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Orlando Family magazine

OCTOBER 2020

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plus

DINING OUT IN THE AGE OF CORONAVIRUS

The Black Widow star on superheroes, success and seizing the moment

Scarlett JOHANSSON

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DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING
Eva Kelso

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Peter Proko

MANAGING EDITOR
Matt Cosentino

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Brittany Ann Morrisey

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Liz Hunter, Evan Jameson, Julie Shannon, Debra Wallace

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES
Donna Colona, Stacy Daniels, Catherine Randell, Ali Wilson

SALES ASSISTANT
Maria Foster

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Hank Alspach

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Brian Mikulski

DESIGNERS
Abby Lurty, Dori Shields, Lisa Zollinger

ACCOUNTANT
Max Haggerty

SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL CONTENT COORDINATOR
Maggie Reilly

INTERNS
Deanna Pineiro, Kayla Rundstrom

PUBLISHER
Gerry Haggerty

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Home Front

EDITED BY BRITTANY ANN MORRISEY AND KAYLA RUNDSTROM

by the Numbers

$2.9 MILLION

The price Orlando Magic guard Evan Fournier paid for his new estate in Winter Park.

349 The total number of rooms in the new Walt Disney World Swan Reserve, a 14-story tower added to the Swan and Dolphin resort.

75,000

The amount of unreported coronavirus test results that lab group Quest Diagnostics failed to share with the state. As a result, Gov. Ron DeSantis cut all ties with the organization.

10 The number of University of Central Florida football players who opted out of the 2020 season due to COVID-19 concerns.



145 The number of new recruits that Orange County Fire Rescue has seen since the pandemic began.

$2 million

The amount of CARES Act funding that Orange County Public Schools is using to test high school football players and coaches. The tests are being administered every other week.



The Haunted Road

Running now through Nov. 7

THIS DRIVE-THRU HALLOWEEN EXPERIENCE BILLS ITSELF AS A SAFE WAY TO CELEBRATE THE SPOOKY SEASON. Guests will follow the fairy-tale character Rapunzel as she ventures through a world of disarray and creepy creatures and will drive their vehicles along the road and park at each staged scene to take in each part of the story. The main event runs Wednesdays through Saturdays and is recommended for people ages 13 and older, however there will also be a family-friendly experience during the daytime on select weekends in October. An unrestricted version of the experience recommended only for those who are 18 years and older will be presented on Nov. 6 and 7. *Daytime events 10 a.m.-5:55 p.m., nighttime experience 7:45-11:40 p.m., 15239 Lake Pickett Road, Orlando, general admission tickets are $15-$45 per person, unrestricted event is $20-$25 per person, upgraded experiences are an additional $75 per car*

FEATURED EVENT



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Hit

Gov. Ron DeSantis has ordered the reopening of nursing homes and assisted facilities to visitors after a lockdown of six months to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Workers' compensation insurance costs could go down for Florida businesses in 2021. Premiums would reduce next year in the workers' compensation system by an average of 5.7%.

The short film documentary *Sur Les Pointes*, created by Full Sail graduates and faculty about the Orlando Ballet, was chosen for screening at the Cannes Short Film Festival.

Orange County spent $6.5 million on a convention center expansion project after it was announced that the project was being put on hold to address budgetary concerns.

Airline workers at Orlando International Airport are concerned they'll lose their jobs without federal payroll support to help offset losses caused by the pandemic.

So far, this hurricane season has already seen 23 named storms, the most ever recorded.

Miss

3 THINGS YOU'LL LEARN

Adoptions at local animal shelters have increased as folks seek the comfort and companionship of pets during the pandemic. **Page 42**

Scarlett Johansson feels her exposure to acting at a young age helped her immensely on her way to becoming the ninth-highest grossing actor of all time **Page 30**

With short supply and high demand, the Central Florida real estate market is thriving. **Page 36**



DID YOU HEAR?

"We don't know if there's a genetic or biological reason there, but we just know from sheer numbers that minorities are facing a lot of social disparities that are putting them at risk of getting infected."

—CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFECTIOUS DISEASES AT THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS **DR. YVONNE MALDONADO** ON A TREND COMING OUT OF FLORIDA THAT TWO-THIRDS OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE DEVELOPED A RARE COMPLICATION FROM COVID-19 ARE BLACK OR HISPANIC.

DATEBOOK



LONG & SCOTT FARMS CORN MAZE

Oct. 3-Dec. 13

Ring in the fall season with this annual corn maze and family-friendly fair. The main attraction is the maze but there will also be games, food and drink for purchase, and add-on experiences including hay rides. *10 a.m.-5 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays 12-5 p.m., 26216 County Road 448A, Mount Dora, tickets are $12 for adults, $12 for kids ages 4 to 16, children under 3 years old admitted free*

THE PLAYHOUSE SERIES

Oct. 3, Oct. 17, Nov. 14

This event series will take place under a large tent outdoors. It kicks off with a Country Western Jamboree on Oct. 3. The Spirit of Samba will debut on Oct. 17 and in November the Hawaiian Luau will take place. Each show will have theatrics of all kinds and themed food and drinks. *Shows at 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Oct. 3 and Nov. 14, 5 p.m on Oct. 17, Waterford Lakes Town Center, Orlando, tickets are $25 for adults and $15 for children 12 years old and under*

FORE OUR KIDS GOLF TOURNAMENT

Oct. 23

Support Central Florida children in foster care by teeing off at this golf tournament that raises money for Embrace Families, a provider of child welfare services. Registration closes on Friday, Oct. 16 and participants can compete individually or as a team of four. *Check-in begins at 7:30 a.m., shotgun start at 8:30 a.m., Hawk's Landing Golf Club at Orlando World Center Marriott, Orlando, $800 for a team, $250 for individual, cost includes lunch and complimentary drink tickets*





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Readers share their favorite family moments



Carson, Jillian and Henry Field, Orlando



Zoé, Miles, Julian and Thomas Smith, Orlando

Whether it was an endearing childhood moment, family reunion or board game night at home, we'd like you to share your best photos taken in Greater Orlando. These can simply be images of your family or friends having fun locally. Selected pictures will appear in an upcoming issue of *Orlando Family Magazine.*

Submit your hi-res photos for consideration by visiting *OrlandoFamilyMagazine.com/Contests/Photo.*



Lauren, Caroline and Charlotte Diamantas, Orlando



Grace, Teresa and Charlie Navarro, Orlando



Bronson, Huxton and Justin Dalrymple, Orlando

GETTING PERSONAL

Local social media star **Nurse Blake** on his ideal day in Central Florida, making funny and inspirational content for health care professionals, and advocating for positive change in the medical community.



1. I've been a nurse for six years. I started nursing school in the concurrent Seminole State College-University of Central Florida program back in 2012. During that time, I worked in the hospital setting as a patient transporter, surgical assistant and patient care tech in the neurology intensive care unit to start gaining experience. I graduated from my program in 2014. About three years ago, I started my Nurse Blake Facebook page to make my coworkers laugh on social media and now I have over two million followers across my platforms.

2. I create funny and inspirational videos based on my experiences as a nursing student and nurse. Whenever I post a video, I love reading all the comments from people all over the world who can relate to the same experiences that I've had. My platform is a positive and supportive community of health care professionals sharing stories, laughing and connecting with each other and my hope is that it continues to grow as new nurses enter the profession.

3. I was born and raised in the Sanford/Lake Mary area. While I've been in Central Florida most of my life, I have also lived in South Carolina, Texas and Washington state.

4. My first job was in high school at The UPS Store near Heathrow. My experience at UPS helped me build a strong foundation for my professional career.

5. I graduated from Seminole High School in 2009 and received my Bachelor of Science in nursing from the University of Central Florida in 2014. #GoKnights

6. My favorite dish is the margherita pizza from Terramia Ristorante in Lake Mary.

7. I have two puppies named Zion and Ranger. They are sibling husky-pit bull mixes. They just turned 5 months old and graduated from the Central Florida K-9 Puppy Training program.

8. My perfect day in Central Florida, pre-COVID-19, would begin with brunch at KeKe's Breakfast Cafe (French toast, please) before heading to Universal Studios for some roller coaster adrenaline and closing the evening watching fireworks at Disney's Magic Kingdom. Having worked at Disney, I'm a huge fan of theme parks so I'm a proud annual passholder to both Universal and Disney.

9. Being in health care was never a question for me as both of my parents are in the field and love what they do. While there are many different roles and paths one can take in health care, nursing was always my top choice. The beauty of nursing is that it combines so many elements from different health disciplines, allowing me to serve patients and their families and meet all their needs including physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being.

10. Over the years, I've started different campaigns to bring light and change to important issues related to health care. After being turned away and permanently banned from donating blood back in 2013 for being a gay male because of an outdated U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) policy; I started Banned4Life. The goal was to bring awareness to this discriminatory policy and to pressure the FDA to make a change by hosting blood drives and collecting petition signatures. After two years of hard work, the FDA ended the lifetime ban in December 2015. I've also started the Nurses Support Their Young campaign to promote healthy work environments, especially for new nurses entering the profession. To me, being a nurse means being an advocate on and off the clock for both patients and our profession.



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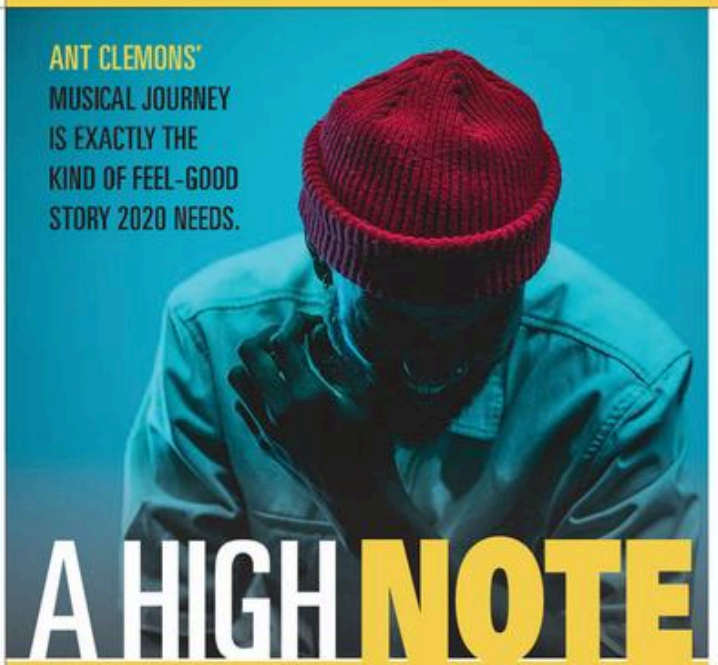
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ANT CLEMONS' MUSICAL JOURNEY IS EXACTLY THE KIND OF FEEL-GOOD STORY 2020 NEEDS.

A HIGH NOTE

It wasn't that long ago that Ant Clemons was working shifts at a Red Lobster with visions of bigger things for his life. A self-described performer since a young age, the Southern New Jersey native long had dreams of making it in the music industry. And so, he would save his paychecks until he had enough money to travel to Los Angeles in hopes of having his talents discovered by the right people. When the money ran out, he'd fly back home and head back to work at the restaurant. The process continued until his mother interceded and gave him an ultimatum.

Fed up with him being "late on the rent," Clemons' mother told him it was time for him to reach for the stars. She encouraged him to spend a year in Los Angeles to try launching his career.

"My mom and my dad have always been my biggest advocates," says Clemons. "But my mom was at a point in our relationship where she was like, 'What I need you to do for you, and for me, is to get up and go live your dream and try to make it happen. I don't have a million dollars, but whatever I can give to help you, I'm here to be your mom. You have one year; if nothing happens, you come home and we'll figure out another plan.'"

Clemons spent the next several months trying to carve out a lane in the business and did much of it couch surfing. During that time, he linked up with three friends from Philadelphia who had a production group and were willing to let him crash at their house rent free under the condition that he write at least one new song every day.

From there, further connections were made as Clemons began to work with other notable producers and see his songwriting prowess and distinct falsetto propel him forward. Eventually he landed a publishing deal with Universal and multiple projects he's had an imprint on have gone on to be Grammy nominated. And just a few years later, he already has several impressive credits to his name, having worked with star-studded hitmakers like Beyoncé, Kanye West and Pharrell Williams. In late February, he released his debut solo EP, *Happy 2 Be Here*, and the soulful songs, including the very personal "Mamma I Made It," served as an appetizer for what's to come.

Speaking by phone during a break from one of his marathon studio sessions—Clemons claims to have written 500 songs during the pandemic—he is excited to talk about his journey, the things he misses about home and how his upbringing helped shape his career. The one thing he can't tell me is what he's working on next.

"I have albums ready and have been working with every artist I had on my vision board. Everybody," he says proudly, before divulging that he's bound by non-disclosure agreements. "I can't give you any names as bad as I want to!"

Your sound is unique but also fits right in with the times. Who are some of the artists who inspired your sound because there's definitely a bit of the old and new represented there?

I grew up as and still to this today am the world's biggest Michael Jackson fan. Kanye West, Stevie Wonder … I've been influenced by Jay-Z, Drake; anyone and anybody that is great. Jeremih; all the people I've had the chance to work with now. Everyone has influenced my style in some way.

And you grew up in a pretty musical household, right?

Absolutely. My sisters can sing; my youngest sister is the best singer out of all of us, I just got lucky to get kicked out first. My mom is a phenomenal dancer and so I get my rhythm from her. My dad is amazing, he was singing our entire life growing up. My dad would be singing a record and my mom would be dancing around the room and I just wanted to perform and be a part of it.

You have worked with so many big names, who else is out there that you would love to collaborate with?

I'd love to work with Drake, he may be the only person that I've been dying to work with. I would love that opportunity.

Despite being around so many notables in the music industry, are you ever taken back by where your career has taken you so far?

I love that you asked me this question. Before I started obtaining a certain level of success, I was just focused on what's next. In conversations and studying, to get to where I want to get to, I have to appreciate the blessing God is giving me. I want to cherish this moment while I have it. I have goals and things I want to accomplish in my career, but I'm aware that where I am now was never promised.

There's a lot of great musical artists out there, both known and unknown. What do you think it is about you that has helped you rise to the top?

I think authenticity might have played a role into it. I can tell you I'm very religious and I believe God is the reason for a lot of my blessings. I can't tell you what exactly gets me into the rooms that I've gotten into. Maybe it's likability and the wanting to complete the task; but I love singing and seeing things completed from start to finish.

You're very secretive about your new project. Is there anything you can share with us about it or will we just have to wait and see?

It's coming very soon. Definitely sooner than later.

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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

The Good Fight

Libby's Legacy Breast Cancer Foundation is working to close the gap between women who are able to access life-saving care for breast cancer and those who are not. by JOHN ANTHONY



Toni Pressley may be well-known for her play on the field as a member of the Orlando Pride soccer team, but it's her work away from the game that is equally inspiring.

With a desire to make a difference in the Central Florida community, Pressley aligned herself with Libby's Legacy Breast Cancer Foundation, a local nonprofit founded by Robin Maynard-Harris after her mother, Libby, passed away from the disease. The organization's mission is to provide comprehensive services to the underserved through education, mammograms and patient navigation on the journey from diagnosis to survivorship with the compassion to ensure no one fights alone. They want to ensure all women, whether they are uninsured or underinsured, can access vital, life-saving breast cancer screenings and treatment.

Pressley had been a volunteer for the organization, but things hit close to home when she was diagnosed with breast cancer at just 29 years of age. After facing the challenging realities and undergoing successful surgery a month later to remove the cancer, Pressley knew she wanted to increase her involvement with Libby's Legacy. And from there, a new program called "Toni Pressley's Kicking Breast Cancer" was born, the focus of which was to educate young women on how to know their body better and become an advocate for themselves; especially Black women who are less likely to contract breast cancer but more likely to die as a result of the disease.

While Pressley's journey had a positive outcome, her involvement with Libby's Legacy allowed her to recognize how fortunate she was to have the means and access to quality medical care. It's an all too common occurrence that women's lives end too soon because their care is delayed or they do not have access to health care at all. In fact, Central Floridians often fall into the "gap"—they make too much money to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford exorbitant health insurance premiums or a high deductible.

Apart from financial barriers, young women in particular face an additional hurdle: convincing doctors to take their concerns seriously. Because breast cancer is more common in women who are age 45 and older, doctors tend to overlook younger patients' concerns. As a result, nearly 80% of young women diagnosed find their breast abnormality themselves.

In 2017, Kissimmee's Alina Sanchez had such an experience when she discovered a lump in her breast. With great concern she contacted her obstetrician who after some urging, finally sent her for a sonogram but when results showed she needed a biopsy she could not afford the cost. Having recently lost her medical coverage, the 29-year-old mother was stretched thin. She started researching and found Libby's Legacy and they were able to help.

"I just kept having to go back to the doctor and each time it was $150 to $200," she says. "And mind you, I'm paying for daycare. My son is in school. I have bills. It was just so hard."

Beginning to lose hope that she'd be able to get a diagnosis and subsequently the care she needed, Sanchez reached out to Libby's Legacy and the organization moved quickly because early detection is critical. The nonprofit paid for Sanchez's biopsy and the test determined that she had a rare neuroendocrine tumor in her breast.

With Libby's Legacy by her side every step of the way, Sanchez received 20 rounds of chemotherapy and had a lumpectomy. By April 2018, she was in remission. But had Sanchez not received treatment when she did, her story may have ended much differently.

As the founder of Libby's Legacy, Maynard-Harris has seen it many times. She relates the story of a young pregnant woman in her early 30s who came to Libby's Legacy for help. This woman's doctor had dismissed her concerns about a lump in her breast and said hormones due to pregnancy were likely the cause for the abnormality. When the lump did not go away after she gave birth, the woman turned to Libby's Legacy for guidance. The organization sent her for a diagnostic mammogram and she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She received treatment, but the disease had progressed too far and she died just four years later.

"Had that doctor given her that script and listened to her about her own body, she'd probably be here today," Maynard-Harris says.

Sanchez says her obstetrician was also dismissive about the lump in her breast, even as she felt strongly that something was wrong.

"If I feel this way, it's for a reason," she says. "Us women, we know our bodies."

Libby's Legacy makes it a priority to support women through their breast cancer diagnosis, treatment, remission and beyond. The nonprofit's Patient Advocate Liaison Services (PALS) program is one way it helps women along their journey.

Through this program, breast cancer patients are paired with an advocate or "PAL," who will come with them to appointments, take notes, seek answers to their questions and make sure they get what they need.

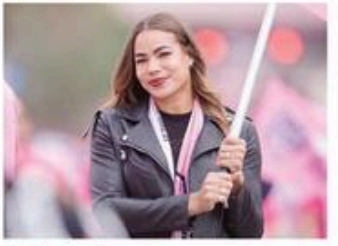
"Breast cancer is a journey," Maynard-Harris says. "So, you need someone with you on that path to navigate you."

While the life-saving work of Libby's Legacy has continued through the COVID-19 pandemic, the circumstances of this year have thrown the nonprofit for a loop. Unable to raise money through events, the organization's donations have dropped significantly. The nonprofit is lean and able to withstand this year's setbacks thanks to sponsors like CPA firm Cregan & Co. and other long-time partners, but donations are still needed to make sure the organization can continue its important work.

Unlike large, national cancer nonprofits that retain high-paid executives, Libby's Legacy is able to put forth 87 to 92 cents of every dollar donated to providing its services. As a result, every $100 donation covers a mammogram for someone in need.

The dedication that Libby's Legacy has to serving women in Central Florida is evident when talking to survivors like Sanchez, who gets choked up trying to put into words how the nonprofit touched her life.

"I am so blessed that I found them," Sanchez says. "Because of them I didn't fight alone."



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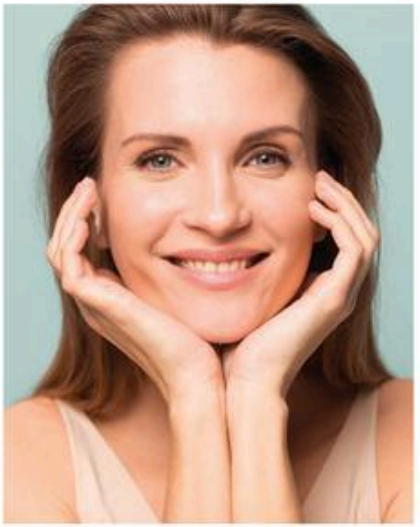
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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

An Eye Opener

The stress of the pandemic can lead to poor skin conditions, but the expert team at **Associates in Dermatology** can put you on a path to recovery. by JOHN ANTHONY



With daily reminders of the harsh realities surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, it's been hard to hide the worry and fatigue so many of us are dealing with. As both our professional and personal lives have been turned upside down, the levels of increased anxiety we are experiencing can have a very dramatic effect on our well-being. And though it may not be immediately thought of, one of the consequences of all this stress is poor skin health.

Dr. Michael Steppie is the president and medical director of Associates in Dermatology, founded in 1989, and he has an unrivaled passion for serving Central Florida's community through clinical, general and cosmetic dermatology. A board-certified physician who has completed residencies in internal medicine, dermatology and dermatologic surgery and is a highly qualified Mohs micrographic skin cancer surgeon, Dr. Steppie is also a member of the National Psoriasis Foundation and the American Contact Dermatitis Society. He and his experienced team of providers are well-versed in treating a wide variety of dermatologic conditions.

During the pandemic, the area around the eyes has gained plenty of attention and with mask wearing becoming so prevalent, the eyes have become a focal point now that the face is largely hidden. While it's been said many times that the eyes are the window to the soul and can communicate various emotions, the area is also particularly susceptible to damage like wrinkles, dehydration lines, puffiness and other visible signs of aging and fatigue. Thankfully, seeking professional guidance can drastically help those who want to look and feel their best during these trying times.

"Because the skin around the eyes is thinner than the rest of the face and more delicate, it can damage easily," says Dr Steppie. "The skin needs proper care and time to be able to renew and rejuvenate."

To help combat these issues, Dr. Steppie recommends Virtuous Eyes from his Ethereal Beauty skin care regimen. Enriched with a clinically proven blend of antioxidants, moisture boosters and other repairing nutrients, it helps regenerate and revitalize eye contour.

"Not only does it visibly minimize lines, wrinkle depth and volume, but it also fights the appearance of under eye dark circles and puffiness. Day by day, your eye contour seems smoother and more youthful," Dr. Steppie says.

Besides being a widely recognized leader in skin care and skin cancer treatment, Associates in Dermatology provides an array of dermatological services at their 16 Orlando area locations, including treatment of common conditions such as allergic dermatitis, psoriasis, acne, eczema, and disease of the hair and nails.

Since the onset of the pandemic, each office location is also following strict sanitizing guidelines and has made patient safety as its No. 1 priority. And for the high-risk population and those who care for them, the practice is still able to provide the high-quality and compassionate care that patients have become accustomed to with a virtual telehealth consultation.

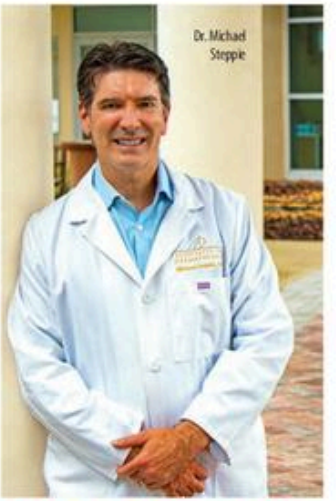
"Telemedicine has made it possible to stay connected with our most vulnerable patients, which is very important to us because we think of them as if they are family," says Dr. Steppie.

Speaking of family, as loved ones start to plan for the holidays, now is a great time to think about the many skin revitalizing procedures offered by Associates in Dermatology. For those looking to put their best face forward this season and reveal a more vibrant look, there are several options ranging from neuromodulators such as Botox or fillers such as Juvéderm to minimize the appearance of volume loss and wrinkles. Another less invasive alternative to help even skin tone and smooth out skin texture are chemical peels, which can treat a wide range of conditions, including blemishes.

Chemical peels are strong and deliver remarkable results," says Dr. Steppie. "Their ability to improve fine lines and renew the skin surface while also boosting collagen and elastin make it an affordable option that addresses varying concerns a patient may have."

No matter your skincare needs, Associates in Dermatology has a team of specialists ready to assist in all areas of the field, from clinical concerns like skin cancer to general and cosmetic options. And you can expect to find a knowledgeable and friendly staff in a welcoming setting.

"We have helped countless patients pinpoint the causes of their issues and retain their confidence," Dr. Steppie says. "We would love to see you to take a closer look at your specific needs to help fade away the fatigue and stress and have you smiling back at life."



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STAR STUDENTS

Lake Highland Preparatory School National Merit Semifinalists

Sixteen Lake Highland Preparatory School students were selected as National Merit semifinalists this year. Those students were: Samuel Mariash, Kheli Phillips, Nicole Ward, Sarah Steadman, Max Schaked, Isaac Lightman, Taneesh Makkena, Pierce Hipp, Jeffrey Zhou, Ayei Chang, David Lightman, Matthew Rathbun, Alan Chen, Ahad Ansari, Robert DeMartino and Khalil Jebailey. The National Merit Scholarship Program honors students who show exceptional academic ability and potential for success in rigorous college studies.



STAR PROFESSIONAL

Keshara Cowans

Orange County Public Schools staff attorney Keshara Cowans was bestowed with the Lawrence G. Mathews Jr. Young Lawyer Professionalism Award by the Orange County Bar Association. Cowans was nominated by her peers for her conduct and career.



STAR STUDENT

Dave Patel

Lake Highland Preparatory School 12th-grader Dave Patel created an online store to sell custom-designed hats and raise money for charitable organizations. Patel has raised more than $3,000 for the charities so far and hopes to reach $10,000.

STAR EXECUTIVE

Allen Johnson

Greater Orlando Sports Commission chief venues officer, Allen Johnson, received the Executive of the Year award at the commission's 2020 SPORTY Awards. Johnson was recognized for his hard work, determination and passion in making Orlando one of the country's premier sports destinations.

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Advancements in health care for women show the importance of a **whole-body approach.**

HEALTH *for Her*

By Liz Hunter

Women traditionally put themselves last when it comes to health and wellness, prioritizing appointments for their family members first—whether children or aging parents. Busy schedules are an easy excuse, but the pandemic has placed even more stress on women as statistics show they are shouldering the load of caring for children who have been home more than usual. Any delay in seeing physicians regularly for preventive care could put women at risk of needing more critical care.

The realities of women's daily lives are not lost on health care professionals in Central Florida. Progress has been made in various fields to provide more comfortable and comprehensive care, including advancements in minimally invasive surgeries, maternal and prenatal health, breast cancer education and even eye and vein health. *Orlando Family Magazine* spoke with some of the providers who are leading the way in women's health and the benefits of these new treatments.

Minimally Invasive Gynecologic Surgery

Women commonly need surgeries on their reproductive organs to address uterine fibroids, cysts on the ovaries and endometriosis. A myomectomy can remove fibroids while preserving the uterus, and a hysterectomy removes the uterus and sometimes the cervix, ovaries and fallopian tubes. In the case of endometriosis, abnormal tissue growth can cause intense pelvic pain and infertility.

Dr. Jessica Vaught, director of minimally invasive surgery at Orlando Health Winnie Palmer Hospital for Women & Babies, says it's important for women to know that all of these surgeries can be done in a minimally invasive way. "Women are not as educated on their possibilities and providers are not always aware," she says. "Everyone knows that a gallbladder can be removed with a tiny incision—you wouldn't accept a surgeon telling you otherwise, so this same standard of care should be given to women."

These surgeries were traditionally done through a large cut in the abdomen, which is a greater risk for infection, prolongs recovery time in the hospital and could lead to blood clots, pneumonia and over time women could develop a hernia on the incision. "When I came to Orlando in 2007, only 7% of hysterectomies were done minimally invasively—vaginally or with three tiny incisions," says Vaught. "Now 85% are done this way, using robotic, laparoscopic or vaginal methods."

Cosmetically, smaller incisions are nicer, but recovery is more important. "Women can go home the same day versus staying in the hospital for several days, and they can return to work in two to three weeks, where the older method for a hysterectomy was four to six weeks," she says, adding that some cases may still require larger incisions, but women should be sure to press their doctor on which options are most appropriate for them.

"At Winnie Palmer, we are recognized as a Center of Excellence in robotic surgery by the Surgical Review Corporation. This technology is not just a toy for us, we take it seriously and use it responsibly for the best outcomes," Vaught says.

Vascular Disease Treatment

Dr. Lina Vargas, a board-certified vascular surgeon, runs The Vascular Experts Florida, in Windermere. She says a broad term to describe a large number of conditions affecting blood vessels, arteries and veins, vascular disease can lead to complications throughout the body.

"Conditions affecting veins are very different and usually involve dysfunction of the valves inside of them that facilitate flow against gravity toward the heart. Other vein conditions include thrombosis or clotting that impair the venous drainage from an extremity leading to pain and swelling, or external compression by other structures or scars affecting venous return as well. Some of these conditions are more common in women, such as venous insufficiency and pelvic congestion syndrome," Vargas says.

> **Over the years,** the awareness of the importance of mammograms and early detection has increased exponentially. The number of lives this has saved is many."
>
> –TRACY JACIM, FLORIDA BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION

Women commonly present with spider veins or varicose veins on their legs. Spider veins may be purely cosmetic, but varicose veins are related to a condition called venous insufficiency, which affects an estimated 23 million people, she says. "Venous insufficiency usually presents with leg aching, itching, heaviness and tiredness, especially at the end of the day and after prolonged periods of standing or sitting. Leg restlessness has also been associated with venous insufficiency. Most people believe these symptoms are 'normal' after working long shifts or walking long distances and that is why they don't seek evaluation or treatment."

If left unchecked, this condition can become more debilitating and irreversible. Vargas says treatment of dysfunctional superficial veins used to involve removal under general anesthesia, which led to significant pain and bruising. "That procedure has been largely replaced by minimally invasive therapies such as laser or chemical ablation of the diseased vein that leads to definitive closure of the vein without removing it. These procedures are currently performed in office-based settings under minimal local anesthetic and with no downtime," she says. Return to routine activities is encouraged and pain medications are rarely required.

"Women have definitely benefited from these advancements as they now have an option to treat a condition that can be very debilitating both from the physical and aesthetic standpoint without affecting their routines, especially for those who have busy schedules both at work and home as

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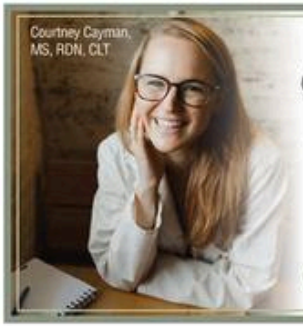
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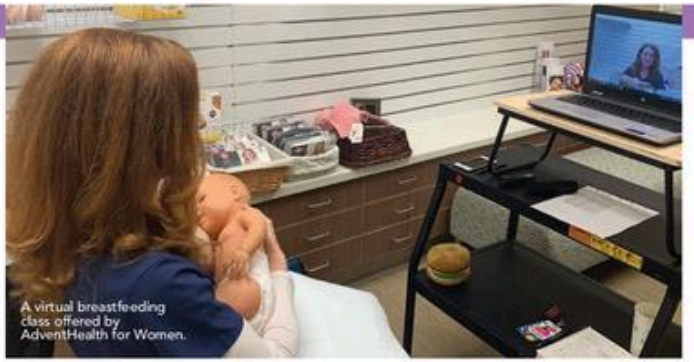
well as those who may be single parents or main breadwinners," Vargas says, who adds the access to female physicians and surgeons may make women more likely to seek treatment.

Breast Health

Arguably one of the factors most prominent in women's minds is their risk for breast cancer. The awareness around the issue is largely due to the work of organizations like the Florida Breast Cancer Foundation (FBCF), which makes education a main component of its mission. That in itself is an advancement, if you ask Tracy Jacim, president and CEO of FBCF.

"Over the years, the awareness of the importance of mammograms and early detection has increased exponentially. The number of lives this has saved is many. When breast cancer, or any cancer for that matter, is detected early, the chance of survival increases greatly. It is the late-stage diagnoses that pose the highest risk for complications," she says.

In addition to that increased education and awareness, there are advances on the medical and research front. "Most notably, the focus on node preservation and the reduction of lymphedema cases, genomic testing minimizing chemotherapy exposure, oral options for targeted therapy, better identification of hereditary cancer syndromes, new drug combinations making estrogen-blocking agents more effective, and systemic therapies in general," says Jacim. "We are proud to mention that one of the directors on our board, Dr. Annette Khaled, is working on a way to stop the metastasis of cancer cells."


A virtual breastfeeding class offered by AdventHealth for Women.

This amounts to hope for the future, and Jacim encourages women to reach out. "Knowledge really is power," she concludes.

Prenatal and Maternal Virtual Education

Having a baby is one of the most exciting moments in a woman's life, but it also comes with a great deal of questions. While the pandemic changed how places like AdventHealth for Women delivered information, it didn't slow down.

Cameron Munoz, birth experience and parent education coordinator, says, "At AdventHealth for Women we know that access to prenatal education can play an important role in healthy pregnancies. By transitioning our resources to the virtual setting this year we have been able to continue to provide important education for women."

Hospital tours help expectant parents familiarize themselves with what will happen during delivery. These continued virtually, as did parent classes at the Baby Place Academy. "We are proud to offer a variety of classes including our childbirth education series, baby care basics, breastfeeding class, Baby Meets Fido class, sibling classes and more," says Munoz. "We also made our new mom support group, The Baby Bunch, virtual this summer. This free support group is offered twice a week for new mothers and features guest speakers, lactation consultants and a community where new moms can bond and share. We also brought lactation consultations virtual as well."

This likely will continue to be a staple of

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AdventHealth's offerings. "COVID has pushed health care providers to do more telemedicine and virtual visits, and that could be a happy byproduct of what we've all been dealing with," she says. "Even when in-person classes return, we still plan to offer virtual education so women can have access to the information they need. Providing more points of access for women to get the care and advice they need can only lead to better outcomes for them and their babies."

New Treatments for Incontinence

Incontinence affects twice as many women as men, likely caused by pregnancy, childbirth and menopause. Stress incontinence is the most common type and also more likely effects younger women. This occurs when there is stress or pressure on the bladder due to weak pelvic floor muscles. Coughing, sneezing, laughing, and activities like running can cause leakage.

"It's no fun if you've been a runner all your life and this problem makes you stop doing something you love," says Dr. Shereen Oloufa, of West Orange Women's Care. "If you also have the constant urge to go, you're likely losing sleep, and that affects your overall health."

Oloufa says laser therapy and platelet-rich plasma (PRP) treatments are showing promising outcomes in initial studies. "These are both non-invasive," she says. These treatments can help rejuvenate and tighten vaginal tissues, leading to greater bladder support.

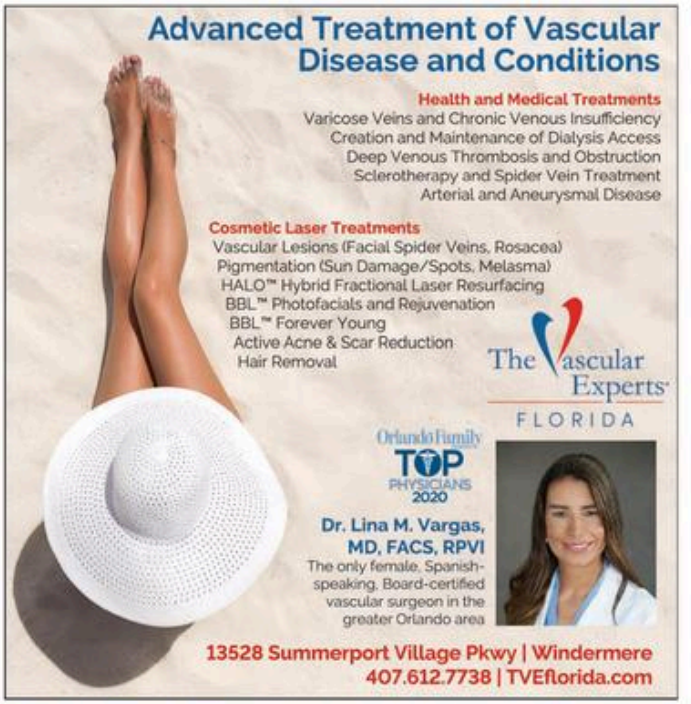
"If you document the time and money you're losing with incontinence— sleep, activity, productivity, the cost of pads— these options can help regain your quality of life," says Oloufa. "Although they may not be mainstream, it doesn't mean it's not something worth investigating to see if you're a candidate. … I recommend women seek a good physical workup and look at their health goals with their physician."

Eye Care

Women may not realize it, but they account for approximately two-thirds of all blindness and visual impairment occurrences. "Women are at slightly higher risk than men for developing age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma and ocular side effects from auto-immune conditions. Age-related hormonal changes such as dry eye are also more common in women," says Dr. Jaya Kumar, retinal specialist at the Florida Retina Institute.

Historically, treatment options were limited, she says. "Now we have several medications that we inject directly in the eye that prevent vision loss and in some cases improve vision. … Intravitreal injections have revolutionized the management of several retinal diseases including wet macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, vein occlusion and uveitis."

Early detection and lifestyle matter to eye health, just like any other medical condition, Kumar adds. "Women should have an annual eye checkup with dilated eye exam, maintain a healthy lifestyle and diet, avoid smoking, wear sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays, and wear protective eyewear while working with chemicals or fixing things around the house."





BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

The Strength to Keep Fighting

Focusing on the necessity to forge forward, the **Florida Breast Cancer Foundation** relies on adaptability and resilience to navigate 2020's challenges. by LIZ HUNTER



FBCF at the state capital in Tallahassee this past February

When the COVID-19 pandemic brought the country to a standstill in March, the people behind the Florida Breast Cancer Foundation didn't have time to sit back and wait.

"This event made us more motivated than ever because it put the people we serve at an even higher risk," says Tracy Jacim, president and CEO of the Florida Breast Cancer Foundation (FBCF). "Not only are they battling for their lives and the health care they need, but now they could be at risk of losing their job, or their spouse's income. And as if that wasn't enough, those currently in treatment have to operate very cautiously due to the fact compromised immune systems could put them at higher risk of contracting COVID-19. As an organization, we knew we had to adapt quickly."

Jacim says they were fueled by survivors' strength. "When you are faced with a cancer diagnosis you have to adapt and be resilient. Those are traits survivors have to exude in their fight, and we had to follow their example to overcome this unprecedented situation."



Outreach and education continues virtually

In addition to funding their full grant cycle this year, Jacim says she's proud FBCF also responded to the pandemic with the COVID-19 Emergency Assistance Fund—a $50,000 grant for nonprofits to provide funding for living expenses for Floridians in active breast cancer treatment and impacted by COVID-19. "The economic fallout from COVID may really come after the main event and there could be more struggle ahead," she says. "Our goal is to not only continue to fund direct services, but to grow that fund, and to do that we need the help of our partners, our donors and our supporters."

This hasn't been the year anyone expected, especially for Jacim who was newly installed in her position just this past January. A former anchor and reporter for Fox 35, Jacim joined FBCF in 2019 as its director of community empowerment for the Central Florida region. She calls the role of president and CEO an "honor and privilege."

"Moving into the role of president and CEO is an opportunity that fuels and impassions me. It's exciting every day to be able to work with our stellar board and help lead the organization and shape its future," she says. "There is so much to do, so many people who need our help. This year has forced us to press fast forward on certain areas of growth, including some virtual programs, but we are rising to the challenge and, actually, that challenge is benefiting us in some ways by allowing us to become more stable."

Technology is also allowing much of the events and programming centered around Breast Cancer Awareness Month to carry on while some pandemic restrictions remain in place. For the second year in a row, FBCF is partnering with the Orlando Sports Foundation for the Race 2 Cure. The event kicks off virtually Oct. 1 and participants can log their virtual walk or run any time during the month, which could in turn boost participation since people can complete their activity on their own schedule and in a safe, socially distant manner.

FBCF is also launching a program called Virtual MASS (Mammograms After Sunday Service), a virtual adaptation of a program created by a survivor and works to reduce the number of late-stage diagnoses in underserved African-American and minority communities with education and access to screenings.

"A lot of people don't realize that only 10 percent of breast cancer cases are hereditary, and the majority are caused by environmental factors. That means educating women, and men, is key. Lifestyle and health care choices can make a difference. Our job is to make sure people know that. It's also our job to make sure people know how to respond to a family history."

Advocacy will likely continue virtually as well, being that it is one of the primary missions of the organization. "We had just been to Tallahassee back in February and had one of our largest turnouts. We are always making our voices heard in the capital, looking for legislation that supports breast cancer patients getting the treatments they need, not what insurance companies may dictate," Jacim says.

All funds raised by FBCF stay in Florida, ensuring that programs are directly benefiting your family, your friends and your neighbors, Jacim continues. The organization also touts a perfect score from Charity Navigator—the only breast cancer organization both statewide and nationwide to do so.

Work continues on the medical frontier as well. Board members of the FBCF are on the front lines of research and treatment at renowned institutions such as UCF, UF and the Moffitt Cancer Center. "It is invaluable to have them on the board. They are in the labs daily, working on cancer breakthroughs. They keep us updated on the latest advancements which helps determine our compass," she says.

Seeing the impact this organization makes on a daily basis is what keeps Jacim and the team going. "We think about the people who need this help, and we've all seen this year that there are so many factors we can't control," she says. "I truly believe passion and flexibility are the keys. If there is a way to get it done, we will find it."



President and CEO Tracy Jacim addresses a group in the Villages

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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

A Healthy Vision

The Florida Retina Institute specializes in treating diabetic retinopathy, a leading cause of blindness that often goes undiagnosed. by BRITTANY ANN MORRISEY



When undiagnosed or left untreated, diabetes is a disease known to cause many serious health complications. One of those complications is diabetic retinopathy, the leading cause of blindness in adults ages 20 to 74.

Retinopathy happens when high blood sugar levels cause damage to a person's eyes. Unfortunately, the damage often goes unnoticed until the disease has become a serious threat.

"When blood sugars are high, it can cause inflammation and weakening of the blood vessels causing them to leak, which damages the retina," explains Dr. Jaya B. Kumar, a retina specialist at the Florida Retina Institute who has advanced training in vitreoretinal diseases and surgery. "As a result, there's not enough oxygen and blood flow to parts of the retina, and subsequently abnormal vessels can form. These vessels bleed, form scar tissue and retinal detachment—all of these changes can lead to vision loss."

The physicians at the Florida Retina Institute are ophthalmologists who are fellowship trained in vitreoretinal diseases and surgery. The institute, which has 19 locations throughout Central Florida, North Florida and Southeast Georgia, places an emphasis on continuing education so doctors are up to date on all the latest medical and surgical advancements for not only diabetic retinopathy but also disorders such as retinal detachment, macular degeneration, retinal vein occlusion and more.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends people with diabetes receive annual eye exams because if caught early, diabetic retinopathy can be treated successfully. Abnormal findings may require more frequent check-ups. While most people do not have any symptoms for diabetic retinopathy, people with diabetes should be on alert for changes in their eyesight such as new or increasing floaters, blurry or fluctuating vision, difficulty seeing at night and decreased clarity of colors.

Dr. Kumar stresses that all diabetics should always attend their annual eye checkups as early detection is key. Although, the best treatment for retinopathy is preventing its onset in the first place.

"Treating diabetic retinopathy is a team approach with the patient, primary care provider, endocrinologist, dietician and eye doctor. The first step is controlling the blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol and adopting a healthy lifestyle including diet, exercise and smoking cessation," Dr. Kumar says. "When patients have early stages of diabetic retinopathy, that's all we need to do.

"For more advanced cases we may use medications injected into the eye to improve vision and prevent vision loss, laser treatment to stop abnormal vessel growth, or surgical intervention to remove scar tissue or repair retinal detachment."

Dr. Kumar says to maintain good eye health, patients with diabetes should remember their ABCs. A stands for A1C, the marker for blood sugar level, which should be less than seven. B is blood pressure control. C is "cholesterol should be low, and cigarettes are a no." And S is for "see" your eye doctor routinely for your dilated eye exam.

"Diabetic retinopathy is preventable and early detection and treatment are key to prevent vision loss," Dr. Kumar says.



Dr. Jaya B. Kumar

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THE 2020 PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOL REPORT CARD



MAKING THE GRADE

The start of a new school year means that it's time for us to examine some of the area's top private schools to see how these revered academic institutions are helping students recognize their potential both in and out of the classroom. We worked directly with the schools to glean information on key areas like average SAT scores, the percentage of students attending four-year colleges, tuition rates, student-to-teacher ratios and much more. In addition, we had the chance to speak to several school officials to find out how they are dealing with the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.



TUITION, PER YEAR

SCHOOL	
Trinity Prep	$23,910
Windermere Prep	$23,075
Lake Highland Prep	$22,400
The First Academy	$19,880
Montverde Academy	$18,350
Lake Mary Prep	$16,700
The Geneva School	$16,305
Foundation Academy	$14,355
The Master's Academy	$14,268
Bishop Moore	$12,480*

* Increase for non-Catholic students

SAT TOTAL AVERAGE SCORE

SCHOOL	
Trinity Prep	1317
Lake Highland Prep	1311
Windermere Prep	1229
Lake Mary Prep	1225
The Geneva School	1215
The First Academy	1207
Bishop Moore	1181
The Master's Academy	1163
Foundation Academy	1154

SAT BREAKDOWN

SCHOOL	M	EBRW
Bishop Moore	572	609
Foundation Academy	570	584
Lake Highland Prep	655	656
Lake Mary Prep	627	598
The First Academy	600	607
The Geneva School	600	615
The Master's Academy	574	589
Trinity Prep	660	657
Windermere Prep	625	604

M/Math; **EBRW**/Evidence-Based Reading and Writing

TOTAL HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

SCHOOL	
Bishop Moore	1,417
Lake Highland Prep	756
Montverde Academy	675
Windermere Prep	605
Trinity Prep	524
The First Academy	400
The Master's Academy	335
Foundation Academy	287
Lake Mary Prep	180
The Geneva School	142

STUDENT-TO-TEACHER RATIO

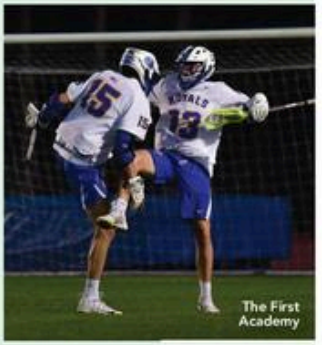
SCHOOL	
The Geneva School	8:1
Lake Highland Prep	11:1
Lake Mary Prep	11:1
The Master's Academy	11:1
Trinity Prep	11:1
Montverde Academy	12:1
Foundation Academy	14:1
Bishop Moore	15:1
The First Academy	15:1

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS ATTENDING 4-YEAR COLLEGES

SCHOOL	
The First Academy	100%
The Geneva School	100%
Lake Mary Prep	100%
Windermere Prep	100%
Montverde Academy	99%
Trinity Prep	99%
Lake Highland Prep	98%
The Master's Academy	94%
Bishop Moore	86%
Foundation Academy	79%

Continued on next page





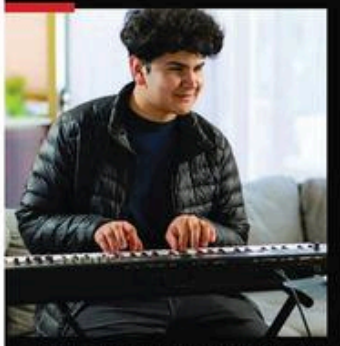


Experience
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- We offer an exemplary college-prep curriculum designed to foster academic and spiritual growth.
- Our students contribute more than 30,000 service hours in the greater Orlando area annually.
- 98% of our graduates are college bound.
- Our 2019-2020 graduates were awarded more than $24 million in scholarships.
- We hold 29 state titles and 3 national championships in athletics.
- We offer 23 AP courses every year.

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A PRIVATE CONVERSATION

We spoke with several school officials to get a grasp on a very different school year, the misconceptions about private school education and how they look to cultivate students into young adults.

What have been some of the biggest challenges caused by the pandemic?

"School had to be reinvented—everything from class meetings on video conferences, to tests and quizzes online, to doing orchestra or choir with everyone in a separate place. Teachers were so creative and really stepped up their games to keep kids learning. A key component of the success has been communication. It's difficult because all communication must be very deliberate. You don't realize how much happens in casual conversations in the hallways, on a break in the quad or at lunch. Teachers, administrators, students and parents have really had to identify the necessary communication channels under difficult circumstances."
— Dr. Stephanie Dryden, director of learning and instruction, Trinity Prep

"Balancing the need to have students and teachers together while adhering to COVID-19 safety protocols has been the No. 1 challenge. At Windermere Prep we are working hard to focus on the combination of a safe environment and continuity of learning at the same time. The need to create distance on campus and reduce group sizes poses significant logistical challenges."
— Dr. Steve Lyng, head of school, Windermere Prep

NUMBER OF AP CLASSES OFFERED

SCHOOL	
Montverde Academy	34
Lake Highland Prep	30
Trinity Prep	29
Bishop Moore	26
The First Academy	22
Lake Mary Prep	19
The Master's Academy	17
Foundation Academy	13
The Geneva School	9
Windermere Prep	2

NUMBER OF HONORS CLASSES OFFERED

SCHOOL	
Lake Highland Prep	74
Trinity Prep	49
Bishop Moore	46
The First Academy	34
The Geneva School	30
Windermere Prep	23*
Lake Mary Prep	19
Foundation Academy	18
The Master's Academy	18
Montverde Academy	14

*These courses are offered as part of The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme



In your view, what are some of the misconceptions people have when it comes to private education?

"The meaning of personalized learning. This does not mean that every child has their own personalized learning plan or lessons, it means we really get to know your child's strengths and weaknesses so we can provide them with support and challenge them to continue to grow as a learner." *— Angel Nguyen, director of admissions and marketing, Lake Mary Prep*

"Common misconceptions include the notion that a private school education is only suitable for academically elite students or wealthy families. Granted, most private schools test for admission, and they also charge tuition. However, there are many opportunities for students not in the top of their class as well as financial resources to assist those who desire what is typically a smaller school program providing more connections with teachers and more chances to take on leadership roles." *— Kedi Milajecki, advancement coordinator, The Geneva School*

Besides a quality education, what kind of things do you hope a student walks away with after they graduate?

"At Montverde Academy, our students gain a solid work ethic and an understanding that achievements are earned. Our mission is to inspire students to become leaders with a passion for knowledge, global vision and innovation while developing character in a nurturing and diverse community." *—Dr. Kasey C. Kesselring, head of school, Montverde Academy*

"This year marks the 50th anniversary of Lake Highland Preparatory School (LHP), and since the beginning, LHP has been committed to its mission of instilling Christian values, inspiring patriotism, developing leaders and nurturing lifelong learners within an atmosphere of love, concern and mutual respect. Today, LHP continues to prepare young men and women with extraordinary academic rigor and opportunities to thrive in arts, athletics, academics, leadership, and service. Last school year, students contributed more than 45,000 community service hours and found innovative ways to help the local community and nation during the COVID-19 pandemic." *— Candace Watson, communications coordinator, Lake Highland Prep*







SEIZING THE MOMENT

By taking full advantage of her opportunities, **Scarlett Johansson** finds herself in some pretty elite Hollywood company.

BY **EVAN JAMESON**

These days, Scarlett Johansson's star couldn't be brighter. Not only has she spent the past couple years atop *Forbes'* list for the highest-paid actresses, but her recent powerful performances in *Jojo Rabbit* and *Marriage Story* earned her rave reviews from fans and critics alike, including a well-deserved tour on the award circuit where she became just the 11th actor ever to be nominated for two Academy Awards in the same year. →

SCARLETT

SEIZING THE MOMENT

With the 35-year-old's reported net worth at a lofty $165 million, there is proof beyond a doubt that her widespread acclaim is based upon success, with the 2003 turn in *Lost in Translation* the starting point on a long road that has rarely seen the Manhattan-born star's level of performance dip.

As Marvel films' almost perennial box office success attests, the upcoming action spectacular, *Black Widow*, is set to endorse the worthiness of those career earnings further, regardless of how few might step foot into cinemas at present.

Not that it matters—indeed, Johansson movies over time have amassed more than $14 billion in box office revenue, something that puts her in the top 10 of the biggest-grossing box office actors of all time.

Away from the big screen, Johansson got engaged to her partner, *Saturday Night Live* writer and comedian Colin Jost, in 2019. She has a 5-year-old daughter, Rose, with former husband and advertising agency owner Romain Dauriac.

The long-delayed *Black Widow* sees Natasha Romanoff flourish in her own spinoff on the film set in between the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) releases *Civil War* and *Infinity War*, focusing on her own personal quests. It will be Johansson's ninth and final appearance as the former KGB agent-turned freelance operative.

Q&A

What has the switch from drama to action movie and Marvel Cinematic Universe brought to your acting prowess?
It's made me realize that I need to stay active, healthy, fit and in shape, that's for sure [laughs]! These Marvel movies are so tough on set. The moves in *Iron Man 2* were the first bits of choreographed fight scenes I had ever done. I knew once they were under my belt that they were going to be the norm [laughs].

They are quite different to other genres of films that I had done before, obviously. But they have storylines, backstories, and it's still a movie and you're acting. So, you may be preparing for the role before you go on set each day, but you still have a script to read.

There's a beginning, middle and an end and you have to always understand that there could be something down the line that you're affecting, in terms of the MCU.

Once I was fully immersed in the role of Nat, I totally felt that I was her. I was thinking and acting like her—or at least like I thought she would be. That helped me totally for *Black Widow* because all of the fight scenes and sequences come from a deep and emotional place inside Nat.

So, everything that has happened previously in her life has affected her and what you see is the outpouring of emotion. Out comes anger, frustration, betrayal, broken trust or whatever she has been left to feel from the things that she has experienced on a personal level.

Obviously, for anyone who is joining these films in the middle of the storylines, it can be difficult to catch up.
[Laughs] Yeah, I guess so. Regardless of if people saw the previous films, *Black Widow* is a flashback movie, so it can be enjoyed as a standalone for those who aren't aware of the films which have been released before it. However, as with a lot of the MCU and movies in general, nothing is chronological. They stand as their own entities and need to.

But I suppose there are also a few people—albeit surely not so many—who have read the comics and kind of know some of the backstories and the history of the MCU who may not even have seen the movies yet. Surely, not that many have done it that way around, I know. But there will still be one or two.

Anyway, *Black Widow* is more about everything that has gone on in Nat's life and she is using that as a motivation and a release of tension to put an end to the personal quests that she is on. And my, does it really come to a head.

Along with the 68 credits on your acting résumé, you're also a mother of a young daughter. How do you find time to do that and be the ninth-highest-grossing actor of all-time?
With difficulty [laughs]! It is an exhausting, yet wonderful experience being a mother and bringing up a child. You can't replace the irresistible amount of love that it brings and at times it can overwhelm me. Being a totally active mother in the early years of Rose's life is something that can never be taken away and I will hold those memories with me forever.

Being active and always making sure I am there for my daughter was the best way of regaining the figure that I had before pregnancy and is still an amazing assist in staying in shape, all of the time. You're never sitting still and it's great—a brilliant way to burn off the calories and still have amazing fun.

Your home movies of when you were young are well-known now, with footage showing you singing and dancing. It's like you always knew you would be in show business.
Oh absolutely, but every child fantasizes about going out into the world to do something incredible. It's totally unnatural for that not to be the case—whether that's a sports person, an



In her upcoming film Black Widow

"EVERY CHILD FANTASIZES ABOUT GOING OUT INTO THE WORLD TO DO SOMETHING INCREDIBLE. IT'S TOTALLY UNNATURAL FOR THAT NOT TO BE THE CASE."

actor, a train driver. I think that's what I love about children—they have such a range for potential and optimism in their own lives. You will only ever see that sort of unrelinquished ambition in scriptwriters and authors! It's like they have never lost that spark of childhood innocence and potential. I love that.

Ultimately, when I was young, I just made sure that I was enjoying myself. I was introduced to musicals and movies by my mom, who was a complete obsessive—in the right way—with film.

So, when you're watching Judy Garland performances, singing along to Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals and knowing every single word, pitch and tone [laughs], and being immersed into those worlds all of the time, it's no surprise where I have ended up in my life.

Those times in my life were just absolute heaven and I always dreamed of being in those movies myself or at least stage productions like those. I think wanting to be Judy Garland in *Meet Me in St. Louis* and putting together song-and-dance routines for my family, helped me a great deal.

The passion was always there and because I loved what I was doing, I never ever felt like it was hard work, at all. So, I think it gave me an advantage the older I got, and the closer that then got me to fulfilling my dreams of working in show business.

You're one of the few child actors who has overcome what seemed like a prolonged string of rejection to then finally become a fully-fledged success. It certainly wasn't overnight success, was it?

Yeah, I have worked hard, and it sometimes feels that it has been a long time coming. But there are a lot of child actors who work hard through their teens and early adult life and it's not like I've worked harder than they have. Sometimes it's about the resilience and being in the right place at the right time and having the right fit for your acting style.



With Laura Dern in Marriage Story

Look, there's so much luck, and because there are so many different productions and projects going on just in Los Angeles and Hollywood—especially when you're a kid—that you can always feel like you have a chance to get the next part.

The first time you get rejected it's a killer, it really is. I mean before any of the acting auditions came along, my brother got selected for a talent agency ahead of me and I cried for days and I thought everything was all over. Obviously, it wasn't, but you don't see the bigger picture when you're 7 years old!

So, the more I auditioned and the more I got rejected, I just learned that that was what happened. Because there were so many kids auditioning and you couldn't get all of the parts. It's just that I wasn't getting any of them. But I started getting more confident and I am so competitive, that I brushed off the disappointment and went for the next one.

It's certainly made me a stronger person and rejection in later life is relatively easy because you know that there is always something more afterwards. One thing lost is never the last thing available.

Do you look at the film industry the same way now that you used to?

No, I have a much deeper understanding of the complexity of my job and its possibilities, now more than ever before, just from the variety of the work that I have done and the time I put into it. They say 10,000 hours is what makes you good at something—well, I put like 100,000 hours in!

I am so inspired by my job and understand it in a totally different way; it's evolved over time, I'm interested in different things, I can imagine someday teaching acting classes. I like collaboration and working with young actors. I love the collaborative experience of working with a cast and I think I can appreciate other people's strengths and weaknesses in a way that I hadn't before.

PANDEMIC UPDATE: DINING

A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Dining out in the pandemic is certainly different, but most locals are finding it to be a welcome respite.

BY PETER PROKO

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the hardest hit areas has been the restaurant industry. Already a challenging business, without diners filling seats regularly, it was only right for owners, chefs, servers and more to worry about their futures. Slowly, as restrictions began to be rolled back, some folks were thrilled to make their way back to their favorite eateries, while other would-be diners weren't comfortable sitting down to a meal in public just yet.

Then news came in late September that Gov. Ron DeSantis was lifting all coronavirus restrictions, paving the way for restaurants (and bars) to go back to 100 percent capacity levels should they choose.

While it remains to be seen if restaurants will be packed anytime soon, Central Floridians have certainly been making the most of the situation when dining out. Allyson Gregg captures her latest foodie endeavors around the Orlando area on her Instagram page and has been taking advantage of all the local culinary scene has to offer, whether ordering takeout or dining al fresco. But she is doing so with a cautious approach.

"At the end of the day, if you catch the virus, you catch the virus. But if you want to prevent it, do all of the things they're telling you to do: wash your hands, wear a mask, keep your distance. That's really all you need to do," she says.

But just because things have shifted in recent weeks, Gregg feels that those clamoring for the way things were pre-pandemic need to fully appreciate the nuanced situation.

"You can't pretend like it was before, because I don't think it will be that way for a while," says Gregg. "People keep wanting to go back to normal, but this is the new normal. This is how it's going to be for a while and I think people are having a hard time dealing with that. It will take some growing pains."

Paul Johnsen knows the local restaurant and bar scene quite well. He's a former bartender who now works as an on-premise representative for spirits company William Grant & Sons. Prior to the pandemic, he and his wife—also a bartender—spent a lot of time dining out or grabbing drinks. But since the virus hit, they've been leery of the situation, especially with an infant at home.

"We have a new child who's only [9] months old. We used to go out a decent amount," says Johnsen. "We had him right before [the pandemic] and we even used to take him out. Now we're at the point where we don't want to take him anywhere. If he gets sick, how do you fix that?"

While those fears are more than justifiable, Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings says there are plenty of reasons to be hopeful, but stresses



> *My wife and I have seen the precautions taken by the restaurants and appreciate the care they are taking to keep both their employees and customers safe.*
>
> —ORANGE COUNTY MAYOR JERRY DEMINGS

Opposite page photo by Greg Patton/Shutterstock.com



Gov. DeSantis has lifted all coronavirus restrictions on restaurants—allowing them to return to 100 percent capacity if they choose.

that it will take patience from all involved.

"Life will most likely not be the same as it was pre-pandemic for a long time, but we must continue to build consumer confidence in making a full recovery," he says.

Demings says he and his wife (U.S. Rep. Val Demings) have been patronizing their favorite restaurants on Sand Lake Road's Restaurant Row and they've been impressed by the safety measures put into place.

"My wife and I have seen the precautions taken by the restaurants and appreciate the care they are taking to keep both their employees and customers safe. Several times we have dined-in at restaurants and have felt safe and enjoyed delicious food," says Demings.

Savanna Chrostowski, of Orlando, agrees with that sentiment as she has been dining out two-to-three times a week during the pandemic. Preferring to sit mainly indoors, she acknowledges the noticeable changes like spaced tables and digital menus, but says for the most part things are as normal as they can be.

"I love eating out in general and it brings a sense of normalcy, but supporting local places is always a plus and the overall experience has honestly been great," Chrostowski says, adding she's always felt safe when visiting a restaurant.

"You are putting yourself at risk anytime you go anywhere, not just restaurants, but I feel they are doing a good job keeping up with the cleanliness," she says.

Another Orlando resident, Patrick Jardim, has been dining out even more. Thanks to his busy schedule, cooking isn't always a reality, so he's been eating at restaurants as much as five times per week. Aside from the obvious changes in atmosphere, he's noticed little else that's altered his typical dining encounters.

"Restaurants are doing the best they can during this time and I've never really had a bad experience," Jardim says. "The only real difference is that we wear masks now and are socially distanced from others. Servers are still pretty attentive and I also feel well-treated at grab-and-go places."

As Central Florida's restaurant scene continues to rebound, it's become clear that residents are eager to help keep the momentum going. And while it needs to be done in a safe manner, that shared interest is helping lift spirits up and keep hope alive.

"The pandemic has affected every aspect of how we do business not only in Orange County, but around the nation and it has cost our community billions of dollars," says Demings. "I cannot thank our business owners enough for being resilient and trying to stay safe, while finding creative and alternative ways to stay open and make a living. … Things will get better, but it will just take time. I have been pleased by this community's response and sense of togetherness in combatting the spread of this virus."



PANDEMIC UPDATE: REAL ESTATE

WHILE THE IRON IS HOT

With record-low interest rates and limited inventory, the Central Florida real estate market is booming for sellers despite the pandemic.

BY MATT COSENTINO

Normally when someone moves into a new house, it does not take long for the neighbors to stop by, introduce themselves and perhaps offer some baked goods as a gift. Eric Matthews and his wife, local residents who purchased a townhome in Champions Gate this past summer, have not exactly had the pleasure of a warm welcome, but they completely understand the reason. After all, moving during a pandemic certainly comes with its share of challenges.

"The funniest thing with COVID is we just wave and talk to our new neighbors from across the street. It's different, for sure," Matthews says with a laugh. "We haven't really sat down with anyone or compared notes because I think everyone is still a little shy with COVID. That will come later, hopefully."

Aside from fitting into the neighborhood, Matthews acknowledges there were other obstacles to overcome throughout the process. Although he and his wife are getting close to retirement age and have been thinking about buying their "forever home" for some time, they were apprehensive after the pandemic hit. Not only were they worried about keeping their jobs in a turbulent economy, but they also had safety concerns about walking through prospective houses. Once those fears were allayed, they made the decision to move forward because of historically low interest rates, and they are happy they did.

"We considered for a brief period delaying the purchase for six months, but what would happen if we waited and the interest rates went up? They are so favorable right now, so I think we made the best decision," Matthews says.

"It was quite an experience and I'm glad it's over. … With any home purchase, there's some level of stress that's going to be involved. But overall, it worked out well. Even though we went with new construction and for the most part didn't really need a realtor, having one definitely benefited us."

Their realtor, Ryan Heitman of ERA Grizzard Real Estate, has been in the industry since 2004. Like other professionals in the area, he notes that the market has not slowed down at all in recent months during the pandemic—it has actually taken off.

"Central Florida is always one of the top places in the country for people to move to, and the interest rates are unbelievable right now," he says. "When I first started in 2004 and 2005 during the housing boom [it was like this]. It's a great time to sell; if you put a sign in your yard, you're selling your house.

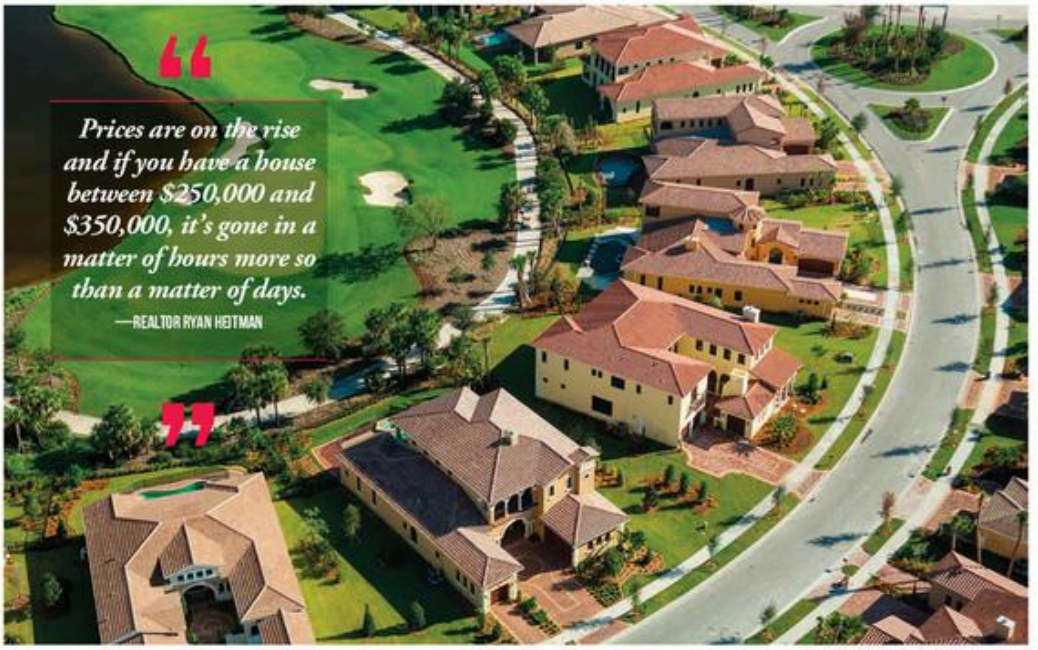
"There are definitely bidding wars. If it's a good neighborhood and a good house, you're getting multiple offers. Different areas and price ranges make a big difference. We're still a very service industry-based economy, so you don't have huge salaries. But prices are on the rise and if you have a house between $250,000 and $350,000, it's gone in a matter of hours more so than a matter of days."

Adjusting to the new normal

The statistics back up Heitman's words. According to the Orlando Regional Realtor Association (ORRA), strong buyer activity has led to an upswing in home sales the last two months, and in August members of the organization participated in 3,539 sales, an increase of 4.2% over the same time last year. The median price for Orlando homes sold in the month was $275,000, a 10% increase over August 2019.

Going back to the beginning of the pandemic, it was hard to predict such an outcome. Realtors weren't sure if they could even continue working, and both buyers and sellers were hesitant. Some activity did come from those who moved up existing settlement dates out of fear for how long the coronavirus crisis could last, but other than that nobody knew what to expect.





"At the very beginning there was a lot of uncertainty," says Reese Stewart, president of ORRA. "We didn't know what was going on, we didn't know who was deemed essential. Finally the governor announced that real estate was essential so we could get back to doing our craft."

Technology has transformed the industry since Stewart acquired his real estate license in 1996, and it has changed the way business is done during the pandemic.

"Realtors were good before this at virtual tours, but they got even better when they could go out and do open houses or streaming videos for buyers," he says. "The title companies [also utilized technology]. Some of them were doing closings outside and the buyers and sellers would pull up in their cars and have papers handed to them to sign. At the very beginning it was a learning curve for everybody."

Christy Clark-Weber, broker and owner of Southern Heritage Realty, adds that FaceTime has been an important tool that allows her to give virtual tours to clients through her smartphone. It can be useful for those who have safety concerns about physically walking through multiple homes, or even more so for clients from out of state who are looking to relocate to the area or purchase investment properties.

"FaceTime is huge right now," she says. "They don't have to be there; they can have the realtor walk through the house and ask them questions as they're doing it. Then they can go ahead and make an offer, get the contract and fly down here to see the house during an inspection and make sure they want the house.

"I've told people, especially investors, that if they can do cash and they want the house as is, then send the offer in right now and then we'll go look at the house. A smart buyer would have a really good agent who is looking every single day for what they're looking for so they don't miss anything."

Heitman also uses FaceTime frequently and recently represented buyers from Utah who didn't see their new house in person until the day they moved in. "I was a little nervous but fortunately they still liked it," he says. "You want them to see it, feel it and be there [ahead of time] to know that they truly want that house. But we definitely sell them that way."

What the future holds

Local professionals agree that as the pandemic persists and many people continue to work and spend more time at home, the features they are looking for in a house include office space, strong internet connection, extra square footage and outdoor living areas.

Heitman states that all of Orange County remains popular, notably Downtown Orlando, and Seminole County is also desirable because of its school system. Clark-Webber, meanwhile, is seeing clients seek three towns in particular. "Winter Garden, College Park and Mount Dora are affordable and family friendly," she says. "Everybody is getting back to the healthy neighborhoods so there's a big demand for that."

As ORRA continues to support its membership in various ways, including continuing education classes, Stewart is encouraged by the activity in the market but is worried about the number of available homes.

"We've had low inventory for a while, and the amount of inventory on the market continues to concern us, especially in the $300,000-and-below range," he says. Stewart adds there is currently less than a month's worth of inventory, and a six-month supply of homes is usually an indicator of a balanced market.

Clark-Weber, however, believes that inventory will start to rise for several reasons. "Between now and this time next year I think we're going to see a lot of homes come on the market because of the aging baby boomers moving in with their kids and people losing their jobs because of COVID," she says. "That's the mentality of a lot of people who invest; they're going to wait until these properties hit the market, thinking they can get a better deal. But any [seller] who has any intelligence is going to get a professional to work with them and get the right value for their house."

She also expects the hot market to continue into the winter and carry on to next year.

"The highest time for sales is normally between May and September," she says. "That's when people get the most money for their house, kids are out of school so families can move. But now, because of the pandemic situation, I think with the low interest rates sales are going to keep going all the way through next spring. The market should be very, very strong and it's going to be interesting."

PANDEMIC UPDATE:

PARTY PLANNING

FROM SOCIAL TO SOCIALLY DISTANT

BY JULIE SHANNON

With the threat of the virus looming, area venues are devising ways to keep the party going and celebrate safely.

Planning parties for any kind of celebration and momentous occasion involves many details, such as the decorations, food and number of guests to invite. Making sure these details were in order took a lot of work before COVID-19 made its way to the United States, but during the pandemic planning events has become much more difficult and time-consuming.

With the combination of capacity at venues (and even homes at one point) lowered to certain percentages, adhering to other restrictions implemented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), disinfecting areas before and after they are used, as well as making sure people are safe, planning a get-together the past several months has become challenging.

Weddings

Many couples have had to relocate their wedding for a number of reasons—wanting to be closer to home, space constraints and having to lower their guest count to name a few. Hammock Beach Golf Resort & Spa has been able to help these couples reschedule their wedding to the resort and make it the day they envisioned, while still adhering to state guidelines and implementing social distancing.

"We have had a number of weddings that were due to go to the Caribbean and have now scheduled their event with us so they are closer to home and can drive to their destination instead of flying," says Nicole Connon, director of marketing.

Hammock Beach has gotten creative with its planning, and Connon says smaller events have made the experiences more intimate and provided the opportunity to offer the kind of service that one would not normally receive at a larger event.

"Smaller events have given us the opportunity to provide highly personalized service," she says. "An example would be the choice of menu, being able to offer multiple menu items and providing a French-service style."

There have been some challenges along the way, as every venue has experienced in some shape or form.

"The biggest challenge we have had to work with is the buffet service where we now have to create a buffer between the food and beverages, and the client," she says. "Additional staffing is now required for buffets and station service."

Birthdays and other events

WonderWorks, an interactive amusement park in Orlando, hosts numerous parties and events throughout the year. It is a combination of a science center and family attraction that combines fun and learning with hands-on exhibits for kids





and adults alike.

General Manager Brian Wayne says sanitizing the buildings has always been a top priority, but they have increased their cleaning schedule and make sure all hands-on objects are disinfected between uses.

"We have a team that goes through and disinfects all touchable surfaces. Anything guests would touch in the exhibits, it's wiped down thoroughly throughout the day," he says.

WonderWorks has decreased capacity to 50 percent so guests can spread out as much as they can, but Wayne says they are able to do everything they would pre-COVID and have the same experience.

"A lot of the games and interactives are a one-person thing," he says. "Activities like laser tag or the ropes course have multiple people at a time but they are able to spread out, distance themselves and still have fun."

WonderWorks attracts all kinds of clientele, from kids celebrating their birthdays and interactive school trips to companies hosting parties and team-building activities.

"We also have the option for guests to buy out the entire building for a few hours or the whole day so they have it to themselves," Wayne says. "We've also had quite a few homeschool groups enjoy WonderWorks and offer a discounted ticket program."

Birthdays are still popular on the weekend and Wayne says his crew has been able to make each occasion a fun and enjoyable experience during the pandemic.

"We try to make things as normal as possible during birthday parties, including being able to remove masks while they are sitting and enjoying their food," Wayne says. "As far as the kids go, there's no difference. They still run around and play with everything; the only difference is having to wear masks inside. I see the kids still having a great time."

Wayne says it's a great feeling seeing kids have fun and their parents trusting the venue as a safe place to bring their families during the pandemic.

"What makes me the happiest is people's confidence in coming to WonderWorks. Being indoors and all hands-on, we've received positive comments online about our cleanliness and how people felt very safe here," he says. "We are proud people are confident they can come to our facility and feel safe and have a fun time with family and friends."

WonderWorks photo by Lvf/ images/Shutterstock.com

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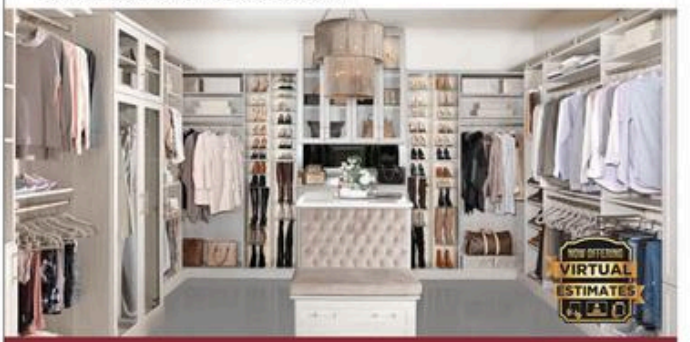
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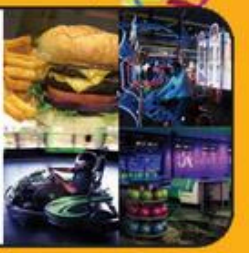
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Furry Friends

Central Floridians are taking comfort in spending time with pets during the coronavirus pandemic.

by Brittany Ann Morrisey

During times of upheaval, it's a blessing to be able to take comfort in spending time with pets. So maybe that is why a number of animal shelters across the U.S. have reported an increase in adoptions as of late.

However, here in Central Florida, the state of affairs is not as clear-cut. Although a couple of animal shelters told *Orlando Family Magazine* that they are indeed seeing an uptick in adoptions, others say they are struggling through the COVID-19 pandemic.

But all of Greater Orlando's local shelters do agree that now is as good a time as any—and possibly the best time for some would-be adopters—to welcome a new furry friend into your home.

Adoptions

Diane Gagliano, program coordinator for Seminole County Animal Services, says her shelter has seen a large rise in cat adoptions and a modest increase for dogs. Although, the shelter's dog kennels are not being filled as they once were.

"Our stray kennels are almost empty," Gagliano says. "I think it's because people are staying home and paying more attention to their dogs. So, their dogs aren't running off during the day and being picked up."

Diane Summers, division manager for Orange County Animal Services, says she's also seeing fewer animals come into her shelter.

"We're on track to receive approximately four to five thousand fewer animals than the year prior," she says. "I would say that our adoption interest has stayed the same, or potentially even been a little bit stronger, but we have fewer animals to adopt out."

Director for Osceola County Animal Services Kim Staton says there's been a drop in adoptions at her shelter.

"I think that's mainly attributed to the fact that we're still in stage two reopening, which means the public is having to schedule appointments," she says. "So we don't have the regular amount of traffic through the shelter that we did pre-COVID."

At the beginning of the pandemic, the Pet Alliance of Greater Orlando saw a decrease in its adoption numbers, a decline that lasted through the summer. But Executive Director Stephen Brady says things have picked up now because the nonprofit, which has one shelter in the city of Orlando and another in Sanford, has streamlined its COVID-19 adoption process.

The organization's shelters are not open for walk-ins right now, however, people can do virtual meet and greets with animals they are interested in and potential adopters can also schedule an appointment to meet a dog or cat in-person. This appointment-based arrangement is the structure most shelters around the region are following and there is no set date for when shelters will reopen to the public.

"We probably won't reopen to the public before the end of the year," Brady says.

Evictions

Aid organizations around Central Florida are concerned about a coming crisis that could be set off by Gov. Ron DeSantis lifting the moratorium on evictions. Combined with Central Florida's high unemployment rate and layoffs that continue to reverberate through the economy, an untold number of people could end up on the street, and so could their pets.

"It potentially could be hundreds and hundreds of animals locally," Brady says.

However, he cautions that such a crisis would not happen overnight since eviction processes typically take time to work through the court system. The team at Orange County Animal Services is also concerned about evictions in Central Florida.

"We've been following closely what's happening with evictions," Summers says. "Because I think if the eviction holds are taken off the table, we will see a lot of animals surrendered to shelters as people are displaced."

For some struggling pet owners who are not facing eviction at the moment but are tight on money, just a bag of dog or cat food can make all the difference.

"Not having a place to live is totally different than not being able to buy a bag of dog food," Gagliano says, adding that people should contact their local shelter if providing food to their pet is a barrier for them.

Being a nonprofit, the Pet Alliance is poised to help pet owners and has held three large-scale pet food giveaway events since the coronavirus pandemic started. The organization also has a pet food pantry where people can pick up what they need.

Brady says the organization has provided more food to people in March and May than it ever has historically. On giveaway days the organization distributes between 10 and 15 thousand pounds of pet food.

"It just provides a little bit of relief," Brady says. "Instead of spending $30 on your dog food, you can put that toward something else. I call it budget relieving—it just relieves your budget a little bit."



Foster Programs

For those who are not ready to adopt, fostering is an option. Animal foster programs allow people to take in and care for shelter pets for a specified amount of time.

"The more foster parents that we have, the more life-saving we can do," Summers says. "I know some people think, 'Oh, I can only take one occasionally. Maybe that's not that big of a help.' But honestly, each and every kitten or cat fostered is a life saved."

But if you have the time and money, now is the time to adopt from your local shelter.

"I personally think that adopted animals make great pets because I think a lot of animals know they've been rescued," Staton says. "I've always had rescue animals in my household and they just make very wonderful pets."

And there are benefits to having a pet in the home.

"It's been proven that animals are good for your mental health," Summers says. "They reduce anxiety and stress."

The bliss of cuddling with a kitten, the amusement gained from playing fetch with the family dog—it's a welcomed respite from the stress of living during a pandemic. So, if you're ready to open your home to a new furry friend, there are cats, kittens, puppies and dogs all eager to meet you at your local shelter.



Kitten Season

Although it has an endearing moniker, kitten season can be anything but cute. Referring to the span of time between spring and winter when cats are more prone to mate, this season results in lots of new kittens who desperately need homes. Local animal shelter managers ask people to remember a few things during this time:

- **If you find a litter of kittens and you do not see the mom nearby,** do not move them. Sometimes the mom has just gone off for a bit and will come back.
- **If you have observed the kittens for 12 to 24 hours and the mother has not come back,** then you should take the litter in.
- **If you can, care for the kittens until they are at least 8 weeks old.** Kittens younger than 8 weeks are highly susceptible to disease and therefore at-risk in a shelter setting.
- **If you are capable of caring for the kittens, reach out to your local shelter for guidance on how to do so.** If you cannot care for them, there are foster programs that may be able to help.
- **Spay and neuter your pets.** It's better for their health and for helping to manage the local feral cat population.

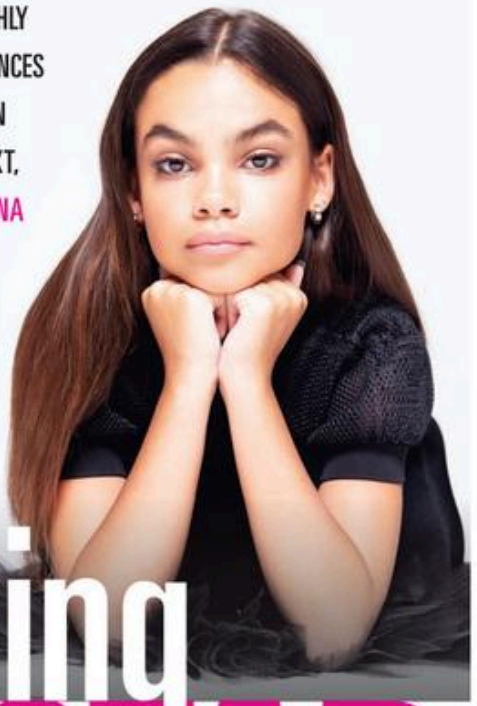






BY BRITTANY ANN MORRISEY

WITH SEVERAL HIGHLY VISIBLE PERFORMANCES HITTING THE SCREEN THIS YEAR AND NEXT, 13-YEAR-OLD ARIANA GREENBLATT IS ONE OF YOUNG HOLLYWOOD'S MOST PROMISING PERFORMERS.



Rising STAR

Whether she's on the silver screen performing next to bright-green CGI stand-ins or in the sound booth voicing an animated character, 13-year-old Ariana Greenblatt displays the exuberance of someone who's really happy to be where she is.

"Everything about acting—I'm so passionate about it," she says speaking to *Orlando Family Magazine* in a recent phone interview.

In 2019, Ariana, who was born in New York but raised in Florida, was named by *The Hollywood Reporter* as one of Young Hollywood's upcoming talents and she's living up to that forecast with a slew of features debuting this year and next.

In August, she starred in *The One and Only Ivan*, a film adaptation of the beloved children's novel by K.A. Applegate. The movie was set for a worldwide theatrical release but, because of the coronavirus pandemic, it was instead distributed on the streaming service Disney+. The family-friendly feature tells the story of an artistic silverback gorilla named Ivan who begins to question his life in captivity. Ariana plays a live-action role alongside actors Bryan Cranston and Ramón Rodríguez. Heavyweights including Sam Rockwell, Angelina Jolie, Danny DeVito and Helen Mirren voice the movie's CGI animals. Some of the movie's principal photography took place in Central Florida in the city of Lakeland and in nearby Polk County.

Before *The One and Only Ivan*, audiences heard Ariana as the voice of young Velma in the animated film *Scoob* released this past May on video on demand platforms.

Looking ahead, her upcoming projects include the Netflix original sci-fi thriller *Awake* where she stars alongside Gina Rodriguez and Jennifer Jason Leigh and a small part in the film adaptation of Lin-Manuel Miranda's Broadway musical *In the Heights*. But this month you can catch her in the post-apocalyptic romantic comedy *Love and Monsters*. The movie, which has also foregone a theatrical release because of the pandemic, will be available on Oct. 16 on video on demand platforms.

With all that she has lined up, it's clear that this Ariana's star is on the rise. So, on the heels of *The One and Only Ivan*'s debut, we spoke to her about working with CGI animals, visiting Australia to shoot her latest movie and the person she hopes to be when she grows up.

Tell me about your experience on *The One and Only Ivan* set? Did you have a lot of fun shooting the movie?

Yeah. I had such a great time on set. Fortunately, I got to film in London for like three months, which had been a dream of mine. I've always wanted to go to London, so that was amazing. … I got to work with Bryan Cranston, which was incredible. I learned so much from him. He is such an amazing person to work with. He's so funny. We had such a great time together, and overall, it was just incredible.

The One and Only Ivan was a book before it was a movie. Did you read the book before you shot the movie?

So, fun story, when I was in about third grade, I actually read the book for my class before I even started acting. … When I read the book, it was incredible. I was so moved and inspired by it, and I just wanted to help all the animals around the world after I read it.

Tell me about your character in the movie.

My character, Julia, is Ivan's best friend and she's also like the voice for Ivan. She inspires him to get into art and to kind of paint his way out to the life that he deserves. And Julia is a caring, sweet, introverted girl. She's so smart and she's so nice and she loves art, just like me, so I thought that was pretty cool.

And we should say that Ivan is a gorilla and CGI was used to depict the character in the movie. Was it hard for you to act alongside a stand-in? I'm sure the gorilla wasn't really there, right?

Yes, you're right on the money. I didn't actually get to work with a gorilla or an elephant, but fortunately I had the experience of working with green screens and CGI while I was filming [*Avengers:*] *Infinity War*, so I had the experience doing that. So, it definitely helped with the filming of *The One and Only Ivan*.

Photograph by Tiziano Lugli

Ben Bishop played Ivan, so he had a motion capture suit on and he would do all the movements and body language and little sounds like a gorilla would do, which I thought was so intriguing. And he also had these crutches that he would walk on to really mimic how gorillas walk. And regarding the elephants, there were two green-screen elephants. One as the baby size of Ruby, and then another huge one as Stella. So, it was super cool to just see bright-green elephants walking around, but you definitely have to use your imagination while working with things like that.

What do you like about acting?

There's so much that goes into acting that I love, but probably the story that I get to tell. I'm the voice for whatever character I'm playing. So, I find that really cool that I can just embody whoever I'm playing and I just completely transform into another person.

You have been shooting a lot of movies. Have there been any filming locations that you enjoyed visiting?

Yes, Australia. I got to film a movie in Australia for like a couple of weeks. That was amazing. Australia was one of the best places I've ever been. There were kangaroos everywhere; we stayed at this hotel where there were just kangaroos hopping around our front lawn, which was crazy. I just loved Australia so much. The people there were so cool, the environment, the animals, everything about it.



GREENBLATT WITH RAMÓN RODRIGUEZ ON THE SET OF *THE ONE AND ONLY IVAN.*

You have another movie coming up called *Awake*. Can you tell me a little bit about this movie and what your role in the movie was?

Yeah. So, I've done a Netflix original called *Awake* and that's with Gina Rodriguez, and it's like an emotional and action-packed storyline. It's a thriller. It's super cool. And there's sci-fi-esque [aspect] to it. I don't want to spoil too much, hopefully I can talk more about it soon.

My character is nothing you've seen me do before, so keep that in mind. And it was probably the most challenging thing I've done, but also one of the best things I've done. I got to meet incredible people, such as Gina, who's like family to me now.

Your movie *Love and Monsters* comes out on video on demand this month. Tell me a little bit about it.

That was actually the movie that I got to film in Australia. I got to work face-to-face with Dylan O'Brien and Michael Rooker. They're such fun people to work with. … And my character is like a super cool, warrior-esque type person. She's a survivor. And what happens in the movie obviously [I] can't say too much, of course, but … it's such a cool movie, and I can't wait for you guys to see it.

Earlier this year, you voiced young Velma in the Warner Bros. movie *Scoob*. Do you enjoy voice-over work?

It was definitely challenging in the very beginning. Because with normal acting, you have to use your eyes and body language, which is much different from voice-overs because you really have to over enunciate and over put the emotion in when you're just talking, so the viewers can feel the emotion just through your voice. … I just love being in the booth; it's so fun. And doing different things with my voice, I find it so cool. I can't wait to do more voice-over things soon.

Who are some actors you look up to?

There's so many. I'd really love to work with Jim Carrey and Leonardo DiCaprio; those [two] are definitely on my bucket list. Also, Natalie Portman, I love her so much. She's a role model to me in acting. And I would love to work with Gina Rodriguez again, because she was just a great energy to be around and I learned a lot from her. … There are like hundreds of people I'd like to work with, but those are just a couple that I can think of.

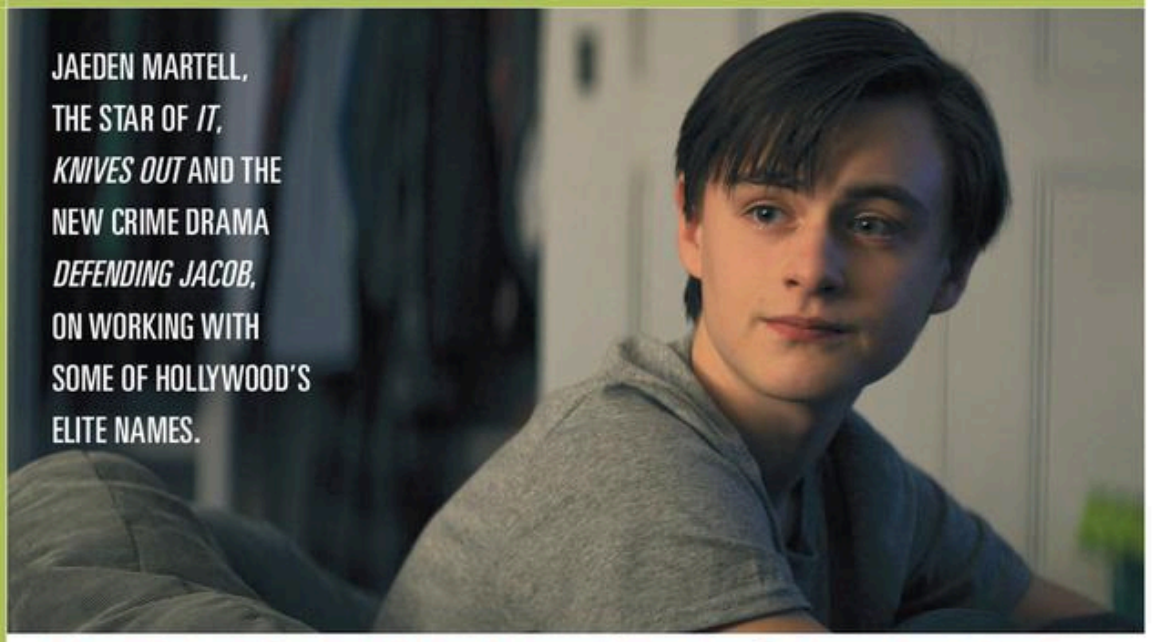
You're doing so much now and you're only 13 years old, but what are some of the things that you'd like to do when you grow up?

That's hard. I want to go to college, and I also want to do a lot of charity and inspire people when I'm older. Obviously with *The One and Only Ivan*, I want to have my own charity to help animals and stuff, because that's a big passion of mine. … I really want to travel the world and film in all the different places, and hopefully be an award-winning actress. … And hopefully I can be a very inspiring and powerful woman to other young girls in the future that can look up to me.



GREENBLATT WITH BRYAN CRANSTON ON THE SET OF *THE ONE AND ONLY IVAN.*

Photographs for The One and Only Ivan courtesy of Disney



JAEDEN MARTELL, THE STAR OF *IT*, *KNIVES OUT* AND THE NEW CRIME DRAMA *DEFENDING JACOB*, ON WORKING WITH SOME OF HOLLYWOOD'S ELITE NAMES.

IN CHARACTER

When we see the face of Jaeden Martell, chances are that our first thoughts go to the precocious 10-year-old boy stealing scene after scene in *St. Vincent*, the poignant 2014 coming-of-age film about a young boy who softens the heart of his curmudgeonly neighbor, played by Bill Murray. Or maybe we think of a young Bill Denbrough, the stuttering leader of the Losers Club from *It*, the 2017 film and its 2019 sequel, both based on the bestselling Stephen King novel.

Now age 17, Martell, a high school junior, is starring in *Defending Jacob*, a streaming series about a family dealing with the accusation that their 14-year-old son Jacob (Martell) may have murdered a classmate. Chris Evans (*Captain America*) and Michelle Dockery (*Downton Abbey*) play his parents in the Apple TV+ crime drama. The series is based on the William Landay novel of the same name.

Originally from Philadelphia, Martell moved to Los Angeles at the age of 8. His father, Wes, an executive chef, and his mom, Angela, have given him sage advice throughout his career. He began his performing career under the last name Lieberher, and in 2019 switched to his mother's maiden name.

Fulfilling every kid's dream, Martell's first acting role was in a Hot Wheels toy commercial, which was followed by many more commercials. After *St. Vincent*, he acted in Cameron Crowe's 2015 movie *Aloha*, followed by the 2017 film *The Book of Henry*, the *It* films and Rian Johnson's murder mystery *Knives Out*. Next up is the film *Tunnels*, co-starring Susan Sarandon, in the role of Grayson Mitchell, the younger sibling of a victim of gun violence; it's currently on hold due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

We recently spoke with Martell to talk about quarantining at home with his mom, working with the iconic Bill Murray and his dramatic role in *Defending Jacob*, plus his favorite movies, career goals and more.

Q+A

You were so young when you made *St. Vincent*. Were you overwhelmed or afraid?

I was terrified. It was my first movie, and what a crazy movie to have it be my first. I got to live in New York for three months and I was working every single day with Bill Murray, Melissa McCarthy and Naomi Watts. So, it was a wild ride. That's where I found out that I really wanted to continue acting and discovered how much I loved it. I would say that first-time director Ted Melfi and I were both being guided by Bill Murray.

I think of him a lot right now because I feel like COVID-19 has a lot of his movie *Groundhog Day* in it.

I think that every day feels the same these days.

Did anybody give you advice that you really took to heart?

I've definitely learned from all of those people around me. My mom taught me how to work hard, and whatever I do, I have to do it 100 percent.

Defending Jacob photographs courtesy of Apple TV+

Working on *St. Vincent*, Bill taught me how to enjoy myself and not be so hard on myself. And just be myself, relax and have fun with everything that I was doing.

What are you doing during quarantine?

I'm at home in LA. I'm watching a lot of movies; I often watch four a day. I enjoy watching The Criterion Channel and the older artsy movies, like *Chungking Express*, *Taipei Story* and the Spike Jonze movie *Adaptation*. I just read *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. I've also been trying to go outside and go for drives and hikes, and take a ride on my skateboard.

Do you find that you're cooking or eating more during your time at home?

Lots of eating. My mom is a great cook, so I'm always eating really good food, and I do the dishes. Earlier today I had some homemade pancakes. She also makes really good rosemary chicken.

How did your role in *Defending Jacob* come about?

I was shooting the movie *It [Chapter] Two*, I sent in a tape and I landed the role. Shortly after I met [director] Morten Tyldum, and [writer] Mark Bomback. I was super attracted to the story and the character, Jacob, just because there's so much mystery around him. I really wanted to get to know Jacob the best way that I could.

What was the burning question that you asked the director?

One of the first things I asked was whether or not Jacob did it, whether or not he killed [his classmate] Ben. And Morten told me that he doesn't know and he doesn't want to know, and that I should decide for myself. I was able to do a deep dive to come up with a personal story for Jacob, all of which was a major learning experience for me.

Do you feel that Michelle Dockery and Chris Evans, who played your parents on the show, come across as parental?

Yes, for sure. Both of them have been doing this for a long time and are super experienced. I think that really shows when they are on the set because they are both such great leaders. They were both extremely helpful on set when it came to figuring things out with me. They were always, "How could this help everyone else and make all of our jobs easier?" So I'd say they definitely have great parental attitudes.

Talk about making the well-regarded murder mystery *Knives Out*.

That was an incredible and informative experience because I was able to watch all of these legends in action, including Daniel Craig, Jamie Lee Curtis, Toni Collette and Christopher Plummer. Even though everyone was obviously super talented and successful, there was no ego on the set; they were sweet, kind and they worked extremely hard. I think it shows that you need to have something more than just talent to be a successful actor; you also need to be a good person.

Do you think college is in your future?

I'm still thinking about it and deciding what I should do. I want to go to college just because I never had that high school experience because I did it online. So, I would want to be around people my own age and in a school environment. But then also I do want to keep working, so we'll see.

Do you have a specific career plan?

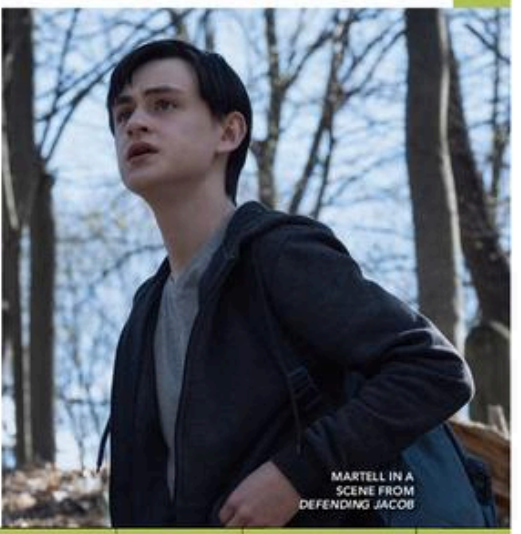
Hopefully, to continue acting. After that I want to write and direct because I like to tell stories, and I love movies. There is no strict career plan. All I can hope for is to continue doing what I love.

Why do you want us to watch *Defending Jacob*?

It goes beyond a crime drama or a courtroom drama. It's a really interesting story about family that a lot of families can relate to. It's about how far people would go for the people they love. It's a very human series. I think the purpose of all shows and movies is to make people think and reflect, so hopefully this show does that as well.



WITH CO-STARS MICHELLE DOCKERY AND CHRIS EVANS



MARTELL IN A SCENE FROM *DEFENDING JACOB*

Defending Jacob photographs courtesy of Apple TV+

Palate

By Kayla Rundstrom

TOP FIVE:

RAMEN

A quintet of tasty things to try this month

RICHIE RICH
AT DOMU, MULTIPLE LOCATIONS
This ramen features a complex blend of simmered pork, wood ear mushrooms, scallions, fried garlic, seasoned soft-boiled egg, miso and drizzles of black garlic oil swimming in a pork bone broth.

SLURP UP CILANTRO
AT JINYA RAMEN BAR, THORNTON PARK
Thin noodles, chicken *cashu*, *kikurage*—black wood ear mushrooms and seasoned egg sit in a clear chicken broth that is finished with a lime and chili sauce and topped with fresh cilantro.

BEEF RAMEN
AT THE RAMEN, DOWNTOWN ORLANDO
Don't be afraid to slurp up the contents of this ramen which include a pork broth base, bean sprouts, spinach, soft boiled egg, bamboo shoots, green onion and shredded chili pepper.

SHOYU DUCK RAMEN
AT JADE SUSHI & NEW ASIAN, COLLEGE PARK
Pan-seared duck breast mingles with rich *foie gras* and a *shoyu* soft egg in this dish garnished with scallions and sesame seeds.



TORI PAITAN
AT SUSURU, SOUTH ORLANDO
Fried burdock roots, scallions and a *shoyu* soft boiled egg top off this ramen that showcases *yuzu* chicken *chashu* and a creamy double chicken broth.



RAISE A GLASS: CACHAÇA

Libations you're sure to love

BRAZILIAN SUNRISE
AT BLACK FIRE, SOUTH ORLANDO
Feel like you're vacationing in South America with this cocktail blend of cachaça, passion fruit and grenadine.

RIO CAIPIRINHA
AT DON JULIO'S, LAKE NONA & WATERFORD LAKES
Served on the rocks, this sweet and sour cocktail packs a punch with cachaça and sugar blended with muddled lime.

COCOA CABANA MOJITO
AT REEL FISH COASTAL KITCHEN, WINTER PARK
This cocktail contains an artisanal brand of cachaça from Leblon and is mixed with muddled mint, simple syrup and fresh lemon juice.

Richie Rich ramen photograph courtesy of Cristina Rodriguez

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