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Orlando Family magazine

MARCH 2019

UNLOCKING THE UNKNOWN

From health risks to solving crime, how genetic testing is going beyond tracing your family tree

SHINING STARS

Meet spring's top varsity athletes



TOM HANKS

Hollywood's Nice Guy

plus

ON THE FRONT LINES

First responders and PTSD

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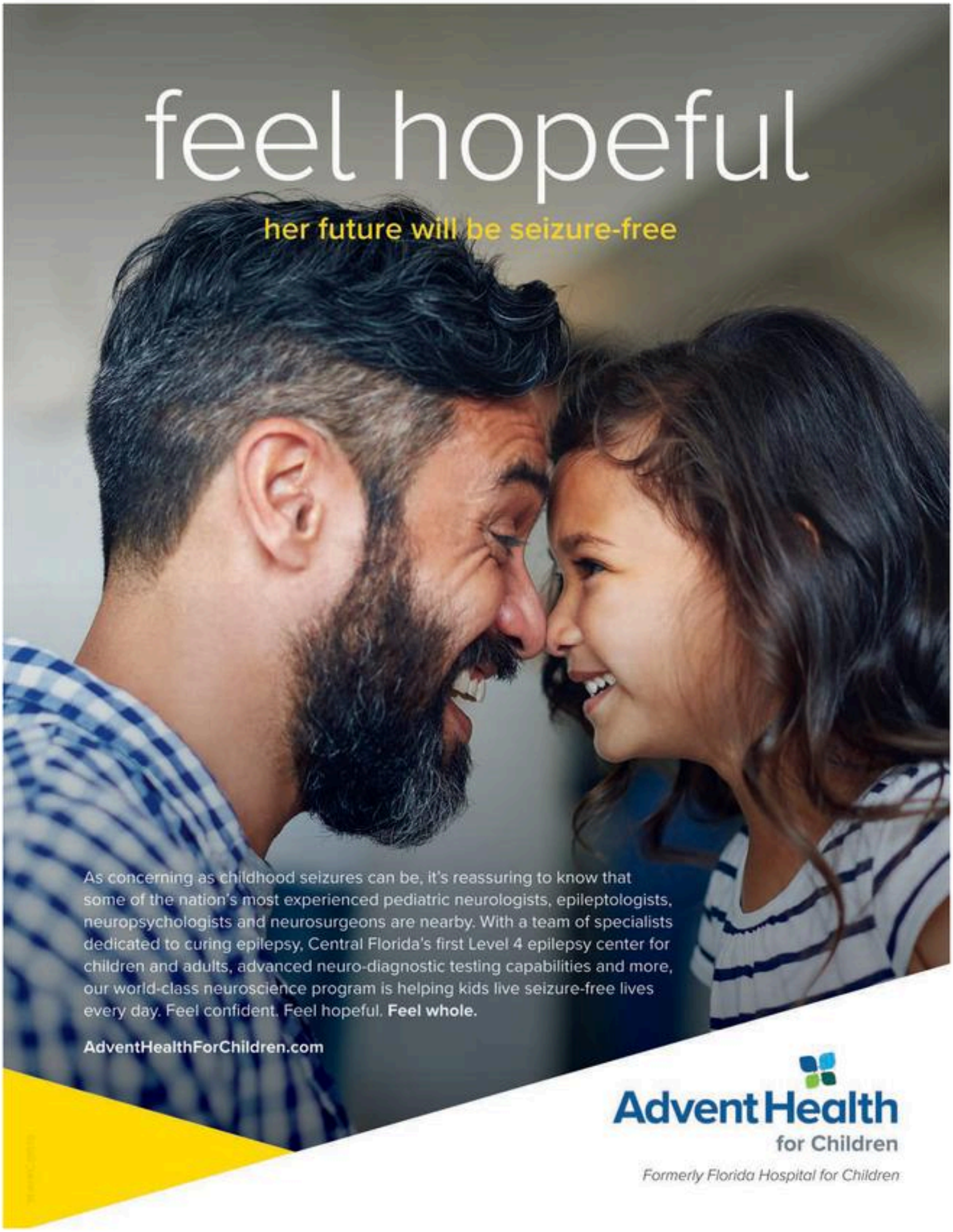
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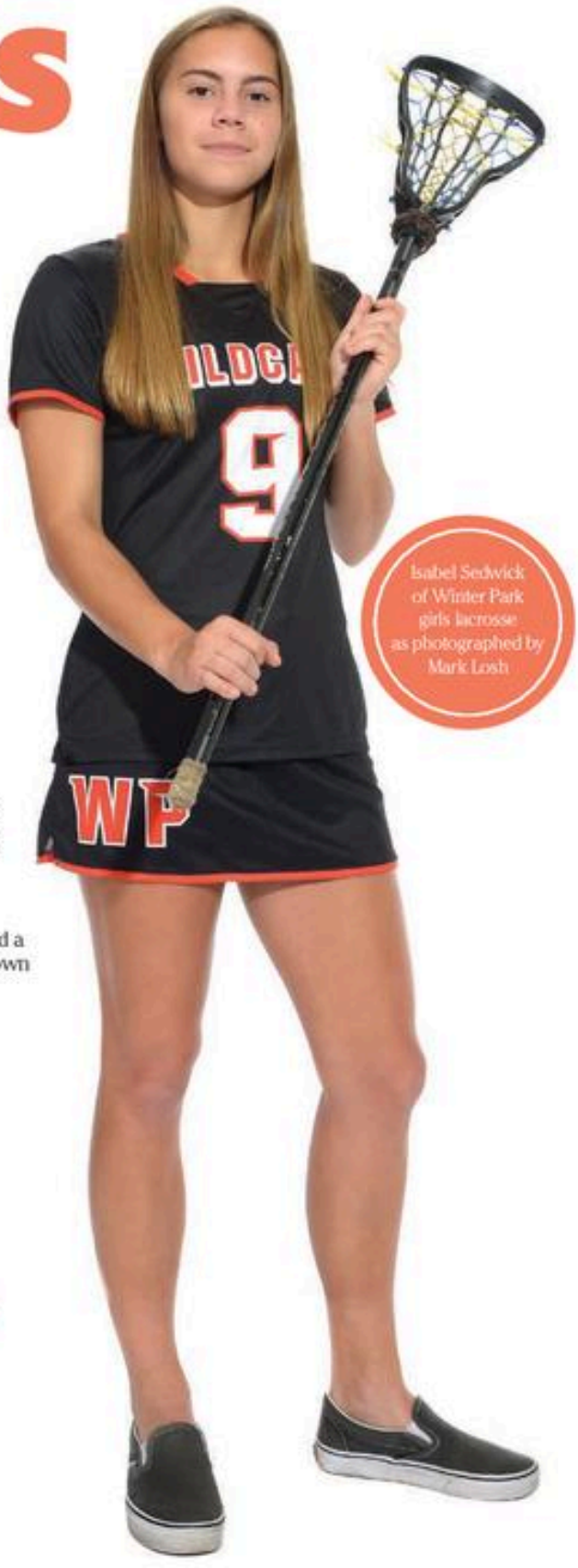

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Orlando Family MARCH 2019

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Meet the spring season's top varsity athletes who regularly rise above the competition.



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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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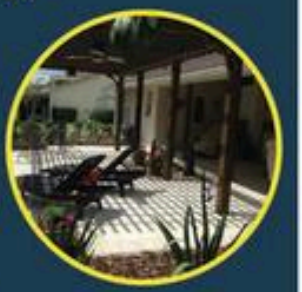
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Home Front

by the Numbers

1,000

The number of tickets the Orlando Ballet dispersed to Puerto Ricans displaced by Hurricane Maria for a free showing of the dance group's most recent show.

$7.8 Million

The federal funding that Central Florida will receive to help combat the affordable housing crisis and homelessness.

No. 1



Orlando's ranking in a new report from Smart Growth America that says the City Beautiful is the deadliest place in the country for pedestrians.

800

The number of low-income youth who were invited to catch a free performance of the hit musical *Hamilton* during its run at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts.

$1.5 Million

The money a Conway nursing facility and an area orthopedic surgeon have agreed to pay to the U.S. government after the Justice Department investigated both for an alleged kickback scheme involving federally backed health programs.

NINTH

The ranking Orlando achieved on *Inc. Magazine's* recent list of the top 50 U.S. cities for starting a business.

Cirque du Soleil's Luzia

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LUZIA
The Florida Mall
CirqueDuSoleil.com









Hit

A substantial number of graduates from Central Florida's Full Sail University were credited at this year's Grammys for their contributions to the night's award-winning albums and songs.

An east Orlando animal sanctuary was overwhelmed by donations and support from the community after a devastating fire destroyed much of the refuge.

Ocoee city commissioners established a youth council to give nine to 15 high school students a chance to learn about local government operations.

A 30-year-old orca named Kayla died at SeaWorld Orlando after becoming sick.

After two separate incidents of drivers crashing their vehicles into Orlando fire engines, officials are urging people to follow the law and move over for stopped emergency vehicles.

A Transportation Security Administration worker died at the Orlando International Airport after jumping to his death inside the airport atrium.

Miss

3 THINGS YOU'LL LEARN

Genetic testing is being used for much more than just tracing your family tree. **Page 26**

New programs are helping first responders cope with **PTSD. Page 16**

Tom Hanks' **love** of history **was** inspired **by a** college professor he credits with making the biggest impact of anyone in his life. **Page 22**



DID YOU HEAR?

"As you can imagine, my feelings are bittersweet, but I know Orlando Rep will be in good hands after my departure."

—ORLANDO REPERTORY THEATRE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **GENE COLUMBUS**, WHO IS RETIRING AFTER 11 YEARS WITH THE ORGANIZATION

DATEBOOK



WINTER PARK SIDEWALK ART FESTIVAL

March 15–17

One of the nation's oldest, largest and most prestigious outdoor art festivals, this annual event will feature the works of 225 artists who were personally selected out of more than 1,000 applicants by an independent panel of three judges. *9 a.m.–6 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. on Sunday, Central Park, 150 W. Morse Blvd., Winter Park, free admission*

AMERICAN GIRL LIVE

March 16

Join your favorite American Girl characters as they follow their hearts, share their dreams and learn the power of friendship in this all-new musical production. Featuring original songs and unforgettable experiences, this show sees the girls heading to sleepover camp for an exciting summer away from home. *2 and 6 p.m., Bob Carr Theater, tickets start at $34*

CARIBBEAN FOOD & MUSIC FESTIVAL

March 23

The sights and sounds of the Caribbean are recreated at this event presented by Fun Spot America Theme Parks. The party will be hosted by viral comedian Kerwin and there will be live music, four DJs and authentic island cuisine from more than 15 food trucks. *3-9 p.m., Fun Spot America Theme Park, 5700 Fun Spot Way, Orlando, free admission*

ASK THE EXPERT
ORTHODONTIST



When should my child first see an orthodontist?

Braces have been traditionally associated with those awkward middle school years. However, it's important to note that in most cases, diagnosis of many problems can be made much earlier. The American Association Of Orthodontists recommends that patients first see an orthodontist at the age of 7. Some of the issues that we see at this age may not need early treatment, but for a number of problems, early intervention can make future treatment much easier or even unnecessary.

What types of issues are better addressed early?

Early orthodontics, often called Phase 1 treatment, is generally reserved for specific problems, such as crossbites, underbites or front teeth that have not come in properly. Other patients receive future treatment recommendations along with timing considerations so that parents can start to plan.

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Youth MOVEMENT

These selfless youngsters are giving back as much as they get.

By Alyssa Asaro and Brittany Ann Morrisey

The spirit of giving is alive and well in the next generation as evidenced by this year's list of youth volunteer standouts. Nominated by their organizations, these helpers are making a difference and encouraging others to do the same.

LUKE ROSSER

American Diabetes Association



Sixteen-year-old Luke was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes about four years ago. As a youth ambassador for the American Diabetes Association (ADA), he has since raised more than $65,000 for diabetes research, advocacy and education through the ADA's Tour de Cure and pushed for increased research funding and insulin cost regulation at the ADA's annual Call to Congress in Washington, D.C. Luke is also a regular guest speaker at elementary and middle schools, sharing the importance of physical activity and how he did not let the diagnosis of diabetes define him or impact his long-term aspirations. He is a tri-athlete who has won the national championship for triathlons in his age group.

AVERY WORLEY

Best Buddies



Eighteen-year-old Avery is the president of the Best Buddies chapter at Windermere High School. Best Buddies offers one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development programs to individuals with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities. As president, Avery leads the chapter in all areas including planning activities and meetings, selecting a team of officers and logging the group's progress. Brianne Reynolds, program manager for Best Buddies, says Avery has a true servant's heart, along with a strong work ethic, and she is always the first to complete what she needs to, which goes to show just how much she cares about her chapter.



LULA AND VIVI KASTEN

Pet Alliance of Greater Orlando

Sisters Lula, 12, and Vivi, 11, have taken community canvassing to new heights at the Pet Alliance of Greater Orlando, the region's oldest and largest animal welfare agency. Each year the girls put up a lemonade stand to raise funds and awareness of the organization. However, this year the sisters ingeniously decided that hot chocolate was a more fitting beverage for the cold season and their rebrand brought in almost $400 in donations over the course of a single day. Beyond an interest in animal welfare, Lula and Vivi are budding thespians and math enthusiasts.

ESHA GILL

Orlando Science Center



In 2016, Esha started volunteering with the Orlando Science Center (OSC), a hands-on museum with the mission of inspiring science learning for life. Today, the 17-year-old Apopka High School senior is a member of the center's Catalyst Scholars, an advanced internship program that gives students the opportunity to work alongside the organization's NatureWorks team to learn about animal husbandry and conservation. With an interest in pursuing a STEM career, Esha has donated over 642 hours of service in a variety of volunteer roles within OSC. According to the science center's leaders, her strong spirit and eagerness to learn have helped those working alongside her become better teachers, leaders and mentors.

BEN GOODWIN

Central Florida Community Arts



Sixteen-year-old Ben is a performer in the Central Florida Community Art's (CFCArts) Youth Vocal Ensemble. As a member of this group, he uses his talents to bring joy to the CFCArts' fellow nonprofit partners and the community at large. He has sung at charity

events, assisted living facilities, senior centers and CFCArts' own concerts and performances. According to CFCArts leaders, Ben embodies the organization's mission to serve and build community through the arts. He recently performed in The Music Man with CFCArts' Youth Theatre Troupe in the barbershop quartet as the first tenor.

LILLY LAWTON

Girl Scouts of Citrus



Fourteen-year-old Lilly is a member of Girl Scouts of Citrus Troop 1402. For her Girl Scouts' Take Action Project, Lilly decided that she wanted to make an impression on younger girls so she organized a three-day seminar at her house. With the help of her mentor, she taught girls ranging in age from 9 to 10 years old about the importance of confidence, kindness and friendship. To put on the workshop, the Trinity Preparatory School ninth-grader designed her own logo, gathered materials for her attendees to use in making friendship bracelets and put together an educational PowerPoint.

ANNMARIE LA MAISON

Friends of the Library



Seventeen-year-old Annmarie volunteers as a cashier at the Gifts & Greetings store located in the Orlando Public Library. The Friends-of-the-Library-run gift shop is entirely staffed by volunteers and all proceeds are donated back to the Orange County Library System. A 12th-grader studying through Florida Virtual School, Annmarie is responsible for everything from greeting customers and processing sales to helping to maintain an attractive and inviting store appearance. She is the only high school student volunteering as a cashier in one of the library stores. These positions are traditionally held by adults as there is a high level of responsibility that comes with the role. When asked why she chose to volunteer at the library, Annmarie said she wanted to be a part of an organization that would draw her closer to her community.



KATIE LOFTIS

Buddy Up Tennis Orlando

Seventeen-year-old Katie had the idea, along with her older brother, to bring Buddy Up Tennis to the Orlando area. Buddy Up Tennis is a national organization with chapters all over the U.S. that provides 90-minute tennis clinics for athletes who have Down syndrome. Prior to launching Orlando's program, Katie worked to spread the word about Buddy Up and recruit volunteers. The Winter Springs High School senior bears the responsibility of planning the tennis clinics including pairing buddies with volunteers and setting up the equipment. During the clinics, she serves as an assistant coach or a buddy. Katie is president of the Down Syndrome Teen Council and has been awarded the Lynda Pollack Advocate of the Year award by the Down Syndrome Association. Her advocacy is partly inspired by watching her cousin who has Down syndrome grow up and seeing how important sports were to his involvement with the community.

ALLISON ADLER

Garden Theatre



Seventeen-year-old Allison volunteers as a ticket taker and usher at the Garden Theatre, Winter Garden's beloved community venue for live plays, concerts, movies and more. In her time with the organization, Allison has handed out flyers, volunteered at special events and played games with the children who attend shows at the theatre. She also assists new volunteers with learning their positions. Allison and her mother have been volunteering with the Garden Theatre for seven years and in that time she has contributed an estimated 200 hours. She is a member of Beta Club and the National Honor Society at West Orange High School and plans on continuing her appreciation of the arts by majoring in English or creative writing in college.

CAITRIONA FALLON

Garden Theatre



Fifteen-year-old Caitriona scans tickets and ushers people to their seats at the Garden Theatre, which works to inspire discovery through theatrical experiences that are innovative, impactful and inclusive. During the summer, the Montverde Academy sophomore volunteers as a camp counselor at the theatre, either assisting the teachers or taking care of kids in the extended day program while they wait for their parents to pick them up. Caitriona's father started working at the theatre when she was 5 years old and since then, she has been very involved in the performing arts, including serving as a junior member of the Garden Theatre's board of directors. Her passion for the arts extends into her schooling: She's a member of Montverde Academy's Theater Conservatory as well as a member of the International Thespian Society Troupe 3977.

SOPHIA RAABERG

Buddy Up Tennis Lake Nona



According to members of Buddy Up Tennis Lake Nona, 11-year-old Sophia is a "true buddy" in every sense. Each week, she diligently works with the coordinators of this local chapter to get buddies signed up for 90-minute tennis clinics catered to athletes who have Down syndrome. Then, she updates the board for pairing and prepares personalized name tags for buddies, athletes and coaches. On the day of the clinic, Sophia makes sure she is assigned as a buddy to one or more athletes. The SunRidge Middle School sixth-grader also helps out new buddies as needed. Sophia's brother has Down syndrome and is an athlete at Buddy Up Tennis. She has played tennis herself but prefers to assist others. Sophia also volunteers at her dance school as a dance assistant for little children who are starting ballet.

SARINA ZHOU

YMCA



Dr. Phillips High School junior Sarina is a volunteer with the YMCA Youth in Government program, which teaches teens life skills through a civics lens and allows them to write bills and debate ideas relevant to Florida issues. This year, Sarina was chosen as the head of the State Youth Department of Juvenile Justice and as legislative coordinator for her school. In this role, she meets with state lawmakers advocating for the Y movement and teaches students about public policy change. Last year, she attended a conference to debate national and international issues with teens from across the country. Not only does she teach her peers to be advocates, but she also helps lead outreach service projects on the same issues such as youth homelessness and child safety in Orlando and across Florida. This year, she will volunteer more than 200 hours of her time to this program.

MAGGIE KIRBY

Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens



Sixteen-year-old Maggie serves as a Teen Team volunteer at the Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens. Teen Team is a life skills program open to students between the ages 13 and 17 who are interested in exploring careers involving animals. As a member of this program, Maggie participates in a wide variety of activities including animal encounters with guests, off-site career days, school break camps and more. The Seminole High School sophomore grew up at the zoo through its summer camp programs and the variety of youth programs that are offered. The zoo's volunteer manager, Bry Sidwell, says Maggie is a devoted and caring member of the team. After high school, she hopes to enter the veterinary field or get a job involving animal husbandry.

Youth MOVEMENT

ESTHER FOUROOZI

Orlando Health



Eighteen-year-old Esther volunteers on several units at Orlando Health including mother and baby, women's triage, guest services and pediatric units. The Seminole High School senior supports hospital staff by filling patients' water, removing food trays, stocking supplies and various other tasks. She has been a volunteer for two years, contributing 250 hours of time. Leaders at Orlando Health say she is inquisitive and has a strong work ethic and that they can always count on her to deliver great customer service. Esther aspires to one day be a physician.

COLIN HEDGE

Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens



Sixteen-year-old Colin has served in several volunteer roles at the Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens. The Crooms Academy of Information Technology junior started as a Bright Futures volunteer tasked with educating visitors about conservation. The Bright Futures program is for students between the ages 14 to 17 who are looking to complete the volunteer hours required to receive a Florida Bright Futures Scholarship. After a year, Colin decided to join the zoo's life skills program Teen Team where he participates in a wide variety of activities such as animal encounters with guests and off-site career days. The zoo's volunteer manager, Bry Sidwell, says Colin brings out the best in those around him and is exceptionally respectful, attentive and engaged.

MAKAYLAH SOUTH

Arnold Palmer Hospital



Fifteen-year-old Makaylah is a member of Arnold Palmer Hospital's first-ever Teen Leadership Council (TLC). As a member, she spends time at the hospital for her own medical needs and those of her family, but also returns bi-monthly to weigh in on corporate initiatives. The goal of the program is to enhance the delivery of care to adolescents and young adults at the hospital. Makaylah is the sister of a child who is chronically ill and a patient at the hospital herself. Some of her contributions include helping to plan events such as a summer barbecue, a Halloween spooktakular and an ugly sweater party. She has also assisted with donations during the hospital's Santa's workshop and its third annual prom event. Leaders at Arnold Palmer Hospital say Makaylah is a devoted big sister and a friend to all.

JAMIE GILBERT

Orlando Health



Nineteen-year-old Jamie has volunteered in many departments around Orlando Health. Currently, she supports the staff of the orthopaedic nursing and neuro units at Arnold Palmer Hospital, along with delivering reading materials to women on bedrest at Winnie Palmer Hospital. The Boone High School senior has been volunteering with Orlando Health for 2 ½ years and has contributed 382 hours of service. As a Girl Scout going for her Gold Award, Jamie came up with the idea to create a book cart stocked with free magazines and books to deliver to women in the antepartum unit at Winnie Palmer Hospital. Each week, the book cart makes its way to patients in the hospital. The cart is kept fully stocked through generous donations from the community.

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Hosting foreign exchange students has allowed some Central Florida families to not only share what life is like in America but to broaden their own horizons as well.

Cultural Exchange



by **Brittany Ann Morrisey**

Mark Weatherly was listening to the radio when he heard a commercial that seemed to be speaking directly to him. It was an ad seeking families interested in hosting exchange students or young people from other countries coming to the United States to experience the culture and study at American high schools.

The timing was kismet. Just the day before Weatherly had been on a flight from Europe chatting with a Polish family that had two sons of which one had been an exchange student and the other was just about to be. The conversation got him thinking about the possibility of being a host. And as a single dad to a 5-year-old, he figured it would be a positive experience for his son.

That was 20 years ago and looking back today, Weatherly says he's glad he made the decision to open his home to exchange students because it allowed him to forge lifetime relationships with so many people that he would have never met otherwise. And it gave his son access to cultures unknown to many American children.

"[My son] grew up with exchange students and the expectation that people are different and speak different languages and come from different cultures," he says. "I think he has a bigger view of the world than a lot of kids who didn't have that opportunity."

Lifetime Relationships

To date, Weatherly has hosted 38 young people from places all over the globe including South Korea, Sweden, France, Bulgaria, Latvia, Brazil and Australia. Having

enjoyed the exchange of cultures, he's continued to host students even as his son is now grown and out of the house.

Currently, he has two students living with him; one is from Norway and the other is from Spain.

Weatherly isn't alone in this. Each year, scores of families welcome exchange students into their homes.

According to Susan Farris, Florida regional coordinator with EF High School Exchange Year, people choose to become hosts because they want to learn about other cultures just as much as foreigners seek to learn about America.

"The thing that unites all of our hosting families is their belief in the mission and power of cultural exchange, and that good things happen when people from different backgrounds come together in mutual understanding," she says.

He keeps in touch with many of them. Weatherly visited the students he's hosted in their home countries and they've also come back to America to visit him.

"I have students who are 37 years old now and I've got five grandkids through exchange students," he says.

A number of companies arrange exchange experiences but the process for becoming a host is generally about the same: The host parent fills out an application and then an interview and a home visit are conducted to make sure it is a safe environment.

Additionally, these companies pay stipends to hosts families for them to fulfill certain daily requirements including providing meals and transportation.

Communication

Kristin Chapman has hosted five exchange students so far. They've come from such countries as Slovenia, China, Russia and Germany.

Chapman began hosting 12 years ago because she herself had done an exchange program in high school. She spent a year abroad in Australia as a sophomore and says the experience was life-changing. She still keeps in touch with her Australian friends and host family.

Chapman says one of the biggest misconceptions people have about hosting is that the students will be hard to understand. But for her, that hasn't been the case at all.

"Their vocabulary may expand while they're here," she says. "But I've not had any exchange students that we weren't able to communicate with."

Although, one peculiar thing she has noticed is that students she's hosted are generally not taught English cooking terms — words like chop, stir or mix. But those are easy to teach, she says, and students learn them while helping out with the cooking at home.

Weatherly agrees that most exchange students are proficient in English. In fact, it's more often cultural differences that hinder a mutual understanding. He recalls a situation with one European student that at first threw him for a loop.

"In Bulgaria, when you mean yes, you shake

yfu

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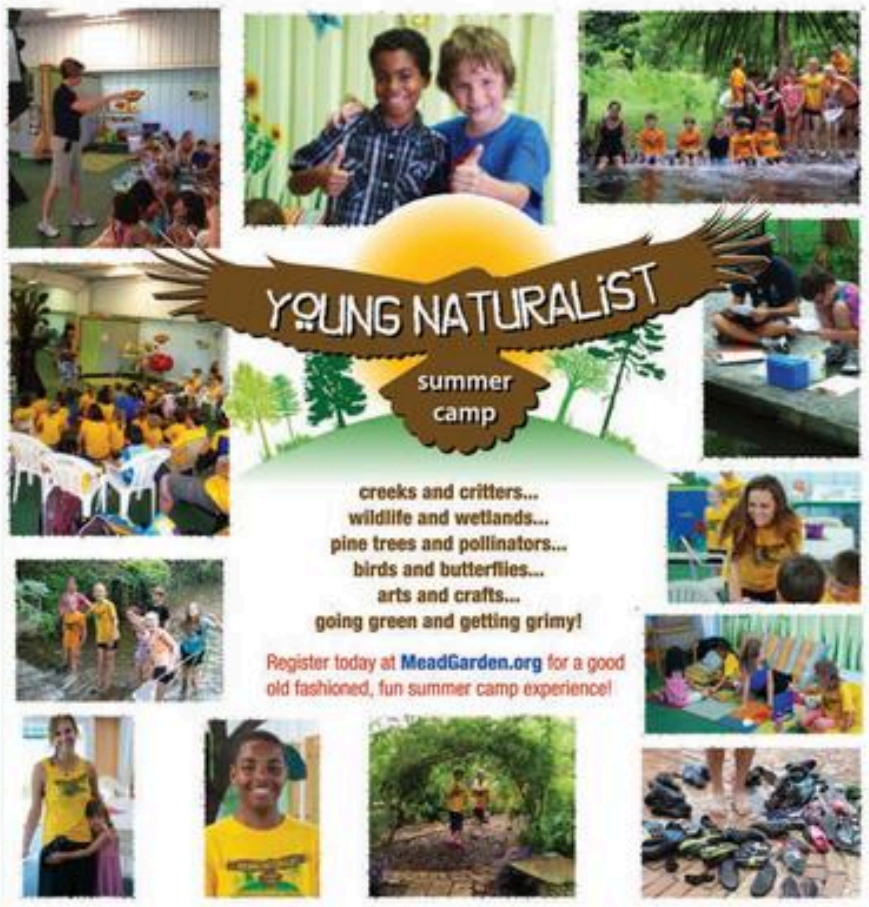
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Cultural Exchange





The Chapman family, Kirstin, Jason and Zoë (from left) with Anni, the German exchange student they are hosting.

"The thing that unites all of our hosting families is their belief in the mission and power of cultural exchange, and that good things happen when people from different backgrounds come together in mutual understanding."

your head from side to side," he says. "And when you mean no, you nod your head up and down. So, it took us a couple days to figure that one out."

American Life

Seventeen-year-old Anni Dittrich came to America from Germany in August 2018 and says she decided to do an exchange program because in some ways she felt stuck in her home country.

"I wanted to see different cultures," she says. "And the best place for that is literally America because you have culture from all over the world together so you can see so many people."

Dittrich is staying with Chapman at her home in Baldwin Park. Dittrich was originally living with a family in Ocoee but she says it didn't work out because her first host mother had to work a lot. Youth For Understanding (YFU), the nonprofit organization that arranged Dittrich's stay, stepped in and coordinated for her to move to another host family.

Dittrich says her favorite experience so far was playing on Ocoee High School's girls soccer team, as goalie, during the winter.



"The girls were so together like a family," she says. "I had so much fun."

Sina Homann, a 15-year-old exchange student from Germany, says she also likes participating in sports in America. At Hagerty High School, she ran cross country in the fall and is now doing track and field.

"It's great … the school spirit you have here," she says. "I'm not used to it because in Germany there is not a school spirit like that."

Homann says she wanted to come to the United States to see what it was really like.

"In Germany you see a lot of American influence," she says. "So, you see a lot of movies. … You hear the music from here. … You kind of see glimpses of it everywhere you go but you just don't know how it really is."

When she found out she was going to Orlando, she was excited because she doesn't like the cold weather of her home country. Her time in Florida has also led her to believe that the weather really does have a strong effect on temperament.

"In Germany the weather isn't so good and my theory is because the weather is so much better here, people are so much happier here and nicer and more open," she says.

Open to New Cultures

Cathy White, community engagement manager for YFU, says cultural exchange programs can be catalysts for positive global change.

"Those bonds of family and friendship can last for a lifetime and lead to an understanding and respect of other cultures," she says.

When it comes to the exchange process, host families are, of course, able to select who comes to stay with them and many people do look to have a student from a certain country because they want to learn more about that place, often one connected to their own heritage. The most popular country YFU host families request students from is Germany, according to White.

Chapman suggest that new hosts be open to having children from all different places, though.

"Because you never know what you're going to learn from [someone's] culture," she says. "So, I would say, I would never try to be selective."

Weatherly has advice for prospective hosts too.

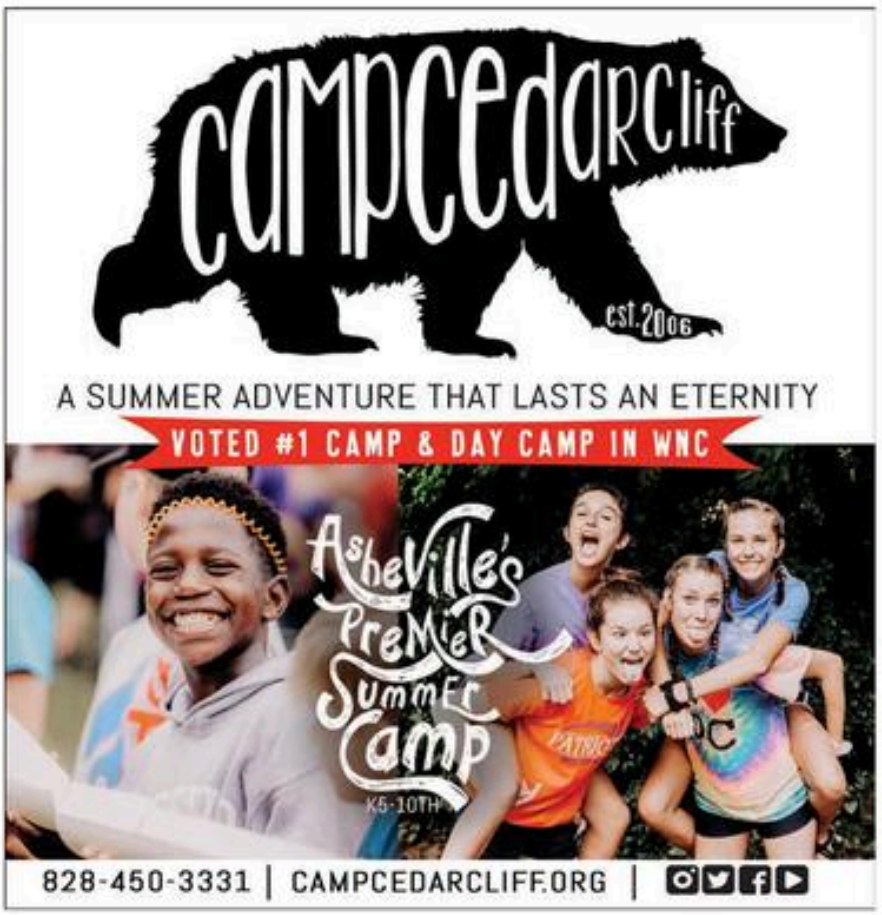
"Don't treat [the exchange student] like a guest but treat them like a member of your family," he says. "And the rewards are huge because you get out of it another member of your family."

He's already preparing for later this year when he'll have two new students. One of the exchange students is coming from Japan, a country that Weatherly has never hosted someone from.

Chapman is also thinking about later this year. Specifically, this June when Dittrich will pack up and go back to her home country.

"I'm hoping that the experiences that we have with Anni now will carry on much longer than just this one year she's here," Chapman says. "And that she goes back with a very positive experience of Americans."





A new wave of legislation and programs TAKING EFFECT IN ORANGE COUNTY **will benefit first responders suffering from distress** AFTER TRAUMATIC EVENTS.

ON THE FRONT LINES

By Lauren Kubiak



Gunfire crackled in the air as Orange County firefighter Donovan Reid* and his partner arrived at Pulse nightclub on June 12, 2016. Expecting a call for something minor, nothing could have prepared them for the pure chaos they would encounter—unraveling just another typical day into a nightmare before their eyes.

Reid and his team were the first fire rescue team to arrive at the catastrophic scene. At that time, the police department was still unsure where the shooter was located, or if he was posing even more of a threat to the area with a bomb.

"When we got there, we were basically told where to park, which was in the intersection in front of the club and they just started putting people in our truck and telling us to drop them off at the hospital," Reid says. "We were basically the shuttle back and forth from the scene to the hospital."

After arriving at the hospital with the first group of victims, Reid and his partner had an opportunity to try and process the dire situation. After gathering their thoughts, the two had a conversation filled with fear as they discussed the dangers of going back to the scene. Quickly, they realized they were the only available rescue team in the area at that moment. It was no longer just their job, it became their moral responsibility.

"In my entire career, I've never had the feeling of, 'OK. This is going to be the call I don't go home from.' That kind of hit hard," says Reid.

By the end of the night, Reid and his fire rescue colleagues did away with their blood-ridden shirts the only way they knew how—a fire. Every day after that fateful night, while transporting other patients to the hospital, Reid and his team would drive by Pulse, forcing him to relive the tragedy repeatedly. Beginning to struggle with the fact that he couldn't save everyone, Reid began slipping away from his normal routine. He stopped working out daily and everything about him began to change. While it was undoubtedly difficult for Reid at first, he has been doing much better and found some solace after talking openly with a therapist about the event.

In the aftermath of tragedies such as the Pulse and Parkland shootings, the Florida Legislature has been focused on helping first responders through their trauma. A recent bill was put in place that would allow individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to receive lost wage benefits and a grant was given to Orange County for multiple programs, the main two of which involve a training program for first responders and a new PTSD treatment technology.

Real name has been changed to protect his identity

directly after the Pulse Nightclub shooting, St. Petersburg College's Center for Public Safety Innovation received a request from Orange County to train first responders who were at the scene in addition to secondary responders (medical staff) who were involved. A portion of the Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance grant was recently given to St. Petersburg College from the Department of Justice, now allowing the multi-faceted training program—AEAP, named after the grant—to proceed.

The program is set to begin this month in Orlando and encompass two critical incident peer support classes—both 16 hours each—and will train various agencies and their members how to establish a peer support system internally.

Todd Kirchgraber, the training manager for the program, says that there is still a stigma attached to first responders going outside to seek help for any type of mental disorders or concerns associated with a traumatic event, so this grant will give agencies an internal program letting first responders talk with their peers about issues they're experiencing.

"For this particular program, the training is geared specifically for those individuals who were first responders to that incident—the Pulse Nightclub," Kirchgraber says. "We're going to be looking at understanding what stress and critical incidents are; what the principles are to establishing a critical incidents peer support group; responsibilities of those that have accepted that role; intervention strategies, those types of things.

"We're then going to put on a 'train the trainer' for that same program, so [the] Orlando area can continue with the process," he adds.

"Once [the college is] done and they leave, left behind will be people who are trained as trainers so they can continue to go through the municipalities and law enforcement agencies and first responders to continue to do this training over and over and over again," says Donna Wyche, division manager of mental health and homelessness in Orange County.

St. Petersburg will also offer a 16-hour, two-day community response model training course for those not directly impacted by Pulse such as mental health practitioners, social workers and non-government agencies trying to help individuals deal with the aftermath.

Lastly, an officer wellness training course will be offered to first responders to help them better understand what they're experiencing and how they can help themselves not only through the Pulse event, but any potential future traumatic events as well.

"We're going to talk about the principles of stress, the psychological aspects of stress, how to cope with stress, improving mental and physical health to work in those particular areas related to stress, also peer support for families," Kirchgraber says.

Looking ahead, Kirchgraber hopes that these training programs help first responders receive the tools needed to cope after a traumatic event and give them the opportunity to speak to their peers







about their experience. He also hopes they will help the community understand how they can assist those in need of help.

"We assume this is [the first responders'] job and so it won't affect them, but sometimes it does and when it does, I think we have to be able to respond to that," Wyche says. "By doing these kinds of trainings it not only allows an ongoing training to be founded in the agencies, but it gives people the understanding of how to recognize stress in themselves. Not only that, it allows them to recognize stress in others, so when their peers aren't doing well, it's an opportunity to reach out and once that starts being the norm, I think you have a healthier workforce in any first responder agencies."

An organization, which got its start in 2011, was given another portion of the AEAP grant. UCF Restores was originally geared toward treating veterans and active duty military with PSTD, but has expanded to treating first responders and survivors of mass shootings. The organization is the first in the nation to provide an intensive outpatient treatment program while bringing together multiple disciplines including exposure therapy and group therapy.

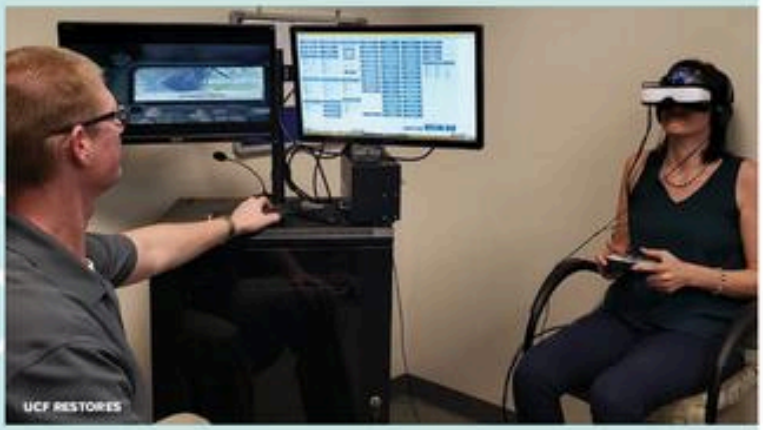
The AEAP grant will be used for UCF Restores' new VR system technology, which will recreate scenes for those with PTSD.

"In virtual reality what we do is we recreate the person's traumatic event, so the sights, the sounds, the smells and any kind of physical sensation such as rocking after a bomb explodes," says Deborah Beidel, founder and executive director of UCF Restores. "We have this system that we had purchased that we use called Bravemind. The problem is that there aren't any scenes in there that are appropriate for first responders, so we don't have car accidents, we don't have burning buildings, we don't have anything that occurred in some of these mass shootings."

With funding, UCF Restores will be building a virtual reality tool that will be able to match the trauma through scenes and environments that closely reflect what the person went through.

"The most effective therapy is the closer you can get to the initial traumatic event, the more successful the therapy will be," Beidel says. "For example, if you are afraid of German shepherds, and the only dog I ask you to be around is a little French poodle, you're really not going to get over your fear of German shepherds that way. … We have to recreate what happened and by doing that we can more closely treat people correctly, and there's a higher likelihood that they will benefit from the training.

"I think it's important for people to understand that more first responders commit suicide every year than die in the hands of a felon or die in the line of duty," she adds. "Unlike veterans there's no VA for first responders, so we need to have people who are trained and understand the first responder culture and be able to provide services to them that are desperately needed."



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Orlando Family TOP PHYSICIANS 2018

Orlando police officer Gerry Realin was called to the scene and spent nearly 17 hours at Pulse. For over five of those hours, he was inside the nightclub. After struggling with the reality of what he witnessed, Realin was diagnosed with PTSD and since then he and his wife Jessica have been at the forefront of new legislation to provide workers' compensation benefits for first responders with similar diagnoses.

Back in 2007, the legislature extended medical coverage under workers' compensation to first responders (firefighters, law enforcement officers, EMTs and paramedics) with PTSD. They weren't eligible to receive lost wage benefits, but were able to receive coverage on medical bills.

Although each state has very individualistic workers' compensation benefits for first responders with PTSD, Florida and Washington passed a bill in 2018 allowing workers to receive lost wage benefits along with medical coverage.

The bill began with Jessica and Gerry Realin in August of 2016. Jessica was able to connect with a senator who promised to enact the bill if elected, and although it wasn't passed the first time filed, the second filing passed.

Florida passed the legislation last October, however the state drew a clear line as to how first responders can receive these benefits. The statute says that the individual must be diagnosed with PTSD by an authorized psychiatrist and that there needs to be a specific triggering occurrence. The diagnosis also needs to be made within a year of the traumatic event.

"Our family continues to support Gerry as he works daily on his treatment for his injury (PTSD). Letting him know it's OK not to be OK and love him unconditionally," Jessica Realin says. "I think as a society if we can get to a point that we realize that our first responders are everyday people that are there for us on our worst day and still answer the call no matter what, we then can say, 'Wow they are not heroes but someone's son, daughter, father/mother, sister/brother, best friend.' Then we can accept that they are just as much affected by the atrocities of this world."

"I think the only other thing that I think has probably helped at least [Orange] County is the fact that we've always had a pretty robust counseling program with fire rescue," says John Petrelli, director of risk management and professional standards for Orange County Office of the Ombudsman. "Whenever they have some sort of a significant incident whether it be a really bad auto accident, whether it be a situation where you have a Pulse-type situation, they actually will bring in counselors for staff and I think that helps address that very, very initially and early on and probably helps from the standpoint on the back end of things so that we don't have people that are nine, 10, 11 months down the road starting to all of a sudden have these issues."









The Callais Family

Home Away From Home

The Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Florida has been providing comfort and healing to families of seriously ill children for over 20 years.

By Jule Shannon

When a child has been diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, the first thing usually on a parent's mind is to get them to the best doctor in that specialty as soon as possible. The last thing on their mind? Realizing they may have to travel a distance to receive medical treatment and care—far enough where they can't stay in the comfort of their own home during frequent visits and overnight stays at the hospital.

That's where the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Florida (RMHCCF) comes in. Since 1996, they have been a home away from home in Orlando for families of seriously ill children who are being treated at nearby hospitals. The organization doesn't just provide a bed and sheets—each family is given their own bedroom, hot meals are provided daily, and most importantly, a warm, welcoming environment from the moment the families walk in. It's a homey and comforting setting that families need during times of uncertainty and unfamiliarity.

"The mission of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Florida is to create support programs that directly improve the health and well-being of children, so it entails a lot of different activities and programs. But the largest program—the program that most of the community is familiar with—is our cornerstone program, the Ronald McDonald House," says Lou Ann DeVoogd, president and CEO of RMHCCF. "The purpose of the Ronald McDonald Houses is to keep families close when children are ill and being treated at local hospitals and facilities. We provide overnight accommodations for them, we provide programs where the community can come in and see families so they don't have to worry about anything while with us. We continually focus on healing and wellness of the child."

There are three Ronald McDonald Houses in Orlando. The first one opened in 1996 on the campus of the then-called Florida Hospital for Children. Another opened in 2003 on the campus of the Arnold Palmer Medical Center, and the newest house opened in 2016 at Nemours Children's Hospital.

But the history of the Ronald McDonald House goes back four decades—1974 to be exact when the first Ronald McDonald House opened in Philadelphia. It began when former Philadelphia Eagles player Fred Hill's daughter Kim was being treated for leukemia. Camping out nightly on hospital chairs and not eating solid meals during her three years of treatment took a toll on Hill and his family, and that was before they learned many other families were traveling long distances for their children's treatment and couldn't afford hotel rooms. Currently, there are more than 250

Ronald McDonald Houses in 43 countries that have housed 10 million families.

DeVoogd says the average stay for a family is 8.6 days, and also notes it continues to grow due to the type of illnesses that are being treated in Orlando and how much more sophisticated they are becoming.

"Our families are able to stay with us as long as they need to. We've had families stay several months or up to a year depending on treatment," she says. "Sixty percent come from Central Florida, but the other 40 percent come from other counties in Florida all throughout the state. In fact, we've had families from 49 states and 67 countries around the world."

The Ronald McDonald House asks for a small donation from each family, but no family is required to pay and none are turned away if they don't have the funds. And even with three houses, they are each filled or almost filled every night. "We operate at almost 80 percent occupancy, which in the hotel business means full occupancy," DeVoogd says. "It fluctuates night to night, but when we do have a waiting list, we work with nearby hotels to so they can have a place to stay and not on the street."

The need for rooms is so high, they are adding nine more bedrooms at the Nemours location and one bedroom at AdventHealth for Children. That hospital is also providing an additional 10 rooms. Having these rooms is crucial for families whose lives were turned upside down at a moment's notice.

"Our families tell us each and every day how they had no idea they would be at the Ronald McDonald House," DeVoogd says. "I just ask people to imagine what it would be like to have a healthy child one minute, and then have them gone and sent over to [one of the hospitals in] Orlando the next. They have no idea what they are getting into and going to an unfamiliar place in the city. Many of them don't even have time to pack clothes; all they have is the clothes on their back."



Tonya McEver and her son, Gavin

"My son was very critical and he was the only thing I was worried about, so to have a room to stay in, a clean space, have meals provided for us and laundry services available, not to mention we were within steps of the hospital, it was very humbling. It was a great experience to be able to stay there." —Tonya McEver

That's what happened to Port St. John resident Tonya McEver. Her son Gavin was born 24 weeks premature and they were airlifted to a hospital in Orlando where they stayed for six months while he was in the intensive care unit.

"It was definitely one of the scariest times of our lives," she recalls. "We were not familiar with this area at all; we weren't sure where to stay. We kept asking ourselves, 'How are were going to drive back and forth over an hour away?' Then we were told about the Ronald McDonald House and it was amazing. We had no idea what to expect, but when we arrived, the staff and volunteers were so welcoming. I still remember that first day walking into the house.

"My son was very critical and he was the only thing I was worried about, so to have a room to stay in, a clean space, have meals provided for us and laundry services available, not to mention we were within steps of the hospital, it was very humbling. It was a great experience to be able to stay there."

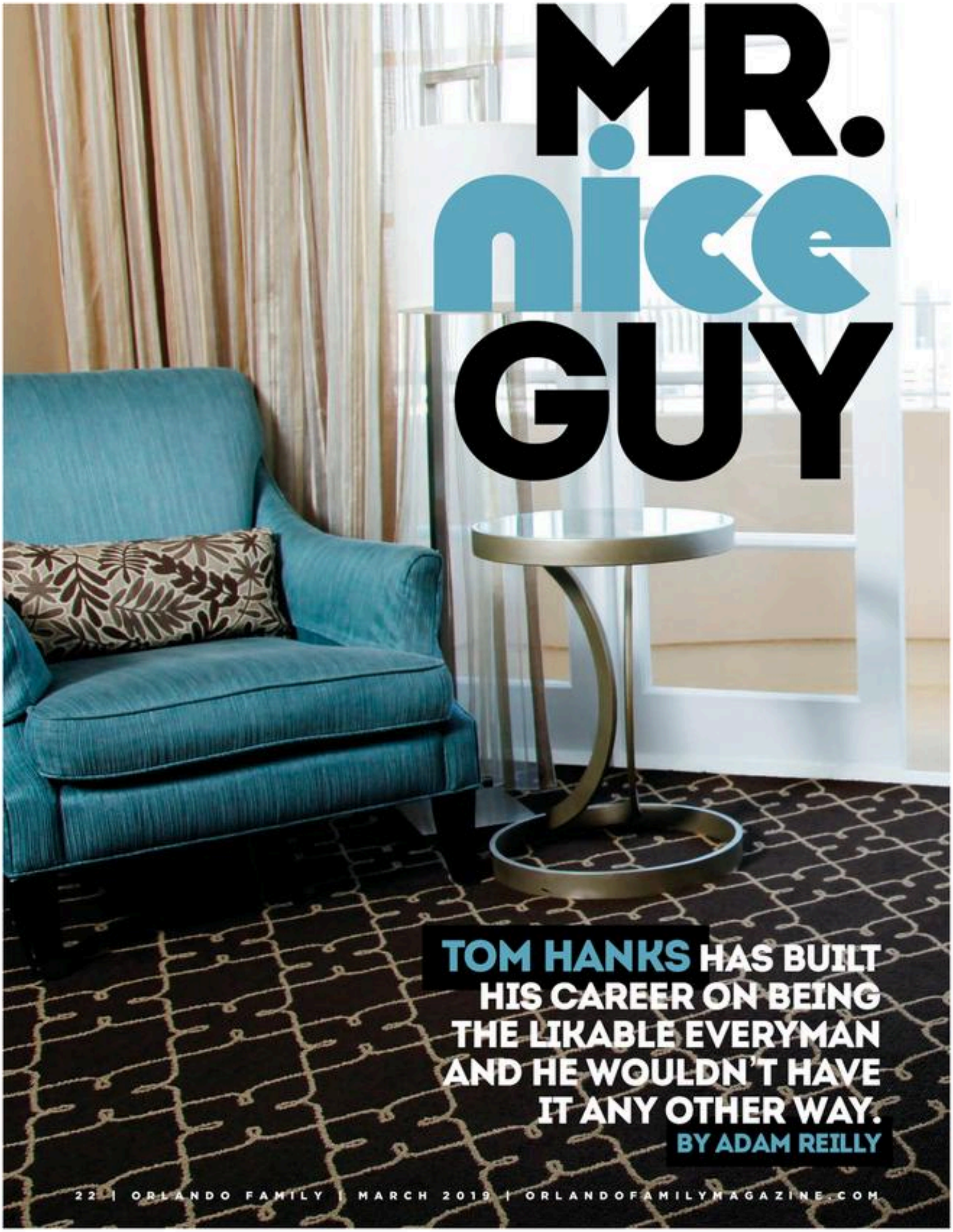
With all the unfamiliarity and uncertainty these families go through, RMHCCF does its best to help the kids have a sense of normalcy. Each house has a playroom, a treasure room and activity rooms that target all age groups so they have a place to call their own.

"The families find our house a home away from home," DeVoogd says. "The siblings interact really well with other siblings that are staying there, with volunteers and with staff; they become part of our home. Many of our activities are for siblings because it can be really hard for them when the sick child obviously receives most of the focus."

RMHCCF depends on support from the community to help keep the houses running smoothly because they are not funded by the government. Various events are held throughout the year to raise money, the charity accepts donations daily for paper products and food, among other items, and volunteers give over 20,000 hours of their time to support the families. The organization is always looking for more volunteers, and DeVoogd encourages Florida residents to tour the Ronald McDonald Houses.

"We encourage people to come in and see us so you can see firsthand the work we do, our mission and how you can get involved," she says. "So many of our ideas and programs have come from the community, so people can see what they can do. You never know when you may need a Ronald McDonald House. I hope you never do, but if you do, you have a lot of people helping out."





MR. nice GUY

TOM HANKS HAS BUILT HIS CAREER ON BEING THE LIKABLE EVERYMAN AND HE WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY.

BY ADAM REILLY



TO SAY THAT TOM HANKS HAS WIDE-RANGING PUBLIC APPEAL is a bit of an understatement. In today's day and age where a portion of the entertainment world's elite are either embroiled in scandal or viewed as boorish and overly ego-driven, Hanks very much retains his aw-shucks, average Joe persona. He's one of the biggest actors in Hollywood history, yet he comes across like your friendly next-door neighbor, the kind who would mow your lawn while you're away on vacation. He's often been referred to as a modern-day Jimmy Stewart, a comparison he doesn't exactly shy away from.

"It's very flattering because Jimmy Stewart was the kind of icon and everyman figure," says Hanks. "I'm proud of the work I've done and I'm very satisfied with the depth and range of stuff that I've been able to play."

During the course of the 62-year-old's storied career, Hanks has played several iconic roles and he has been lauded with countless awards, including being the only person besides Spencer Tracy to claim the Academy Award for Best Actor in consecutive years (in 1993 for *Philadelphia* and in 1994 for *Forrest Gump*). He's provided the goofball comic relief, melted hearts in rom-coms, evoked powerful emotion in tear-jerking dramas and became the voice for one of Disney's biggest animated franchises. Heck, he even became the first person to portray Walt Disney in a mainstream film.

Hanks' string of impressive performances is only complemented by his work as a producer, where he's been equally recognized for often bringing gripping stories to both the silver and small screens.

As if that wasn't enough, Hanks is also a past recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom; not bad for a guy who made his breakthrough starring on the short-lived sitcom *Bosom Buddies*.

"I'm very lucky because I feel that every film is a new adventure and a new experience. It's great to be able to keep doing something that you love and have that kind of creative satisfaction," he says. "It never gets boring."

Hanks is certainly not bored, as he regularly has multiple projects in the works with some notable films set to hit theaters

MR. nice GUY

in the coming months. In June, he'll once again serve as the voice of Woody in *Toy Story 4* and come October he'll lace up his sneakers and put on a cardigan to portray Mister Rogers in *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*. And the highly buzzed World War II drama *Greyhound*, in which Hanks stars and produces, is slated for a big release in May 2020.

Taking time out of his busy schedule, Hanks told us what it's like being Hollywood's good guy and the dynamic of his relationship with wife Rita Wilson. During the wide-ranging conversation, he also spoke about his rocky upbringing, the person who had the biggest impact on his life and revealed why breakfast is unquestionably the most important meal of the day.

Q AND A

In recent times you've gone through patterns of playing terrific, heroic figures. What draws you to these types of characters?
I like being able to focus on people whose actions help make us less cynical about life. When you look at someone like Chesley Sullenberger in the film *Sully*, here's a humble man who did his job very calmly while under enormous pressure and saved the lives of 155 people aboard his plane.

I'm interested in the stories of guys like him who do something extraordinary when faced with a difficult situation or circumstances. I'm fascinated with those life-changing moments and I enjoy putting myself in their shoes.

Is that why you'd rather play a man like Sully as opposed to bad guys?
I've played some not-so-nice people but I would rather play characters who face up to challenges and say something more positive about the human condition. I find it interesting to learn how people find something within themselves and rise to the occasion. That's what Sully did. He's the shining example of a man who performed with the highest level of professionalism and showed such grace under pressure.

But do you ever get tired of the "nice guy" label?
You can be called worse things. But I can live with the idea of playing people who don't terrorize their children or shout at waiters in a restaurant if the food is bad or the wine sucks. I'm drawn more to playing good people, I suppose, and I'm not sure people would want to see me as a drooling villain. I also don't think that all my characters are so happy and pleasant.

Is it limiting at all to be continually identified with good guy or heroic roles?
Every character is different. I'm aware that the public will probably always have this image of me as the nice guy. I don't think I can ever erase that impression—but then again it's not the worst thing that people can think about you even though I assure you that I'm not always lovable and charming.

For me, the true measure of success is artistic longevity. I don't like to look back on my past work because there's nothing I can do to change that and the only thing that really matters is what kinds of work you're doing now and in the future. I simply try to stick to the path that's taken me this far and I hope that keeps on working for me.

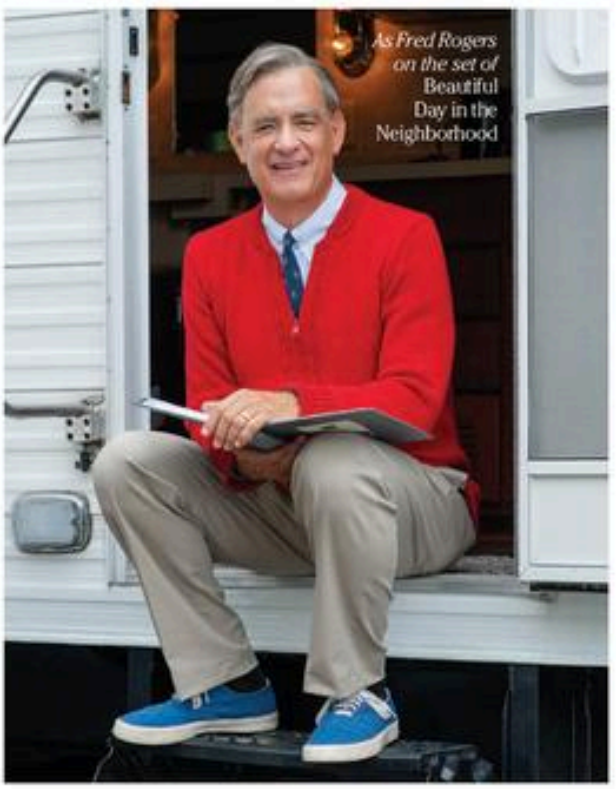
Do you have any specific things you look for in each film or role you play?
I'm very instinctive. I just start reading the script and if after the first 15 pages I think: "This role has to be mine and I don't think anyone else could do it better," then I'll do it. Maybe it's just a matter of self-centeredness and competitiveness but I think most actors are like that.

It's also easy to accept a role sometimes because you're being offered a lot of money, you have the opportunity to work with a director you hold in high esteem or maybe you get to work with a beautiful and talented actress. Saying no is much more difficult.

You've found happiness in your marriage and you've always given your wife credit for enabling you to achieve much more in your career.
By the time I met Rita, I knew a lot more about myself and how to handle a relationship as opposed to my first marriage. So once we settled down, I spent a lot more time thinking about how I was going to make things right and how we could have a happy time together. But Rita also brought so much to me and she's always been a tremendously positive force in my life. The rest of our story just becomes too mushy and sweet to tell so I'll stop with that.

Has it been hard to keep your status as a movie star separate from your home life?
We're not the kind of family where we have posters of our films on the walls of the house. But having said that, my wife knew she was marrying an actor and not a dentist. And my children learned from a young age that their dad had a funny job.

They always knew that I was working on a film because my haircut would be different or I had to grow a mustache. But this is the kind of a job that gives us the opportunity to spend free holidays in Budapest or Morocco. But I think the best way that I've been able to have a good and balanced home life is to have eaten breakfast together.



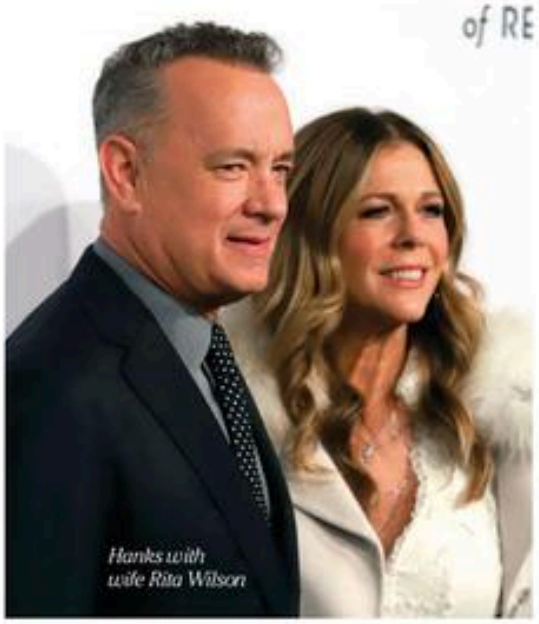
As Fred Rogers on the set of Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

Was there someone who inspired you when you were growing up?
Dr. James Corvellis was my tutor in college, a history professor, and I was a big reader of history for entertainment. I watched different documentary films like I would entertainment films—I was just reared that way. And he laid history to me in this fascinating structure that I was mesmerized by, in concept of a real passing of time.

He laid out this method of understanding and analyzing history in a way that I could take with me for the rest of my life for my own entertainment, not necessarily for study. Professor Corvellis was the man who had the most impact in my

life. Chabot Junior College, in Southern California, in the years 1974 to 1976.

Has the process of making movies changed for you over the years?
I've come to realize this maybe in the last decade, probably longer, that no matter where you are in the world, the process of making a movie breeds a uniform format and adherence. You're making a movie, and it doesn't matter where the crew are from, whatever culture it is, everyone has that natural gut knowledge about how movies are made. It's still the same environment, even if nobody speaks the same language.



Hanks with wife Rita Wilson

Do you feel older and wiser these days?
I literally forget what age I am. I still feel the same as I did at 40, at 35. After 25, it's just a reason to get together with friends, have a few drinks, nothing [is] going to change.

Is life very different now that your children are grown-up and you're an empty nester?
I was looking forward to having time off but now the grandkids are piling up. But the best time you can spend as a grandad is with a $3 wading pool and a garden hose looking after a 3-year-old.

You started out as a stand-up comedian who eventually became Hollywood's leading actor. Do you ever wonder how that happened?
I still don't know (laughs). Look, I've only ever been an actor. I was in college; I had a kid. And I put everything in the back of a car and drove across the country to take a job. That's a pretty big leap of faith. Because you're thinking, OK, I have this project and this is five months of work. And I have faith that something else will come along. So you're living by your wits. But you're also living with the promise that you will meet people that will focus your attention—and that's exactly what happened with me.

Was it a strategic decision on your part to make the shift from comedic to dramatic actor?
Yeah, I was, like, 36 or 37 and said, I gotta take this whole kind of, like, movie off the table because, first, I've been doing them for 10 years, and second, I don't want to do them anymore. Because I'm 37 and I've got three kids now and I want to play a man who's been through more things than [Hanks puts his hands to his face, and speaks in a woe-is-me voice], 'Oh gosh, I'm in love and she doesn't love me.'

You bring so much sensitivity to your work as an actor. What do you think gave you that kind of vulnerability and appreciation of life?
As a kid, you don't have any choice except to adapt to the circumstances. My parents divorced when I was 5, and I was the only one of my siblings who didn't go live with my mom full-time. So my life was with my dad and occasionally with relatives when he was having a tough time or looking for work or finding a new house for us to live in. Altogether, I had three mothers, four fathers, five schools and 10 houses. So I learned to adapt to constantly moving, constantly going to new schools and having to make friends quickly. Which is what made me learn to entertain people and use humor as a way of getting along and fitting in easily.

How did you manage to avoid being screwed up by all that moving about?
Well, assuming your last assumption is correct ... (laughs) ... I think I was lucky in that I found a way to identify with all the good things I had going for me as a child. ... I think it comes down to a particular kind of yearning that you have. Mine was always being connected to something that was contrary to what the real family circumstance was. I had a great teacher for second, third and fourth grade. Mrs. Castle. She just made me feel like a god.

I had good friends when I was going through the tough years of junior high and high school. They weren't potheads. They were mostly just good guys, and all we'd do is sit around and laugh. I went to churches and became part of theater groups, stuff like that.

Did you feel scarred in any way by your childhood?
No. I got used to the idea of moving around. It wasn't easy at times, but I learned to become very adaptable. It gave me a sense of independence. You gain the confidence that comes with knowing that you can handle situations like having to get up and moving out of the house at 2 a.m. because my dad wasn't happy with the woman he was married to. You get used to the idea of having to find new toys because they got left behind in the house that you left with five minutes' notice.

You've said in the past that you can be wary about friendship.
Moving around a lot made it difficult to have faith in friendships. I was constantly forced to make new friends in every new school and neighborhood so you get used to not having many friends. You learn to pretend to be friends but keep some distance because you're worried that it's not going to last. That's why it's not part of my makeup to completely open up.

What was your relationship with your father like?
I didn't get to see my dad that much because he was always working late as a chef in restaurants and he was never home. My brother and sister and I would often be goofing around in the house or in the living room and our dad would just be sitting in his chair watching TV or reading and give us an occasional smile. But he was OK, he just had a tough life and didn't know how to really manage a family properly because he was so busy trying to earn a living.

Did you ever experience anything approaching a midlife crisis?
No. I've managed to avoid that big void. I'm pretty level-headed. I don't have moments of sobbing and wondering what happened. I probably went through so much as a young father and struggling through my first marriage and trying to make my way in show business that I went through so many smaller crises that everything that's happened to me since has been so good that I don't have any reason to complain about anything.

Probably the most momentous event other than meeting Rita, which was simply wonderful, was when our then 15-year-old decided to attend boarding school. That meant that suddenly Rita and I were alone in the house—we were empty nesters. That was not the cause of a midlife crisis, though, that was a minor cause for celebration because it meant we were able to do so many more things together—don't read anything sordid into that, OK? (laughs)

How did that affect you and your wife?
It was an interesting change in our lives. It was the reverse of the typical midlife crisis where someone wakes up one morning and feels that life has passed them by and has this great existential crisis even though everything is otherwise great in their life. That's never happened to me and it never will. I'm pretty happy when I wake up in the morning.

Age has also made me calmer—I don't panic anymore when things don't work out exactly the way I would like. Now I have a certain level of serenity that I never experienced until the latter part of my life. It's not an ecstatic feeling, but I have a lot to look forward to every day.

Above photo by JStone/Shutterstock.com.



> “I always tell patients, it’s like your favorite author writes 24 books [and] this test that 23AndMe is offering only lets you read some chapters of two books”
>
> — **Ryan Bisson,** certified genetic counselor with Orlando Health’s UF Health Cancer Center

TIES THAT BIND

With the growth of at-home DNA testing, more people than ever are finding out what their genetic information can tell them, with some surprises along the way.

Ancestry-tracing companies have been offering genealogical DNA testing for years, but it was only around 2007 that a new genetic analysis using autosomal chromosomes brought about a major shift to the industry. Superior to previously used tests that relied on mitochondria or Y-chromosomes, autosomal DNA testing is able to offer up much more information to people about their recent ancestors by looking at 22 chromosomes that are inherited from both parents.

Although that breakthrough was more than 10 years ago, the full picture of what this powerful test can do is only starting to come into focus. Add to that the fact that more people than ever are taking at-home DNA tests. In 2018, Ancestry.com said it had sold more than 14 million DNA test kits worldwide. Meanwhile, 23AndMe says it has more than 5 million customers.

From criminal justice to assessing your health risks to tracing your family line, autosomal DNA testing is aiding law enforcement in catching criminals, giving people a new way to look at their health and helping others discover familial roots.

CATCHING CRIMINALS

Twenty-five-year-old Christine Franke left Cigarz, a bar at Universal CityWalk where she worked, in the early morning hours of Oct. 21, 2001. It was the last time she was seen alive. Later that day, a neighbor would find her dead, shot in the head inside her Audubon Park apartment.

Although DNA was found at the crime scene, it did not lead the Orlando Police Department (OPD) to a suspect; when it was run through law enforcements' genetic information database, known as CODIS for Combined DNA Index System, it yielded no matches. OPD sought out information and followed leads, but the case quickly turned cold.

So, with nothing to go on, 17 years passed with no one held responsible for the cold-blooded slaying of a

BY BRITTANY ANN MORRISEY

young woman.

Then in 2018, the Golden State Killer, a moniker for the unknown man who committed a series of rapes in California over a number of years, was arrested after investigators used GEDmatch, an open-source genealogy database, to ascertain his identity.

In the aftermath, the Lake Worth-based personal genomics website changed its terms of service to explicitly allow for law enforcement to use the database for homicides, sexual assaults or identifying an unknown deceased person, opening the door for agencies all over the United States to use it in solving their own cases.

That's when OPD began working with DNA technology company Parabon NanoLabs to use genetic genealogy to find the man who left his DNA at the scene of Christine Franke's murder.

"We asked all the agencies with outstanding cases if we had permission to give them a genetic genealogy assessment," CeCe Moore, a genetic genealogist who works with Parabon, says. "And Orlando jumped right on it."

Even before Parabon began offering this forensic service, OPD says one of its own had already started the process of trying to apply genetic genealogy to the Christine Franke murder case. Detective Michael Fields was inspired to do so after his family had participated in a commercial genealogy website.

With GEDmatch now openly letting law enforcement use the database, investigators now had the tool they needed to move forward without concern that they were violating any terms of service or trampling on the privacy of people who've uploaded profiles. Companies such as Ancestry.com and 23AndMe do not give out information to police unless a court order compels them to do so.

Like most genetic genealogy databases, GEDmatch works by comparing long stretches of DNA to all of the profiles stored in its system.

"We're looking for blocks of shared DNA," Moore says. "The larger those blocks are and the more plentiful they are, the closer that shared ancestry is in time between the match in the database and the unknown suspect."

In the case of Christine Franke, the unknown suspect's DNA did not yield a close match but rather many distant matches. To narrow down what part of the family the suspect belonged to, OPD investigators collected DNA from identified family members and sent it to Parabon where lab techs conducted kinship testing to see how closely related each person was to the suspect.

"And we kept doing that until one of the samples [OPD] sent us was a first cousin," Moore says. "That told us we were getting really close."

Eventually, Moore was able to narrow down the field to just two brothers.

"You can't get it further than brothers because they have the same ancestral mix because they have all the same ancestors," she says.

OPD was able to collect DNA from one of the brothers, who ended up not being a match to the DNA from the crime scene. That meant the other brother had to be the unknown suspect.

With a warrant, police collected DNA from the last brother. Lab testing confirmed that he was indeed who they had been looking for all these years.

In a press conference in November 2018, OPD announced that 38-year-old Benjamin Lee Holmes of Orlando had been arrested for the murder of Christine Franke. He is currently awaiting trial.

Last year during the course of the Christine Franke murder investigation, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) created its own genetic genealogy program. This new investigative unit works collaboratively with Parabon and Florida's law enforcement agencies to offer genealogical and analytical assistance, as well as funding for testing. It is headed up by chief of forensic services for FDLE Orlando, Lori Napolitano.

Coincidently, Napolitano had already been doing genetic genealogy in her personal life including helping an adopted friend put her biological family tree together and another adoptee find his biological parents. In fact, she was preparing to retire after 29 years with FDLE to start her own genetic genealogy business, but after seeing what happened in the Golden State Killer case and assisting with the Christine Franke murder case, she instead pioneered the creation of FDLE's genealogy unit.



Library patrons review photos at the West Oaks Branch Library and Genealogy Center in Ocoee.

Napolitano first started doing genetic genealogy in her personal life about three years ago after her mom, who was working to track down some of the family, got her into it.

"We eventually found through DNA testing my dad's father and my half aunt," Napolitano says. "Since then—my dad's deceased so he's not part of it—but we've met his half-sister that he never knew he had and some second cousins."

She says there is tremendous potential in using genetic genealogy as a lead generator for police.

"This has so far shown amazing ability to quickly resolve cases that have been sitting for long periods of time with the inability to solve them," she says. "And it is providing hope to victims and families of victims."

Moore agrees. In her estimation, Parabon so far has helped close about 35 cases all over the United States. Although, none of these have made it to trial as of yet.

"Over the next months and years, hundreds of cold cases, and not-so cold cases, should be resolved thanks to genetic genealogy," she says.

ASSESSING HEALTH RISKS

Today, without making an appointment with a doctor, anyone can use mail-order genetic testing services to see if they carry an inherited condition, such as sickle cell anemia or cystic fibrosis, or to see if they are at risk for a certain disease such as specific cancers.

Ryan Bisson, a certified genetic counselor with Orlando Health's UF Health Cancer Center, says although this kind of testing has brought awareness to what genetics can tell people about their health, he worries patients are not being educated properly on what they're really being provided.

As a genetic counselor, Bisson helps people determine if they have an inherited or hereditary disease running in their family. In particular, he focuses on a person's risk of developing cancer.

"I think people are putting too much stock in these mail-order tests," he says. "And they sometimes will refuse to meet with a health care provider like a genetic counselor because they think the mail-order test covered everything."

23AndMe states on its website that its reports are not to be used as a replacement for visiting health care professionals and that results from its tests should not be used to make medical decisions.

Bisson says it's important for people to understand that direct-to-consumer testing for health factors is limited because these companies only test for specific genetic variants, which leaves a lot of possibilities still on the table.

"I always tell patients, it's like your favorite author writes 24 books [and] this test that 23AndMe is offering only lets you read some chapters of two books," he says. "But not even the full two books and none of the other 20 some books."

Additionally, if you take an at-home genetics test and receive a positive result, this does not mean you have that disease or will for certain develop it in the future.

"It's not actually diagnosing anything," Bisson says. "I think that's where the public gets confused."

Bisson hasn't seen many patients who were spurred to come to the UF Health Cancer Center because of a result from one of these tests, although he suspects that is because 23AndMe only started offering testing for certain genetic variants related to breast cancer in March of 2018.

"Even if somebody comes to me with a report, the Food and Drug Administration says I have to look at the quality of that and I have to confirm it

Image courtesy of Amanda Murphy/Orange County Library System

through a different lab," Bisson says. "So, sometimes people will come to us with those reports and we still have to do the regular clinic test that we would usually do."

Deborah Cragun, director of the University of South Florida's Genetic Counseling Program, says she is not against direct-to-consumer DNA testing for health-related genetic information but she's concerned about how services such as 23AndMe give consumers not just their verified results but all their raw genomic data.

"They're testing a whole bunch of things but they're only giving you back results on certain ones," she says. "And then they give you access to your raw data … and then that is where the problems happen."

By problems, Cragun means, false positives, which is exactly what happened to one of her siblings.

Her brother took a direct-to-consumer genetic test and he uploaded his raw data into a program called Promethease, which allows users to compare personal genomics results and generate a report with information about their propensity to diseases. The program told him that, according to his genetic information, he had a pathogenic mutation that causes hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a condition where the heart muscles become thickened.

"But then when my mom and my brother went to be evaluated, they in fact do not have this condition and they don't have that actual gene mutation either," Cragun says. "So, it was a false positive."

Cragun says the results that people can get from these tests can be distressing. And without the guidance of a genetic counselor, the situation can be scarier than it needs to be.

"[Genetic counselors] do more of that preparing people for what to expect and getting them to think about, 'What would you do with this information,'" she says.

Cragun also took a 23AndMe test after her husband bought her a kit for Christmas. Through the test, she found out she has a high risk for developing Alzheimer's disease later in life.

Cragun says what is frustrating about her result is that there is nothing she can do with the information. The test only tells her that it's highly likely that she will develop the disease, not that she will for sure get it.

And because it's late-onset Alzheimer's, she says there is nothing she can change in her medical management to combat her risk. In contrast, people who learn they are susceptible to early-onset Alzheimer's can take some steps to deal with it.

"I really do have very mixed feelings about it because I found out something that I thought I was prepared to find out and I knew would be coming back," she says, "but I'm not sure I want to know."

Both Cragun and Bisson urge people who are concerned about their test results to see a qualified health professional who can order more testing and counsel you on what, if anything, you can do to mitigate your risk for certain diseases.

"Genetics is only a piece of the puzzle," Bisson says. "You need to look at your personal history, you need to look at your family history [and] you need to look at other environmental factors that you've been exposed to."

> **"Over the next months and years, hundreds of cold cases, and not-so cold cases, should be resolved thanks to genetic genealogy."**
>
> —CeCe Moore, genetic genealogist

DIGGING UP YOUR ROOTS

Two years ago, Melissa Gaudette, of Windermere, bought herself, her daughter and her mother-in-law AncestryDNA kits for Christmas.

"I knew I was European but I was just curious about where my family had come from," she says.

After taking the test and waiting about six weeks for her results, she went on the service's website to look at her ancestral DNA matches. She saw her daughter, who the system said was a person so closely related to her that it must be her child or her parent. She also recognized the name of her niece and a few cousins.

And then there was one other person in her immediate family who she didn't recognize at all.

"I sent her an email and told her my name and who my parents were and asked how we might be related," Gaudette says. "And she sent me a very nice email back and said that she had been born in Germany right after WWII—and my father was a soldier in WWII—and that she had never known who her father was."

Emails exchanged turned into a fateful phone call where the women realized they did indeed have the same father.

"It was funny because the first day when we started talking, I started talking about 'my' dad and by the end of the conversation, I was saying 'our' dad," Gaudette says.

The discovery of a half sister was a joyous affair for both women and an incredible coincidence of timing, as Gaudette's half sister had also given herself the gift of an AncestryDNA kit for Christmas. She had only received her own results just a couple days shy of when Gaudette received hers.

"Timing was everything," Gaudette says. "It was very eerie how both of us had done it at the same time."

Gaudette's father is deceased and she believes he never knew that he had another daughter. Since finding her half sister, she and the rest of the family have met up with their newfound family member on numerous occasions, including taking her to Bushnell to see where their father is buried.

Allison Ryall, a genealogy specialist at the West Oaks Branch Library and Genealogy Center in Ocoee, says this is something she sees all the time in her work.

The West Oaks Branch Library houses the Orange County Library System's genealogy collection, which contains more than 20,000 books and bound periodicals, 10,000 microfiche and over 15,000 reels of microfilm. The collection began in 1923 as a gift from library founder and avid genealogist Captain Charles Albertson. The library offers classes and workshops in genealogy as well as digital familial search tools.

Ryall says many people who come to the library to learn about their ancestral roots are looking to solve something in their family history that troubles them.

"A lot of them are solving personal family problems or they're using genealogy, I feel, as a means of reconnecting with family," she says. "Or there was a separation that occurred or a mystery they don't understand. Or there's been a break in the family or, you know, something that has haunted them and they're looking to solve that."

Ryall, who has a bachelor's degree in history and another in Russian studies as well as a master's degree in New England studies, came to the field of genealogy through her own family mystery.

"On my grandfather's deathbed, I had promised [him] that I would do everything I could to find out what happened to his baby brother," she says. "That's when I got my two bachelor's and master's and I actually went and lived in Russia for a summer studying the language and trying to solve the family mystery."

Ryall did end up learning the truth of what happened to her grandfather's baby brother. Through a convolution of events including the murder of her great-grandfather and the political unrest of Russia in the 1930s, her grandfather's baby brother had ended up in a children's home halfway between western Siberia and Moscow. Because of an injury as a child, the brother needed medical care and looked to be disabled. He ended up dying in the children's home.

Through her work helping people use DNA and traditional genealogical research records like birth and marriage certificates, Ryall has helped people locate biological parents and family members that they never knew they had.

"I feel that knowing who we are and where we come from makes us feel grounded in our life," Ryall says. "It gives us a sense of being, a sense of what we stand for or what has gone before us."

In select cases people do find out things that they would rather have not have known, which is why Ryall says people need to be educated before taking DNA tests for genealogical purposes so they can brace themselves for findings that may be upsetting.

"If there is anything hidden in their family or any secrets that are known or unknown, there's a good possibility that it's going to be discovered when they take a DNA test," she says.

But many people are happy to have found a missing part of their family.

In Gaudette's case, she couldn't be more elated to have the sister she didn't know existed now in her life.

"I didn't know I had a void to be filled but she filled one," she says.

SHINING ST

BRYCE HUBBART

WINDERMERE BASEBALL

A senior lefthanded pitcher, Hubbart helped lead Windermere to a district championship and an appearance in the region quarterfinals last spring in its inaugural season. He is looking forward to a big senior year before continuing his career at Florida State.



Meet eight standout athletes who are

Orlando Family Magazine: After the success your team had in its first season, are you excited to see what you can accomplish in year two?

Bryce Hubbart: I think we have a pretty solid team. We didn't lose anyone and I think we have arguably one of the best coaching staffs in the state. You see what our guys have done with recruiting; our first class has five or six signees in it, which is pretty awesome. We got a couple of pickups in the form of another pitcher and an infielder, so I think we're going to be pretty good. We just have to play together as a team.

OFM: Going back to last year, what was it like going to a brand-new school and having a great season with a new team?

BH: We knew it was going to be tough. That summer [in 2017], the kids on the team started getting together and getting to know each other. Most of us came from West Orange, so we sort of knew each other but we weren't teammates. Having no seniors was a challenge that we had to surpass, but we went 19-9. . . . We had to play our butts off against teams that had seniors and had top-level players. We knew if we had a good team that year, we were going to be even better the next year if we kept working.

OFM: Is there a pitcher you look up to?

BH: Lately I've started to throw more like Josh Hader, who's a closer for the Milwaukee Brewers. He's also a lefthander. I was originally on the third base side of the mound but I switched over to the first base side after eight or nine years of throwing. It made a big difference in all the pitches I threw. I modeled that after Josh Hader, because we have the same arm slot. Obviously, he throws 96, 97, but my mechanics and the way I throw are a lot like him.

OFM: If you could pitch in any MLB park, which one would you choose?

BH: I'm a Cubs fan so I've always wanted to throw at Wrigley. Throwing at Fenway would also be pretty cool. I haven't been to either one yet.

OFM: How did you become a Cubs fan?

BH: I'm from Peoria, which is about two hours south from Chicago. I've been around that area my whole life and I have family that lives up there. I love watching them play and I've been a Cubs fan since they weren't very good in the early 2000s, and then they got a World Series so it was great.

OFM: When did you move to Florida and what do you like about growing up here?

BH: I moved to Florida when I was 5 years old. I really love how I can go outside pretty much year-round. If I need to go for a run or I need to throw, I can do it. I also love all the stuff you can do here. Florida is a busy place and I kind of think of it as the Las Vegas of the East. There's so much to do, especially in Orlando.

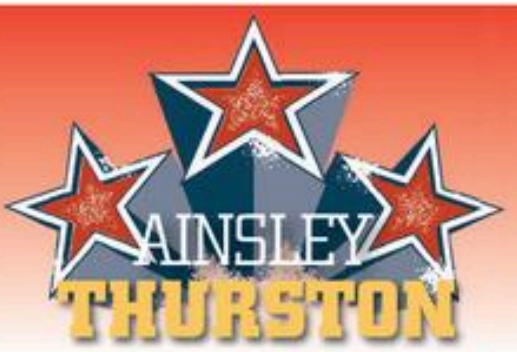
OFM: Is it your dream to eventually play pro ball?

BH: I'm not sure it's an option right now, because I'm not one of those guys who throws 95 or 96 every inning. But with a [velocity] jump, maybe I'll get there, I don't know. I just want to play for something bigger than me and if it gets me a chance to get drafted, then it happens. I know I'll always have the college option and I'm 99 percent sure that's where I'm going. The draft may come up, it may not, but that's not what I'm focused on right now. I'm just focused on playing my season and doing what I can for my team.

By MATT COSENTINO

ARS

taking Greater Orlando by storm this spring.



LAKE HIGHLAND GIRLS LACROSSE

A senior midfielder, Thurston scored more than 60 goals last year as Lake Highland posted an 18-7 record and reached the state championship game for the first time. She is poised for a huge final season before moving on to Duke.

Orlando Family Magazine: Has the experience from last year raised your expectations for this season?

Ainsley Thurston: I'm very excited about this season, especially because we've had new players come into our program and because [renowned lacrosse coach Chris Robinson] is now the coach for my last season. We've already bonded together and our chemistry is way better than it's ever been in the past. I think this season is going to be a lot of fun.

OFM: You mentioned your new coach, who came to Florida after a legendary career in Maryland. Did you know much about him?

AT: That was a really big deal. I had obviously heard about him, because he's a such a well-renowned coach. But also, he coached Maddie and Olivia Jenner from Duke when they went to [high school]. So when I first heard that he was going to become our coach I quickly texted them and asked what they thought. They had nothing but good things to say so I was looking forward to meeting him and having him as a coach.

OFM: Is it special to play on the team with your sister Ashley, a sophomore?

AT: It's amazing. I will have played with her for two years of high school. Our club teams are by grad year so I never got to play with her, although we play in the backyard a lot. Being on the same team with her, I know she'll be there to push me and I'll be there to push her. On the field we automatically have the sister connection, so that's always helpful.

OFM: Was Duke the dream school you always wanted to go to?

AT: When I was younger I always saw Duke as such a pretty campus and everything, but when I started the recruiting process, the main thing that drew me to Duke was the chemistry on that team and coach [Kerstin] Kimel. Her leadership, coaching ability and coaching style is what I wanted in a coach. Besides that, the amazing academic aspect of Duke was important too. When I went on my visit, I stepped on campus and fell in love. Instantaneously I knew that was the place for me.

OFM: Are you excited to be part of the Duke-North Carolina rivalry?

AT: I am very excited for that. On my visit we got to go to the Duke-UNC men's basketball game last year, when it was Duke's senior night. The fans are amazing and I didn't expect Cameron [Indoor Stadium] to be so small, because you see it on TV as a huge arena. But I love the fact that they didn't add on seats and make it this big stadium. It has a family feel. I would be scared to play on the court myself, but being in the stands was really fun.

OFM: Do you know what you want to study?

AT: I do not, but I'm considering pre-med. I think I can handle it [while playing lacrosse]. I've always loved biology class and now I'm taking a forensics class. I'm learning about becoming a doctor and learning how to help people. If I was to choose a specific kind of doctor, I would probably want to be in the emergency room where I can be there to help as many people as possible. Watching all the TV shows, I've always wanted to do that.

OFM: What's your favorite beach spot?

AT: Sarasota. I think that's my favorite because my parents would take me a lot when I was really little and I would walk along the beach and try to find sea shells. Every time I go it's a tradition that we try to find different sea shells. The sand is really nice there and the water is crystal clear.



FULL ATHLETE INTERVIEWS available online at OrlandoFamilyMagazine.com

Photography By MARK LOSH

SHINING STARS

JUAN BIANCHI

OLYMPIA BOYS TENNIS

Bianchi's memorable career at Olympia has included three region championships, two trips to the state semifinals and an individual record of 50-2. A two-time Central Florida Player of the Year and three-time Orange County Player of the Year, he is committed to Southern Methodist University.



Orlando Family Magazine: Are you proud of what you've accomplished so far in high school?

Juan Bianchi: I'm super proud of not only myself but what the team's accomplished, especially last year. We lost all of our varsity team except for myself, and with a lot of underclassmen we were able to make it all the way to the semifinals of states, so that was a huge accomplishment. We basically have the same team this year and we're hoping to get back to states and make the finals at least.

OFM: I know your dad Juan Carlos was a standout player himself. Is he the one who drove you into the sport?

JB: When I was younger, I played baseball and tennis competitively, but my freshman year I made the decision to choose tennis and stop playing baseball. Obviously my dad had a big influence in that decision, especially since he's my coach and I train with him every day. Always having someone in your corner who will support you no matter what, it's huge, especially for tennis because it's an individual sport. He's had a great influence and I'm very thankful to have him.

OFM: Do you have a favorite professional to watch?

JB: For me it's [Roger] Federer. I actually have a pretty similar game. I mean, I wish I was at that level but I have a one-handed backhand; I like to move to the net. So I watch him a lot in order to learn. I watch a lot of players, but I watch him specifically for his strategy and point patterns. Since my game relates to his, I'm able to adapt what he does and fit it to my game to try to get better.

OFM: If you could go to any Grand Slam event as a spectator, which one would you choose?

JB: I've been to the U.S. Open, but I would love to go to Wimbledon one day. That is definitely on my bucket list. I played a tournament called the International Grass Court Championships and it was kind of like Wimbledon for juniors. You had to wear all white, even the spectators. The atmosphere was really cool and I would like to experience that in a professional tournament and see what it's like.

OFM: What led to your decision to commit to SMU?

JB: I was looking at a lot of schools, including Rice and Virginia Tech, but I ended up choosing SMU because the program, the coaching staff and the team were really close-knit. The coaches really care about their players and they focus on what each individual needs to improve, as well as the team. I felt like some schools were lacking in that department. I want to major in economics and the business program at SMU is really good, so that was also an advantage. I also like that SMU is located in the heart of Dallas. For example, with Virginia Tech I didn't really like that there wasn't much to do outside of the college. That was a big plus that SMU brought to the table.

OFM: What's your favorite thing about Olympia?

JB: I've made a lot of relationships that are going to mean a lot even when I move to Texas. I've made a lot of great memories and I've had a lot of great teachers over the years who have made an impact on my life. I'm really thankful for them. The staff is very helpful, especially for tennis players because a lot of tournaments go into Mondays and Tuesdays so you're missing a lot of school. To be able to have those people on campus who support you and understand your situation, that's really been helpful.



LINDSEY HENDRIX

TIMBER CREEK SOFTBALL

Hendrix emerged as Timber Creek's ace pitcher as a sophomore, as she finished with a 0.87 earned run average and 180 strikeouts in 129 innings in leading the Wolves to the state tournament for the second time in school history. The junior is committed to Syracuse.

Orlando Family Magazine: After making the state tournament last year, has that made you even more excited to get back out there this spring and see what you can accomplish?

Lindsey Hendrix: Yes. Our goal as a team is to always go one step further than we have, so I'm really excited to see what we have this year and see if we can make it just as far or do even better.

OFM: Do you think the experience from last year will pay off?

LH: Yes. Now that we've been to states and realize how it is, I think going back a second time we would understand what we need to do and have a better chance to win it all.

OFM: I know you played a lot as a freshman too, but did you like the challenge of becoming the clear-cut No. 1 pitcher as a sophomore?

LH: My freshman year it was me and Britton Rogers, but she moved to Texas so it left just me. It was definitely a challenge and it raised my expectations for myself as a pitcher. I'm pretty proud of how I handled it and I think everything happens for a reason.

OFM: What's your best pitch?

LH: Definitely my changeup. I also throw a fastball, a pretty good curveball, a screwball and a rise. I'm still working on my drop.

OFM: What do you like about being a pitcher?

LH: I just feel like I can do a lot for my team in the circle. Not that everyone is depending on me, but everyone is looking at me to help out as much as I can. I love that and I love being able to hype everyone up.

OFM: What led to your decision to commit to Syracuse?

LH: The recruiting process was going pretty good and then Syracuse found me. They invited me up for a visit so I went and fell in love with the school and the coaches. I decided that I didn't think I was going to find anything better, so I chose Syracuse. I still think it's a great fit.

OFM: Are you prepared for the cold weather up in New York?

LH: Yes I am. I'm originally from Ohio; I moved to Florida in 2016. The cold weather is my favorite and I'd rather get out of the heat. I'm very excited for that.

OFM: What part of Ohio are you from?

LH: Akron, in Northeast Ohio. I probably lived about 15 minutes from where LeBron James is from.

OFM: What are your hobbies away from softball?

LH: Well I love my friends, of course. I have a little group that I'm always with. I also focus a lot of my attention on school because I think good grades are important. I love doing stuff with my family too. I have a twin brother and we're really close.

OFM: What was it like growing up with a twin?

LH: We went through a phase where we fought a lot for a year or two. I have an older brother too, and when he left for the military that's when we realized that we're not always going to be living together. Ever since then we've been really close.

ALEX SHIELDS

THE FIRST ACADEMY BOYS TRACK AND FIELD

Just a junior, Shields already has five individual state championships on his résumé, including titles last year in the 110 hurdles, 300 hurdles and long jump. He is known as one of the fastest hurdles in the country for his age group and is also a star basketball player.



Orlando Family Magazine: You've already had two great high school seasons on the track. Does that raise the bar and change your expectations going into your junior season?

Alex Shields: I expect myself to outperform my past performances. Not only because I want to and I'm looking to give myself more opportunities to go to college for free and study what I want to study, but also because I want to help my team. My school doesn't have very many track state championships and being part of my school's history is something I want to do. . . . It means a lot to me to do as much as I can now and help my team win the state championship for these years that I'm attending The First Academy.

OFM: Do you have a favorite event?

AS: The 110 [hurdles] is definitely my favorite. The 300 is a tough race but it's not the most lovable. The 110 grabs your attention. My dad taught me that whoever gets to the first hurdle first usually wins the race. That's always been my goal and my objective and I take it as a fun game. It motivates me to go even faster, thinking that nobody is going to beat me to the first hurdle. Whereas in the 300 hurdles if you slack off a little bit in the beginning, you have enough time to make up for it. The 110 is a lot about skill and precise movements and that's what excites me about it.

OFM: What did it mean to you to have one of the best times in the country in the 110 hurdles for your age group?

AS: I had the second-best; somebody went under 14 [seconds]. I really don't think about it a lot. It's cool to have those accolades but you can have the title of fastest guy in the country and still get beat at a track meet. My goal is to not lose at all during the season. When it comes down to the big meets, I want to be prepared; not focused on being No. 1 overall but winning that race each and every time.

OFM: Are you just focusing on basketball and track now and giving up football?

AS: I stopped playing football my junior year but I'm still undecided on playing my senior year. If I do, I'll play as hard as I can each and every game to benefit my team. If I don't, I'll be at every home game supporting them and if I have time, I'll be at away games supporting them too.

OFM: How does scoring a touchdown or hitting a big 3-pointer compare with winning a race? What's the best feeling out of the three?

AS: Wow, that's tough. I think winning a race takes the crown on this one. That means a lot to me because it shows that my hard work put me on top of everybody else. At the end of the day track is ultimately a team sport, so I'm also helping my team to win the whole meet or the team title.

OFM: Do you have Olympic dreams?

AS: I do. Being able to represent the USA, or even Guyana, my mother's home country, in the Olympics in 2020, 2024 or 2028 is one of my biggest goals. Not many people can get there and to call myself an Olympic track athlete is something I strive for.

OFM: What do you like about going to school at The First Academy?

AS: Coming from a public school background, the academic side at The First Academy really means a lot to me. My old school used to be overcrowded, so I like having the small class sizes. Sometimes teachers are able to go one on one with you so I'm able to focus a little more. It's also a Christ-centered school so I'm able to keep my faith strong.



MAX MEISENHEIMER

DR. PHILLIPS BOYS WATER POLO

A high school All-American last year as a junior, Meisenheimer owns the school record for most goals in a game and is on track to break the career scoring mark as a senior. Also a standout in the classroom, he will play Division I water polo at the University of California at Irvine.

Orlando Family Magazine: You recently signed your letter of intent to UC-Irvine. What was the experience like?
Max Meisenheimer: It was very exciting; a fun day. It was probably in middle school when playing in college became a goal. I realized I had the potential to do it and I just had to put in the work.

OFM: What did you like about the school and the program?
MM: I took a trip out there during spring break last year to visit a couple of different schools. That one just really clicked with me. I liked all the history behind the water polo program and I really liked coach [Marc] Hunt. I also liked the setup and the style of the school, and the food in the cafeteria was pretty good too [laughs]. They have good workout facilities as well.

OFM: Are you nervous about going away to school on the other side of the country?
MM: Yeah, I'm definitely nervous but mainly excited. I'll miss my friends and family. I've grown up my whole life here so it's going to be a lot different.

OFM: What drew you to water polo in the first place?
MM: I started in fifth grade. Both of my brothers had already started before me; I saw them playing and I wanted to try it out. I liked it right away and fell in love with it. I grew up playing a lot of different sports and I liked them, but I didn't really want to work hard at them. I just did them for fun. This is the first one I had a passion for.

OFM: You're closing in on the program record for career goals. What would that mean to you?
MM: Not really that much. I'm not much of a record person. It's important, but I'd much rather have a winning season. Winning states is the main goal; I'm not worried about [the record].

OFM: Is there a story behind how you got your first name, Maximus?
MM: I was actually named after the character in the movie *Gladiator*. I was born the same year that movie came out and my parents just really liked the name. Most people know me as Max but I'm thinking about going by Maximus once I get to college.



ISABEL SEDWICK

WINTER PARK GIRLS LACROSSE

A three-year starter in the midfield, Sedwick played a key role in Winter Park's run to the Metro Conference championship and second-place finish at districts last year. The junior has already committed to Loyola University.

Orlando Family Magazine: Are you excited to build on the team's success from last year?
Isabel Sedwick: Yes. We lost a lot of seniors, which is kind of sad, but we have a lot of good people coming in and we should be pretty good. I think we can make it to districts and possibly further.

OFM: Now that you're an upperclassman, do you feel like you have to take on more of a leadership role?
IS: Definitely. A lot of our team is younger; we only have a couple of seniors. So a lot of the juniors, including me, have to take the lead this year. Everything is going well so far and we're having a lot of fun with it.

OFM: How did you get started in lacrosse?
IS: One of my friends in third grade was playing lacrosse. I was doing gymnastics and soccer, but my friend said I should try lacrosse. I played it and loved it. She ended up quitting, but ever since then I've been playing.

OFM: What do you love about the game?
IS: I love how fast it is and I love how it combines the running aspect and footwork of sports like soccer with hand-eye coordination and using a stick. It's a super unique game.

OFM: What do you like to do when you're not playing lacrosse?
IS: Of course I like hanging out with my friends. I also really like photography. I've been traveling with my family a lot the past couple of years and I have a camera, so I started taking photos and I like editing them and messing around. It's pretty fun.

OFM: What are some of the places you've traveled to?
IS: Last year we went to Peru and that was cool. We went to Machu Picchu and everything. The year before that we went to Australia and New Zealand and there were a lot of cool landscapes there.



SHEREYA NEWSOME

EVANS GIRLS TRACK AND FIELD

A senior, Newsome captured the class 4A state championship in the shot put last year with a throw of 46 feet, 6 inches. Also a standout in the discus, she is looking to finish strong in both events in her final season.

Orlando Family Magazine: Are you excited for the spring season after what you accomplished last year?
Shereya Newsome: After last year's win I was actually very humble, but yes I'm very excited for the season. I want to throw 50 [feet] this year and create another PR [personal record].

OFM: Let's go back to the day you won the state championship last year. Were you surprised at all?
SN: Going into the competition I was second, but I wasn't worried about winning—I just wanted to PR. The throw that I actually won with, it was surprising to me. I threw [that distance] in practice but never in competition. I was surprised that I was able to PR in competition.

OFM: How did you celebrate?
SN: Some people are kind of finicky about the fact that I wasn't ecstatic. I was excited but I just wasn't jumping up and down and bragging about it.

OFM: Do you do all three throwing events?
SN: I do the shot and the discus, but shot is my favorite. That's the one I started out with in middle school and that's the one I fell in love with.

OFM: Do you and the other throwers push each other?
SN: Most definitely. My teammate [Michaelle Valentin] came in second [at states], but to this day I will help her train and if she does better than me, I can't say too much.

OFM: Do you know what you want to study in college?
SN: I actually want to go into the medical field and I know I need an undergraduate degree, so I'm going to do forensic science. Eventually I want to go to medical school to become a pediatrician.

OFM: What are your hobbies away from sports?
SN: I like to be with my family and crochet. I've been crocheting since maybe fifth grade. So far I've made some covers for my nephews and some shoes.



STAR WATCH

More topflight athletes to keep your eye on this season.

BASEBALL

Edgar Alvarez, Boone: A senior third baseman, Alvarez batted .347 with three home runs and 25 RBIs as a junior and is drawing Division I interest.

Riley Greene, Hagerty: Considered one of the best high school hitters in the country, Greene is committed to Florida but will likely be a top pick in the MLB Draft.

Jake Holland, Montverde Academy: Holland, a senior catcher who shines at the plate and behind it, will continue his career at Georgia Tech.

Chris McDonald, Oviedo: The ace of Oviedo's pitching staff, this senior righthander is headed to Embry-Riddle University.

Andrew Roberts, Trinity Prep: A righthanded pitcher/third baseman, Roberts was Trinity Prep's team MVP last year. He is committed to Florida.

Mason Russell, Windermere Prep: A standout senior outfielder who also stars as a linebacker in football, Russell will play both sports at Duke.

William Sullivan, Dr. Phillips: Sullivan, a power-hitting first baseman who helped lead Dr. Phillips to the state semifinals, will continue his career at Troy.

SOFTBALL

Shaela Bybee, Montverde Academy: A junior, Bybee batted .388 with 16 extra-base hits last year as Montverde made the 4A state semifinals.

Shannon Glover, Hagerty: Glover, a shortstop/second baseman who is committed to North Florida, drove in 37 runs last year for the 8A state champions.

Logan Keith, Lake Nona: A slick-fielding senior shortstop, Keith led Lake Nona in batting average, home runs, RBIs and runs scored as a junior.

Haley Kingsland, Oviedo: Kingsland, a senior first baseman, hit .337 with a .547 slugging percentage last year and will play softball at Southeastern University.

Nikki Kingsland, Oviedo: Haley's sister is a tremendous fielder who is a senior leader for Oviedo. She will continue her career at Haverford College.

Carissa Orland, Olympia: Orland, a key player at the plate and in center field for Olympia, is committed to Florida Atlantic University.

Raychel Trocki, Dr. Phillips: A senior pitcher, Trocki went 22-4 with a 1.81 earned run average and 194 strikeouts as a junior. The Florida Tech commit also batted .373 with four home runs.

BOYS LACROSSE

Hudson Bohn, Lake Highland: Just a junior, Bohn has already committed to Penn State thanks to his incredible skills at the faceoff X.

Parker Junod, Winter Park: A senior midfielder who is committed to Mercer University, Junod has made the all-Metro Conference first team the last three seasons and enters his final campaign with 94 goals and 138 assists for his career.

Matt Nastasi, West Orange: Last year Nastasi, a senior attacker, became the third player in program history to record at least 40 goals and 40 assists in the same season. He will continue his career at Florida Southern.

GIRLS LACROSSE

Justine Decker, Dr. Phillips: A senior midfielder who was named an All-American by US Lacrosse last year, Decker is headed to Columbia University.

Zariah Durham, Dr. Phillips: Durham, a senior attacker committed to Embry-Riddle, helped lead Dr. Phillips to a district title and 16-5 record in 2018.

Katie Williams, Hagerty: Williams, a senior midfielder, led Hagerty to a 20-4 record last year and will continue her career at the University of Alabama-Huntsville.

BOYS TRACK

Suresh Black, The First Academy: A senior, Black was the 1A state champion in the 200 meters last year and took second in the 400 to help The First Academy take home the team title.

Russell Robinson, West Orange: Robinson, a senior, captured the 4A state championship in the long jump as a junior.

GIRLS TRACK

Hannah Douglas, Olympia: Just a sophomore, Douglas had quite a freshman season at Olympia last year as she placed third in the state in 4A in the 100 meters and seventh in the 200.

Elizabeth Nix, Winter Park: A district and region champion in the pole vault last year, this senior was also second in 4A at states.

Michaelle Valentin, Evans: The 4A state runner-up in the shot put behind teammate Sherya Newsome, this junior should be in the running once again this season.

BOYS VOLLEYBALL

Jonathan Diedrich, Dr. Phillips: A starter the last two years at outside hitter and team captain, Diedrich has led Dr. Phillips to back-to-back district titles. He will continue his career at the Division I level at Purdue-Fort Wayne.

Kevin Sanchez, Apopka: A 6-foot-3 senior outside hitter, Sanchez led Apopka with 236 kills last year to go with 79 digs.

BOYS WATER POLO

Matthew Salcedo, Oviedo: A junior goalie, Salcedo holds school records for blocks in a season with 202 and highest average of blocks per game.

GIRLS WATER POLO

Catie Holton, Oviedo: Holton, a junior goalie, is already the program record-holder for blocks in a season and is poised to challenge the mark this spring.

GIRLS TENNIS

Alana Wolfberg, Timber Creek: Wolfberg will look to cap her memorable career at Timber Creek with another perfect season. She is undefeated for her career and has claimed three straight state singles titles. ■



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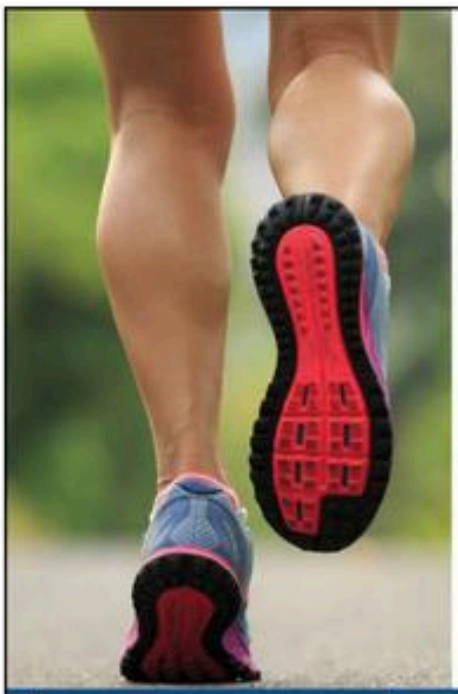
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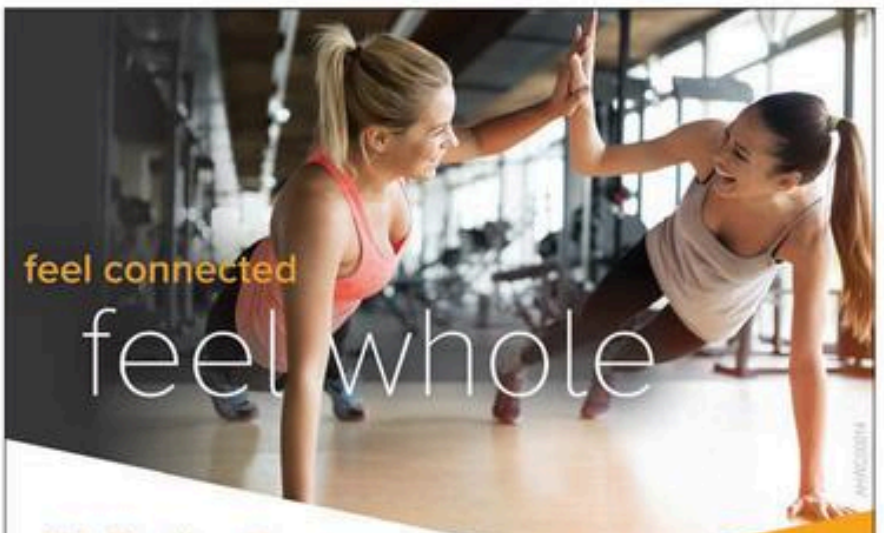
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STAR ATHLETES

Eun-Hee Ji & John Smoltz

LPGA player Eun-Hee Ji and baseball Hall of Famer John Smoltz are the proud winners of the inaugural Diamond Resorts Tournament of Champions, which took place recently at Tranquilo Golf Club at Four Seasons Resort Orlando. The tournament pairs the world's top professional women golfers with well-renowned sports and entertainment celebrities.

STAR MATHLETES

Lakemont Elementary School Students

Lakemont Elementary School's Mathletes club won first and second place at the Orange County Public School's East Area Competition.





STAR STUDENT

Varun Aggarwal

Lake Highland Preparatory School senior Varun Aggarwal won first place at the University of Florida Junior Science Engineering and Health Symposium for his presentation and defense of a STEM innovation project. Aggarwal developed a simulation to test a new method of rendering objects in virtual reality.



STAR TEACHER

Jeffery Redding

West Orange High School's choral director, Jeffery Redding, is the 2019 winner of the Grammy Music Educator Award, which recognizes one teacher each year who has made a significant and lasting contribution to the field of music education. Redding was chosen out of a pool of 2,800 nominees.



STAR STUDENT

Grace Allen

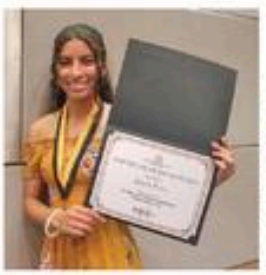
Lake Highland Preparatory School student Grace Allen was selected to enroll in the 2019 class of Disney Dreamers Academy. Allen is an AP Scholar, a volleyball team captain and a thespian. She will be attending Harvard University.

STAR STUDENTS

Holy Family Catholic's Genesian Players

Students of Holy Family Catholic School's Genesian Players put on *Monty Python's Spamalot* musical to resounding success.





STAR STUDENT

Jonely Perez

Ocoee High School student Jonely Perez was a recipient of Mayor Buddy Dyer's MLK Jr. Humanitarian award. The award is given to students for exemplifying the ideals embraced by Martin Luther King Jr., including justice, inclusion, peace and respect.

STAR ATHLETES

Boone High School Basketball Team

Boone High School's boys junior varsity basketball team went undefeated for the entire season. This is the first time since 1980 that one of the high school's teams has accomplished such a feat.





STAR PRINCIPAL

Laura Beusse

Ocoee High School Principal Laura Beusse was named the 2019 Orange County Counselor Association Student Services Administrator of the Year.

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STAR CHILD Academy

StarChildAcademy.com

PRESCHOOL	Year Established	Grade / Age Range	Preschool Hours	VPK	Tuition Range (Preschool)	Application Fee	Accreditations / Awards
Children's Lighthouse 220 Windermere Rd., Winter Garden | (407) 395-0077 | ChildrensLighthousepof.com We are devoted to the purpose of preparing young children for elementary school success and to be contributing citizens in your community. Our academic and character values curriculums were developed specifically with that purpose in mind.	2005	6 wks. - 12 yrs.	6:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.	Yes	$160 - $200/wk.	$75	AdvancedED, 2009 & 2016 Franchise of the Year, 2017 Director of the Year
Community Presbyterian Preschool 511 Celebration Ave., Celebration | (407) 566-1633 | CommPres.com	2004	3 - 5 yrs.	8 a.m. - 5 p.m.	Yes	Varies	$125	–
Cranium Academy 4068 Winter Garden Vineland Rd., Winter Garden | (407) 294-6950 | CraniumAcademy.com At Cranium Academy, we skillfully balance gifted level academics with imaginative, social and play experiences for prestigious preschool through 5th grade programs.	2004	2 yrs. - 5th grd.	8:30 a.-12:30 p. Ext. 3:30 p. Full: 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.	Yes	Varies	–	–
The Crenshaw School 2342 Hemple Ave., Gotha | (407) 757-2241 | CrenshawSchool.com Young children develop attitudes about learning based on their earliest experiences in school. With this in mind, Crenshaw offers a nurturing, safe environment and a distinct, sequenced program specifically designed to meet their needs.	1999	PK4 - 12th grd.	8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.	No	$7,000/yr.	–	AdvancedED, AI,AISF CASI, NCPSA, MSA, SACS
The First Academy Preschool 2667 Bruton Boulevard, Orlando | (407) 206-8704 | TheFirstAcademy.org	2015	8 wks. - 3 yrs.	7 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	No	Varies	$125	ACSI Licensed
The First Academy 2667 Bruton Boulevard, Orlando | (407) 206-8600 | TheFirstAcademy.org In KPrep, the curriculum is differentiated and faith-based. Instruction is child-focused and there is a balance of academic, motor, social, and spiritual development in the classroom.	1987	K4 – 12th grd.	8 a.m. – 3:15p.m.	No	$8,650 - $9,370/yr	–	ACSI, AdvancedEd, CESA, FCIS, FKC, National Blue Ribbon
Foundation Academy 125 E. Plant St., Winter Garden | (407) 656-3677 | FoundationAcademy.net Foundation Academy Preschool provides a loving, nurturing and exciting environment for young learners. Our certified and experienced teachers guide students through our unique curriculum that enhances the development of the "whole" child. Students enjoy enrichment classes in art, music, Spanish, literacy, and computer and participate in chapel. They learn through listening, sharing and teamwork while acquiring the necessary skills for kindergarten and beyond.	1958	PK3 - 12th grd.	8 a.m. - 2:45 p.m.	No	$5,280 - $8,035/yr.	$60 - $150	AdvanceEd, SACS
Holy Family Catholic School 5129 S. Apopka-Vineland Rd., Orlando | (407) 876-9344 | HFCSchool.com HFCS is an educational ministry serving students PK3 through 8th grade. Our STREAM curriculum develops a diverse student. Religion is at the heart of our program. Students explore a fully integrated, hands-on science lab. Going beyond science, math and engineering, our arts program reetouches the inner creativity in all students.	1996	PK3 - 8th grd.	7:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Extended Day Avai.	No	$2,050 - $9,000	$50	FCC, National Blue Ribbon

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PRESCHOOL	Year Established	Grade / Age Range	Preschool Hours	VPK	Tuition Range (Preschool)	Application Fee	Accreditations / Awards
The Learning Center of Dr. Phillips 8004 Banyan Blvd., Orlando | (407) 352-1353 | TLCDrPhillips.com	1983	6 wks. - 5 yrs.	7 a.m. - 6 p.m.	Yes	$190 - $210/wk.	$110	–
The Learning Center of South Park 7350 Futures Dr., Suite 6, Orlando | (407) 363-9325 | TLCSouthPark.com We teach children how to think and learn with a purpose, promoting a safe, healthy learning environment while having fun. We offer various discounted rates, including the military.	2009	6 wks. - 5 yrs.	6:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.	Yes	$190 - $210/wk.	$110	–
Montessori School of Celebration 901 Begonia Rd., Celebration | (407) 566-1561 | MontessoriCelebration.com	1999	2.5 - 15 yrs.	8:15 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.	No	$7,630 - $12,035/yr.	$75	AMS
Montessori World School 11659 Ruby Lake Rd., Orlando | (407) 239-6024 | MontessoriWorldSchool.com	1980	20 mos. - 8th grd.	7:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.	No	$6,500 – $9,900/yr.	$100	AMS
Orlando Catholic Schools 12 Locations in Orange & Seminole | OrlandoCatholicSchools.org Catholic schools are not only academically excellent - they help foster spiritual and character development giving a firm foundation for success in life. There are 13 Catholic early childhood centers, elementary schools and high schools in Orange and Seminole counties -- so you are sure to find a school that is a good fit for your family!	Varies per School	PK - 12th grd.	Varies	Yes	Varies	Varies	FCC
Rosen JCC's Early Childhood Learning Center 11184 S Apopka Vineland Rd, Orlando | (407) 387-5330 | RosenJCC.org	1994	Infant - VPK	7 a.m. - 6 p.m.	Yes	$399 - $1,169	$250	APPLE (FACCM)
StarChild Academy – Hunter's Creek 12050 Crystal Commerce Wy., Orlando | (407) 352-0014 | StarChildAcademy.com	2010	6 wks. – 12 yrs.	6 a.m. – 7 p.m.	No	$190 – $216/wk.	$100	Best of Orlando Award
StarChild Academy – Winter Garden 1324 Winter Garden Vineland Rd., Winter Garden | (407) 877-0345 | StarChildAcademy.com	2007	6 wks. – 12 yrs.	6 a.m. – 7 p.m.	No	$222 – $232/wk.	$100	Best of Orlando Award
StarChild Academy – Windermere 11815 Silverlake Park Dr., Windermere | (407) 876-7827 | StarChildAcademy.com StarChild Academy's seven award-winning centers in the Orlando area offer structured preschool programs featuring Orlando area's most advanced academic curriculum, nutritious meals & snacks, parent access to internet camera systems, a variety of extra-curricular activities, Parent's Night Out programs, and much more - all at an incredible value. Stop by soon for a tour!	2015	6 wks. – 12 yrs.	6 a.m. – 7 p.m.	No	$230 – $240/wk.	$100	Best of Orlando Award
Westgate Children's Learning & Development Center 7450 Sandlake Common Blvd., Orlando | (407) 248-0129 | WestgateChildcare.com Nationally Accredited Program offering a hands-on learning environment with credentialed teachers who are sensitive to the needs of the children. We offer VPK, infant care (6+ weeks), school-age camps, active-military subsidy and year-round enrollment.	2001	Infant - PreK	6:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.	Yes	$167 - $222/wk.	$100	Gold Seal, NAC, QRIS Five Star





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Miracle Workers

Where to turn when starting a family becomes difficult

By Liz Hunter

AS PEOPLE GROW UP, they are told to go for their dreams. From attending college and finding a career to buying a home and settling down with a significant other, people have worked hard to attain these goals. Yet, for too many, the biggest dream of all eludes them—the dream of starting a family.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 5 million people of childbearing age in the U.S. have problems with infertility. The reasons for infertility vary, but statistics also show that rates are dropping, due in part to people seeking medical intervention—and finding success. That includes the Central Florida area, where providers are on the cutting edge of treatment and technology that help to improve success rates and bring healthy babies into the world. *Orlando Family Magazine* looked into the different ways these organizations are doing their part.

Frozen assets

Headquartered in Orlando, Cryos International offers the world's largest variety of sperm and egg donors. Founded 30 years ago in Europe, Cryos specializes in the cryopreservation (freezing) of sperm and has since expanded into oocyte (egg) vitrification as well.

While the bank does offer fertility preservation (when a man or woman wants to preserve their own sperm or eggs for future use), the majority of Cryos' bank is comprised of donor sperm and eggs—both anonymous and non-anonymous—from a variety of ethnicities and phenotypes. Donors undergo rigorous testing that includes medical exams and a screening for infectious and hereditary diseases.

Corey Burke, tissue bank director, says the customer service aspect of choosing a donor at Cryos is like no other. "Most people start on the website, searching fields like height, eye color, hair color, ethnicity," says Burke. "We provide this search capability for free." Cryos collects as much information about donors as possible, including baby pictures, handwritten letters and emotional intelligence tests. For instance, a donor profile may mention he was a trumpet player and someone may see this as a shared hobby and choose that.

Once a donor is selected from the comfort of their own home, customer service walks them through the process over the phone or via online chat. From there, the sperm or egg can be shipped to their home or fertility clinic.

With so many people's futures in its care, Cryos has stayed at the forefront of freezing technology to keep the donor samples viable. For years, sperm has been frozen the same way—by lowering the sample into liquid nitrogen. Typically, about 50 percent of the specimen will be lost in the process, says Burke. That might mean a specimen of 10 million is now 5 million—still a lot to work with, but Cryos is now using controlled rate freezers.

"This is the biggest advance in sperm freezing," he says. "Controlled rate freezers control the temperature so it does not spike after freezing (common in the traditional method), producing a better product and reducing the loss to 40 percent. This is a drastic improvement."

Eggs on the other hand are more complicated, but advancements are being made. "Eggs are more delicate, there aren't millions of them," Burke says. For eggs, Cryos uses a rapid, flash-freezing technique—vitrification—that avoids ice crystals, a byproduct of traditional slow freezing, which can stick into the cell and kill it. While Burke says there is still work to be done, fresh and frozen eggs are equally viable these days.

For those who rely on Cryos for fertility preservation, the security of those—as well as donor—specimens is paramount. Last year, it was widely reported when a Cleveland-based fertility clinic lost thousands of eggs and embryos after a freezer malfunctioned. "Storage is our main business," says Burke. "Specimens are kept in a large liquid nitrogen tank, not in vapor. If a hole were poked in the tank, it would take a week for the temperature to drop. We have people monitoring the tank daily, with two alarms for liquid and temperature connected to devices that alert an alarm company and a second alarm that calls or texts our staff."

Traditional and alternative fertility treatments

Whether using donated sperm and eggs, or their own, those seeking fertility treatments can find a myriad of options at Brown Fertility, including ovulation induction, intrauterine insemination (IUI), in vitro fertilization and other advanced services.

Over the last 20 years, the providers at Brown Fertility have helped thousands of couples grow their families by providing them with the cutting-edge fertility treatments they need along with the compassionate care they deserve. After building the state's most modern in-vitro-fertilization (IVF) lab and partnering with one of the country's most

experienced embryologists, Brown Fertility boasts some of the highest pregnancy rates in the nation—up to 17 percent higher than the national average, according to Dr. Samuel E. Brown, who is dual board-certified in obstetrics and gynecology, reproductive endocrinology and infertility.

Fertility naturally declines in women beginning in their 30s, and more rapidly after 35. Fertility preservation is a viable option.

Those who wish to get pregnant may not know when to see a fertility doctor, but Brown says, "As a general rule of thumb, you should call your fertility doctor if you and your significant other are under the age of 35 and have been practicing unprotected sex for over a year or if you are over the age of 35 and have been actively trying for six months and have been unsuccessful."

In fact, becoming a mother after the age of 35 is not unusual these days. Relying on data from the CDC, Brown says, "There were more than nine times as many first births to mothers 35 and older than there were in the 1970s." "Many women are delaying motherhood for several reasons including personal, education, career or not having yet found a suitable partner. While women are empowered to put off having a child until a later age, the natural age-related decline in female fertility still persists."

Fertility naturally declines in women beginning in their 30s, and more rapidly after 35. Brown cites fertility preservation as a viable option for women who have decided ahead of time that they will wait until a later age to start their families.

"Cryopreservation of eggs (oocytes), embryos and sperm allows patients to protect their future fertility. The two main reasons patients choose fertility preservation are for medical necessity and social or lifestyle choices," says Brown. "Patients who are set to undergo certain cancer treatments are also faced with making a decision about fertility. Cancer treatments such as chemotherapy, radiation and some surgeries can endanger reproductive health and cause irreversible damage in both female and male patients. The American Cancer Society suggests health care providers counsel their patients on the risk of infertility and the assisted reproductive strategies that are available to patients as soon as possible after initial cancer diagnosis."

Genetic testing is another area which Brown sees rapidly evolving. Genetic testing can improve the chances of selecting a healthy embryo. "Once embryos reach the blastocyst stage on day five through seven of embryo development, an embryologist will take a few cells from the embryo for genetic testing," says Brown. "The number of chromosomes will then be analyzed in each embryo. Since the test results usually take about two weeks to come back, all embryos will be cryopreserved until the results of the analysis are available. This is an effort to advance pregnancy rates, a source of improvement."

There are also alternative methods to increase success rates, some of which have been practiced for thousands of years. Acupuncture, frequently combined with Chinese herbal medicine, has been used for centuries throughout history for various kinds of female and male fertility problems, including infertility, miscarriage and complications during pregnancy.

Dr. Cheng chao Yin has been practicing acupuncture for 23 years and runs Yin Acupuncture & Integrative Healing Center in Orlando. She says the practice sees nearly a hundred fertility patients every week, some of whom come in trying to conceive naturally and others who come in to increase the success of IUI or IVF treatments.

"Acupuncture treatments can improve the



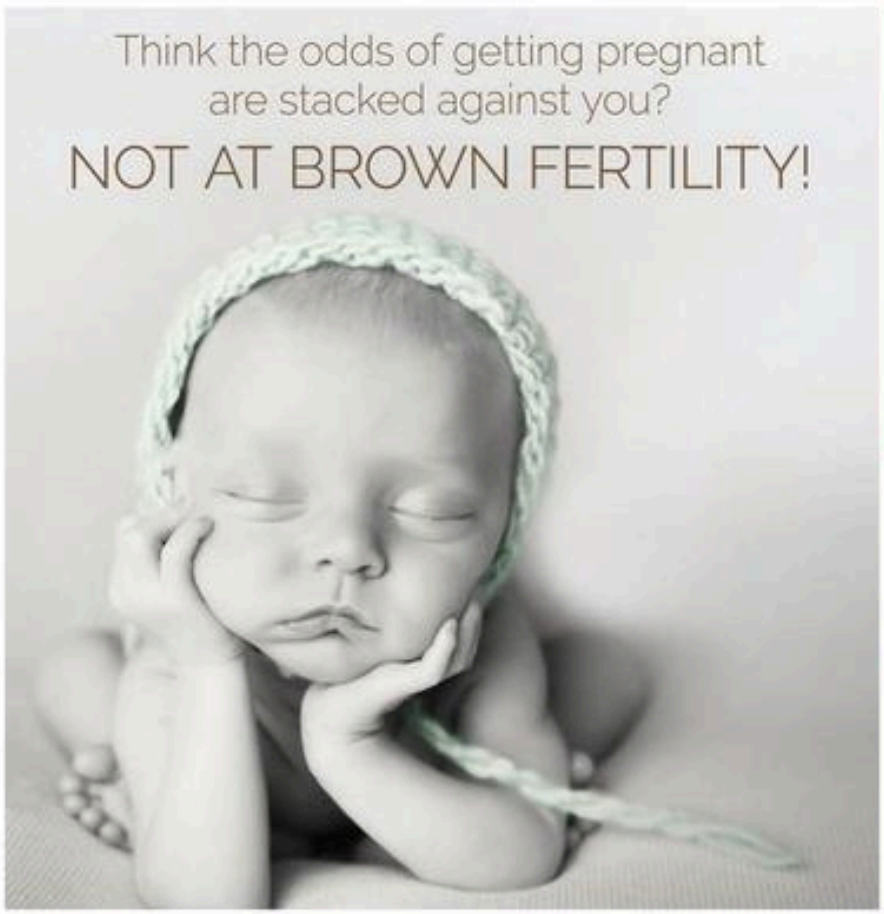


quality of the eggs, increase the blood [circulation] and create a warmer environment in the uterus and ovaries, balance the endocrine systems and hormones, reduce the stress level and regulate the immune system, which is the plus of the traditional fertility treatments, no matter with the ovulation medications only or IUI and IVF," says Yin. "A 2013 study determined that acupuncture can stimulate the superficial nerve fiber of the skin where you have problems, for example, the uterus and ovaries, and cause your brain to release neuropeptides—molecules that allow neurons and effector cells to communicate—into the central nervous system. In turn, this can stimulate your body's self-healing process."

Acupuncture can treat a condition known as a "cold uterus," when the uterine lining has not responded appropriately to the warming hormone (progesterone). Women with this condition usually have slow rising and/or early declining BBT (basal body temperature). "Cold uterus not only causes the wrong temperature for the embryo to grow, like a seed growing in chilly weather, but also inhibits uterine blood circulation," says Yin. "The focus of treatment is to warm the uterus, which in turn maintains progesterone at satisfactory levels. This not only helps metabolic activity, but also allows the uterus to secrete sufficient nutrients, and thereby creates a highly nurturing environment in which to implant the embryo."

According to the research, acupuncture treatments will increase the success of traditional IUI and IVF treatments by 40 to 60 percent, says Yin, and patients come from other states, like California, Colorado, New York, Ohio and Texas, to be treated here. And women aren't the only ones. Men can be treated for low sperm count, low mobility, poor quality, impotence and low energy.

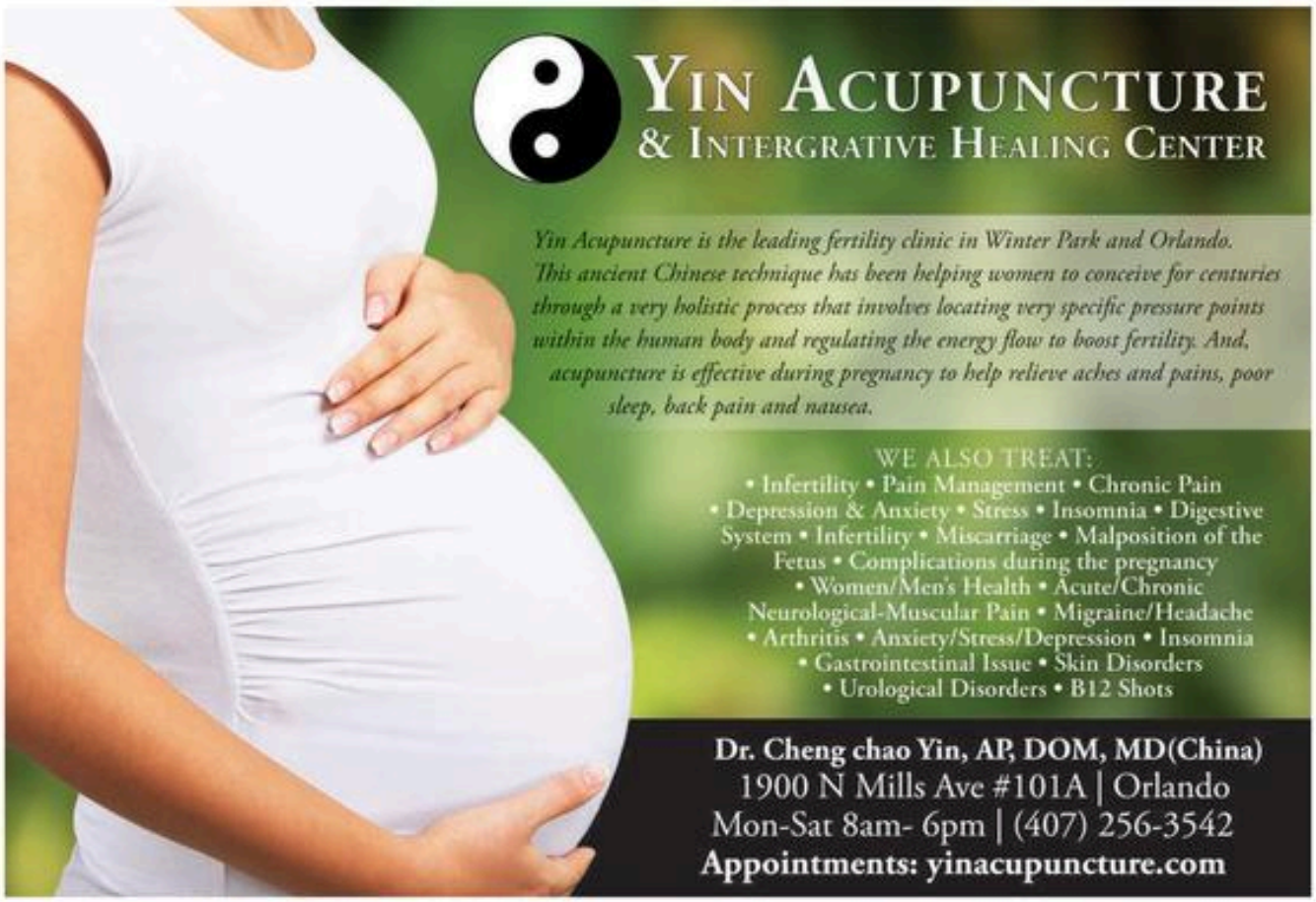
"I believe there is no conflict between the traditional treatments and acupuncture treatments, only a plus. As the fertility acupuncture specialist, our goal is to help all of our fertility patients succeed," says Yin. "It does not matter if it's through the traditional IUI/IVF treatments or acupuncture treatments or combination treatments, whatever is best for the patients. Infertility treatment is a long journey. A lot of patients have been mentally suffering with stress and anxiety. We hope the acupuncture treatments can help them. We are happy to see, yes, they do."



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Palate

By Alyssa Asaro


Photo courtesy of Buttermilk Bakery

TOP FIVE:

CROISSANTS

A quintet of tasty things to try this month

MATCHA CROISSANT ↔
AT BUTTERMILK BAKERY, WINTER PARK
Double-baked to keep the outside crisp and the inside moist, this mouthwatering croissant is filled with *matcha-frangipane*, an almond pastry cream with hints of green tea. A seasonal item, it offers a sweet and earthy taste.


Photo courtesy of Le Gourmet Break

CHOCOLATE CROISSANT ↔
AT LE GOURMET BREAK, DOWNTOWN
Chocolate croissants are a classic and these are made in-house by layering yeast-leavened dough with butter several times over. Just enough bitterness is added by incorporating a bit of chocolate.

CHEESE CROISSANT
AT FORTUNA BAKERY & CAFE, HUNTERS CREEK
This fresh delight is made with white cheese that resembles mozzarella. The melted cheese perfectly melds with the buttery croissant, making you feel fortunate for every bite.

STRAWBERRY CHEESE CROISSANT
AT CHARLIE'S GOURMET PASTRIES, CONWAY
Filled with strawberry preserve and cream cheese, this decadent pastry comes from a family-owned bakery. A *viennoiserie* that balances richness with the tartness of the fruit, this is one you won't want to pass up.

ALMOND CROISSANT
AT THE BACKHAUS, IVANHOE
There is a reason why this croissant is a best-seller at this German bakery and deli. Made with marzipan—a sugary almond paste—and topped with fresh almonds, this treat is nutty, sweet and unforgettable.

RAISE A GLASS: ABSINTHE

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ABSINTHE EXPERIENCE
AT PHARMACY, DR. PHILLIPS
Quite literally a hidden gem, this speakeasy offers an intimate setting in which to sip classic concoctions like this one. This cocktail is prepared in the traditional French way: Vero Water is poured over a sugar cube that is secured on a slotted spoon set atop a glass of Butterfly Classic absinthe.

ABSINTHE SUISSESSE ↔
AT BITTERS & BRASS, SANFORD
The often overpowering anise flavor of absinthe is subdued in this frothy, savory drink. A Big Easy cocktail often served with brunch, it is made up of absinthe, *orgeat*, cream and egg whites.

SAZERAC
AT TIBBY'S NEW ORLEANS KITCHEN, WINTER PARK
Sazerac is the official cocktail of New Orleans and what many consider to be the world's first mixed drink. With Jim Beam Rye, absinthe, mixed sugar and bitters, and a lemon twist garnish, this spicy drink is great for whiskey lovers.


Photo courtesy of Bitters & Brass/ J Hand Photography



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Dinner Time

A perfect moment to talk about alcohol.

An alarming number of pre-teens are drinking alcohol - which makes it urgent to find every opportunity to talk to your kids about the dangers of underage drinking. For tips on how - and when - to begin the conversation, visit: **www.drugfreecoalition.org**

ORANGE COUNTY DRUG FREE COALITION

Side Dish

By Brittany Ann Morrisey and Alyssa Asaro

Restaurant news from throughout Greater Orlando



Pollo Frito at Pepe by José Andrés

Photograph courtesy of Pepe

• A Halloween-themed bar called **Cocktails & Screams** is making its way to Downtown Orlando. The bar will serve spooky drinks inside a lounge decorated with frightening décor.

• A Spanish food truck turned brick-and-mortar restaurant is set to open this winter at Disney Springs. **Pepe**, by chef José Andrés, will have a menu of both hot and cold sandwiches.

• Aiming for a summer opening, **Boozehound** will be Central Florida's first dog bar. Located in Edgewood, the watering hole will be connected to an off-leash dog park that will operate on a membership basis so customers can enjoy beers with their furry companions.

• **Proper & Wild**, an upscale vegetarian restaurant, recently opened in Winter Park. The eatery, from the owners of The Sanctum, serves plant-based meals using farm-fresh, seasonal produce.

• **Cocolando Creamery & Cafe** opened a store in Ocoee. The ice cream parlor serves sundaes, splits and shakes with homemade traditional ice cream flavors as well as unconventional concoctions like banana pudding and black raspberry.

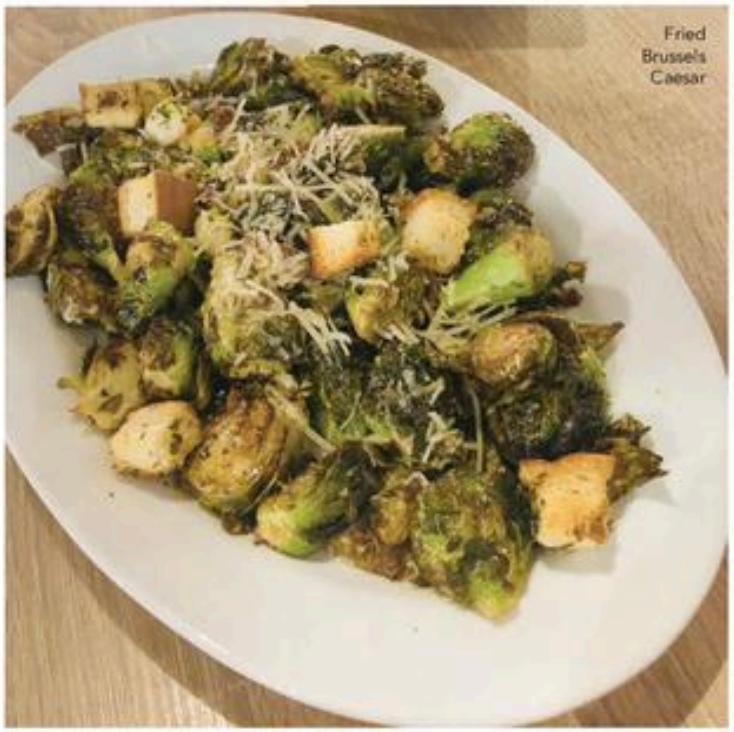


Supplying the Demand

Provisions & Buzz Co. gives discerning foodies something to be excited about.

By Michael Lit

Provisions & Buzz Co. is the brainchild of Lisa and Bob Lacey, the former owners of Jack's Steakhouse in Baldwin Park. They wanted to honor their son's vision after he passed in 2014 and create a more modern interior and revamped menu from the aforementioned steakhouse. They kept the hand-cut steaks and traditional sides but added menu items that feel more of the moment.



Fried Brussels Caesar

And the new space is certainly aptly named: provisions for the food, of course, and buzz for the talk being generated about what's coming out of the kitchen—not to mention the mounted honeycombs lining the walls. The restaurant is in good company with neighboring hot spots that are collectively helping elevate eclectic cuisines on New Broad Street.

We first walked in on Sunday evening and were quickly shown to our table where a server was at the ready to take our drink orders. The Old Fashioned ($11) was prepared with Four Roses Small Batch bourbon, Angostura bitters and cherry liqueur and immediately caught my attention, but I definitely missed the cherry garnish. My wife sipped on the Strawberry and Blackberry Mojito ($12), which came in a pint glass with an abundance of fruit and mint. It looked good enough to eat.

As I scanned the menu for appetizer and salad options, I was intrigued by the Fried Brussels Caesar ($8). Fried Brussels sprouts were tossed in a Caesar dressing and served simply alongside croutons and parmesan. It was a new presentation for me and I enjoyed every bit of the flavor profile, especially how the heat of the vegetables slightly melted the cheese to bring out those salty, nutty notes.

Lobster Bites ($17) featured tempura battered and fried chunks of meat. The bites were light, crisp and the peppercorn honey sauce coating them was the perfect complement, but the presentation of the plate could have been more aesthetically pleasing for the price.

I was excited to try the restaurant's "Taste of the Week" three-course menu with drink pairings, but it was not available. I then focused on the Scallops and Thai Risotto ($24) with a lemongrass cream, but that, too, was unavailable. Determined to find something to excite my palate, I ordered the Pork Belly Kimchi Bowl ($22). The dish featured a generous cut of fatty, meaty pork belly served on sushi rice with a peppery kimchi, a fried egg and avocado. I found the pork to be a bit on the dry side, but the highlight for me was certainly the homemade kimchi, which had the pungent fermentation that really makes the vegetables sing.



Tempura Lobster Bites

My wife set her sights on the 16-ounce Ribeye ($45). The steak was well prepared and had good flavor but it came with no sides, so we ordered the Cheesy Au Gratin Potatoes ($6) and the "shareable" Creamed Spinach ($13). The potatoes had a great creaminess that blanketed the spuds and gave a wonderful richness to the dish. The spinach on the other hand lacked cream, parmesan and $13 worth of spinach. Their portion for a shareable side needs to be re-evaluated in good conscience.

Once presented with the dessert menu, I knew it was going to be a difficult choice, but the Chewy Chocolate Chip Cookie Ice Cream Sandwich with Chocolate Ice Cream ($6) sounded like a great way to wind down the evening. The house-made chocolate ice cream was nestled between two freshly baked chocolate chip cookies, still warm to the touch and slightly melting the ice cream. It was so rich and comforting that I almost asked for a glass of cold milk to wash it down.

Baldwin Park has established itself as a new foodie community with many exciting restaurants in its repertoire. Provisions & Buzz Co. has done many things right to place itself in the center of the competition. Its location, gorgeous al fresco dining area and varied menu can give diners a different experience each time and that is enough to keep any discerning gourmand's interest piqued.

Provisions & Buzz Co.
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Long, Strange Trip

When indie-rock star Kurt Vile returns to Orlando, things might get weird. *By Bill Donahue*

KURT VILE HAS THE SOFTEST OF SPOTS FOR ORLANDO. Last time the Philadelphia-based singer-songwriter played a gig in town, at The Social, he had a "pretty trippy" experience, as he calls it. For someone who has made his bones by manufacturing an almost psychedelic brand of lo-fi, chilled-out indie rock, that's saying something.

"It was the weirdest thing," he recalls. "I was signing records after the show, and this kid comes up and says, 'I grew up in the house you live in now.' It turned out he was right, but it was a little insane to meet this kid in Orlando telling me all about my house in Philly."

Known for his hypnotic guitar work and soothing, stream-of-consciousness lyrics, Vile has become something of a contemporary balladeer, writing about the everyday and the profound. Fans at home and abroad routinely pack his shows, and culture critics have heaped praise upon his many albums, including 2018's *Bottle It In*, his seventh.

Vile's life has traveled a long, strange, and unexpected road since he burst onto the scene 10 years ago. Back then, in 2008, his indie-rock band The War on Drugs had just released its debut album, and he also dropped his first solo album, *Constant Hitmaker*. While The War on Drugs has certainly achieved its share of success, Vile's decision to go solo proved to be a wise one. He has toured the world, taken the stage at festivals such as Bonnaroo, Coachella and Lollapalooza, and collaborated with the highly acclaimed Australian singer-songwriter Courtney Barnett.

We caught up with Vile while he was on a tour bus, en route to Indianapolis as part of an ambitious tour in support of *Bottle It In*. The tour will bring him and his band, The Violators, back to Orlando on March 12, for a show at The Beacham Theater. During the interview, Vile talked about the ups and downs of life on the road, fatherhood, and what happens next.

Q&A

Your songs have a sort of nomadic feel, in that they make me want to be on the road, heading somewhere. Do you have a specific intention when you write a song, or are you just letting go and seeing what happens?

When I'm writing a song, I'm thinking about how I'm feeling, and usually it's a little open. With [the 2013 album] *Wakin on a Pretty Daze*, it was the opposite of being on the road—just being comfortable at home. I like songs that don't have to be about one thing; I could be noticing things while I'm sitting on the couch, or traveling or doing something else. It makes me think of a song from Willie Nelson that I love: "Still is Still Moving to Me." I'm on a bus right now, but the bus could be moving a million miles an hour or it could be stopped somewhere, or I could be relaxing and staying at home or being with my family. We're always moving. It's like a not-so-vicious cycle. No matter what we're doing, the world keeps turning.

You're in the midst of an ambitious tour. How has life as a touring musician changed you, for better or for worse?

It's definitely changed for the better. As intense as touring is, we're playing music every night. When you're starting a record, you're usually working out a lot of kinks, and it definitely takes me a little longer to figure out some things than others. Once you're rolling along [on a tour], ideally the songs get tighter every night, and you can change the set list to break things up, if you need to. All of us are here because we want to be here. We're all musicians, but this goes for the people in the crew, too: We all know how to do the job in front of us. We also get to have that release every night. It's intense but cool; we get paid to play all over the world. Eventually the touring will stop.

You're a family man now. Technology must make it a lot simpler to keep in touch while you're on the road, but does your family ever join you on the road?

You've got to have balance when it comes to family; sometimes my family will meet me on the road, and that's a good thing. My wife is going to meet me in Nashville, at the Ryman [Auditorium], and then they're going to be with me in Australia, and I'll stay out there a little longer than everyone else.

Your two daughters are old enough to have strong opinions and know what's going on in the world around them. What do they think of Dad's job and Dad's music?

My oldest daughter is going to turn 9, so it's a cool time. They're both supportive. They like it. They're musicians and writers in their own way; it's all they've ever known.

Your musical influences seem apparent enough: Tom Petty, Neil Young, J Mascis. Did growing up in Philadelphia have an influence on you and your music?

It does influence me in ways. I worked at Philadelphia Brewing Company from '03 to '09, and some of my earlier records I put out while working at the brewery. … There were a lot of younger bands going on in Philly when I was getting started, and there was this whole subculture of that low-fi DIY scene going on in the early to mid-2000s. I was also inspired by Philly-area bands like the Dead Milkmen and Ween, out of New Hope [a Philadelphia suburb]. When I was teenager, I would go to Stalag 13 in West Philly and play my banjo. I saw a lot of punk shows there.



Kurt's new album, Bottle It In

So you have tonight's show. You have the rest of the tour. What happens after that?

This is our second time touring in the [United] States for this record. After the U.S. tour, we're off for three weeks, more or less. Then we'll go to Australia, and then we have a month off. Then we go to Europe. Once I'm off the road, then I'll start thinking about my next move. I'm listening to new music whenever I can, and eventually I'll be recording again. It's more of the same, really, but it's what I love to do.



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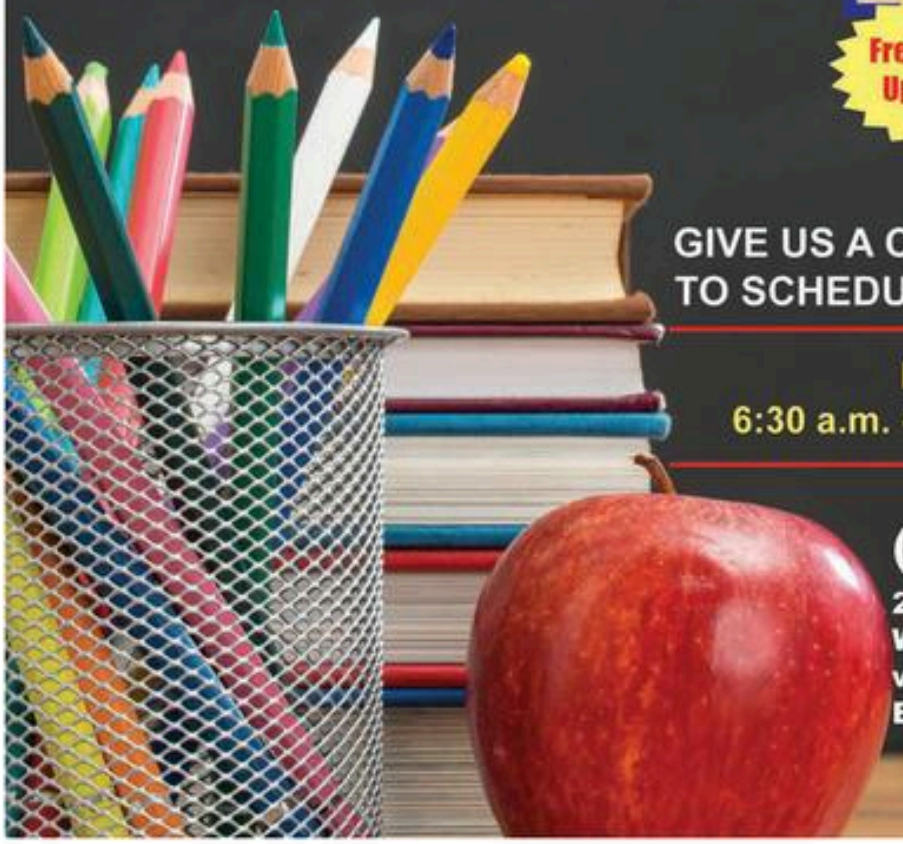


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