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Orlando Family magazine

FEBRUARY 2024

165 AWESOME ATTORNEYS

plus

TABLES FOR TWO

28 great spots for date night

Finding success while remaining true to herself

dakota johnson



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MUSIC SCHEDULE



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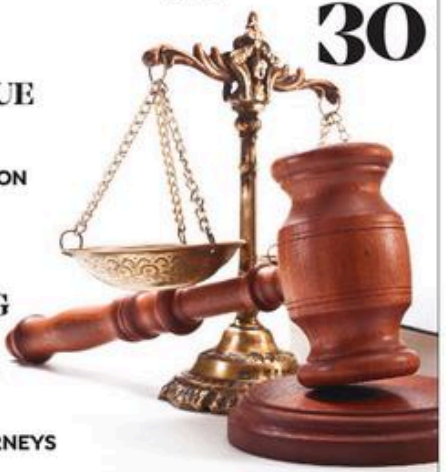
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Orlando Family Magazine is a free, trusted resource designed to inform, serve, and enrich local families and parents throughout the Greater Orlando area with parenting ideas, fun family activities, and a wide variety of invaluable resource guides. Please send all Editorial Correspondence for consideration to editorial@OrlandoFamilyMagazine.com or mail to 110 Centre Blvd., Marlton, NJ 08053. All such correspondence is sent on a non-confidential basis and Orlando Family Magazine, LLC shall be free to reproduce, publish, edit, and/or use the content of any such communications, including any ideas, inventions, concepts, techniques or know-how disclosed therein, for any purpose, including developing, and/or marketing of the magazine and/or goods or services identified in the magazine, without compensation to, or acknowledgement of the author. Orlando Family Magazine assumes no liability for any unsolicited materials, including, but not limited to, manuscripts, photographs or artwork. All submitted materials become the property of Orlando Family Magazine, LLC and will not be returned. Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes.

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Home Front

EDITED BY KAREN NIMETZ

By the Numbers

15th Winter Garden's nationwide ranking for "Hottest Zip Codes for Homebuyers in 2023," according to a new report by Opendoor.

75 The number of performers in the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, representing 18 countries. The reimagined, animal-less circus was in town last month.

32 Shaquille O'Neal's Orlando Magic jersey number, which will be retired at the Kia Center this month. The Hall of Fame center becomes the first player in franchise history to have his number retired.

$269,272 The amount of money that Visit Orlando's Magical Dining 2023 raised for Orange County charities. This reflects a 44% increase from last year's event.

218 lbs. The birth weight of African elephant Corra, born at Disney's Animal Kingdom in December. Corra is the first second-generation calf to be born at the park.

9th Orlando's ranking on Zillow's predictions for the hottest U.S. housing markets of 2024. Predictions were based on an analysis of forecasted home value growth, recent housing market trends, projected changes in the labor market, home construction activity and number of homeowner households.

DATEBOOK



Central Florida Fair

FEB. 29–MARCH 10

THE ANNUAL FAIR RETURNS FOR ITS 112TH YEAR. Visitors will enjoy a midway featuring rides, games and food, along with live music and entertainment, animals, livestock exhibitions, competitive exhibits and so much more. *Ticket prices and event hours can be found at CentralFloridaFair.com*

GIRAFFES CAN'T DANCE

Now through Feb. 25

Based on the bestselling picture book, this new musical with original songs will transport audiences to Africa. *Days and showtimes vary, Orlando Family Stage.*

GLASS IN FLIGHT 2

Feb. 3-May 5

Created by nationally known sculptor Alex Heveri, the exhibit weaves together art with the science of nature. *Included with general admission, Leu Gardens.*

PAWS IN THE PARK

Feb. 10

Pet Alliance invites all pet lovers to the 30th anniversary festival. *10 a.m.-4 p.m., free admission, Lake Eola Park.*



GKTW VILLAGE'S GINGERBREAD RUN

Feb. 10

The Give Kids The World Village's Gingerbread Run: Valentine's Day Edition will enable fundraisers of all ages to run, roll or stroll a 5K or family fun run through the 89-acre nonprofit resort. *7 a.m., Give Kids The World, Kissimmee.*



DIANA KRALL

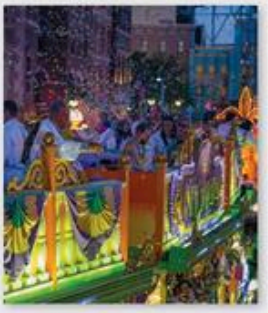
Feb. 13

The two-time Grammy-winning jazz singer is in town for one night only. *8 p.m., tickets from $45, Walt Disney Theater at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts.*

UNIVERSAL MARDI GRAS: INTERNATIONAL FLAVORS OF CARNAVAL

Feb. 3-April 7

This celebration features a menu of cuisine inspired by New Orleans favorites and iconic Carnaval traditions around the globe. *Park admission is required, dates and showtimes vary, Universal Studios.*



CRAIG ROBINSON

Feb. 8-10

Best known for his portrayal of Daryl Philbin on NBC's *The Office*, the comedian is in town for several days performing his act for audiences age 21 and up. *Showtimes and ticket prices vary, Funny Bone Comedy Club (Orlando Improv).*

ALL SHOOK UP

Feb. 16-March 10

A family-friendly show inspired by and featuring the songs of Elvis Presley. *Showtimes and ticket prices vary, Garden Theatre.*

Hit

With funding from the Central Florida Cares Health System and the Florida Association of Free and Charitable Clinics, the Mental Health Association of Central Florida is now offering free services to uninsured children, teens and their families. The new program will serve youth ages 6 to 17 in Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Brevard, Lake and Polk counties.

Crews recently began installing a raised crosswalk at the intersection of Semoran Boulevard and Curry Ford Road in Orange County, with a goal to make both pedestrians and drivers safer.

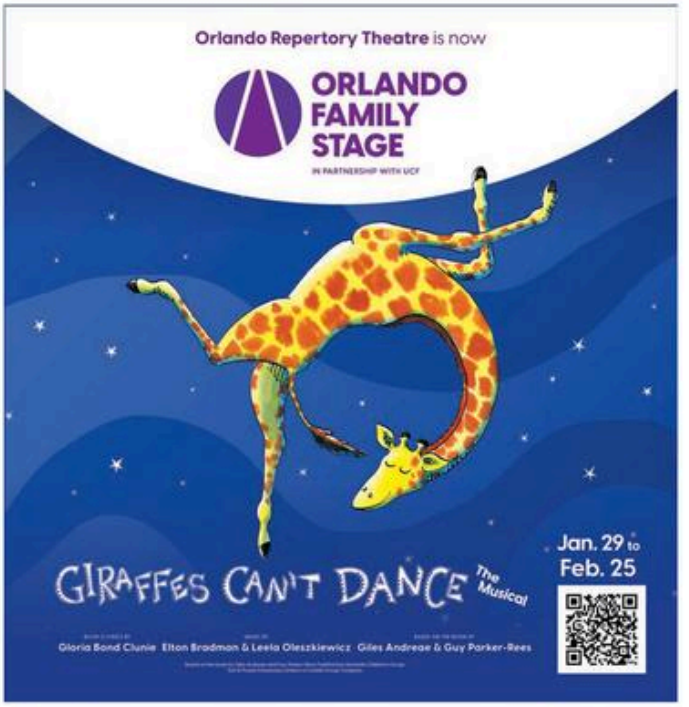
The Central Florida Expressway Authority recently extended the E-PASS Volume Savings Program, which provides toll discounts based on the number of transactions per transponder each month. The program is an automatic enrollment, and the savings are automatically entered into the account. All vehicles are eligible for the program and there are no fees.

The Florida Highway Patrol recently released its crash data for 2023, which revealed that Orange County has the highest total crashes per capita in Central Florida, although the total number of crashes decreased by 2.93% and the total number of fatal crashes decreased by 24.88% from 2022.

The Orlando Museum of Art is reportedly facing a severe financial crisis, following the 2022 exhibition of Basquiat paintings that were later alleged to be fake.

Tourist development tax collections for Orange County fell again this past November, marking the seventh decrease in revenue in the last eight months, according to the Orange County comptroller and Visit Orlando. However, Visit Orlando, the convention and visitor's bureau for Orange County, says room night bookings for 2024 are pacing higher than last year at 5%, and advance airline ticket sales into Orlando were also up in the first quarter of 2024 at 10%.

Miss





FIRST THINGS FIRST

JUST ONE QUESTION

This month we celebrate Valentine's Day, a special occasion where romance fills the air and many individuals feel an extra spark of love. So, we wanted to know: **"What is your favorite love song?"** We asked these Central Floridians and here's what they had to say.



Justin Sullivan, Artistic Director, *Drawn to Life* by Cirque du Soleil & Disney

"My favorite love song is 'Nicest Thing' by Kate Nash—I think it beautifully highlights what we all hope we might mean to someone we are in love with or wish to be in love with. Sometimes the simplest thoughts and gestures are the most poignant and meaningful."



Ashley Vann, Founder & Executive Director, Victory Cup Initiative

"'Endless Love' [by] Lionel Richie. Who could be better? He is the 'Maestro of Romance' with one of the greatest romance albums of all time: Truly: The Love Songs."



Jeff Husby, Owner & General Manager, Regal & Nautique of Orlando

"I grew up a drummer and love rock 'n' roll. … 'Faithfully' by Journey is my favorite love song. Awesome vocals and great drumming make this a popular song and my favorite."



Susan Dyke, Local Video Editor

"My favorite love song is 'Believe' by Cher. It's so hopeful and uplifting and a great reminder that sometimes things just aren't meant to work out."



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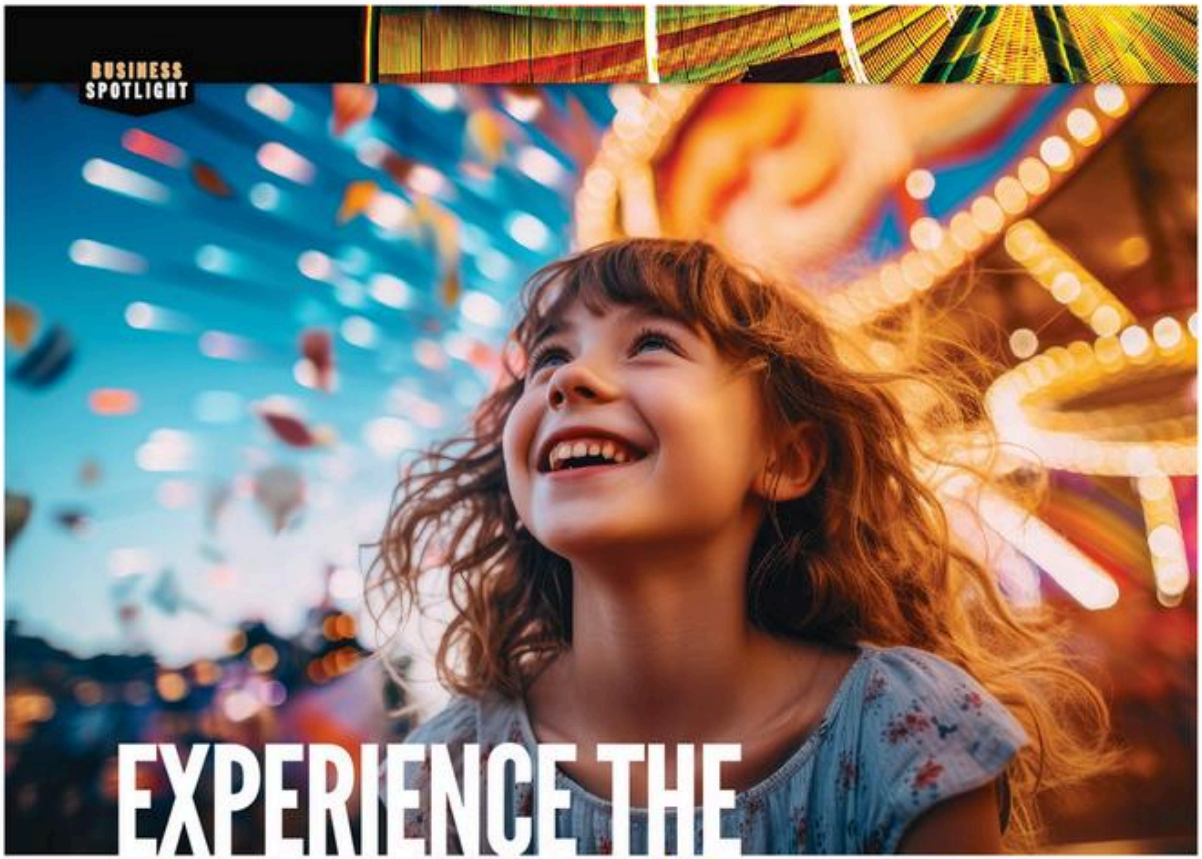
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EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC

The Central Florida Fair is a celebration of fun, thrills and community spirit. by KRISTEN JORGENSEN

Nestled in the heart of Orlando, the Central Florida Fair stands as a testament to the region's vibrant culture, community spirit and love for wholesome entertainment. Every year, this extravaganza brings together people from all walks of life to celebrate the magic of community, offering myriad attractions, thrilling rides, delicious food and engaging exhibits. *Orlando Family* sat down with Micheal Tipton, president and CEO of the fair, to take a closer look at what makes the cherished annual event so exciting for locals and visitors alike.

History and Tradition

The Central Florida Fair has a rich history dating back several decades, tracing its roots to the early 1900s. This year from Feb. 29 through March 10, the fair will embark on its 112th year bringing joy and eclectic entertainment to folks from across the area.

Over the years, it has evolved from a modest county fair to a grand celebration that attracts thousands of attendees. The fairgrounds have been witness to countless memories, showcasing the growth and evolution of Central Florida's communities.

"We want folks to know that we strive to make the fair bigger and better every year, and this year is no exception. We offer live performances daily, and the addition of a beer garden is a crowd favorite. … In the beer garden itself, we will host an assortment of different activities including trivia, karaoke, a live DJ and even a Battle of the Bands segment on a few nights," Tipton says.

Attractions, Rides and Entertainment

One of the main draws of the Central Florida Fair is its impressive lineup of rides and attractions. From classic carnival rides that cater to all ages to adrenaline-pumping roller coasters that the adventurous can't resist, the fair offers a diverse range of experiences. Families can enjoy a fun-filled day with kiddie rides, while thrill-seekers can test their bravery on the towering rides that dominate the skyline.

Beyond the rides, the Central Florida Fair boasts a diverse array of entertainment options. Live performances—including music concerts,









dance shows, fire shows and even a canine frisbee competition—add to the festive atmosphere.

And of course, the fair's roots in agriculture are evident in its extensive display of livestock, crops and other exhibits. Attendees can learn about the region's farming heritage, witness live animal shows and explore the intricacies of agricultural practices. What's more, agricultural competitions add a competitive edge, with participants vying for top honors in categories such as livestock breeding and horticulture.

"The Central Florida Fair is a six-county, not-for-profit district fair that provides a venue for youth exhibitors in Orange, Seminole, Volusia, Lake, Osceola and Brevard counties to showcase their talent. Over 1,000 local FFA and 4-H youth livestock projects are entered in the annual fair, which includes, swine, lamb, cattle, poultry, rabbits, cavies and horses, making the Central Florida Fair one of the largest livestock shows in the state."

Culinary Delights

No fair experience is complete without indulging in the diverse and delicious food offerings. From traditional favorites like cotton candy, funnel cakes and corn dogs to more exotic options, the Central Florida Fair's food vendors cater to every palate. The culinary choices at the fair mirror the diversity of the community, offering a gastronomic adventure for all.

"My first year coming to the fair, I was pleasantly surprised at how many food options were actually available. With all the various food trucks and vendors, there is an eclectic variety of food options to cater to almost everyone. It's quite impressive," shares Tipton.

The Central Florida Fair goes beyond just providing entertainment: It serves as a platform for community engagement and outreach. Local businesses, organizations and artisans often set up booths and exhibits, creating a sense of community involvement. This synergy between the fair and local entities strengthens the bonds that hold Central Florida's diverse communities together.

"We believe the fair is an opportunity to bring people together and to share something special in our local communities. On opening day, those who donate a canned good receive $1 off their entry. On Monday, March 4, we offer free admission to military and first responders. On Thursday, March 7, which we celebrate as "Education Day," we offer free admission to teachers. It's important to celebrate and show appreciation to those folks who work selflessly to keep our communities strong," says Tipton.



OTHER FAIR HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Micromania Wrestling on Feb. 29 and March 1
- A free concert by country music and TikTok star Hannah Dasher on March 4
- On March 5, it's $2 Tuesday, where admission is only $2. There will also be a Top 40 Dance Party in the amphitheater

With so much taking place, it's evident that the Central Florida Fair has something for everyone. As the fair continues to evolve and grow, it remains a cherished tradition that brings people together and creates memories that last a lifetime.

Central Florida Fair
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(407) 295-3247
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Getaways for a Great Day Away

Make the most of your spring break this year and cut down on travel time by checking out what other regions of The Sunshine State have to offer, whether you're traveling solo or appealing to a multigenerational group.

By Madeleine Maccar

Between kids' activities, family obligations, conflicting vacation schedules and work demands, hitting pause for a week away can bring a whole new kind of stress into your life. But getting even a day or three away can be the breather everyone needs, and there are all kinds of statewide getaways just a road trip away.

Whether you're fitting everything into one day or planning an overnight stay, traveling with kids or hitting the road with friends, reuniting extended family or finally getting a couple's weekend away, everyone from the avid outdoor adventurer and eager beginner to the casual window-shopper and curious localvore will find a way to fill their day no matter where they go in The Sunshine State.

Of course, your vacation is yours to design, but we've got some ideas to get you started.

THE PANHANDLE

Bayou George

Taking its name from a waterway that flows into part of the panhandle's saltwater Saint Andrews Bay, Bayou George is unsurprisingly a great place to swim and splash around on spring break. No matter how many lily pads or canopied overhangs you count along your quiet aquatic adventures, though, all that natural beauty is in fierce competition with the vibrant scarlet sunsets you can catch here.

Destin

It's not just white-sand beaches and emerald waters that make Destin a must-visit destination: From golfing to dining, pampering spas to high-energy amusement parks, jet-ski rentals to shopping excursions, there are a million ways to get the vacation you need from this Gulf Coast town. Check out the variety of animal encounters, all-level lessons in everything from surfing to scuba diving to sandcastle-building, restaurants boasting fresh-caught seafood, and even show-stopping sunrises and sunsets bookending the day that appeal to early birds and night owls alike.

Perdido Key

Amid the quiet and seclusion of this laidback coastal community snugly nestled on the Alabama and Florida border, you'll find that one of the state's best-kept secrets is filled with wildlife havens, art galleries and museums, historical fixtures and tours, and plenty of eco-tourism opportunities like bird watching and nature-trail hiking paths. If getting in touch with nature is how you unwind best, almost 60% of Perdido Key's 16 miles of narrow, unblemished beaches is located in either state or federal parks, boasting some of the gulf's last stretches of pristine wilderness.

BIG BEND

Cedar Key

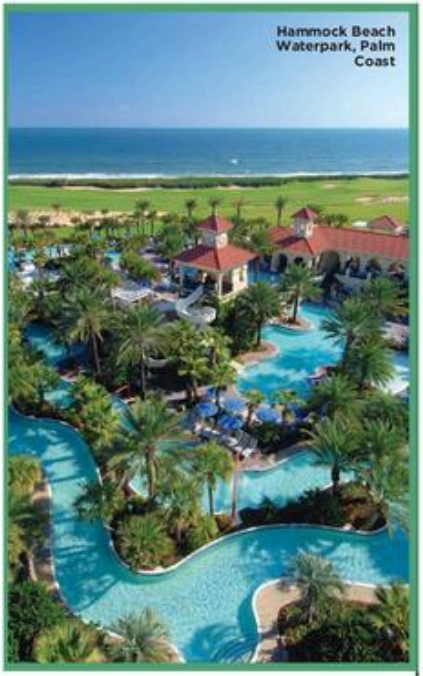
History buffs have plenty to explore here, with roughly 8,000 acres in and around Cedar Key designated to the National Register of Historic Places. Go back in time at Cedar Key Museum State Park, which depicts the town's 19th-century history, or visit the Cedar Key Historical Society & Museum, where two historical buildings are home to a collection of archival material, records and artifacts dating back to 1842. Of course, there's plenty for outdoor enthusiasts, too, with wildlife refuges, nature trails and state preserves all offering up-close glimpses of Cedar Key's rich natural beauty.

Monticello

With a mild climate and vistas of verdant, unspoiled natural settings framed by Spanish moss, Monticello promises its visitors a destination vacation like no other with something for everyone.

Photo at left courtesy of Destin-Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Photo below courtesy of Isla Bella Beach Resort





Hammock Beach Waterpark, Palm Coast

Photo above courtesy of Hammock Beach Golf Resort & Spa

Whether you cozy up at a downtown B&B or hunker down anywhere from a hotel to a campsite, you'll be a stone's throw from enough dining options and outdoor activities to try something new every day, plus a downtown shopping district that'll send you home with local treasures like homemade honey, handmade jewelry, collectibles and antiques.

NORTHEAST

High Springs

A true haven for anyone looking to recharge in the great outdoors, this town's advantageous proximity to the Santa Fe River and other natural wonders attracts campers and sightseers, canoers and swimmers, and cave divers and snorkelers—a natural spring flowing steadily at a year-round 72 degrees is appealing in its own right, too. If you prefer to take your spring break at a more leisurely tempo, the town fully embraces that casual pace, as well as a flair for the unique that defines its many art, retail and cultural offerings.

Palm Coast

For those looking for the kind of vacation where everything you need—including an incredible seaside view—is right within your reach, check out Hammock Beach Golf Resort & Spa. There you'll find nine restaurants serving a veritably globe-trotting range of cuisines, plus 10 swimming pools, a full-service spa, two golf courses, a drop-off camp for kids





and more, right on down to a fresh ocean breeze. Of course, the area is also home to a vibrant art scene, and locating the 10 strikingly designed turtle sculptures that the Palm Coast Arts Foundation distributed among local public spaces, including five in The City of Palm Coast alone, makes for one fun family scavenger hunt.

St. Augustine

The country's oldest city is jam-packed with a reverence for its history while simultaneously embracing a forward-thinking fondness for modern art, a whirlwind tour of international eats and something new to see with every visit. Even its museums always find new ways to celebrate the old days, and the Lightner Museum is no exception. Springtime visitors will be privy to limited engagements like the museum's 75th anniversary culminating with the major exhibition The Triumph of Nature: Art Nouveau from the Chrysler Museum of Art, as well as the soon-opening reinterpretation of the Lightner's breathtaking permanent collection from America's Gilded Age.

WESTERN FLORIDA/ THE GULF COAST

Greer Island

Not to be confused with the privately owned Beer Can Island in the middle of Tampa Bay that's also a popular hangout spot for boaters, this one's on the northern tip of Longboat Key and offers visitors to its one-mile stretch of baby-powder-white beach some stunningly clear water that's great for spotting both manatees and dolphins.

St. Pete Beach

Whatever brings you to these acclaimed white-sand beaches and warm gulf waters, staying somewhere with great service and incredible amenities can be what elevates the experience for everyone you're traveling with. With two conjoining hotels, the coastally charming Island Grand and nautically decorated RumFish Beach Resort, TradeWinds Island Resorts can help good times become cherished memories with a variety of options: low-key family-friendly activities; more adrenaline-pumping options like jet-ski rentals; the high-flying view that parasailing offers; or taking to the water on a dolphin-spotting excursion.

Tarpon Springs

With plenty to fill both the daylight and nightlife hours, you could spend an entire vacation getting to know Tarpon Springs and still not see it all. Get

Photo courtesy of TradeWinds Island Resorts



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Sunset Beach, Tarpon Springs

Photo courtesy of the City of Tarpon Springs

lost in an independent bookstore or get pampered at a local salon, take a tour of local sites or historical landmarks on foot or on water, and then sample your way through its many dining spots' unique and flavorful fare. If your vacations double as educational opportunities, you can't miss the Tarpon Springs Heritage Museum's current exhibit, artist Christopher M. Still's depiction of the history, culture and spirit contained within "The Great State of Florida."

CENTRAL FLORIDA

Merritt Island

Located on the state's biggest island, this town enjoys all the excitement of a front-row seat to today's milestone chapter in American space exploration while celebrating its wild side. Split your day between a visit to the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex and a kayak tour of the local waterways, or get in a quick round of golf before visiting the 140,000-acre Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and being lucky enough to catch a rocket blasting off from nearby Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. You'll find everything from familiar chain restaurants and unique local eats, too, so you won't have to go far to make sure everyone's tastes are satisfied.

River Ranch

If dropping off the grid for a few days is the spring getaway you need, the rustic vibe here offers the perfect counterbalance to a lifestyle of constantly being on the go and always being plugged in. Whether you're indulging in outdoor activities like fishing, trail riding or taking a trip down the Kissimmee River, or you're starting your hike by picking up the Florida Trail—one of the country's 11 National Scenic Trails—at its River Ranch trailhead, you won't even miss the phone you haven't checked all day.

Volusia County

In this region spanning from the St. Johns River to the ocean, its ECHOtourism initiative delivers the best in entertainment and education centering local ecological, cultural, heritage and outdoor events and making them accessible to everyone. If you or your travel companions have a variety of vacation goals, this east-central county is sure to please with offerings that include performances by European symphony orchestras, access to some of the region's most stunning and well-maintained parks, and a



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IA&A

Alphonse Mucha, *Summer* (detail), 1896, Color lithograph, Photograph by Edward Pollard, Image courtesy of the Chrysler Museum of Art, © Alphonse Mucha.

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Photo above courtesy of Lago Mar Beach Resort & Club

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SOUTH FLORIDA/THE KEYS

Fort Lauderdale

Traveling with family and kids can be a challenge, and places like Lago Mar Beach Resort & Club understand that appealing to a range of ages and interests can be the peace-keeping compromise where everyone wins. Guests won't even have to leave the property to discover amenities like one of Fort Lauderdale's deepest private beaches, two large pools, multi-purpose racquet courts, a mini golf course, and a newly upgraded beach playground complete with playsets suited for both toddlers and young kids.

Key West

Home to the southernmost point of the continental U.S.A., Key West is no stranger to drawing big crowds with its unique environment, novel claims to history and year-round tropical appeal. It takes something a little extraordinary to stand out among that inherently unique landscape, and the Key West Tropical Forest & Botanical Garden is a one-of-a-kind arboretum, botanical garden, museum and wildlife refuge filled with attention-grabbing living displays, rare and endangered plants, and a flourishing native nursery.

Marathon

When you need a break from seeing, doing and playing, relax at your home away from home by checking into Isla Bella Beach Resort. At the threshold of the iconic Seven Mile Bridge lies this private oasis reimagining the Florida Keys with a tranquil, scenic escape from the world you left behind with the mainland. Here you'll find everything from in-room enhancements and other world-class guest accommodations onsite and the local experiential expertise to craft curated, one-of-a-kind experiences off-site.

West Palm Beach

Time is everything when you're trying to take in as much as you can in a town known for its beautiful weather, vibrant atmosphere and stunning beaches, and throwing down anchor in a central location can help you check off just one more must-see site during your time away. Guests at the Hilton West Palm Beach can find themselves with easy access to shopping and dining at The Square and just two miles from the Palm Beach waterfront, when they're not enjoying resort-style pool and cabanas, restaurants, live music, fitness classes and lawn games.



Photo below courtesy of Key West Tropical Forest & Botanical Garden

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A CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK

Like her famous parents before her, actress **Dakota Johnson** has made an impression in Hollywood with bold choices like her newest role as a superhero in *Madame Web*.

BY EVAN JAMESON



A multifaceted talent in the world of entertainment, Dakota Johnson has already made a lasting mark on both Hollywood and the global stage—regardless of the fact that she is only in her mid-30s.

Born in Austin, Texas, Johnson hails from a family deeply entrenched in the entertainment industry, with her parents being Academy Award-nominated actress Melanie Griffith and Don Johnson, the Golden Globe-winning actor. It means stardom is practically in her genes.

Johnson's rise to prominence began in earnest with her breakout role as Anastasia Steele in the highly acclaimed *Fifty Shades of Grey* film trilogy, based on E.L. James's bestselling novels.

Her portrayal of the complex and enigmatic character garnered her widespread recognition and critical acclaim. Johnson's success in the franchise opened doors to numerous opportunities in Hollywood.

Beyond her blockbuster trilogy, the 34-year-old has demonstrated her flexibility in film by taking on diverse roles in both independent and mainstream projects. Her performances in films like *The Social Network*, *Suspiria* and The *Peanut Butter Falcon* have showcased her acting prowess and range.

In addition to her acting career, Johnson is also making waves as a producer, championing compelling stories through

Dakota Johnson

A CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK

Page 2, continued

her production company, TeaTime Pictures. With her passion for storytelling, she's poised to shape the industry's narrative landscape in the coming years.

Johnson and Coldplay frontman Chris Martin have been in a relationship since late 2017 and live together in a cozy Malibu home, where they spend time not only with Martin's children, but have holidayed with his ex-wife, Gwyneth Paltrow, and her husband, Brad Falchuk.

Looking ahead, the *Spider-Man* spin-off *Madame Web* will assist Johnson in continuing as a prominent figure in her craft. She takes the lead in this gripping thriller as Cassandra Webb, a paramedic working in Manhattan, whose latent clairvoyant talents come to the fore.

As she grapples with shocking revelations from her own history, she forms a connection with three young women whose destinies hold immense potential, provided they can navigate the perilous challenges of their current circumstances.



Q&A

So, *Madame Web*—how excited should we be?

Very. I'm incredibly excited to be a part of the Marvel world, especially with a lesser-known character. There's a lot of potential to make her really cool and I'm genuinely thrilled.

That's really the way I want to come into a project—I want to be able to shape my own narrative and put my own fingerprint on what's in front of me. Most actors do, to be fair, yet not all get the opportunity, so I am very grateful for that.

Your character is a clairvoyant and precognitive mutant. That's quite a burden!

It is, and it enabled me a nice venture in that world and the elements of psychic ability. It's a diversion from the norm, but one I enjoyed.

Do you have any psychic powers yourself, as Dakota?

Not really, I've grown up in the glare of Hollywood, but despite the craziness and the fantasy of it all, I've always been grounded and aware of the realities of the industry.

Perhaps when I retire from the movie world, I'll find some alternative reality, but right now I'm happy enough and busy enough coping with what's real around me, rather than gazing into the future to try to see what's coming further along the track!

How does it feel to be part of the superhero world?

Playing a superhero has been a longtime dream of mine, as has to be in a big action movie, like a female Indiana Jones. I've always been inspired by those kinds of films, like the new *Top Gun*, which I thought was fantastic.

Regarding the cast, it's shaping up to be incredible, especially with Sydney Sweeney joining. I am a huge fan of hers.

Can you feel your film choices evolving?

Certainly, this marks a pivotal point in my career, allowing me the creative freedom to explore uncharted territories. I feel like I now possess the confidence to embrace risk here and there, when the right thing comes along, selecting projects that deeply resonate with me. The newfound freedom I feel is definitely thrilling.

Have you always wanted to follow in your parents' footsteps?

Of course, and being in this industry is everything I ever dreamed of, and it brings me immense joy. My grandmother, Tippi Hedren,

has been a significant source of inspiration for me. Her straightforward yet profound advice, like 'trust yourself' and 'believe in the goodness of others,' continues to guide me.

My family, including my grandmother, instilled in me the value of finding happiness within myself. They've encouraged me to savor this special phase before marriage and parenthood, emphasizing the unique importance it has in life's journey.

While all that does sound pretty deep and profound, it was so nice to hear those kind words of support, because the older I've gotten, the more I feel like I have to prove something to people.

What fascinated you about the movie business when you were growing up around it so much?

This is the world I grew up in. I always enjoyed being on a film set when I was a kid, and I knew I wanted to act for my whole life. I never really made a decision to become an actress; it's just something I always knew.

For me, it was like a playground where I could use my imagination. When my dad worked on *Nash Bridges*, I spent a lot of time on the San Francisco set and I loved it. A film set feels like home to me, where I belong and feel most at ease.

Do you still ask your parents for advice?

I'm my own person now. What I had was a beginning. When you follow in your parents' footsteps, it's natural to worry about making your own name in the industry. Even today, I'm always searching for roles where I'm judged solely on my acting, not anything else.

My parents have supported me, but I take things one step at a time, which helps me stay calm about decisions and what happens. They taught me to not get caught up in the hype and stay calm.

I grew up understanding what actors go through because of stories and paparazzi. I remember going out with my parents and sometimes it bothered me when people kept coming to our table for autographs, although I was more upset about it than they were!

Do you feel there's a pressure on people and, in turn, on yourself, to couple up, settle down? Does society look down its nose at single people?

Throughout history, society has expected women—more than men—to marry and have kids. This pressure has always been there. If women don't follow this traditional path, they can face criticism.

In my life, I've realized that making choices about relationships is a lot like making career decisions. It's all about listening to your heart and doing what feels right.

While that is really nice and lovely, is it entirely realistic?

I just think that it's a very natural way of thinking, and sometimes we're too influenced by societal norms and expectations. But what's the alternative?

It's like the part of me that says, 'I love you,' and that's it. But then it keeps wondering, 'Why haven't you replied? Do you love me too? Are you coming over?'

Then it gets even more intense: 'When will we get married? Hello? Are you there?' And then it becomes too overwhelming, 'I can't handle this anymore,' and maybe even adds a middle finger emoji as the final message [laughs].

Is that your go-to emoji?

Thank goodness they added that one [laughs]. That's all for me and it happens pretty quickly, maybe in just five minutes or less.

The way people meet these days is still pretty weird to me. I don't like it; it makes me uncomfortable. I find it creepy. I'm not really into social media like Twitter or Facebook. I do have an Instagram, but I don't use it much and I rarely check it.

I have a more traditional and romantic view. I believe men should be polite and sometimes pay for things!

Someday, I'd like to settle down and have a family. I don't necessarily think that two people have to stay together forever. If that happens, it's special, but even if a marriage doesn't last, it can still be beautiful.

People change over time, and sometimes they go in different directions. It's possible to love more than one person in your life. The most important thing is to be honest.

Do you think that fame has changed how you live your life in any way?

No, not really. I mostly do the same stuff. I spend a lot of time at home, and sometimes I worry a lot about people taking my picture.

I'm actually very normal, though I don't feel the pressure to prove that in any way. Certainly something I did learn during my childhood was the fact people will always view you in a way they want to view you, when you're in the public eye. My parents suffered that, to an extent, though with the internet today it's much more prevalent. Back then it would mostly be gossip in newspapers.

Ultimately, if someone decides they really like you then you can do quite a lot and they will still like you. And the opposite it true—when you are disliked people will always try to find fault in you.

And that's not just a celebrity thing—I think it's human nature. We build ideas and opinions of one another based on information and experience, and sometimes it can be difficult to change that into something else.



A scene from Madame Web

For a great meal **with a side of romance,** there are plenty of worthy options across Greater Orlando.

all for love

With love in the air as Valentine's Day approaches, couples throughout Central Florida will be celebrating one another in various ways. So, we felt it was only right to highlight some of the area's finest restaurants that not only serve up amazing food, but also provide the right ambiance that helps set the stage for a romantic evening. These 28 spots check all the boxes and are just another example of how nuanced and extraordinary our local dining scene truly is.

by peter proko

CHATHAM'S PLACE

As you step into the warm dining room and live piano music fills the air, you know you are in for a special evening. Chef Tony Lopez's seasonally driven menu boasts standout starters like the escargot or smoked salmon carpaccio, and classic entrées like seared duck breast and Australian rack of lamb.

KRES CHOPHOUSE

Housed in a building that dates back to the '30s, this splendid steakhouse keeps all of its historic charm while introducing plenty of contemporary flair. You can't go wrong with any of the steaks, chops or fresh seafood, which pair perfectly with a bottle from the respectable wine list or one of the signature cocktails.

THE BOHEME

This stunning dining room oozes elegance and sets the scene for a memorable night out with your significant other. The European-inspired menu is full of highlights like the grilled octopus and the braised lamb rigatoni, but don't miss the Tomahawk Experience—a 40-ounce tomahawk steak that is flambéed tableside with cognac for a dramatic presentation.

CAPA

This sophisticated Michelin-starred restaurant located along the rooftop of the Four Seasons delivers the wow factor with everything from its dynamic décor to the Spanish-inspired dishes coming out of its kitchen. The paella is can't-miss, the flight of wagyu cuts is sublime and the rest of the menu reads like a greatest hits collection.

VICTORIA & ALBERT'S

A destination dining experience inside Disney's Grand Floridian, this storybook dining room is where you'll find some of the most decadent dishes being created anywhere in the country. With three distinct dining experiences—including the Chef's Table where the skilled chefs will create a personalized meal right before your eyes—the possibilities are seemingly endless.





NORMAN'S
Chef Norman Van Aken has been synonymous with Orlando's fine dining scene for years, and at his namesake restaurant he shows why he's stood the test of time. Whether sitting in the dining room or enjoying a night out on the terrace, you'll be eager to sink your teeth into the James Beard winner's scintillating menu that showcase the finest ingredients and seasonal offerings.

BETTER THAN SEX
When you're looking for a unique way to woo your loved one, head to this intimate eatery serving sinfully sweet creations that will make you glad you saved room for dessert. With cozy seating and plenty of mood-setting ambiance, this place makes for a great encore to your evening.

PRATO
Whether dining on the large patio or peering through the window-paned doors, this Park Avenue restaurant is a great place to people watch while waiting to delve into a menu full of outstanding offerings. Think wood-fired pizzas, polished plates of pasta and other mouthwatering Italian specialties.

WINE BAR GEORGE
This popular Disney Springs locale is a haven for oenophiles thanks to its highly touted wine list crafted by master sommelier George Miliotes. With carefully chosen bottles of vino from around the world, you're bound to find many possibilities to pair with the enticing array of small plates and meat-and-cheese boards.

HILLSTONE
Few places offer as picturesque a setting as this Winter Park mainstay that specializes in creating the right atmosphere for parties of two. You'll want to grab a spot on the deck to catch the sunset over Lake Killarney as you dine on favorites like pan-fried snapper or the center-cut filet mignon.

SOCO
This vibrant dining room is the go-to date-night place for couples new and old alike. And it's easy to see why with a menu full of grand comfort food—think crispy mac


Bacán


Christner's Prime Steak & Lobster

and cheese croquettes or the braised short rib stroganoff—and expert bartenders showcasing the latest in modern mixology.

CAFÉ TRASTEVERE

A longtime favorite, local lovebirds regularly flock to Café Trastevere for a night to remember. The dining room is quaint yet comfortable and the quality Italian cuisine is refined without being pretentious.

RUSSELL'S ON LAKE IVANHOE

With serene views of historic Lake Ivanhoe and an equally stellar menu to match, a table at Russell's is highly coveted. We're partial to the roasted beet and burrata napoleon, the grilled swordfish and the crispy duck *confit* served simply with sautéed spinach.

VITO'S CHOP HOUSE

With so many choices along I-Drive, Vito's stands out amongst the crowd thanks to its tantalizing menu and attentive service. You'll find prime cuts, fresh fish and lots of Italian delights. But for a real showstopper, order the wagyu surf and turf for two—a colossal lobster tail and your choice between a 10-ounce filet or a 36-ounce tomahawk ribeye.

THE OSPREY

Start you night off with a cocktail at the centrally located bar before moving to a table to peruse the seafood-focused menu. Highlights include the fresh oysters and the jambalaya, but the handful of entrées grilled over hardwood charcoal and Florida oak are equally divine.

ILLUME

This rooftop getaway allows you to soak up the atmosphere while you chow down on vibrant sushi rolls, lemongrass potstickers and smoked pork belly bao buns. It's also the perfect place to sip *sake* or perhaps a Japanese craft beer while you catch Disney World's nightly fireworks in the distance.





CHRISTNER'S PRIME STEAK & LOBSTER

For a little more than three decades, this staple in Orlando's fine dining scene has earned its reputation as a special occasion restaurant. With quintessential steakhouse décor, a wine list that boasts more than 4,500 bottles and a great selection of prime cuts and seafood specialties, it's no wonder why Christner's has experienced such longevity.

BITES & BUBBLES

Nothing sparks a little romance like cozying up to your loved one as you sip vino from the extensive wine list and nibble on hand-selected cheese boards or perhaps indulge with the finest caviar. But beyond the smaller "bites," this place also serves up marvelous main courses as well, including a recent pan-seared grouper with lobster risotto.

CHRISTINI'S RISTORANTE ITALIANO

With an inviting dining room that pays homage to Tuscany, the atten-

tion to detail shown in the kitchen and an impeccable wait staff. Christini's is beloved by many. The accordionist roaming the dining room only adds to the moment as you choose from any number of well-executed Northern Italian specialties.

VINES GRILLE & WINE BAR

Whether sitting down for a meal inside the sleek dining room or enjoying lighter fare inside the accompanying lounge, you'll be impressed by the dazzling offerings here. The restaurant also regularly hosts live music and its excellent happy hour specials are available Monday through Saturday from 4 to 7 p.m.

NEVEYAH SUSHI & THAI

After recently undergoing a renovation, this restaurant is better than ever. Everything from the curries and noodle dishes to the basil stir-fried rice and dumplings are alluring, but for us the sushi is the star of the show. Immaculate and incredibly fresh, the signature rolls here are as elevated as they are enjoyable.

CHEF'S TABLE WINTER GARDEN

At this charming spot among the local dining landscape, three-course prix-fixe dinners come with optional wine pairings and the cheese plates makes for a great beginning or ending to the night. The neighboring Tasting Room offers its own dining options along with nearly 30 specialty cocktails.

FRANCESCO'S RISTORANTE & PIZZERIA

Inspired by his upbringing in Sicily, chef/owner Francesco Aiello and his talented team pour their heart and soul into their food. Treat yourself to impressive pasta dishes, lavish seafood and other Italian favorites, including the gourmet pizzas torched in a wood-fired oven until thin and crispy.

MARKET TO TABLE

Thanks to the chill vibe, an approachable menu full of star turns and a cocktail list that is far from run of the mill, Market to Table has gained a loyal following over the years. And with a seasonally rotating menu, there is always a new reason to visit.

CUBA LIBRE RESTAURANT & RUM BAR

Not only does this Latin hotspot offer a menu overflowing with classic Cuban dishes and some remarkable cocktails (try any one of the nine mojito varieties), it's also a great place to dance the night away.



On Friday nights, live bands provide the rhythm while DJs keep the party moving on Saturdays—both in the main room and out on the patio.

KNIFE & SPOON

Since opening its doors a few short years ago, John Tesar's Michelin-starred restaurant has become one of Orlando's most in-demand reservations. Guests can expect ornate plates of seafood and pasta, dry-aged steaks and other dynamic dishes that showcase deft technique and Instagram-worthy presentation.



BACÁN

With a stunning dining room to match its superb menu, Bacán provides the kind of experience discerning gourmands crave. The grilled branzino and *birria* short ribs are true headliners, but if you are in a sharing mood, they offer larger plates perfect for two—we strongly recommend the crispy whole Florida snapper with grapefruit *mojo* and fennel salsa.

SEAR + SEA

Sear + Sea serves up intoxicating dishes that take you on a culinary journey of flavor, from the scintillating starters to the museum-worthy desserts. A 1,200-bottle wine cellar and a wonderful cocktail list are the perfect reason to arrive early and head to the bar or linger a while after your meal.

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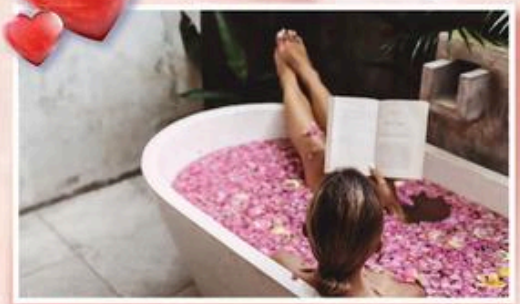




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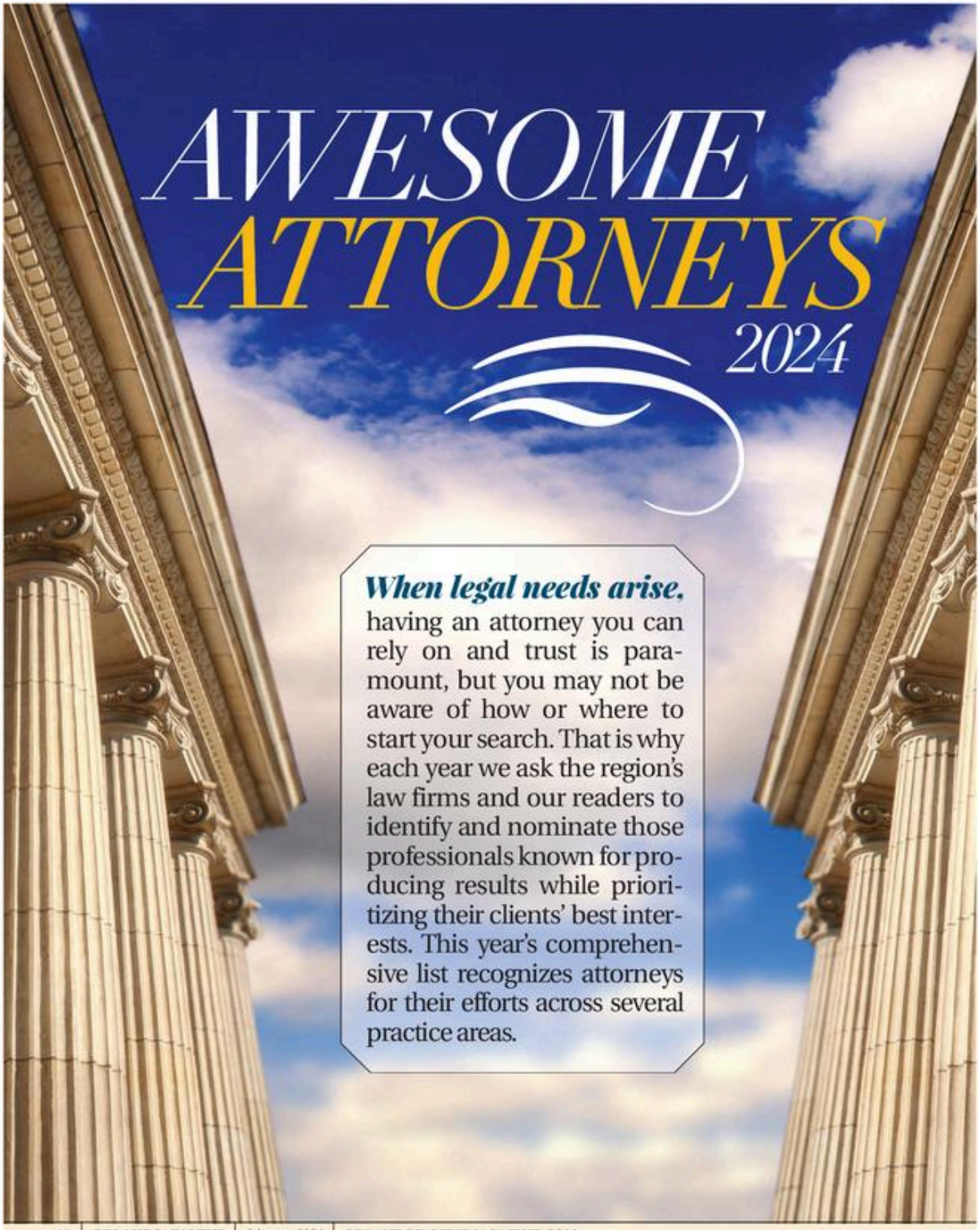




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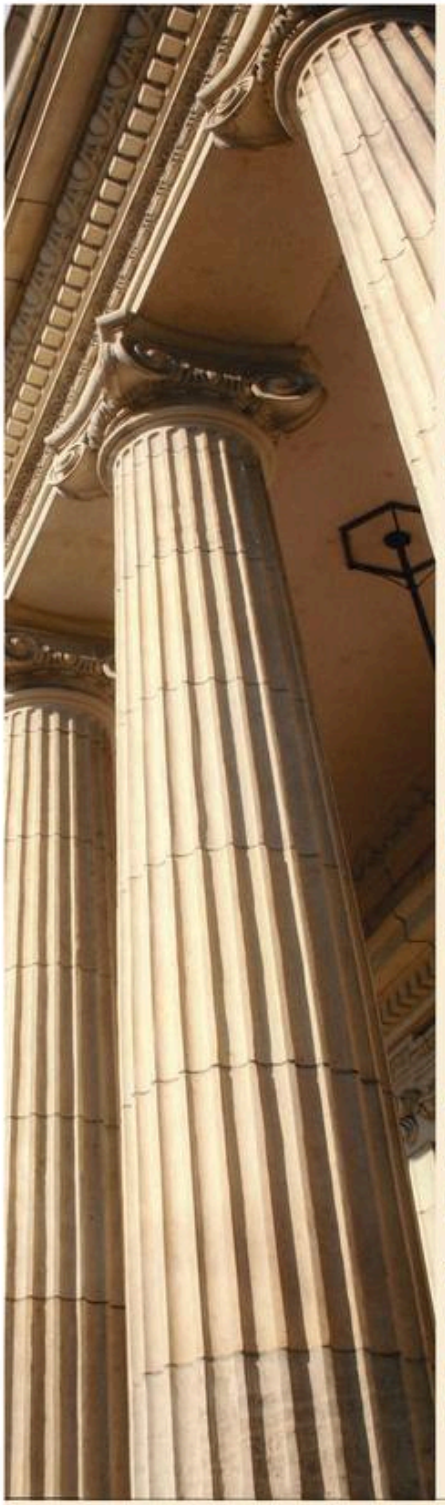
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Rania Arwani, Esq.

Mother, wife, family law attorney, business owner, women's rights advocate and philanthropist. RANIA ARWANI's personal and professional life is grounded in her passion to serve humanity by ensuring women are empowered in their rights.

"It is my life mission to advocate for women: my business background and law degree are the tools I use to empower our female clients daily."

Arwani graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington with a business degree in finance and originally started working in the field. However, through her community service, she soon realized she was destined for a career path that would help her lead impactful change in the lives of women.

Her inspiration came from watching another attorney passionately advocate for the women she represented. One day in particular, as that attorney stood in the courtroom and gave voice to a young, frightened, and abused woman who could not speak up for herself, Rania looked on in awe and thought to herself, "I was born to be an advocate for women. I want to become an attorney." Rania graduated from Barry Law School in Florida in 2013.

Like many women, though, she had some difficulty trying to achieve balance between work and home. Some days, she says, it feels as though she has three full-time jobs, wife and mother, attorney, and business owner, and those days tend to be very hectic. Her secret to making it work, however, is to always remember to take time to create those special memories with her children while they are young.

Rania and her legal team are committed to resolving their clients' complex legal issues, helping families find common ground, and reducing conflict and tension.

"Divorce is rarely easy," said Rania. "Our goal is to create an environment where families can work together to resolve their differences and move forward with their lives. Our philosophy here at Arwani Law Firm is that it is possible for our clients to move from a place of failure in a marriage to a place of acceptance and then, hopefully, to a point where they can envision a positive transformation and future for themselves and their families. It's a privilege to be chosen to help them through this difficult transition, and we take this responsibility very seriously."

On a global scale, Rania said her mission is to make a difference in the fight against domestic violence. In 2021 she wrote a book/memoir, Unintentional Hero, (available on Amazon), an extraordinary story of strength, faith, and resilience. It is about finding light after years of living in the darkness that permeates an abuse victim's existence. Her goal is to educate women in abusive relationships to identify the signs of abuse, and encourage them to speak up, not only for themselves but for their children. She currently serves on the board of Harbor House and United Abolitionist.

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METHODOLOGY

WE SENT OUT CORRESPONDENCE to the leading attorneys and law firms in Greater Orlando in search of nominations for our annual Awesome Attorneys list. In addition, we also tasked our readers with going online and recommending the legal professionals they've had positive experiences with. The results were tallied and after applying a minimum number of votes to be considered for the list, the leading vote getters in each specialty were then vetted using public sources of information to verify peer recognition, professional achievements, experience, honorable accolades and more.

We go to great lengths and take time and energy to ensure a fair voting process, but we acknowledge these surveys and Internet research are not an entirely objective metric. We are aware that this is just a mere sample of the good attorneys in the region and thus there are many professionals who do not appear on the list. Furthermore, *Orlando Family Magazine* does not solely endorse the services of any particular attorney who was selected. Lastly, any paid advertisements in this publication were not exchanged for inclusion on the list.



MEN'S DIVORCE LAW FIRM

Jean Marie Moses

2024 marks the 20th Anniversary of the Men's Divorce Law Firm and its commitment to helping men navigate the intricacies of Florida Family Law, including marital property division, alimony, and child support disputes.

LEADERSHIP:

Jean Marie Moses is the managing attorney of the Men's Divorce Law Firm. Attorney Moses is an experienced advocate for the male point of view. She understands men face distinct challenges regarding divorce and that husbands and fathers should have equal footing in family law cases. Attorney Moses strives to minimize the difficult impact that family law matters have on everyone involved, especially the children, in every case she handles. She is a zealous advocate and litigator and is known for providing aggressive representation in and out of the courtroom. Her years of experience in the courtroom have afforded her familiarity with the various and differing courtroom practices throughout the state. Attorney Moses is collaboratively trained and acts as a member of the Collaborative Family Law Group of Central Florida. She is also an active member of the Orange County Bar Association and Central Florida Association for Women's Lawyers.

EXECUTIVE TEAM

The esteemed attorneys at the Men's Divorce Law Firm expertly handle all family law cases throughout the state of Florida including divorce, paternity, child support, alimony (spousal support), timesharing (custody), parenting plans, modifications, domestic violence injunctions, and adoption. The team wants fathers to know that while their marriage may end, fatherhood doesn't have to.

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AWESOME ATTORNEY 2024

With nearly 30 years of legal experience, Amie Kozan focuses her practice on appellate litigation and has substantive experience ranging from First Amendment, media and business litigation to section 1983, insurance and family law matters. Ms. Kozan recently joined Losey, PLLC, a full-service business law firm, where she heads the firm's appellate practice.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Ms. Kozan has been selected as a Florida "Super Lawyer" in appellate practice for nine years straight, has a peer rating of 'AV Preeminent" by Martindale-Hubbell (reflecting the highest level of legal ability and ethical standards), and has twice been selected by the Judicial Nominating Commission for potential appointment to the state appellate bench. She is former chair of the Orange County Bar Association's Appellate Practice Committee and has served on Ninth Circuit Grievance Committee, as well as the pro bono committee of the Florida Bar's Appellate Practice Section.

EDUCATION:

Licensed in two states and a graduate of Louisiana State University's School of Law, Ms. Kozan finished in the top 10% of her law school class, served as senior editor of the Louisiana Law Review and was admitted to the Order of the Coif. She then served as a judicial clerk to United States District Court Judge Frank Polozola in the Middle District of Louisiana. Prior to law school, she worked in journalism and media relations.

PERSONAL:

When not writing briefs or otherwise puzzling through a complicated legal issue, you'll find Ms. Kozan on the tennis court, cooking for friends, volunteering or walking her Affenpinscher puppy.



Margaret "Amie" Kozan
Losey, PLLC
1420 Edgewater Dr.
Orlando, FL 32804
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AWESOME ATTORNEY 2024

Whether you have a young family and need to put an estate plan in place, are grieving the loss of a family member, or need to plan for long term care, Attorney Pamela Martini can offer assistance, solutions, and compassionate guidance.

BACKGROUND:

Working as an advocate for a special needs family member led Attorney Pamela Martini back to law school as a second career. After graduation and working as a judicial staff attorney for two years, She opened the Law Office of Pamela G. Martini, PLLC in the Dr. Phillips area in 2014. Her practice focuses on Elder Law, which includes Estate Planning, Probate, Guardianship, and Medicaid Planning.

EDUCATION / MEMBER:

Attorney Martini is a native Floridian, graduate of the University of Florida, and Barry University School of Law. Attorney Martini is certified by the Florida Supreme Court in Family Mediation and has completed additional training in Elder Mediation and Shared Family Decision Making and as an Eldercaring Coordinator. She is a member of The Florida Bar, the National Association of Elder Law Attorneys, the Association of Florida Elder Law Attorneys, the Orange County Bar Association, and the Central Florida Association for Women Lawyers.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

As the proud mom of a U.S. Marine, the practice offers discounts to all first responders, active military members, and U.S. veterans.



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AWESOME ATTORNEYS 2024

HAWM PLLC focuses on serving the needs of Orlando families in the areas of Criminal, Family, and Immigration law. Their commitment to preserving the well-being of families facing difficult legal challenges sets them apart as true advocates for their clients.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

In addition to being Awesome Attorneys, the Firm's remarkable achievements have been acknowledged with the prestigious SEMINOLE 100 award from Florida State University. For the past three consecutive years, HAWM PLLC has been honored as one of the top 100 fastest-growing businesses owned by FSU alumni. This recognition not only underscores their professional success but also serves as a testament to the firm's resilience, innovation, and enduring commitment to excellence.

COMMUNITY:

HAWM is active in the Orlando community, demonstrating a genuine commitment to making a positive impact beyond legal matters. Their involvement in various community initiatives, including Second Harvest, Boys & Girls Club, and Orange County Public Schools, reflects a dedication to enhancing the overall well-being of the families they serve.

MISSION:

With a strategic mission aimed at enhancing access to justice, HAWM Law is committed to delivering innovative, cost-effective, and high-quality legal services. The firm takes pride in its client-centric approach, fostering open communication and ensuring that clients feel supported throughout the legal process.



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AWESOME ATTORNEY 2024

Richard B. Schwamm is a Senior Partner in the Orlando office of Haliczer Pettis & Schwamm (HPS). Richard mainly focuses his practice in the areas of medical malpractice, wrongful death, and catastrophic injury cases. With over 30 years of experience in the practice of law, Richard has dedicated his professional life to serving the needs of his clients all over the State of Florida.

EXPERIENCE:

Richard's litigation practice is devoted to helping families who have suffered a devastating injury or loss. His strategic approach of only taking "significant injury cases and a small number of them" allows Richard and the team at HPS to focus their time, energy, and resources on the most serious injury cases.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

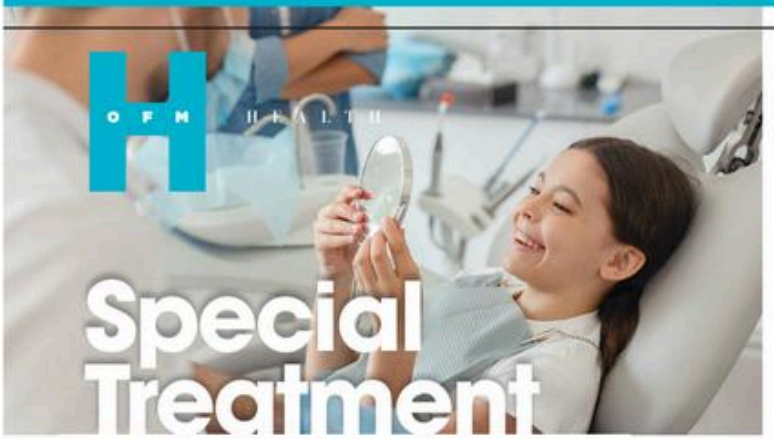
Richard has been a frequent, invited guest speaker, including as a featured speaker for the Trial Lawyers Section of the Florida Bar, for medical-legal seminars all over the United States and for education institutions like Harvard University. He also frequently lectures and teaches other lawyers about medical malpractice litigation, advanced trial strategies, and technological advances in the practice of law.

PERSONAL:

Richard has been a lawyer since 1991, joined HPS on the first day it opened for business in 1996, and became a partner in 1999. Richard lives in Winter Garden, Florida, with his wife and two children.



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Special Treatment

Local professionals weigh in on the bene taking children to a pediatric dentist and th

By Matt Cosentino

DR. DOMENIC ALOISE DID NOT EXACTLY SET OUT WITH THE GOAL of devoting his professional life to working with children. But once he felt drawn to pediatric dentistry, it was impossible to change his mind.

"Out of all the aspects of dentistry, I felt pediatric dentistry was the most personally rewarding and impactful, while being fun too," he says. "I enjoyed learning about pediatric dentistry more than any of the other subjects in dental school—especially learning about behavior management, pediatric dental treatments and materials, special needs, and growth and development. I just liked it the most."

Fortunately, Central Florida is home to quite a few compassionate and experienced pediatric dentists just like Dr. Aloise, of Maitland Pediatric Dentistry. While general dentists are also capable of treating young patients, the specialized training and education that pediatric dentists undergo makes them uniquely qualified for the task.

"Pediatric dentists do a two-year specialty program," says Dr. Lissette Bernal of Winter Garden Smiles. "The two years are spent studying baby teeth (primary teeth), mixed dentition, child development, behavior, psychology, pharmacology, special needs patient care and sedation. Pediatric dentists have special training and education that make them more qualified to work with kids."

As parents with young children know all too well, it can be challenging to get kids on board with a visit to the dentist and to be on their best behavior while receiving treatment. Pediatric dentists enjoy being around children, however, and understand how to relate to them while putting them at ease and explaining any procedures they are doing.

Many pediatric dentists also have experience in working with special needs patients. Dr. Aloise, for example, completed a one-year fellowship in special needs dentistry at Helen Hayes Hospital and Columbia University in New York.

"I often reflect on what I learned during that year," he says. "In a nutshell, it teaches you to think outside the box sometimes, because children with special needs, or even adults with special needs, aren't always able to do things in the same way as others. You can still accomplish those goals, but, for example, some children with special needs don't want to sit in the dental chair, so we stand up and brush their teeth.

"Knowing what aspects of dentistry might be viewed as adverse to the child or fearful for the child allows you to minimize those things, so you can have a more effective relationship. It's not always traditional, but you can still accomplish your goals—it might just take longer or require you to use different material or a different instrument."

Speaking of different instruments, technology has given pediatric dentists many more tools to work with in diagnosing and treating various ailments. Dr. Aloise points to the philosophy of "minimally invasive dentistry" and addressing issues before they develop into something serious, while Dr. Bernal notes the many advancements that have become common at most practices.

"[With] digital radiography, dentists can obtain detailed images of a child's teeth with significantly lower radiation exposure compared to traditional X-rays," she says. "Digital scanning and 3D printing technology allow dentists to create custom-fitted dental appliances such as braces, retainers, dental restorations and mouth guards. Sedation dentistry involves using medication to help children relax during dental procedures. It is becoming more popular for children who are anxious or have special needs.

"Painless injection techniques have been developed [as well]. The Wand is a tool that provides a pain-free and less fearful option to the traditional syringe. The pain from infections comes not from the infection itself but the delivery of the anesthetic into your tissue. There is also sedation dentistry for those patients who are very young or anxious."

Dr. Lauris Johnson of MyFamily Orthodontics believes technology has made treatment more convenient for patients.

"Digital scanning and 3D printing are two recent advancements in the field that have positively impacted the dental industry," she says. "We are now able to provide quality dental appliances faster to our patients without multiple visits."

The field promises to evolve even further with the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the future.

"AI is becoming an effective and powerful tool for assisting pediatric dentists," Dr. Bernal says. "It shows high accuracy in diagnosis. There are a lot of dental software imaging programs that are being developed to detect early caries or detect caries that are not easily detected radiographically."

Dr. Johnson adds: "I believe there is a place for AI to assist providers with formulating a more informed treatment plan and to facilitate selection of superior dental materials to provide better treatment results."

Dr. Breck Brewer of Fravel Brewer Orthodontics has not seen AI develop into an effective tool for diagnosis in his field as of yet, but it is assisting with orthodontic treatment. He explains that one company, DentalMonitoring, provides a device that patients use along with their smartphone to take intraoral images monitoring their progress with Invisalign or traditional braces.

"Then artificial intelligence would be used to analyze those photos and determine if things are proceeding accordingly," Dr. Brewer says. "What I mean by that is, does the alignment look good? Do the Invisalign trays fit like they should at this point? It would give automatic feedback to patients that says, 'You're not tracking along very good, you need to add two or three more days to your trays before you switch to the next one.' Or, for a braces patient it might say, 'You need to keep wearing rubber bands.' It might also tell a patient they're not doing a good job of brushing, or maybe that a bracket is loose and they need to call the office."

Of course, supporting these technological advancements with traditional care and good habits enforced at home goes a long way, which is why Dr. Aloise recommends parents bring their child in for a first dental visit by age 1, even if they only have one tooth.

"It's good for the dentist to have a positive relationship with parents and create what we call a 'dental home'—creating home awareness of oral health and reinforcing it with the dentist at each appointment," he says. "The younger, the better:

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It's important to create a healthy dental habit, which should benefit the patient as they grow."

Dr. Brewer agrees, stressing the importance of parents taking their children for regular dentist and orthodontist visits to ensure that teeth are coming in properly.

"My job as an orthodontist is to evaluate the bite and the alignment and give you a really good snapshot of what that looks like, and more importantly, what it might look like in the future," he says. "Is it going to stay like this? Are there things in your mouth that are not stable? Are you putting too much pressure on this side versus that side and that's going to make things worse? We give you a lot of information so you can make an informed decision on whether to get braces.

"A lot of people don't need braces; a lot of them choose it because they want to see the teeth well aligned and as ideal as possible. But other times it's not necessary, and getting that information to see how important orthodontic treatment could be makes a lot of sense."

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Terrific Teachers

Recognizing 14 incredible teachers whose passion for education extends beyond the classroom.

Edited by Chelsea Valcourt

Teachers are tasked with one of the most important responsibilities in the future of our society—educating and preparing the next generation of workers, voters and leaders. Often asked to juggle dozens of responsibilities, the life of an educator can be a hectic one. That doesn't stop these "super teachers" from putting their all into their jobs and relaying their passions to their students. These teachers go above and beyond to spread the love of learning and encourage their students to dream big.

Melissa Benner



MATH, MONTVERDE ACADEMY MIDDLE SCHOOL

A graduate of Northern Michigan University in elementary education with a specialization in mathematics and a master's from the American College of Education in Curriculum & Instruction, Benner brings a wealth of knowledge to the classroom. With 12 years of teaching experience, including four at Montverde Academy, she has honed a teaching philosophy focused on nurturing a positive mindset toward learning mathematics. Benner's commitment to facilitating growth and closing gaps in students' mathematical mastery is evident in their approach. Through high-quality teaching and building confidence, Benner is dedicated to ensuring that every student succeeds in their mathematical journey.

Erin Goranson



ALGEBRA II; FUNCTIONS, PROBABILITY, AND STATISTICS, THE GENEVA SCHOOL

Goranson has taught upper school math at The Geneva School since 2020. With a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in secondary mathematics education, she began teaching in 2007. She loves being in the classroom sharing her love of mathematics with her students. Teaching a classical curriculum from a Christian worldview provides a unique opportunity to share the wonders of math with students in a complex but beautiful world. Using discussion, debate and play, her students explore and master concepts to move toward deeper mathematical understanding, and her classes equip students with problem-solving and communication.

Kathryn Gunter



MEDIA SPECIALIST, LOVELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Creativity, passion and respect inspire Gunter to make the media center the heartbeat of Lovell. She creates a vibrant and evolving library program that is student-centered, and under her management, book circulation has increased. The library has also grown—a place for research, academic centers, a makerspace, STEM and more, where students enjoy learning, exploring and creating. Her innovative ideas won the Florida Power Library School Award, which recognizes outstanding school library programs. Gunter leads journalism, book and STEM clubs, in addition to Safety Patrol, National Elementary Honor Society and student council. She also runs an academic tutoring program that supports at-risk students.

Holly Harris



DRAMA, LAKE HIGHLAND PREPARATORY SCHOOL

In addition to teaching improv, acting and musical theater, you may find Harris turning up the music for a pop-up performance in the cafeteria, teaching lessons for colleagues, or choreographing and directing shows for pre-K through 12th grade students at Lake Highland Preparatory School (LHP). Actively involved in Orlando's arts community, Harris is the founder of National Dance Day Orlando, serves as a creative collaborator for Creative City Project theatrical events, choreographs for Florida collegiate schools and is a Disney-in-Schools certified educator. A recipient of LHP's prestigious President's Cup Award for Excellence in Teaching, Harris has been a Highlander for seven years.

Sara Hudson



FIFTH-GRADE ELA, PRAIRIE LAKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Hudson has created a culture of high expectations in her classroom for 11 years. Bringing Level 1 students up to proficiency in one year, she strives beyond reading standards by discussing sociological topics. She creates a welcoming environment with monthly family nights, developing deep, lasting relationships with students, while additionally leading the cheer committee. As grade chair, she pushes teachers to help students excel, increasing fifth-grade ELA scores to above the district average. She has facilitated PLCs and hosts monthly professional development sessions. Hudson also helped shape district science assessments and create a house system that transformed the culture at her previous school.

Jaque Keehan



ELEMENTARY, FIORELLA PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Keehan is a difference-maker—she gives her students all the tools they need to be successful, not only in the classroom, but also as productive members of the community. From helping organize amazing educational field trips to taking the lead in Fiorella Preparatory School's community food drive, she provides a nurturing environment for her students and is a daily example of living out Christian values. Every day, she creates memorable learning experiences that her students will take with them for years to come.





Terrific Teachers

Tiffany Mann



STEM, WALDEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Mann currently teaches pre-algebra, algebra I/II, chemistry, sustainability and origins of infectious disease. She is adept at seamlessly integrating subjects to provide a holistic learning experience. With a dynamic teaching style, she sparks enthusiasm among students, fostering a love for discovery and critical thinking. Recognized for cultivating a classroom environment that encourages collaboration and creativity, she goes beyond traditional teaching methods, employing real-world applications to make abstract concepts relatable. Her commitment to student success is evident through consistently high achievement levels and a palpable eagerness for learning. As an inspirational mentor, she instills confidence, motivating her students to reach their full potential.

Vanessa McMillion



DEAN OF DISCIPLINE AND SCIENCE COACH, WASHINGTON SHORES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

For 28 years, McMillion has felt joy from seeing a concept click with a child. Her collective roles at Washington Shores allow her to have an impact on student growth, such as lobbying for a schedule change to increase science instruction, causing science proficiency scores to triple last year. As the teacher leader in science, she blends mentoring, innovation, collaboration and advocacy, hosting weekly planning sessions for teachers. McMillion designed a points-based incentive plan for students who follow the rules. Students can purchase items with points at a Positive Behavior Intervention and Support store on campus, which encourages positive behavior and respect.

Deborah Parsons



K-5 MUSIC, LAKE SILVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

For five years, Parsons has created a loving and accepting environment for all students in her music classroom. She holds ESE Inclusion concerts featuring Lake Silver gifted students and those in her extracurricular music enrichment group. She co-presented to a state conference in 2022 focusing on how educators can replicate the success of these concerts. She works with middle and high school music teachers to build each other's programs and is chair of the Elementary All-County Honors Concert committee. Parsons is involved in organizing many school initiatives including seasonal celebrations, cultural performances, a collaborative mural and an International Day of Peace event epitomizing music and art.

David Rego



SOCIAL STUDIES, ORLANDO SCIENCE SCHOOL

Rego is a treasured member of the school community for his strong relationships with students, families and staff, and for the vast culture and personal experience he infuses into his lessons. By incorporating hands-on music, food and real-life experiences, students become immersed in their education in ways that will stick with them well into their future. Rego is also the leader of the school Ukulele Club, which performs regularly at campus events. Prior to joining the school in 2018, Rego served in the Navy and graduated from UCF with a master's degree in arts in teaching with certifications in elementary education, english, ESOL and gifted.



Jacqueline Russell



SIXTH-GRADE MATH, MEADOWBROOK MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Florida DOE High Impact Teacher, Russell helped her students achieve one of the highest proficiency rates at her school. Bringing 15 years of experience and leadership, Russell supports colleagues delivering quality math instruction. She initiated the "Young Girls on the Move" mentoring program, which influences the academic and personal growth of sixth through eighth grade girls. Administrators and former students say Russell's innovative teaching methods and her stimulating, inclusive classroom environment light a fire in many students. During the pandemic, Russell started a YouTube channel called "At Home with Mother Bonnet the Math Teacher," providing math tutorials to help parents with struggling students.

Heather Webb



ORTON-GILLINGHAM AND MULTISENSORY MATH TEACHER, THE CHRIST SCHOOL

Once curating fine art as a gallery owner, Webb now spends her days creatively designing emotionally sound, prescriptive and diagnostic lessons for students with learning differences such as dyslexia and ADHD. With care and compassion for reaching all students through a multisensory educational approach, Webb makes learning fun. After taking Orton-Gillingham Academy and multisensory math trainings, Webb jumped into deeper learning for herself through practicum training to hone her skills even further. She takes her wisdom as a parent and passion for her students to cheer them on as they achieve new skills.

Michael Weeldreyer



MATH, THE FIRST ACADEMY

Math teacher, Wrestling coach. Commissioned Colson Fellow. In his seven years at The First Academy, Weeldreyer has found a way to help students thrive in many aspects of their lives. "It has been great to teach in a Christian environment where the kids have a passion for learning, and the families are so supportive," says Weeldreyer. He enjoys building relationships with his students. For him, one of the best parts of being a math teacher is seeing the students understand a difficult concept, and he finds it rewarding to help students understand and be able to help them when they have questions.



Sam Weitzner



ENTREPRENEURIAL STUDIES, WINDERMERE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Weitzner has been in education for 18 years as a mentor, coach, summer camp director, classroom teacher and everything in between. In his second year at Windermere Preparatory School's high school, he teaches entrepreneurial studies and guides the internships via the Learn to Start program. In every class, Weitzner encourages students to find their passion and connect it to learning. His enthusiasm is contagious, and his innovative teaching methods cater to every learning style, ensuring all students play to their strengths. When he is not teaching, Weitzner can be found writing, exploring the kitchen, playing music, or spending time with his wife, daughter and dog.

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Making the Grade

It has been a tough past few years since the pandemic erupted, causing students to engage in alternative pathways in their learning and social journeys.

Inevitably, this lapse in crucial development is coming to light in nationwide reports of students falling behind. **by Carly Murray**

Florida schools are distinctive in that they reopened more rapidly than other states following the pandemic, mandating an option of in-classroom education in August 2020. The trend of adjusting to remote learning and virtual classrooms were not as impactful on Florida's youth as in other states, and did not initiate an expectation of alternative learning models.

As all subjects progressively build on previously learned material, any loss of understanding received with that in-classroom guidance can be detrimental. This is exacerbated by still-rapidly spreading illnesses that cause both students and teachers to miss out on essential class time. Yet, the emotional and physical repercussions of COVID have still led to an increased mental health crisis, absenteeism and behavioral challenges—all of which are correlated to educational performance.

"[Learning] gaps vary depending on the age of students when they lived through the pandemic. I think we see the gaps more in math than in other areas. We see even more issues with student well-being though. We experience more students with anxiety and depression than we did pre-COVID," says Alex Birchenall, assistant head of school at Windermere Preparatory School.



It is not difficult to determine from where these struggles originate—from a focus on sickness and death during the pandemic, to high emotions in the news as well as in everyday interactions. The uncertainty generated chaos abruptly; crippling anxiety over what's to come, or for some, apathy and a lack of motivation. The standards set by adults are always monitored by children, and they will act accordingly.

"The environment that we see right now in our society is one where people are very confrontational and you see the adults behaving badly on a regular basis … we can't be surprised that kids are mimicking what they're seeing," explains Andrew Spar, president of Florida Education Association (FEA). "We need to talk about what is appropriate … parents and schools working together to make sure that we're developing climates in our schools that are supportive, that are free of bullying and that we help students determine right from wrong in their actions."

Preparing a generation who has uniquely witnessed world suffering first-hand comes with a detriment to the parents and teachers who are guiding them. There has been a widely reported teacher and staff shortage post-pandemic, as well as a social media outpouring of teachers sharing their experiences of students' frequently shocking behavior.

This is unfortunate, as just one impassioned teacher can inspire students or even spearhead their trajectory toward success. Many of us still fondly remember those connections from teachers that were so beneficial in shaping our lives, but this becomes more difficult (though not impossible) with a lack of engagement from students. Teachers in the modern age are expected to navigate multiple methods of teaching while being cognizant of the mental health challenges that their students are frequently facing.

Some attribute this to what is called "the iPad generation," identifying that children raised with screens since infancy might be a huge factor. This alone may be a cause for the shorter attention-spans, lack of social skills or need for technology-driven educational models, only exponentiated by the pandemic. This demonstrates a need to understand younger generations' technological experience and to incorporate it as a tool, not as a substitute.

"Our students today are digital natives. They haven't experienced a world without modern technology," says Birchenall. "While students can often learn to navigate technology more quickly and easily than older generations, technology doesn't guarantee better learning outcomes. It all comes down to teachers having thoughtfully designed learning experiences."

Experts recommend methods to address the prevalent resistance to learning, as well as ways to stay involved in order to sense changes in your child's behavior. Dennis Freeman, owner of In-Home Tutors, has noticed a major loss of confidence among students, prioritizing tutoring that is

encouraging, compassionate, and that is aimed to restore that lost confidence. While meeting with a tutor is a proven method of supplementing education and leading students to success, and funding has made high-intensity tutoring more accessible, getting a child back to grade level performance expectations is most successful when parents, schools and tutors work together.

"The cliche is read with your child, every day. Make that one of your New Year's resolutions: 30 minutes of reading every day… especially if you choose books that the child loves and they'll begin to enjoy reading and learn that love of getting information from books that are fun rather than a school chore," recommends Freeman.

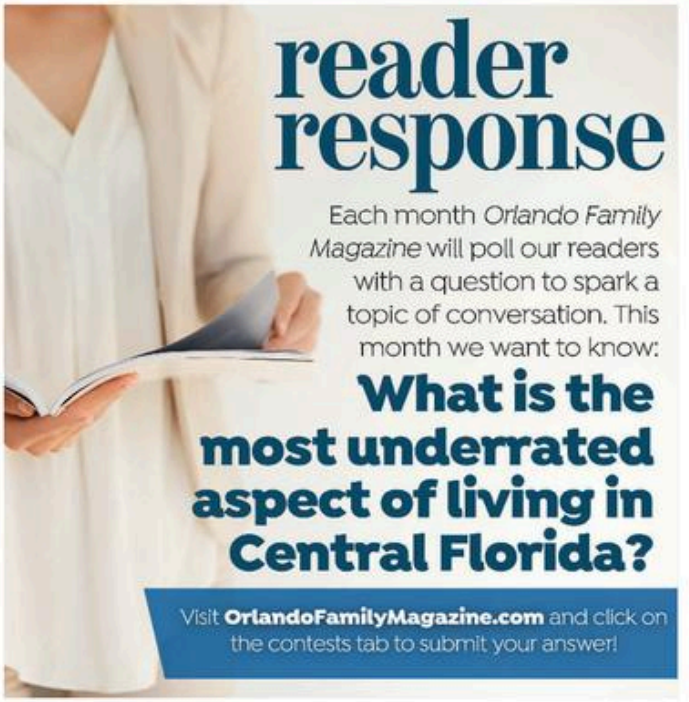
While it is no secret that Florida has faced public controversies recently in regard to literature in schools, allowing a child to immerse themselves in the world of a book that they identify with is an essential part of discovering a passion to learn. A love for reading is a gateway to becoming knowledgeable on a wide variety of subjects, learning research skills and developing curiosity. It is a great opportunity to bond with a child by learning together or by expressing excitement about a subject or educational experience.

"Talk about every subject—you connect with your kid in that way. Obviously, you show you care, but it allows you to know what's going on, it allows you to know what they're learning, of what they might be struggling with, ways that you can help them, if you need to call a teacher because something's going on—and if we if we're not connecting in that way, you tend to miss some of that," Spar says. "There has to be a strong partnership between the teacher and the parent, and that support system at home is so essential."

Every child is unique, as is each child's learning style. Students with learning disabilities were particularly affected by a loss of routine and consistency, lessening the ability to retain information. As schools are focused on educational difficulties among their entire student body, those with a predisposition who need a little extra help can be unintentionally overlooked.

"Have a regular homework time and maybe make it some little ritual; like when homework time comes, put on some specific instrumental gentle music that the kids can respond to, or bring out a homework kit with index cards, sharpeners, pencils and colored ink. … I think you'll find that really has some positive effects of helping the child develop study skills and the ability to self-start and get the homework done," says Freeman.

Students who lack motivation or confidence may neglect turning in assignments, or showing up at all—and this can originate from a perceived lack of interest in their day-to-day assignments and activities. Cultivating an enthusiasm for learning and nurturing it throughout a child's entire educational progression can help nullify the disruptions that parents and school officials have documented and found characteristic of the emerging generations.







A look at upcoming events around the Greater Orlando area

Jan. 25
Boozy Book Fair, Serendipity Labs, Orlando, 4 p.m.

Cheers to You!, Winter Park Events Center, Winter Park, 5:30-8 p.m.

Jan. 27
Family Fun Day, Independence Lane, Maitland, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

Otter Fest, Wekiva Island, Longwood, 1-5 p.m.

Jan. 28
Winterfest 2024, Rosen JCC, Orlando, *11 a.m.-3 p.m.*

Feb. 1–11
Winter Carnival, Oviedo Mall, Oviedo, times vary

Feb. 1, 3 & 5
Resonate Festival 2024, Winter Park Events Center, Winter Park, 7 & 8:45 p.m.

Feb. 2
Movie Night, Harry P. Leu Gardens, Orlando, 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 3
HAPCO Jazz Festival, Lakeshore Center, Ocoee, 6-9 p.m.

Feb. 4
Yoga in the Garden, Mead Botanical Garden, Winter Park, 4-5 p.m.

Feb. 5
Five Love *Languages Date Night Event,* ***Downtown*** *Baptist Orlando Church,* ***Orlando,*** *6 p.m.*

Feb. 6
Coyote Education *Presentation,* ***Celebration*** *Town Hall, Kissimmee,* ***6 p.m.***

Feb. 9
Mardi Gras Black Party, McKey Street, Ocoee, 6-9 p.m.

Feb. 10
Touch a Truck, Trinity Downtown, Orlando, 9 a.m.

Virginia Drive Live!, Virginia Drive, Orlando 5-9 p.m.

Love Your Library Gala, Winter Park Library, Winter Park, 7 p.m.

Feb. 13
Galentine's Day Sips & Shopping, Downtown Historic District, Winter Garden, 5-8 p.m.

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Palate

By Karen Nimetz

TOP FIVE:

ITALIAN

A quintet of tasty things to try this month



ROASTED MUSHROOM LASAGNA
AT MIA'S ITALIAN KITCHEN, INTERNATIONAL DRIVE
A vegetarian take on a traditional dish, this platter consists of mushrooms roasted in a brick oven, sungold tomatoes, ricotta, sharp provolone, mozzarella, Parmigiano and herbs.

COFFEE PAOLO
AT MISTER O1, LAKE MARY
A unique blending of flavors, this pie features tomato sauce, mozzarella, gorgonzola, honey, spicy salami and coffee.

PEAR RAVIOLI WITH POACH PEAR IN WINE
AT TURCI PASTA, COLLEGE PARK
A signature offering, this ravioli dish features the pasta coated with a three-cheese homemade sauce and served with a pear poached in red wine and crushed pistachio.

SALMON CAPRIE
AT FRATELLI'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT, DOWNTOWN ORLANDO
This salmon is marinated with Italian spices and baked in the oven and then topped with capers, shallots, and a white wine and lemon sauce.

SQUID INK TONNARELLI
AT NORTH ITALIA, DR. PHILLIPS
A mixture of sweet and spicy, this pasta platter is comprised of tiger shrimp, calamari, wild fennel pollen, mint and spicy tomato sauce.

RAISE A GLASS:

MARTINI

Libations you're sure to love

MYTHOS CUCUMBER MARTINI
AT MYTHOS RESTAURANT, UNIVERSAL'S ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE
This crisp cocktail is crafted with Effen cucumber vodka, New Amsterdam gin, St. Elder elderflower liqueur, cucumber slices and fresh lime juice.

CHOCOLATE MUDSLIDE MARTINI
AT SUGAR FACTORY, ICON PARK
A creamy blend of vodka, Kahlua and Bailey's Irish Cream. The drink is garnished with a chocolate drizzle, a chocolate rim and dark chocolate shavings.

TOASTED COCONUT MARTINI
AT ICEBAR, INTERNATIONAL DRIVE
A sweet drink made with Ciroc Coconut Vodka, Bailey's Irish Cream, Frangelico, dark crème de cacao and coconut cream with a toasted coconut rim.



Side Dish

EDITED BY KAREN NIMETZ

IN THE KITCHEN

A CULINARY QUESTION OF THE MONTH

We polled 30 Central Florida residents and asked them: **"What is your favorite style of pasta?"**



The results are in:

Spaghetti: 8 votes
Fettuccine: 7 votes
Linguine: 6 votes
Ziti: 5 votes
Lasagna: 4 votes

Here's what one local chef had to say about her favorite pasta style:

Chef Shelby Farrell, *chef de cuisine, Four Flamingos, A Richard Blais Florida Kitchen*



"My favorite style of pasta right now has got to be the Vesuvio. It's one of the newer pasta shapes to be created and it's getting a lot of talk, for good reason. Its unique, tapered triple-spiral volcanic shape with curled edges grabs chunky sauces like no other and the dense shape retains a killer bite."

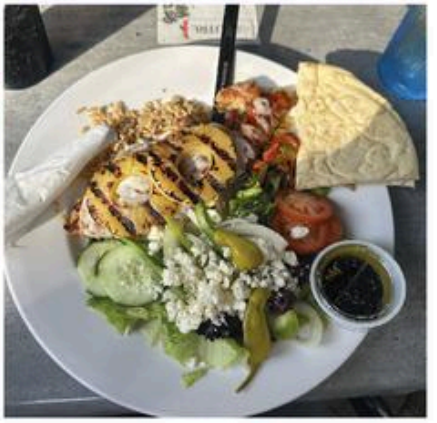


GOOD EATS

The best thing we've tasted recently...

HAWAIIAN CHICKEN
at **Relax Grill,** Lake Eola

WE RECENTLY TRIED THIS delectable dish, which features a grilled teriyaki chicken breast topped with melted provolone cheese and grilled pineapple slices for added sweetness. It is served with a Greek salad, seasoned rice, sautéed onions and peppers with pita.



QUICK BITES

What's new and notable on the local dining scene

Eastwood, a fire-centric restaurant, is set to open later this year in the former Kittinger Printing building in Mills 50.

An "experiential" French-Japanese tasting menu concept, **Ômo by Jônt**, opens this month in Winter Park.

Maw's Mountain Moonshine, a craft cocktail distillery, will be coming to Old Town in Kissimmee this spring.

Tom's Watch Bar is expected to open shortly on I-Drive, next to Mango's Live.

A long-awaited "juice stand" recently opened in the packing district, featuring vendors **Foxtail Coffee**, **Kelly's Homemade Ice Cream** and **The Ravenous Pig Brewing Company**. Paying homage to the area's historic citrus district, the 1,800-square-foot location is a replica of Dr. Phillips' stand from the early 1950s.

A new upscale diner, **Jack & Honey's**, recently opened in the heart of Thornton Park.

The Bao Spot opened recently on Church Street in Downtown Orlando.



Death in the Afternoon, specializing in Absinthe service, craft cocktails and French- and Spanish-influenced cuisine, opened late last year in Mills 50.

RESERVATIONS

Foodie events to fill your calendar

Feb. 10
FIELD TO FEAST
at Long & Scott Farms, Mount Dora
The ninth annual open-air event will feature locally sourced food from Walt Disney World's top chefs along with wine, beer and cocktail pairings by Master Sommelier George Miliotes. *For guests 21 and over. 2:30-5:30 p.m., tickets from $195, with 100% of event proceeds benefiting Second Harvest Kids Cafe.*

Feb. 10
FOOD TRUCK BATTLES
at Orlando Festival Park
Forty food trucks from all over Florida will meet face to face to battle for the $1,000 grand prize, with attendees deciding who wins. *11a.m.-9 p.m., free, food and beverage prices vary.*



Feb. 23
TASTE OF KISSIMMEE
at Kissimmee Lakefront Park
This festival provides an opportunity for guests to indulge themselves through a wide range of local Kissimmee eateries. *5-9 p.m., free admission, food and beverage prices vary.*

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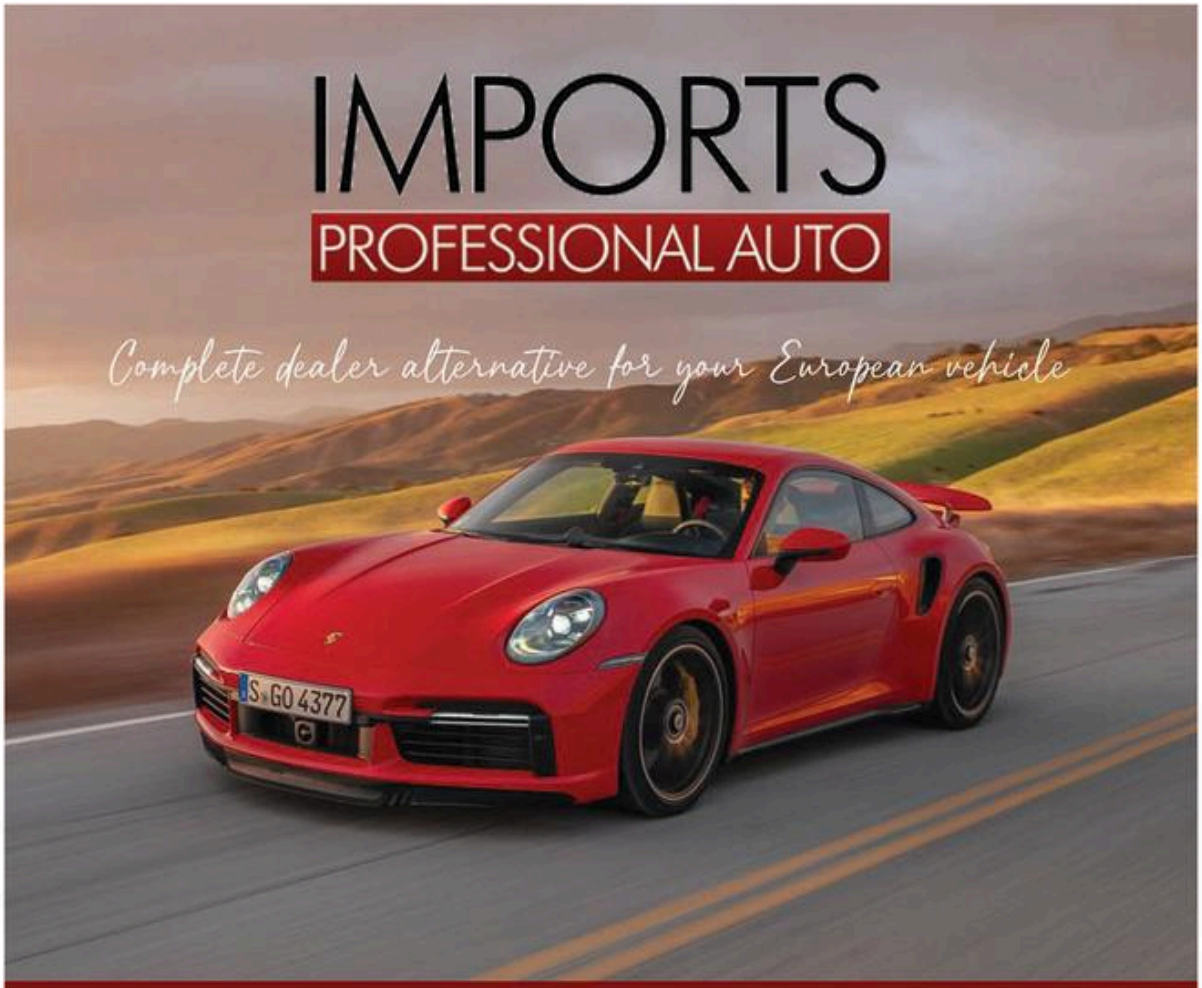


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