's Jingle Bell Run

Turn your holiday spirit and love of running into an opportunity to raise money and spread awareness for the Arthritis Foundation. Baldwin Park's 5K Jingle Bell Run will feature holiday costumes, refreshments, special registration tee shirts and more. ***LEASHED FRIENDS ARE WELCOME, AND THE RACE STARTS PROMPTLY AT 8:30 A.M. ON SATURDAY, DEC. 9.***

Chanukah on the Park

Those of Jewish faith will be able to experience a unique, family festival, courtesy of the Jewish Community Center and Jewish Academy. This faith-filled night will feature live entertainment, chocolate Chanukahs, Chassidic dancers, face-painting, clowns, light shows, a $1,000 grand prize raffle and the lighting of a Grand Menorah. ***THIS FREE EVENT TAKES PLACE ON SUNDAY, DEC. 17 AT 5:30 P.M.***

Christmas at Bok Tower Gardens

This year, Bok Tower Gardens is featuring a variety of independently priced events for the holiday season. Visitors can choose from Pinewood Estate tours, Christmas concerts, decorating events, walking tours, workshops and more. ***EVENTS ARE VARIED AND RUN THROUGH SUNDAY, JAN. 7.***

Christmas at the Leu House

Local interior designers will put a holiday touch on the historic, 11-room Leu House at the Harry P. Leu Gardens this season. Elegant, festive and classic decorations will be on full display in this sprawling estate. Tours are included with admission, and run for 30 minutes. ***THIS EVENT RUNS DAILY THROUGH JAN. 3.***

Christmas Eve Open House

The Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of Art will provide free admission to all galleries on Christmas Eve. Those interested can experience a comprehensive collection of masterpieces that include pottery, glass art, lamps, jewelry and more. Live performances by the Raintree Chamber Players will occur between 1 and 4 p.m. ***THIS FREE EVENT TAKES PLACE ON SUNDAY, DEC. 24 DURING NORMAL OPERATING HOURS.***

Christmas in the Square

The city of Sanford is proud to present a completely free, one-stop celebratory stop for all things merry this Christmas. The inaugural tree lighting ceremony will take place on Friday, Dec. 1 at 6 p.m. and will remain active throughout the month. ***THE CHRISTMAS PARADE WILL TAKE PLACE ON SATURDAY, DEC. 9 AT 6 P.M., AND WILL FEATURE FLOATS CRAFTED BY THE SANFORD RECREATION DEPARTMENT.***

Church Street Station NYE Block Party

Your comprehensive block party for the year, Church Street Station will celebrate the New Year in style with an outdoor stage and live entertainment at all four participating bars, including the signature three-tier block. Fireworks will be on display during the iconic "Orange Drop" to commemorate the countdown to 2018, and a simulcast of Times Square will be available at participating locations. ***THIS EVENT TAKES PLACE ON SUNDAY, DEC. 31 AT 8 P.M.***

Central Florida Ballet's "Pyrotechnic Nutcracker"

EXPERIENCE AN EXPLOSIVE TWIST ON A HOLIDAY CLASSIC AT THE ORANGE COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER'S LINDA CHAPIN THEATER. THIS PERFORMANCE OF CRITICAL ACCLAIM IS DIRECTED BY VASILE PETRUTIU AND FEATURES CUSTOM-MADE RUSSIAN SETS AND CLASSIC PERFORMANCES. *Three total performances will take place on Saturday, Dec. 16 and Sunday, Dec. 17.*



City of Orlando Annual Tree Lighting Celebration

Jump into the holiday season with The City Beautiful's Christmas tree lighting event. Come out to Walt Disney Amphitheater at Lake Eola Park for some live entertainment, food trucks and of course, the lighting of over 80,000 lights on a six-story tall tree. ***THIS EVENT TAKES PLACE ON FRIDAY, DEC. 1. FESTIVITIES START AT 5 P.M., AND THE TREE WILL BE LIT AT 7 P.M.***

Eola Wonderland Christmas Tree Show

If holiday light shows are your favorite tradition of the season, check out the Lake Eola Christmas Tree show this year. The first synchronized light and music performance will take place at 5:45 p.m. and every 60 minutes following until 10 p.m., for a total of five shows. ***THIS EVENT IS FREE TO THE PUBLIC, AND RUNS DAILY FROM DEC. 1 THROUGH JAN. 6.***

Cirque Musica Holiday presents BELIEVE

PREPARE YOURSELF FOR A HIGH-FLYING, DAZZLING ACROBATIC SPECTACULAR. THIS SHOW COMBINES SENSORY EXPERIENCES WITH HOLIDAY MUSIC AND DARING AERIAL STUNTS FOR AN EVENT THAT WON'T SOON BE FORGOTTEN.

The sole performance will take place on Saturday, Dec. 23. Tickets start at $25, and doors open at 6:30 p.m.



Festival of Lights Parade

Experience history brought to life with the annual Festival of Lights Parade in downtown Kissimmee. All residents and business are welcome to attend and participate in float lineups and street performances. This year's theme is "Jingle Bell Rock," and all home-made floats will be included in official judging for prizes and bragging rights. ***THIS FREE EVENT TAKES PLACE ON SATURDAY, DEC. 9 AT 7 P.M.***

Holiday Craft Fair

Find that perfect hand-made treasure at the 36th annual Holiday Craft Fair, presented by the Osceola Crafters Guild. Hundreds of vendors will be in attendance with one-of-a-kind cards, candles, ceramics, prints, jewelry, wreaths, ornaments and more. ***THIS FREE EVENT RUNS DAILY THROUGH SUNDAY, DEC. 17.***

Holiday Lights Ride

Bikes, Beans and Bordeaux's 10th annual Holiday Light Ride is back for another exciting trip around the downtown area. Bike riders of all ages are encouraged to decorate their wheels and meet up at the storefront before departure. A $2 donation is requested for the Audubon Park Garden District, and hot refreshments will be served afterwards. ***THE TOUR IS APPROXIMATELY SIX MILES LONG, AND WILL DEPART AT 7 P.M. SHARP ON SATURDAY, DEC. 9.***

Holiday Movies in the Park

Relive some of your favorite holiday films with three free presentations provided by the Walt Disney Amphitheatre at Lake Eola Park. All screenings will take place on Friday at 7 p.m., and blankets and chairs are strongly encouraged. ***THIS YEAR'S SELECTIONS ARE ELF (DEC. 8), NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CHRISTMAS VACATION (DEC. 15) AND THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS (DEC. 22).***

Holiday Shopping Extravaganza at Freedom High School

Support your local small business and get that perfect gift for your loved one at the Holiday Shopping Extravaganza at Freedom High School. Admission is free, and vendors will be on site offering deals on hand-made crafts, jewelry, baked goods and more. ***THIS EVENT TAKES PLACE ON SATURDAY, DEC. 2 FROM 4 TO 7 P.M.***



Altamonte Springs Light Up the Holidays

ICE! Featuring Christmas Around the World

The Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center is transforming into a breathtaking ice display once again this holiday season. Featuring diverse traditions among several different nations, this ticketed display is a destination not to be missed. There will be hand-carved slides and sculptures, snow ball throws, scavenger hunts, nativity scenes, toy workshops and more. ***THIS EVENT RUNS DAILY THROUGH SUNDAY, JAN. 7.***

Jewish Heritage Night at Amway Center

Bring friends and family out to the Amway Center for the 5th annual Jewish Heritage Night. Kids of all ages will be able to participate in an outdoor Menorah lighting ceremony, tip-off, halftime celebration and layups on the court. Discounted tickets start at $18 for upper level seating, and one free t-shirt is included with every purchase. ***THIS EVENT TAKES PLACE ON WEDNESDAY, DEC. 13 AT 6 P.M.***

Light Up SoDo (South Downtown Orlando District)

Come support our local Main Street with the annual Light Up SoDo celebration. There will be vendors, wreath-making, face-painting, live music and entertainment and a special appearance from Johnny of Magic 106.7. ***THIS EVENT IS FREE TO THE PUBLIC, AND WILL RUN FROM 2 TO 6 P.M. ON SUNDAY, DEC. 3.***

Light Up the Holidays at Cranes Roost Park

Join the city of Altamonte Springs as they celebrate their annual traditions with the lighting of Cranes Roost Park. This free event will feature music, live entertainment, fireworks, festive displays and of course, the lighting of a massive, 27-foot city tree. Refreshments will be available for purchase, and Santa and Mrs. Claus will be available for photos throughout the night. ***THIS EVENT TAKES PLACE ON SATURDAY, DEC. 2, FROM 5 TO 9 P.M. AND THE DISPLAY WILL REMAIN ACTIVE THROUGH THE END OF THE MONTH.***



Gaylord Palms Snow Tubing

Light Up UCF

Back for its 10th year straight, Light Up UCF is excited to provide affordable, wintertime fun to families in Central Florida. There will be ice skating, carnival rides, photo opportunities, holiday attractions and a very special Holiday Market featuring local artists. ***ADMISSION IS FREE, AND ATTRACTIONS ARE INDIVIDUALLY PRICED. THIS EVENT RUNS THROUGH SUNDAY, DEC. 31.***



Mall at Millenia Grand Court Decor



Now Snowing in Celebration

COME OUT TO TOWN CENTER AND EXPERIENCE FOUR SEPARATE SNOWFALLS EACH NIGHT, AND DON'T FORGET TO TAKE A SPIN ON THE ICE-SKATING RINK BETWEEN THE BREAK IN SNOWFLAKES. THERE WILL ALSO BE CHRISTMAS CAROLERS, PHOTOS WITH SANTA, TRAIN RIDES, HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGES AND LIVE ENTERTAINMENT. *This free event runs nightly through Sunday, Dec. 31.*

New Year's Eve on Wall Street!

Head downtown to the "Wall Street" district for an all-out block party to ring in the New Year. Live entertainment will be on site to party through the night and will include DJs, outdoor street dances, lightshows and an official countdown to ring in 2018. Tickets start at $25 in advance, and slots are limited. ***THIS EVENT TAKES PLACE ON SUNDAY, DEC. 31 AT 8 P.M.***

Santa Claus at the Eola House

Santa Claus will be making several stops at the Eola House this holiday season. Stop in to tell him your wish list and grab a stylized photo. ***HE WILL BE AVAILABLE STARTING AT 4:30 P.M. ON DEC. 1, AND RETURNING ON 10 ADDITIONAL SELECT DAYS THROUGHOUT THE MONTH.***

Santa Photo Experience at The Mall at Millenia

Those wishing to see Santa and Mrs. Claus at their summer home can stop in Mall of Millenia for great photos, tasty treats and lots of decorations. ***MR. AND MRS. CLAUS WILL BE AVAILABLE DAILY DURING MALL OPERATING HOURS UNTIL SUNDAY, DEC. 24, AND GUESTS ARE WELCOME TO TAKE THEIR OWN PHOTOS OR PURCHASE SPECIAL PACKAGES.***

Santa's Christmas Tree Forest

If you're craving an authentic labor of Christmas love, stop in at Santa's Christmas Tree Forest to wrangle your own tree. Take a leisurely tour of the lot via hayride and point to the winner once you find it. With over 17,000 trees to choose from, even the pickiest of décor sticklers will be satisfied with their holiday trophy. Admission starts at $2, and partial costs may be used toward final tree prices. ***THIS EVENT RUNS THROUGH SATURDAY, DEC. 23.***

Scrooge The Musical!

The Osceola Arts Main Stage series is proud to present *Scrooge The Musical!* this season. Follow the classic tale of a grumpy old man as he is visited by three iconic ghosts and reminded of the true magic of Christmas. Broadway veteran Brian Mirvard stars as Ebenezer Scrooge, and Frank Siano directs this festive treat. ***TICKETS START AT $22, WITH MULTIPLE PERFORMANCES SCHEDULED FROM FRIDAY, DEC. 1 THROUGH SUNDAY, DEC. 17.***

Singing Christmas Trees

First Baptist Church of Orlando will be performing their beloved Christmas-time spectacular during select dates and times this holiday season. This presentation will include a choir, orchestra, song and dance performances and a dramatic showcase of several thousand lights on two 45-foot Christmas trees. One hour prior to show time, guests can experience live nativity scenes, petting zoos and a special Bethlehem Village. ***THIS IS A TICKETED EVENT, AND PRICES START AT $7.***

Vioelectric Holiday Show

Support a good cause and get into the holiday spirit with the Vioelectric strings group, presented by the City of Orlando Department of Families, Parks and Recreation. This free concert is pet-friendly and donations will be accepted on behalf of Pet Alliance of Greater Orlando. Participants will receive a free pet photo with Santa and Mrs. Claus. ***THIS EVENT TAKES PLACE ON SATURDAY DEC. 9 AT THE WALT DISNEY AMPHITHEATER IN LAKE EOLA PARK. THE SHOW STARTS AT 7 P.M.***

What's Up Downtown for the Holidays

Witness some of the best in song and dance at What's Up Downtown for the Holidays at the Walt Disney Ampitheater at Lake Eola Park. Live performances will be provided by Russian Ballet Orlando, Mad Cow Theatre and more. ***THIS EVENT TAKES PLACE ON THURSDAY, DEC. 7 FROM 11:45 A.M. TO 1:15 P.M., AND IS FREE TO THE PUBLIC.***

Winter on the Avenue featuring the Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony

The city of Winter Park and Chamber of Commerce are partnering up for their annual holiday kickoff celebration. This free, festive street party will include choirs, kid-friendly activities, exciting displays and a tree lighting ceremony at dusk. Admission is free and all are welcome to attend. ***THIS EVENT TAKES PLACE ON FRIDAY, DEC. 1 FROM 5 TO 10 P.M.***

Winter Park "Ye Olde Hometown" Christmas Parade

Come out and experience Central Florida's most prestigious, longest running Christmas parade. The "Ye Olde Hometown" parade will celebrate its 65th run on historic Park Avenue and will feature local bands, dancers, floats and Santa Claus. ***THIS FREE EVENT TAKES PLACE ON SATURDAY, DEC. 2 AT 9 A.M.***

Winter Springs Winter Wonderland

Celebrate the season with the 36th annual Winter Springs Winter Wonderland extravaganza at the Winter Springs Town Center. There will be a holiday parade, a Christmas tree lighting, a children's play area and entertainment from local performers. ***THIS EVENT TAKES PLACE ON SATURDAY, DEC. 2 FROM 4:30 TO 9 P.M.***



Stetson Mansion Christmas Tour

OBSERVE ONE-OF-A-KIND DÉCOR AND DISPLAYS AT THE STETSON MANSION IN DELAND. THIS SPECIAL GUIDED WALKING TOUR WILL TAKE YOU THROUGH SEVERAL INDEPENDENTLY THEMED ROOMS STYLED WITH ANTIQUE DECORATIONS AND LIGHTING. TICKETS ARE $25 FOR A 90 MINUTE TOUR, AND AGES 5 AND UNDER ARE FREE. *This event runs through Monday, Jan. 15 on select days.*

At the Parks


LEGOLAND Florida Christmas

CHRISTMAS IN THE WIZARDING WORLD OF HARRY POTTER

Have your wands at the ready as you venture into Universal Studios' and Island of Adventure's Wizarding World of Harry Potter this holiday season. Hogwarts, Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley will be decked out in generous measure with lights, garland and themed décor adorning every door and window. There will be special performances by the Frog Choir, the Banshees and Celestina Warbeck and plenty of seasonal treats to indulge in. ***This event runs nightly through Saturday, Jan. 6.***

EPCOT INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF THE HOLIDAYS

Celebrate the beauty in diversity among our neighboring nations during the annual Epcot International Festival of the Holidays. Traditions will be on full display with holiday kitchens, yuletide celebrations, choirs, candlelight processionals, live entertainment and one very, very large Christmas tree. All ages are welcome, and standard park admission is required. ***This event runs during normal park hours through Saturday, Dec. 30.***

EVE AT UNIVERSAL'S CITYWALK

Embrace the last night of the year with flair and celebrate EVE at Universal's CityWalk this December. Enjoy unlimited gourmet meals and signature drink specials and dance the night away at any of the six clubs on site before concluding the year with a champagne toast. Live DJs will spin beats and create pyrotechnical displays on the largest outdoor dance floor as you all groove fashionably into 2018. ***This is a separately ticketed event for ages 21 and up, and will take place on Sunday, Dec. 31.***

GRINCHMAS AT UNIVERSAL'S ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE

Come visit the grumpiest Who in all of Who-ville during the Grinchmas at Universal's Islands of Adventure this holiday season. Suess Landing will don enough decorations for even the smallest of hearts to appreciate and a live retelling of the classic fairytale will be ongoing daily. Guests will also have the opportunity to take a holiday photo with the fuzzy green monster and snag a few sweet treats, too. ***This event runs nightly through Saturday, Jan. 6.***

HOLIDAYS AT DISNEY SPRINGS

Enjoy some holiday magic while you shop to your heart's content at the beautiful Disney Springs this season. Participating shops will offer an exclusive selection of limited seasonal gifts and restaurants will offer traditional meals, themed brunch opportunities and daily happy hours where applicable. Back this year is the Christmas Tree Trail, featuring several character-style Christmas trees available for photo opportunities. ***These events are free to the public and will take place on select days and nights now through Monday, Dec. 25.***

JINGLE BELL, JINGLE BAM!

Witness the total transformation of Disney's Hollywood Studios as holiday décor brings warmth across the grounds. Take part in a special scavenger hunt to locate Kris Kringle and feel the jingle magic as you enjoy the fantastic music, light projections and a massive dance party. Snag a special viewing area for the fireworks and indulge in your fill of seasonally themed decadent desserts at the separately ticketed holiday party, too. ***This event runs nightly through Friday, Dec. 22.***

LEGOLAND CHRISTMAS BRICKTACULAR

Build your holiday cheer from the ground up during the Legoland Christmas Bricktacular this holiday season. This all-inclusive celebration will feature a life-size brick Santa, sleighs, reindeer and wreaths inside a giant snow globe, as well as opportunities to take photos with Lego Santa and his Lego Toy Soldiers. Guests can also enjoy music, dancing, letter writing, snow flurries and a glittering 30-foot Christmas tree that will perform several times each night. ***This event is included with regular park admission and runs select nights from Saturday, Dec. 2 through Monday, Dec. 25.***

LEGOLAND KIDS' NEW YEAR'S PARTY

Construct your favorite way to say goodbye to 2017 and finish out the year in style at the Legoland Kid's New Year's Party. Guests can enjoy a dance party, scavenger hunt, special building event and giant Lego brick drop to ring in the New Year. Free viewing glasses will be available for all guests to experience a special Lego fireworks finale, too. ***This event is included with regular park admission and will take place on Sunday, Dec. 31.***


Universal Orlando Resort Macy's Holiday Parade


Universal Orlando Resort Harry Potter Christmas

MICKEY'S VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS PARTY

Join Mickey and all of his closest friends for a Disney celebration like no other this Christmas. Your favorite characters will be dressed in their holiday best and ready to take you on an adventure through Magic Kingdom, with stops for sweet treats, dance parties, exciting shows, Santa visits and a light-filled parade. All ages are welcome, and tickets start at $89. ***This event runs nightly through Friday, Dec. 22.***

NEW YEAR'S EVE AT WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT

Put on your favorite pair of mouse ears and raise your glasses for an exciting New Year's Eve at Walt Disney World Resort. Exclusive dining options are available at select restaurants throughout the resort, and Epcot, Magic Kingdom and Hollywood Studios will offer specially themed dance parties and whimsical firework displays to help ring in the New Year with just the right amount of Disney magic. Celebratory events are included with regular park admission, and dining experiences are separately ticketed happenings. ***All activities will take place on Sunday, Dec. 31.***

ROCK 'TIL THE DROP NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY

Rock out in an exclusive party celebrating only the best in classic hits throughout the ages at Rock 'Til The Drop New Year's Eve Party at Hard Rock Live! Dress your best and bring the whole family out to enjoy a varied menu, live music and entertainment, a champagne toast and more. This event is appropriate for all ages, and prices start at $50. Unlimited non-alcoholic beverages are included with each purchase. ***This is a separately ticketed event, and will take place on Sunday, Dec. 31.***

SEAWORLD ORLANDO CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

Join Shamu and his marine mammal friends as SeaWorld transforms into a winter wonderland this Christmas season. Experience floating trees, festive food, seasonal markets, Christmas carols, special performances and more. Be sure to stop in at the Wild Arctic to visit Santa and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, too. ***This event is included with regular park admission and runs select nights through Sunday, Dec. 31.***

SEAWORLD ORLANDO NEW YEAR'S EVE

Join in harmony with our friends of the sea and celebrate SeaWorld Orlando New Year's Eve this December. An enormous celebration will unfold throughout the park and will feature live music, dance parties, festive eats, interactive DJ stations and craft beer stands for the older flippers. The night will conclude with a wave goodbye to 2017 and a breath-taking fireworks display to splash into the new year. ***This event is included with regular park admission and will take place on Sunday, Dec. 31.***

SUNSET SEASONS GREETINGS

Celebrate a throwback to classic Hollywood as Disney's Hollywood Studios transforms Sunset Boulevard into a tinsel town treasure this season. Expect exciting twists on traditional displays, glimmering streets, new character interactions and shows, and a very special snowfall on the strip. Guests can also dine with Minnie and visit Santa Claus or Santa Goofy during specific dates. All ages are welcome, and standard park admission is required. ***This event runs nightly from through Sunday, Dec. 31.***

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOLIDAY PARADE FEATURING MACY'S

Step aside and find a seat as the streets of Universal Studios become a runway for a big and bright holiday parade, featuring Macy's department store. Santa Claus is teaming up with Minions, friends of Madagascar, and Shrek himself to spread the merry and create a whole lot of mischief. All new floats will be on display, and this event is included with regular park admission. ***This parade runs daily from through Saturday, Jan. 6.***

Holidays in Kissimmee









Holidays in Kissimmee



'Tis the Season

Old Town is the perfect destination this holiday season. Bring the family and stroll through a colorfully lit Main Street filled with holiday decorations, and watch as Old Town transforms into a winter wonderland with holiday carolers and white, fluffy snow during the weekend. Don't forget to stop by one of our unique shops to find the perfect gift for everyone on your list, or come enjoy events and live music on select nights. Join us as we celebrate the holidays at Old Town.

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Festival of LIGHTS Parade
CITY OF KISSIMMEE

This Year's Theme:
"JINGLE BELL ROCK!"

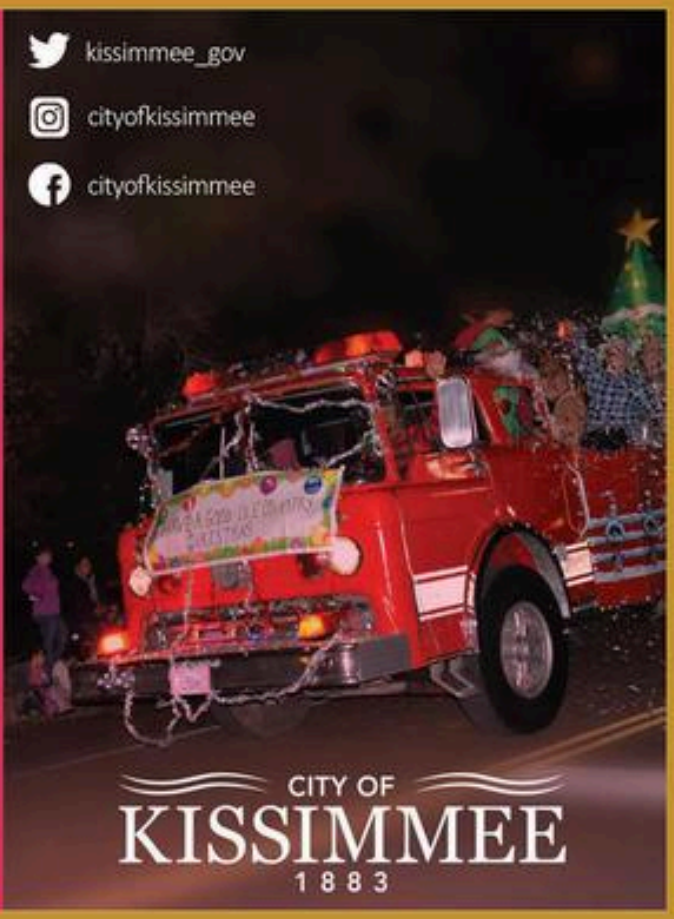
Saturday, December 9 at 7:00 p.m.
Historic Downtown Kissimmee & Lakefront Park

To enter your float into the Parade, please visit www.kissimmeeparades.com

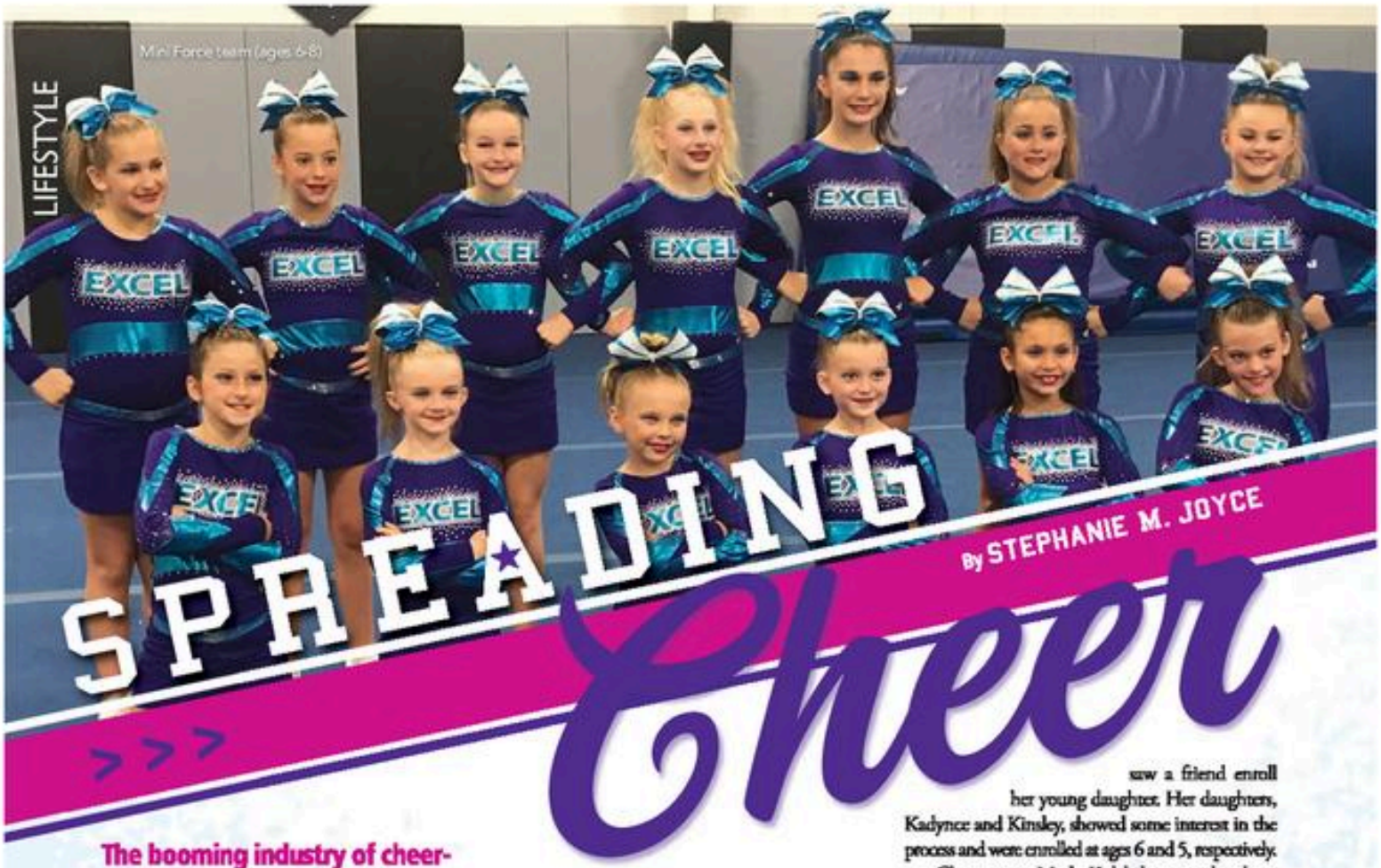
Also visit our BRAND NEW Holiday House
Berlinsky Community House
4:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Activities will include:

- Face Painting
- Hot Cocoa/Cookies
- Make it - Take it Ornaments
- Snow Flurries

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CITY OF KISSIMMEE
1883



SPREADING Cheer

By STEPHANIE M. JOYCE

The booming industry of cheerleading has become competitive in more ways than one, and local families are willing to spend big bucks and countless hours for the experience.

The decision to become a parent is perhaps one of the most important choices that an individual will face in their lifetime. The obligations, sacrifices, commitments and mounting societal pressures that accompany parenthood ensure that the job is not for the faint of heart.

Those who embark on this journey feel that, ultimately, the rewards will always outweigh the risks. However, as time and history have shown us, no amount of meticulous preparation and planning can wholly prepare two loving individuals for all that will be required in the creation of their blossoming family. Styles and strategies for dealing with both the everyday and the unexpected will of course vary, but most parents in today's culture can agree that they will do everything in their power to give their children the brightest possible start in life.

For many parents, the desire to provide the best of everything translates to top-rated schools, organic meals, daily quality time and a long list of extracurricular activities and programs to help discover hidden talents and bring out their best attributes. Nowadays, there are many different programs that a child can participate in, and one of the more popular options is that of competitive cheerleading.

BABY STEPS

On an exterior level, competitive cheerleading has tremendous mass appeal. For eager young minds, cheerleading is an opportunity to develop an exciting skill, create lasting friendships, travel to new places and don those glittery, sequined costumes. Beyond the surface, however, there is an entire lifestyle devoted to the heavy lifting and behind-the-scenes operations that take place before the finished products take center stage. Competitive cheerleading is one of the most aggressive activities to partake in and, perhaps fittingly, comes with several additional obligations and sacrifices for both parent and child.

The world of cheerleading includes a high level of demand and an even higher level of competition. Those who wish to ascend to this level of performance have to be bold, strong, and most importantly, have to start young. The introductions into cheerleading are varied, but starting early remains one of the best ways to warrant a successful run. Parents across the country are well aware of this need for early beginnings, as they waste no time enrolling their young stars well before they reach double digits. Mothers are also quick to adopt the unofficial branding of "Cheer Mom," and do so with pride.

Local resident and former cheerleader, Justine Prudente, has two daughters in competitive cheer currently. Her older daughter, Brooke, started performing at age 6 and her youngest, Elle, started at age 4. They have been involved for almost five years now.

Another cheer parent, Amanda Mathis, got the idea to put her daughters in cheerleading when she saw a friend enroll her young daughter. Her daughters, Kadynce and Kinsley, showed some interest in the process and were enrolled at ages 6 and 5, respectively.

Cheer mom Marla Kulek has one daughter, Hayden, whom she enrolled at age 8. Before cheerleading, Hayden was in a tumbling class and was eventually asked to join a competitive team. Kulek was beyond ecstatic for the opportunity to have Hayden become a part of the squad.

"I was so excited because I was also a competitive cheerleader and thought my daughter would love it as much as I did," says Kulek.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

Once the papers are signed and the introductions are complete, the training begins and the time and effort that is required increases tenfold. Holly Parnell, owner of Excel Athletics in Winter Haven, breaks down what a typical day looks like at her family-operated facility.

"Our days tend to start a little later because we are at the gym pretty late most nights," says Parnell. "We run a pretty large after-school program, so pickup starts around 2 p.m. Our competitive teams practice until at least 7:30 p.m., sometimes 8 p.m."

These hours are daily, but they expand during the off-season for training, camps, classes, and recreational activities. "During the summer we are open every day from 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. or later. It's quite a bit, but we have an amazing staff that helps keep all our programs running smoothly." Don't let that terminology fool you, though, because competitive-level cheerleading has no off-season.

"The difference is [that] competitive cheer is literally year-round," she says. "Most other sports have



a 'season,' but in competitive cheer we just go from summer practices, to competitions, and back to summer practices."

The weekly hours that are put in per family may fluctuate depending on the classes and number of children, but the commitments remain high. Prudente is involved on many levels, so she and daughters Brooke and Elle have a packed schedule.

"I am a cheer parent, but I also work and coach at the gym so [in total] I am there five nights a week for about two hours," she says.

Mathis does not provide coaching services, but her girls, Kadynce and Kinsley, are enrolled in multiple classes, so the hours they spend on the mat add up quickly, too.

"I have two girls in three teams, and we do two-hour practices, twice a week," she says. "I would say [we spend] a solid 10-11 hours a week at practice, which does not include the closed practices for competition weeks."

Beyond the time obligations, there are some relatively large financial investments that are required as well. It's often too hard to estimate how many dollars go into an ongoing and all-consuming activity such as competitive cheerleading, but the approximations from the parents are signs of a promise that is taken very seriously.

"I believe our cost was $3,000 for a returning cheerleader, not including hotel stays, travel and a few other things," says Mathis.

Kulek's estimates were a little bit higher, but she accounts for some of the additional expenses. "Between tuition, uniforms, completion fees, hotels, travel and miscellaneous [purchases] I would say $5,000 a year."

Prudente's estimates were broken down by month, but her calculations amount to about the same totals as Kulek and Mathis over the course of a year.

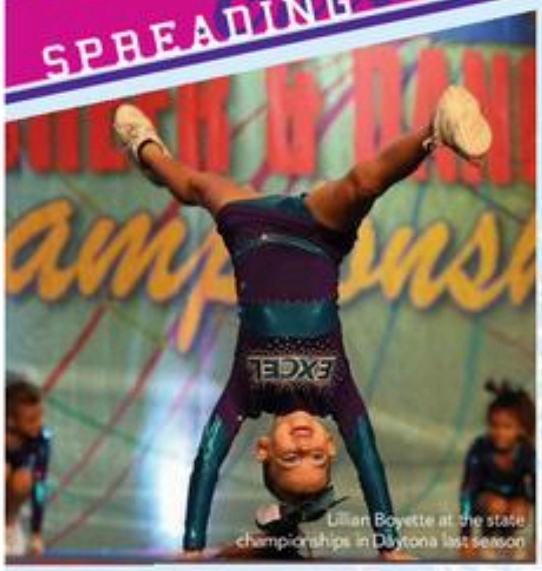
"We spend around $200 a month, and I have two children so normal costs are doubled for us," she says.

The training hours and financial investments are no small addition to the load of an already busy family, but the desire to be a part of this lifestyle continues to overshadow any sacrifices that are made long before the final competitions.

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Spreading Cheer



Lilian Boyette at the state championships in Daytona last season

A BALANCING ACT

When cheerleading began to develop into a competitive level, there was concern among parents and teachers in regards to the balance between cheerleading and education. Given that these obligations occur during crucial teaching periods, this worry remains justifiable.

Mathis acknowledges this concern, but she works around it by communicating with the teachers, and tries to limit the amount of time away from the books to less busy days of the week.

"If we have a long travel weekend, I will take the girls out of school on the Friday before," she says. "I just give their teachers a heads-up in advance when I take them out of school for a competition."

Fortunately, Parnell's gym fosters a positive relationship between education and practice with her after-school program, and her cheerleaders are picked up from class and taken straight to the mats. This service has tremendous benefit for parents like Prudente, because it alleviates some of the stress and saves a lot of valuable time.

"The gym picks my children up from school, where they [then] work on homework and have a snack before practice," she says. "So by the time I get off work and arrive at the gym, they have already completed homework and are dressed for practice."

Even with the help of the after-school program, Prudente knows that there are only so many hours in a day to accomplish everything that needs attention. Cuts are often made, but she ensures that her daughters understand the expectations. "School is the No. 1 priority, and cheer is second." This policy has kept time-related issues to a minimum.

The hours are long, the training is grueling and the costs are nothing short of demanding, but the rewards that come from embracing this industry and adopting the lifestyle are plenty and permanent.

"Hayden was a very shy 8-year-old when she started cheer," says Kulek. "Now in her third season, she has grown into a social butterfly and has more confidence in herself. As a parent, that's all I can hope for my child."

Mathis feels these benefits when her children are performing. "Seeing their faces when they win first place is priceless. All of the blood, sweat and tears disappear. They understand then, that hard work pays off."

Prudente's biggest takeaways come in the form of understanding difficult lessons. "My children learn discipline and teamwork, and they also learn to be confident," she says. "They also learn that quitting is not an option and that through hard work and dedication you can achieve so much and be rewarded. They also learn about defeat; you can't always win, and if you don't you be a good sport anyways."

Parnell sees all of this and more unfold at her gym, and she's grateful to be a part of the process. With her own mother as her business partner, she sees all of the other families as one big extension, and she wouldn't trade this experience for the world.

"While cheerleading is a huge time and financial commitment, it definitely teaches kids things that you can't learn at home or in a classroom; it teaches them commitment, perseverance, teamwork and loads of other skills that are so important to molding a successful adult. It's not always rainbows and butterflies, but when you see a child turn into an athlete and one day a successful adult, they can look back on competitive cheer and say, 'I may have learned a lot of cheer skills at Excel [Athletics], but I learned a lot of life skills too.'"

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Palate

By Stephanie M. Joyce



TOP FIVE:

FLATBREAD

A quintet of tasty things to try this month

GUAVA & GOAT CHEESE FLATBREAD ↔
AT CHROMA MODERN BAR + GRILL, LAKE NONA
Selections abound at Chroma Modern Bar + Grill, but we were confident in our order. Their Guava & Goat Cheese flatbread is comprised of a soft dough base, adorned with sweet guava paste and tangy goat cheese, and then finished with speck ham, thin Marcona almonds and red sorrel.



BLT FLATBREAD ↕
AT CALIFORNIA GRILL, WALT DISNEY'S CONTEMPORARY RESORT
Disney's claim to fame is character dining, but we were more focused on the delectable BLT Flatbread at California Grill. A warm, crispy base is covered generously with sweet heirloom tomatoes, soft mozzarella and tomato-based mayonnaise and finished with Cherrywood bacon jam and crunchy arugula.

ONION FLATBREAD ↕
AT THE STRAND, PARK LAKE



Our favorite thing about The Strand is their ability to turn simple ingredients into sophisticated plates, and the Onion Flatbread is no exception. A slightly grilled, dough base is home to sensationally rich, caramelized onions, sweet ricotta and mozzarella cheeses and a sinful balsamic drizzle.

BLACK & BLUE FLATBREAD
AT EMBER, DOWNTOWN ORLANDO
Style and quality are in generous supply at Ember Bar & Grill, and we definitely felt elevated after devouring the Black & Blue Flatbread. Fresh, shaved ribeye and Vidalia mushroom *confit* is layered atop artisan bread and finalized with Maytag cream and a decadent spinach mozzarella.

ZUCCHINI FLATBREAD
AT 310 LAKESIDE, LAKE EOLA PARK
The Zucchini Flatbread at 310 Lakeside is arguably nothing short of sheer culinary genius. Boursin mint spread is applied generously to toasty bread, then treated with layers of expertly sliced zucchini, shaved Bermuda onions and made perfect with sharp grated parmesan and house balsamic reduction.

RAISE A GLASS: RUM

Libations you're sure to love

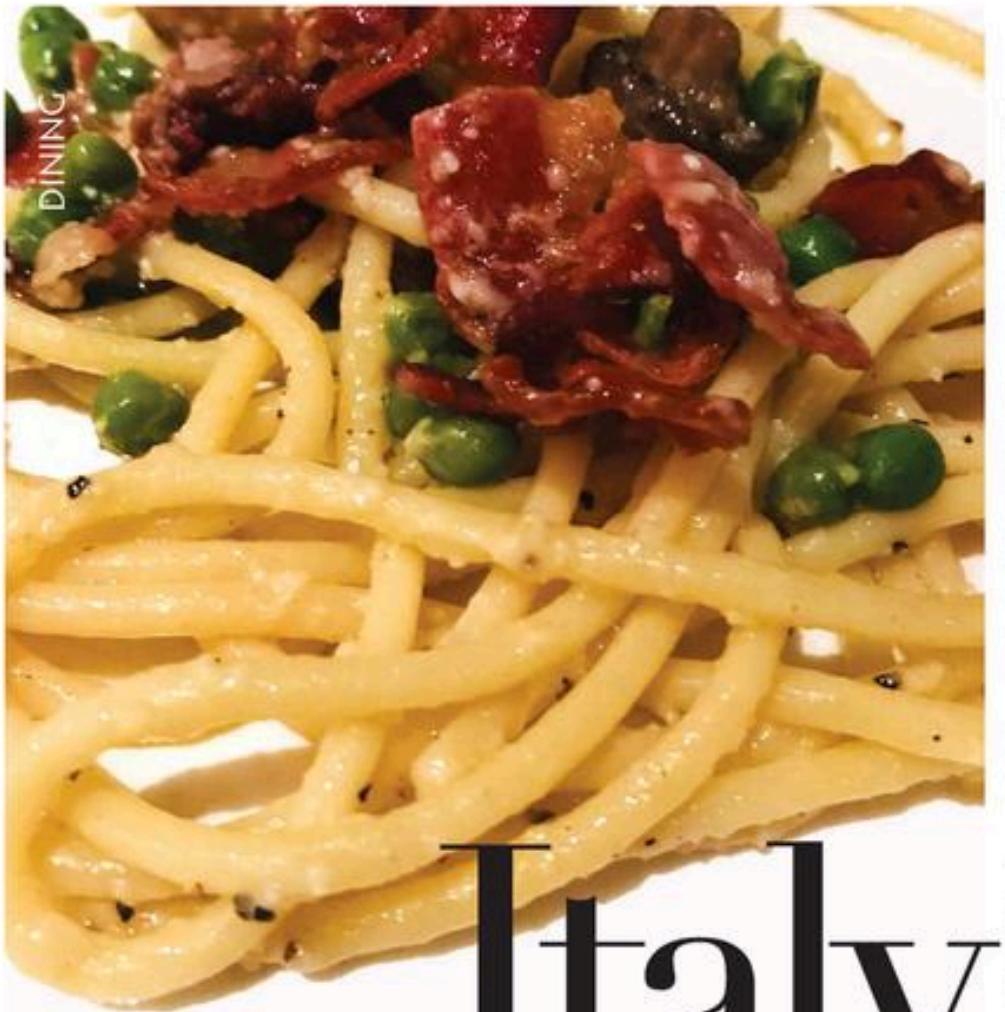
THE RIG AT THE PORCH RESTAURANT, WINTER PARK ↔
The Rig paints images of a tropical escape instead of a winter wonderland, but we can appreciate the variety. Grander Panama rum is mixed with Chambord liqueur, then lovingly joined with fresh grapefruit, lime and orange juices for a sandy serenade.

COCONUTS ROASTING OVER AN OPEN FIRE ↔
AT FROSTY'S CHRISTMASTIME LOUNGE, DOWNTOWN ORLANDO
Frosty's Christmastime Lounge is what winter dreams are made of, and Coconuts Roasting Over an Open Fire is the source of the magic. Rum Haven Coconut Water Rum is shaken with Giffard Banana de Bresil, then combined with shredded coconut flakes and lime juice for an icy delight.



NEEDLE IN THE HAY AT THE RAVENOUS PIG, WINTER PARK
The name suggests a struggle, but this crafty mix-up felt like the perfect gift. Sweet Plantation pineapple rum is tossed with tangy Fernet-Branca and tawny port, then blended seamlessly with spiced apple, lemon and nutmeg flavors for a fire-crackling finish.





Escape to Italy

Enzo's on the Lake proves attention to detail stands the test of time. *By Michael Lit*

In 1980, Enzo's on the Lake opened as a lovely secluded lakefront restaurant, built in the style of an Italian villa and has been wowing diners with its cuisine and breathtaking views ever since. The restaurant is dedicated to the idea of simple yet sophisticated cuisine. The freshest fish, meats, fruits and vegetables that can be obtained are woven into a menu that emphasizes a unique and diverse culinary heritage. An extravagant antipasto bar welcomes you to the excitement of the dining room.

There are no frills at the bar—instead they focus on their extensive wine list—so don't expect a special craft cocktail menu here. They don't need one! Their Old World Italian theme speaks through every detail of this quaint eatery. I'm sure a jalapeño-infused blackberry liquor Old Fashioned would just feel out of place. So, Jameson on the rocks it is. My wife ordered a bottle of Chianti ($55) and our server, who was quite knowledgeable, promptly poured the wine into a glass decanter and advised us to let the vino breathe a little while to bring out the sweeter notes.

We started with the Antipasti Della Casa ($14), a platter of assorted goodies that our server culled from a table at the back of the main dining room. Note: You are not allowed to go to the table to collect your own selections; it's not a buffet. Although, waiting for your table, you glare at all the delicious items hoping you can indulge in the wonderfully roasted peppers, olives, roasted eggplant, tangy cheese, and the standout pickled *gigante* beans and potato. This was an exciting start to our evening.

Their Old World Italian theme speaks through every detail of this quaint eatery.

I ordered the Lobster Bisque ($14), which our server said was not typical with the heavy cream, but equally as rich and delicious. He was correct, it wasn't heavy on the cream, it was lighter, rich and just as succulent.

A good friend who frequents Enzo's gave us some handy info about starters: Order a pasta dish as an appetizer and split it. We ordered the *Buccatini alla Enzo*'s ($24), an oily-rich pasta dish rife with prosciutto, bacon, mushrooms and parmesan. The only issue with this was that it was quite possibly the best pasta dish my wife and I had ever eaten and we wished we ordered two. We are both still thinking about going back to embellish in the perfection.

Our first entrée was the *Scaloppini Al Agro dolce* ($29), consisting of veal sautéed in extra virgin olive oil with a peppadew, prosciutto, garlic and pinot grigio sauce. This dish had a great balance of flavors and the veal was nicely pounded and seared. It was very tender and the sauce brought all the elements together to create an exquisite dish.

I was going to order the Beef Short Ribs Toscana ($40), until I saw a large Bone-In Veal Chop ($59) walk by. It came to the table tomahawk style and grilled to a delicious medium temperature and served with broccolini and some wedge potatoes. The veal came with an herbed compound butter that glistened down the whole chop. Enzo's is not a steakhouse but they know how to cook them with precision.

We also had the *Sogliola Al Limone* ($32). It was a nice piece of Dover sole sautéed in olive oil and lemon. It was served with grilled zucchini and wedged potato. Dover sole used to be on many upscale menus in the '80s, but has slid somewhat out of the spotlight in recent years. It was as rich and delicate as I remembered, though the dish could have used a bit more salt to really enhance the flavor.

The dessert menu had some old favorites with Enzo's special touch. First was the Tiramisu ($7); it was a good sized piece, the lady fingers soaked up the coffee liquor and the whipped topping was fluffy and light. Next to our table was the Chocolate Soufflé ($10). I did think it was weird that there was no explanation why the soufflé needed to be ordered 30 minutes in advance to properly cook. As it came out I realized why. The soufflé was more like a molten lava cake. It was still very good, nonetheless, just not a soufflé. The last dessert was the *Zuccotto* ($8). It was a white sponge cake with light whipped cream and fruit in the center and every bite made me feel like I was in Italy.

Enzo's has been around a long time now. It's another testament to the growing sophistication of Central Florida's diners. When it first opened, locals didn't understand that what Enzo Perlini was serving was authentic Italian fare—most wanted to know where the spaghetti and tomato sauce were. Slowly, locals came to embrace true Italian food. Many since have enlisted a similar concept but few do it as well as Enzo's did, and still does.

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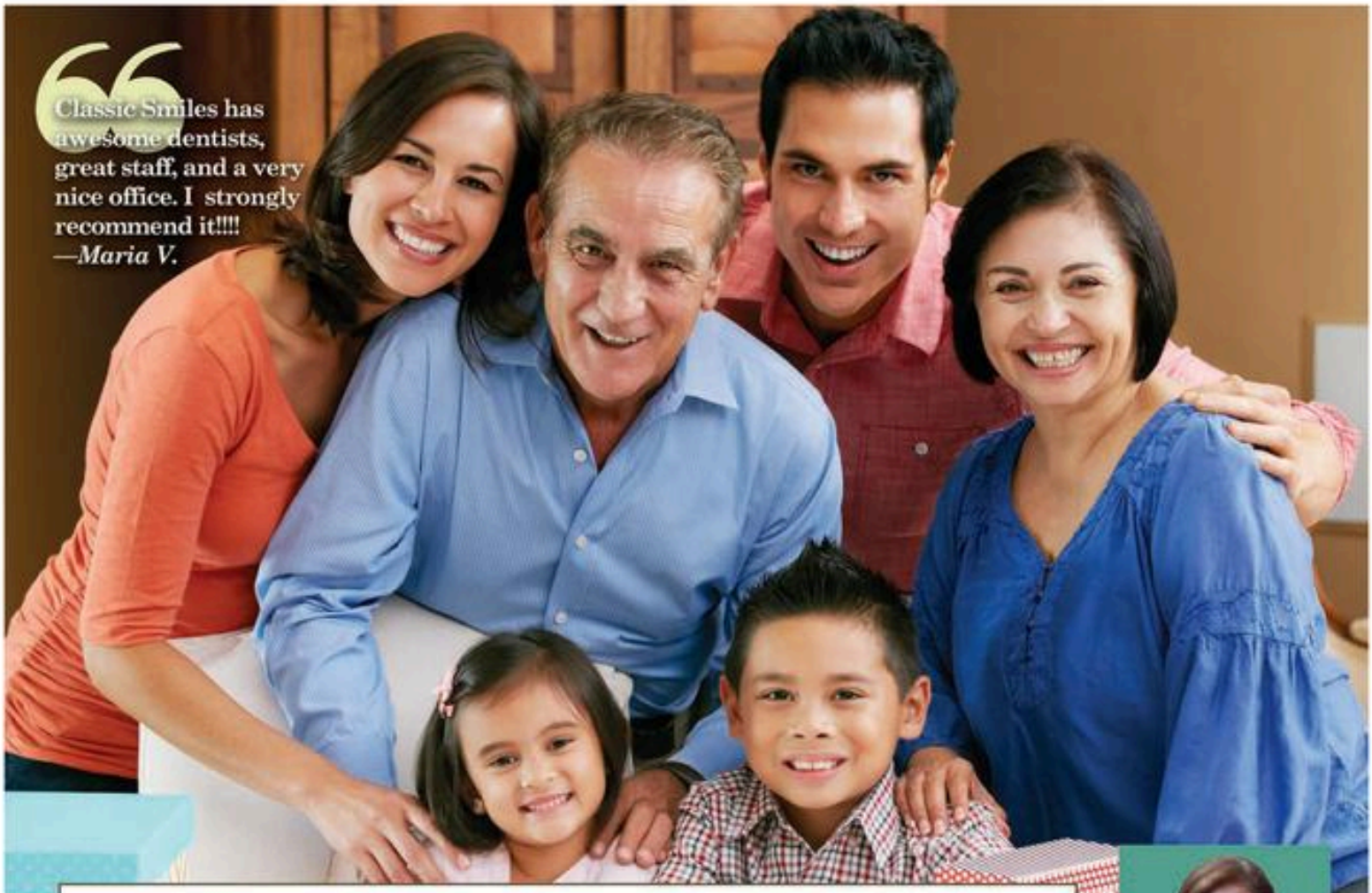


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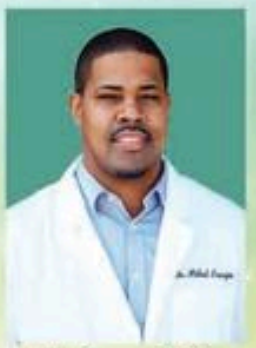
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