

# nonahood news®

CREATIVELY AND INDEPENDENTLY PRODUCED BY THE RESIDENTS OF LAKE NONA

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THE ARTIST:  
ONA SILVERIO

ON PAGE 13



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## PUBLISHER'S DESK

### No Regrets

BY RHYS & JENNY LYNN  
Talk about a hot summer! Things



Finishing the Publishers Note in District Donuts  
in New Orleans

ties are coming sooner than I would have expected.

Jenny and I took over *Nonahood News* a little over a year ago, and we've now been running it for about half of the "life" of the paper. There's something fitting about one husband and wife team passing the *Nonahood News* torch to another. When Jason and Lindsay handed the paper over to us, we had no real inkling of what was in store, but through all the ups and downs, we have no regrets. I do miss our next door neighbors but we still catch up from time to time – most recently we met them for lunch at Fishlips Waterfront Grill on the East Coast. If you haven't been, check it out – it's a great place and is owned by a Lake Nona resident.

One of the things that I truly love about *Nonahood News* is that we are able to help businesses grow by reaching our great audience (if you are reading this, that audience is you). There's an interesting dynamic there since, without our advertisers, the newspaper simply couldn't exist. My goal is to create the best possible product and provide great value to both our audience and our advertisers.



Jason Diven & Rhys Lynn, Nonahood News Bros at Fishlips Waterfront Grill

are definitely heating up in the Nona hood. The pace of development is quickening and businesses are opening up and being announced left and right. Before the year is out, we'll be seeing some great new options for dining and entertainment in Lake Nona. Construction is well underway at Nona Adventure Park, which my family and I are lucky to live a couple of blocks from. Adjacent to that is Laureate City Park, which will offer a huge area with mixed use fields for various sports. Just behind Laureate Park Elementary School, those two sites alone will bring a great array of activity opportunities soon.

Dining options have blossomed over the past year as well and the trend is only growing. I'd name off a list of the great restaurants that have opened in the past year, but I don't want to leave anyone out. Suffice it to say: foodies will appreciate Lake Nona more and more as time goes on. We're also expecting some exciting details about features coming to the Lake Nona Town Center very soon. Even now, infrastructure is being laid down for the future phases and some new ameni-

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~ Andrew & Ariel Axsom

"We absolutely loved working with Kevin and Yvette! When it was time to sell our first house, they immediately came to mind as we had always seen them be so active in our neighborhood and the Lake Nona community. From the moment we met them, they made us feel comfortable and at ease. As first-time home sellers, we could not have imagined leaving the work that went into this in better hands. They were always there to answer all of our questions and educate us throughout the process so we could make informed decisions about selling our home. All their recommendations and guidance helped us get six full-price offers in just four days. We are now less than two months away from closing on our dream home we built from scratch and they have been there to help us through this process as well. They are not our realtors, they are now our friends and we could not be more grateful to know them!" ~ Justin & Claudia Hough



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"The Kendrick Team found us the perfect home. We really liked working with Kevin & Yvette because they live in Lake Nona and know the area very well. They have incredible knowledge of the Lake Nona real estate market and were also able to provide information about the community that was critical for us as we relocated from New York. The Kendrick Team took the time to understand what we were looking for, researched all the available properties and coordinated visits at times that were convenient for us. They then navigated us through a complex transaction in a place we did not know. We highly recommend The Kendrick Team. They made us feel like we had a friend in Lake Nona."  
~ Fahad Malik & Laurel Pickering



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# LOCAL LEADERS

## Lyme Disease Infections Are Increasing – UCF Is Working On Better Treatments

BY DR. DEBORAH C. GERMAN, M.D.  
VICE PRESIDENT FOR MEDICAL AFFAIRS, FOUNDING DEAN  
UCF COLLEGE OF MEDICINE



Dr. Deborah German

Humans get Lyme disease after being bitten by an infected blacklegged tick, and the number of infections is increasing nationwide. A College of Medicine researcher just earned a \$2.2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to understand how this disease is able to escape our body's immune system.



Dr. Jewett, photo courtesy of UCF Health

Her work is important because a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control says vector-borne diseases – those transmitted from insects like mosquitoes and ticks – are on the rise in the United States. Lyme disease accounted for 82 percent of reported cases of tick-borne diseases between 2004 and 2016. While the disease is most prevalent in the Northeast and rare in Florida, many of us travel to areas where Lyme disease is common and we can return home with the infection.

One of the challenges in treating Lyme disease is that some of its symptoms – including fever, headache and fatigue – can be mistaken for symptoms of other conditions. So, treatment with antibiotics can be delayed or missed. The infection can then spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system, causing long-lasting damage.

Dr. Mollie Jewett, who leads our Division of Immunity and Pathogenesis Research at the Burnett School of Biomedical Sciences, focuses her research on earlier detection and better treatments for Lyme disease. Her latest grant is a five-year competitive renewal of an RO1 or Research Project Grant she received in 2013. These grants are highly competitive – only about

12 percent of applications are funded – and are designed to support innovative health research by a sole investigator who addresses a public health need.

The bacterium that causes Lyme disease is transmitted by the tick at a single bite site. But for a person to acquire the disease, the infection must move quickly through the blood to the joints, heart and brain. Dr. Jewett and her team are looking at how the genetic makeup of the bacterium allows it to escape the immune system.

Dr. Jewett is collaborating with Dr. Shibu Yooseph, UCF professor of computer science and genomics and bioinformatics,

and Dr. Justine Tigno-Aranjuez, an assistant professor in the Immunity and Pathogenesis Research Division.

"To disseminate, the bacteria has to overcome all these barriers that the immune system puts up," Dr. Jewett explained. "So if we can figure out a way to strengthen the immune response or target the bacteria to make it more susceptible to the immune defenses, then we might even be able to prevent the infection from happening in the first place."

*Deborah German, M.D. is the Vice President for Medical Affairs and Founding Dean of the UCF College of Medicine. To learn more, visit [med.ucf.edu](http://med.ucf.edu).*



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# Rotary Update: Interact's Leah Laskowski

BY SONYA LABOSCO, PRESIDENT  
ROTARY CLUB OF  
LAKE NONA LUNCH



Leah Laskowski and Mrs. Valerie Ledford  
Photo by Gem Micheo



The Rotary Club of Lake Nona Lunch is proud to announce that Lake Nona High School Interact president Leah Laskowski and Interact advisor Mrs. Valerie Ledford received our club's prestigious "Service Above Self" award for their dedicated service in 2017 to 2018.

The Lake Nona High School Interact Club (LNHSIC) brings together young people ages 12-18 to develop leadership skills while discovering the power of service above self. Laskowski led her team early in 2017 by planning the district conference held in August. Ledford worked tirelessly

with Lake Nona High School administrators, District 6980 Governor's staff, and Interactors to ensure a detailed organizational plan was created and carried out for the conference.

The District 6980 conference was held at Lake Nona High School and welcomed over 150 attendees from different Interact clubs around the district. The conference included guest speakers associated with motivational speaker Tony Robbins and author Steven Covey, workshops that provided Interactors the opportunity to explore different careers, and team-building games that allowed students to engage other students from visiting Interact clubs.

Another super addition to the LNHSIC was the inception of Intarconnect, a Rotary-Interact mentorship program. Our Interactors/mentees had the opportunity to meet and converse with Rotarians/mentors whose professions aligned with the student's interests. Community partners volunteered to visit Lake Nona High School and provided in-depth knowledge about their respective careers at club meetings. Presenters included Tesla, Lake Nona's Veterans Administration, Nemours, life coaches, and local entrepreneurs. This unique mentorship program provided an energized atmosphere for Interactors to discover their passions and gain experience as well as knowledge for their future careers.

Community partners have provided enthusiasm as well as financial support. Sam's Club awarded the Lake Nona High School Interactors with a \$2,000 grant, allowing seven Interactors to attend the life-changing Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, also known as Camp RYLA. RYLA is an intensive leadership experience organized by Rotary clubs and districts where youth develop their skills as a leader while having fun and making connections. The many benefits of RYLA include the opportunity to connect with leaders in the community and around the world, build communication and problem-solving skills, discover strategies for becoming a dynamic leader in school or the community,

learn from community leaders, meet inspirational speakers, learn from peer mentors, unlock potential to turn motivation into action, and to have fun and form lasting friendships. Students from across the district spent five days obtaining important leadership and life skills through various team-building activities and information sessions.

Laskowski stated, "There's something about putting a group of students in a positive, judgment-free environment that instills confidence and brings out the best in them. Many students entered this camp as complete strangers and left as lifelong friends."

Along with developing new members, Interactors took action in the community, demonstrating "Service Above Self." They volunteered at World Polio Day, Paw-sitive Action Foundation, the Lake Nona Pancake Run, Split Oak Forest, the Ronald McDonald House Share-A-Meal, the Little Free Library, and gathered hygiene items for National Giving Day. Interactors worked selflessly to raise funds to purchase and collect teddy bears for children suffering from traumatic incidents. The teddy bears were donated to the Orlando Police Department for officers to keep in their patrol cars for children in need. Interactors collected soap for Clean the World and even made holiday cards for veterans at the Orlando VA Medical Center in Lake Nona.

In closing, Laskowski congratulated the students and thanked all of the volunteers: "We would have never been able to accomplish these things without a wonderful sponsor and teacher like Mrs. Valerie Ledford and the amazing Lake Nona Rotary Club that was with us every step of the way. It has truly been a fantastic experience working with these adults to help



Leah Laskowski | Photo by Jonathan Ervan

impact the lives of the students in our club. Interact provides unparalleled opportunities, and every LNHS student is strongly encouraged to join."

Special thanks to Sam's Club, PBM Specialties, Nemours Children's Hospital, Orlando VA Medical Center, Lake Nona High School Principal Mable Chang, Rotarians President-Elect Gem Micheo, Dr. Larry McKinney, Teresa Turner, and Dr. Tweet Coleman for their support, guidance, and commitment to our youth.

For additional information on Interact or the Rotary Club of Lake Nona Lunch, visit [www.lakenonarotary.com](http://www.lakenonarotary.com) or call (407) 733-6700. Meetings are held on the second and fourth Tuesdays at 11:45 a.m. at the Ronald McDonald House, 13551 Nemours Pkwy., Orlando FL, 32827.



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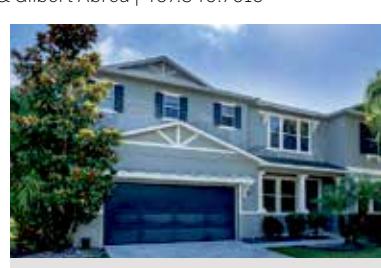
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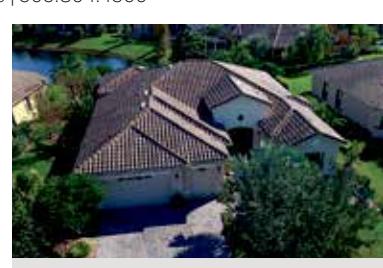
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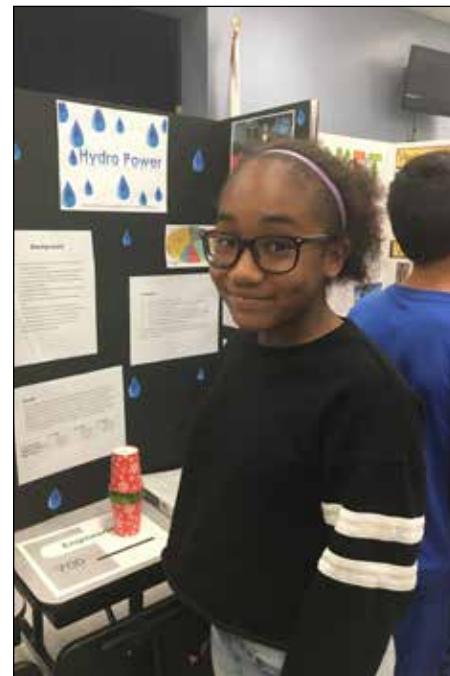
# Lake Nona Resident Selected to Attend Junior National Young Leaders Conference

BY VANESSA POULSON  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE PALMA FAMILY

Local Lake Nona Middle School student Anisa Palma was recently selected to attend the Junior National Young Leaders Conference, a premiere leadership development program for middle school students. There, she will proudly represent Orange County's very own Lake Nona Middle School. We talked to her mom, Renee Palma, about Anisa's accomplishments and future aspirations.

**NHN: Could you tell me a little more about the Junior National Young Leaders Conference? What do the kids get to do that attend?**

RP: The kids do not receive any gifts or monetary award for attending. They are nominated by someone in education administration based on accomplishments, grades and character. The conference is separated by grades, 5/6 and 7/8. There is a heavy focus on Leadership and Social Advocacy. Their keynote speaker will



Anisa Palma

be Anthony Robles, 2011 NCAA National Wrestling Champ, who was born with one leg. They will study public service via a Capitol Hill experience, and they will spend the night at a museum, Maryland Science Center. All in addition to the big Voices of Change Project that will put what they learn into practice.

**NHN: How does Anisa feel about being able to attend?**

RP: Anisa is one of the most humble kids I have ever met. She is excited and very thankful that someone noticed her accomplishments in and out of school. She cannot wait to go to D.C.

**NHN: What does Anisa want to do when she grows up?**

RP: For the last four years, Anisa has dreamed of owning her own vet practice. Before we moved to Florida four years ago, she would get off the school bus and clean the chicken coop in our neighbor's yard. Simply put, she loves animals. We took her to the Bronx Zoo at two years old. When we stopped to get a stuffed animal, the guy was pushing her to pick a mammoth. We put her on the counter, and she zeroed in on a snow leopard. Eleven years later, we still have him along with two dogs and a desert tortoise.

**NHN: How does Anisa balance all of the activities that she does?**

RP: Anisa is very organized and practical while being the biggest heart I know. She stays up late doing Cornell Notes and prepping for quizzes. Or staying up to go the extra mile on this year's science project. Simply put, she's amazing.

**NHN: What do you as parents hope for her to learn from this experience?**

RP: With such a big heart, we want her to learn more ways to put her talents to use in addition to capitalizing on learning more leadership skills. An experience that is just for her will help her experience more structured independence that will help prepare her for secondary education. Not to mention we want her to have fun.



## BUSINESS & REAL ESTATE

### City of Orlando Revises Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise Certification Process

BY ELAINE SUSAN VAIL



Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer and Luis Martinez, City of Orlando Director of Multicultural Affairs by Elaine Vail

Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer and Commissioner Tony Ortiz of District 2 held a media event on June 5 to educate the community and increase awareness about the city's recently revised Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) certification process. The event was hosted by SkyBuilders USA, a minority-owned construction company located in downtown Orlando that received its M/WBE certification in 2009. Since the company's certification, SkyBuilders USA has participated in numerous contracts tallying more than \$5 million, with their most



Mayor Dyer, photo courtesy City of Orlando

recent project being Stienmetz Hall at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, a 1,700-seat theater set to open in the spring of 2020.

The event began with opening remarks given by M/WBE division manager Janeiro R. Coulter. Followed by Coulter's introduction of him, Mayor Dyer gave an overview of the changes to the certification process requirements. The previous certification rule stated that Hispanic/Latino business owners were required to provide a minimum of three out of five pieces of documentation. Implemented in November 2017, the new rule requires only one piece of verifying documentation, including a birth certificate, baptism certificate or government-issued identification that proves Hispanic/Latino lineage.

Dyer shared that there are currently 166 Hispanic-owned businesses M/WBE-certified, and the hope is to increase this number through awareness of the program. He also stated that the economic impact of the Hispanic business market in Central Florida exceeds \$350 million. Dyer went on to say, "Last year, the City of Orlando awarded over \$14 million in contracts to city-certified M/WBE firms, and 32% of that went to Hispanic-certified firms." According to Luis Martinez, City of Orlando director of multicultural affairs, there are many benefits to becoming M/WBE-certified, including city contracts, participation in procurement outreach events, national and local referrals, access to programs and services designed to help grow business, and a listing on the city's database.

Commissioner Ortiz followed Mayor Dyer and shared that in an attempt to address the ever-changing needs of the community, these policy changes have been discussed for a long time. While trying to illustrate how small business dominates the economy, Ortiz stated, "Florida is home to 2.5 million small businesses, which makes up for 99.8 [percent] of all business in the state. Because of people like you who come to this country for a second chance, change and better opportunities, 926,000 of those businesses are minority-owned. And of those, 604,000 are Hispanic-owned businesses. That's quite a big number."

Ortiz continued, "It is easy to see by these numbers the importance of the Hispanic community and why we embrace diversity here in the City of Orlando. Not only is the City of Orlando a community of diversity, but it is one of opportunity. And that is why I want to encourage you to utilize the services that the city has dedicated to your success." Ortiz explained that advancement and evolution in government is based on the needs of the people and the trends of society. This policy change is an important step in addressing the importance of minority business needs.

Ortiz announced the city's partnership with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the offering of free bilingual workshops to help in the process of becoming M/WBE-certified. He went on to declare, "This is

a nation where even if you have nothing, but you have determination, perseverance, and you're willing to sacrifice, you will have a chance."

In the MBE and Blueprint Division 2017 fiscal year annual report, Coulter boasted, "This division's 'Certification Board'

is committed to changing its rules when it helps minority and women-owned businesses more fully participate in contracting opportunities, including both city and private contracts. The results of these changes undertaken by the board stand as a testament to such commitment. To wit, Hispanics no longer have more steps to follow than other minority group members to gain certification. In addition, M/WBEs can now gain city certification for their expanded business lines. Consequently, the board's changes make for a program that proactively fosters business growth."

The statistics in the annual report are impressive. In 2017, M/WBE subcontractors were paid \$14.1 million, while \$6.9 million was paid to M/WBE prime contractors. That's a total of \$21 million paid to M/WBE firms, which breaks down to 39% African-American, 32% Hispanic, 17% Asian and 12% Caucasian. Broken down by industry, 54% of the \$14.1 million went to construction, 18% of it went to professional services, and 28% went to the goods and services area.

For more information, visit [cityoforlando.mwdbe.com](http://cityoforlando.mwdbe.com) or email [mwbe\\_cert@cityoforlando.net](mailto:mwbe_cert@cityoforlando.net).



Mayor Buddy Dyer, Commissioner Tony Ortiz with Sky Builders USA owners, Juan Velez y Olga Marcela Restrepo | Photo courtesy of the City of Orlando



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# Fitness and Organizational Culture, Part One: Keep Your Eye On the Goal

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY TRAVIS JACOB



One of the best aspects of the Lake Nona community is the design and focus on personal health and fitness together with a strong and healthy business and medical community. When it comes to performance and success, these factors go hand in hand. Personal performance is not only beneficial to your personal health, but it is beneficial to the health of your business or organization as well. Being a triathlete, I spend many hours each week biking and running around the Lake Nona community. It's always great to see like-minded fitness people out doing the same thing, especially during the times I am usually out there between 4:30 and 7 a.m. Yes, I know, only the "crazy" people are out riding or running at 4:30 a.m., but I'm okay with that!

I started doing triathlons in 1999 as a way to do something fun to keep in shape. It

started with the sprint distance (.25-mile swim/10-mile bike/3.1-mile run). I found that I really enjoyed the training and racing, and, over the next couple of years, I progressed up to the iron distance races (2.4-mile swim/112-mile bike/26.2-mile run). Since 2006, I have completed seven iron distance races. Training for races like this requires 20-25 hours a week of training for five to six months leading up to the race. Hence, the 4:30 a.m. start times. Over the years, I began to realize that the lessons I was learning from all the training, preparation and racing directly related to how well I was working in the business world. This article is the first in a four-part series on just four of the principles I have learned and teach related to building and maintaining a winning culture in organizations.

## Principle #1: Keep Your Eye on the Goal.

I completed my first iron distance triathlon in 2006 in Clermont. This race (The Great Floridian Triathlon) is not only one of the longest running iron distance

races in the country, but it is also one of the toughest due to the bike course, which has roughly 6,000 feet of climbing. That year, the run course included a seven-mile circle around Lake Minneola three times. It was late in the afternoon when I started the run. During the second two loops around the lake, I was running in the dark. At that point, my body was telling me to quit. It's at this point in a race like this that mental toughness has to take over. When your body says "no," your mind has to say "yes" if you want any chance of finishing.

That night, as I was running all alone, in the dark, and in a great deal of pain, one thing consumed my mind. I just kept telling myself, "Keep your eye on the goal." The finish line at the lakefront was lit up, and I could see it from any point around the lake. I just kept looking over to the finish line. I was not going to let anything stop me from reaching my goal that night.



Not the pain in my stomach, not the pain in my back, and not the pain in my legs. Reduced to a fast walk with brief times of a slow, painful jog, I crossed the finish line at almost 11:30 p.m.

Building and maintaining a winning organizational culture requires setting goals that are relevant to the organization and can be achieved in a timely manner. Employees at every level like to see progress, especially when it comes to culture, because that directly relates to them. Keeping your eye on the "culture goals" and doing everything you have to do to meet those goals will send a positive message to every employee. That message is that you care about them and they have value to the organization.

Goals must also be clearly stated and communicated to every department and individual. When the leaders of the organization keep their eyes on the goal and stop at nothing to achieve them, a whole new level of trust is established. That trust brings with it excitement, which in turn brings a greater sense of commitment and ownership at all levels.

Keeping your eye on culture goals is a great start, but it is only the beginning. Stay tuned next month for part two of this Fitness and Organizational Culture series.

Travis is the founder and chief culture consultant of Ultimate Synergy, a company based in Lake Nona that consults with organizations to help build and maintain a foundation for a strong and winning culture by taking care of people and focusing on team dynamics.  
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# Behind The Scene: Tavistock's Jessi Blakley Honored By Orlando Business Journal

BY SOPHIA ROGERS  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF TAVISTOCK  
DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

Join us in congratulating Jessi Blakley, senior director of strategic communications at Tavistock Development Company, on her recognition as one of the Women to Watch in *Orlando Business Journal's* 2018 Women Who Mean Business Awards.



Blakley, a passionate communications industry leader, began her public relations career while attending Auburn University in 1999. Enrolled as a med student, a shift in her degree major occurred when Blakley's sorority sister returned from an NBC *Today Show* internship. After hearing her excitement about working behind the scenes and managing communications, Blakley was so intrigued that she promptly changed majors and started writing for the school newspaper. That same year, she won an internship with CNN. Little did she know that in the coming years she would play a major role in one of the fastest-growing communities in the nation, Lake Nona.

After graduating with a BA in communications, Blakley later went on to pursue her professional accreditation in public relations, or APR. Unlike many professions, public relations does not have required certifications. She feels it is important that communications professionals voluntarily commit to upholding the values, ethics and principles of their field. Blakley carries a strong sense of pride in her career. And she takes communications seriously. "Communications is so much more than publicity – it's the foundation of every business, every relationship. A lot has changed since I was younger, but I think there is a huge opportunity to better expose and educate youth as to the many career opportunities. Knowledge is power."

Initially hired as a Tavistock consultant in 2006, Blakley later moved in-house and has been with Tavistock for over 12 years. Blakley feels incredibly privileged to be part of an organization with such an amazing portfolio of projects. She recalls the early beginnings as a land company with a dozen colleagues only a decade ago. "Now, we have a team of 150 people – some of the smartest, innovative collaborators – who choose to come to work at Tavistock to make a difference, to thinking outside the box, to not do more of the same. We all live by our chairman's credo to pursue excellence in everything we do. It's inspiring, it's challenging, but most of all, it's fun."

Ever wonder how Tavistock Development manages to keep their press releases and marketing messages so clean, fresh and consistent? Kudos go to Blakley and her powerhouse team working behind the scene. Part of the daily routine includes continuously monitoring news coverage of projects, the political landscape, and the community while overseeing social media (the team manages 20+ channels). Her team spends a significant amount of time "writing, editing and reviewing nearly everything that's published both internally

and externally – brochures, websites, talking points, video scripts, business proposals. I also oversee community relations, government relations, issues and crisis management – basically, all the fun stuff." She says, "No two days are the same, and for me, that's what's exciting!"

When asked who she attributes her success to, Blakley first gives credit to her family. Her grandfather and father were both successful business owners who taught her the value of hard work, respect and persistence at a very young age. She was taught by her grandmother and mother that she could achieve anything she set her mind to with strength and determination. And now, she proclaims, "Without my husband, I would not be fortunate enough to balance a successful career and beautiful family." Additionally, she credits the fortune of working with "amazing mentors" who have been there for her on this journey. "It takes a village," says Blakley.

Who better to ask about the vision for Lake Nona's future than Tavistock's director of communications? Here is what Blakley has to say: "I see it as the defining community of Orlando, and among the best places to live in the country. I see an energized Town Center that's the social center of the community and sought-after regional destination. I see new partners, a new teaching hospital, a new human performance center in our Medical City, and an entrepreneurial ecosystem that's inspiring innovation and advancements across a multitude of industries.

"I see athletes of every sport choosing Lake Nona as their home, their place to train, a place that inspires them to be their very best, 365 days of the year. I see our collaborative learning environment inspiring future education models, and thousands of graduates choosing to stay here and be part of our exciting future. I see our living lab and well-being studies cited for findings that will improve our overall health and perhaps even change the model of our current health-care system.

"We've already accomplished so much, but we also have so



much more to look forward to. It's what gets us so excited to come to work every day and create this incredible place that's truly like no other."

To learn more, visit [LakeNona.com](http://LakeNona.com). Follow on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @learnlakenona.

Sophia Rogers is a six-year Lake Nona area resident and Realtor/founder of [NonaHomeGuide.com](http://NonaHomeGuide.com). A wife and mom of four, family, relationships and real estate are her passions. She can be reached at [sophia@nonahoodnews.com](mailto:sophia@nonahoodnews.com).



N



## Creator Mindset: Creating Meaning

BY NIR BASHAN



Nir Bashan

closer, you will see that is not the case. In late-night conversations, in quiet times of reflection, or when no one is looking, there is something gnawing. Something persistent. Something that is not often shared with anyone.

What is often left unspoken is the question of the meaning. What is the meaning of our work?

It's a universal thought. It's human nature. And it happens to everyone. From the bricklayer to the accountant. From the attorney to the construction worker. In a moment of reflection, everyone looks for meaning in their work.

And how can we not? Today, the stakes are higher than ever. Time spent away from family and friends while at work can be enormous. The sacrifices can be substantial. The commitments of earning a living can add up to a lifetime of regrets.

It's usually at this point that the search for meaning menacingly turns into an attack on making money. Money can't buy happiness, right? In other words, if the meaning of our work is only financial, then sure, that might be true. But I argue that making money is seldom the only goal. In fact, making money is a by-product of a search for meaning. It's just one of the fruits we hopefully pick up along the way because there is a far more substantial undercurrent than making a living at play here. And it is as old as time.

The search for meaning is as ancient as the human condition. Our eldest ancestors looked for meaning in the stars. To them, clouds turning to rain meant some misfortune (or fortune), and a successful hunt meant perhaps a great spring season was

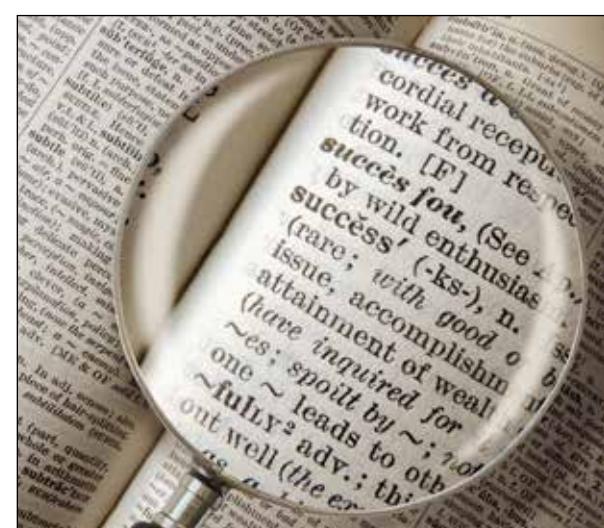
in store. They attached meaning to just about everything. It gave them comfort. But do these things truly have meaning?

I'm pretty sure our ancestors hadn't figured it out. And I don't think that we will either, my dear readers. But there are certain ways of looking at meaning that will always have value. We can take comfort in this like our ancestors had. And this is what I share with the folks I work with.

The markers of meaning in a creator mindset are things that make us inherently human. Empathy is a big one. Same with humor. Spirituality. Emotion. Creativity is a cornerstone. Forethought. Storytelling.

It's up to you to use these elements to create and embed meaning in your line of business, no matter what it is that you do. In a modern day race to seemingly demonize capitalism, note that all the above markers exist harmoniously with making as much money as you please. They, in fact, enhance it. Understanding that meaning and making a living can go hand in hand is one of the cornerstones of the creator mindset.

With the Fourth of July upon us, it is hard not to think of how good we have it here in America. We are blessed to be living in one of the most monumental experiments of all time, free men and women living together under our Constitution. Irrelevant of race, color or creed, that same Constitution enables us the freedom to ponder such things as meaning. And it is our destiny, armed with these uniquely human



markers of meaning, to go out and live the best life we can possibly live, one rich and deep in meaning.

Nir Bashan is an executive creative director/managing director with over 18 years of advertising, entertainment and business development experience.

He helps teach folks in non-creative fields how to think creatively to solve problems. He leads workshops and lectures on topics relating to The Creator Mindset. He is publishing a book on The Creator Mindset, which will be released soon. Visit [nirbashan.com](http://nirbashan.com) for more information.

Often times, I work with executives or companies who have met most of their goals and aspirations. They are already captains of industries, steadfast in the apogee of their careers. Sure, there is always somewhere to improve, something to get better at. But these are by and large folks who have achieved success and in some cases have built fortunes as well.

It is far too easy from an outside perspective to assume that they have it all. But, when you dig a bit deeper and look a little

# Get In-Powered!: The Imperfection About Your Perfection

BY EDWARD A. RODRIGUEZ



This morning, someone approached me at Starbucks and told me, "Edward, it is hard to change because, as humans, we are not perfect." She was alluding to my last article about if we can really change the way we are.

Let me ask you: Do you think you are not perfect? If so, what would be different if you believed otherwise? Would you take more risks, believe more in yourself and in your ability to make things happen?

About 15 years ago, I bought a guitar with the intention of learning how to play it. Every time I visited a different country to give my seminars, I went to music stores to buy guitar instruction manuals with easy-to-play songs, especially old ballads, which are my favorites.

I must admit that as time passed, I did not accomplish much. Other projects took precedence. Because of that, when I pick up the guitar, instead of sounds, I create noise, and instead of harmony, the only thing left is the memory of what could have been.

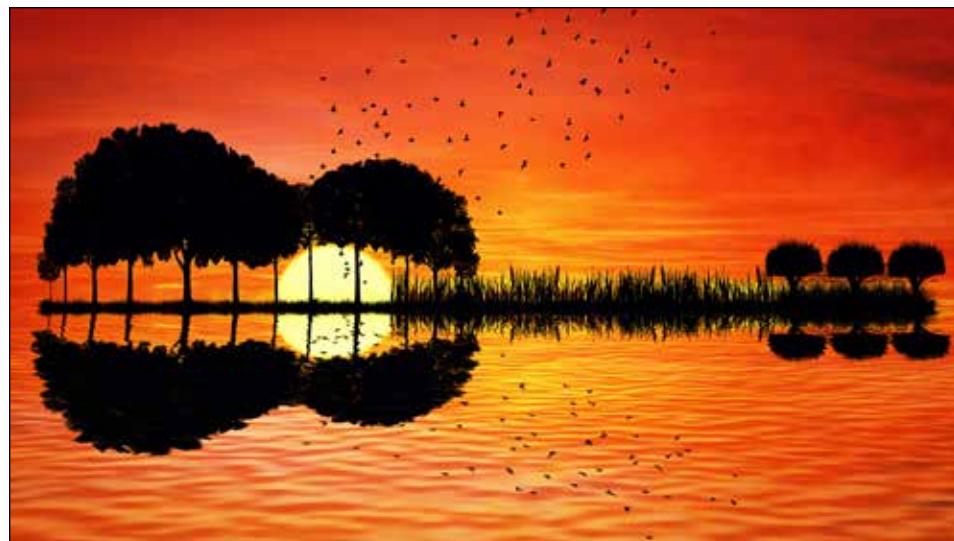
All of this came to mind because recently a friend came to my house, picked up the guitar and started playing like I have never heard before. He played ballads, bossa nova, classical music, and there wasn't any song that I mentioned that he was not able to play...I was in awe!

It would be absurd to say the guitar was imperfect when I was the one playing it, don't you think? The guitar was perfect – great brand, fine wood, and sounded amazing! Then, what was the difference between my friend and me? He studied guitar. He had spent years practicing while I was busy doing other things. His priority was to play the guitar and become a master at it. It had nothing to do with the guitar being imperfect, but with my inability to play it.

I have this belief: **"You are perfect the way you are without having to change anything! There is nothing you could do to become more perfect because the word already implies you are complete."** Before someone writes to me sharing why s/he does not believe so, let me clarify something.

Accepting that you are perfect does not necessarily mean you have a high ego or that you think you are more than anybody else. There is nothing wrong with recognizing your inner power and uniqueness, especially when you use it to contribute. You don't have to agree with me, but I can tell you that I have been able to accomplish and contribute more when I believe I am perfect than when I think I am a broken human being like if God made a mistake with me.

It surprises me to hear people talking about nature and everything in it as perfect (including animals) but referring to humans as imperfect. Then, what is the imperfection about your perfection that might keep you from reaching your full potential? To think you are not. This belief sometimes keeps us justifying, blaming or trying to be someone we are not.



You are not your behaviors. You can change your behaviors

You are not your attitude. You can change your attitude.

You are not your values. You can change your values.

You are not your character. You can change your character.

You are not your beliefs. You can change your beliefs.

You are already perfect...that YOU CAN-NOT CHANGE.

Your results may be imperfect, but who you are in essence is perfect.

Don't be hard on yourself. You are so perfect that, when your heart beats for the first time in your mother's womb, you didn't have to do anything to earn it. In a way, it is not that you chose life, it is that life chose you! You are amazing. Celebrate your uniqueness and appreciate the uniqueness of others. Dream big, live fully, and above all, like I heard someone say once, "You were born original, don't die

like a photocopy."

*Edward A. Rodriguez is a coach, co-author and transformational trainer. He is founder and CEO of Better Graphics (a promotional products company) and In-Powerment! Center (an international training company for productivity and personal development). He is an NLP, HNLP, and neuro-strategy certified trainer. He has many certifications as a life and executive coach, serving clients in different countries. Edward has developed internationally known transformational programs and has co-authored books like "La Biblia de la Motivación" ("The Bible About Motivation") and "Empowered," which was co-written with other authors such as Wayne W. Dyer, John Assaraf (from the movie The Secret), Brian Tracy, etc. For more information, call 1-888-2-IN-POWER or write to [info@EdwardRodriguez.com](mailto:info@EdwardRodriguez.com).*

## Nona Growth: Tavistock Expands Lake Nona Footprint

BY SOPHIA ROGERS  
PHOTOS FROM THE CITY OF ORLANDO WEBSITE



In early May, Tavistock Development Company paid more than \$63.885 million for the first 1,147 acres of the "Poitras Property." Named after the original land owners, the sale comes after years of negotiations and planning with the City of Orlando.

Located on the north side of Boggy Creek Road in southeast Orlando, the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority bought the land in 1989 for soil borrow material in anticipation of its construction of a third and fourth runway at the airport and for related wetlands mitigation.

The property will connect to Tavistock's Laureate Park development and will lie west of Tavistock's 4,787-acre Sunbridge project. Extensions are proposed for Medical City Drive southward into the property, as well as Hartwell Court.

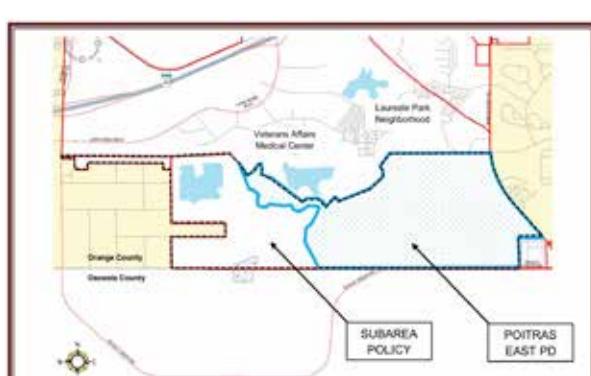
We have a breakdown of what's been allowed in the Planned Development:

- 2,734 residential units
- 30 acres for a school site
- 285.9 acres of conservation land
- 100,000 square feet of commercial space

- 15 acres for a neighborhood center
- 12.3 acres for a community park

According to a Tavistock representative, "There is land reserved for the proposed Osceola Parkway extension within the Poitras project description based on the current extension options." Central Florida Expressway Authority "is still in the Project Development and Environment process, so we don't know for sure yet where it will be."

One thing we know for sure, demand continues for our part of town once known as "pasture land" in southeastern Orange County.



*Sophia Rogers is a six-year Lake Nona area resident and Realtor/founder of [Nonahoodnews.com](http://Nonahoodnews.com). A wife and mom of four, family, relationships and real estate are her passions. She can be reached at [sophia@nonahoodnews.com](mailto:sophia@nonahoodnews.com).*

## Get Traction: Forging Resiliency And Mental Toughness

BY CHRIS WHITE,  
ENTREPRENEUR, AUTHOR AND  
CERTIFIED EOS IMPLEMENTER



Chris White



Why wait? Ask your boss for opportunities, attend a seminar, go to classes, get a mentor, shadow a colleague. Be proactive! If your boss says it's not in the budget or resources are needed elsewhere, find another way. Be relentless in your pursuit of self-mastery in both your profession and personal life.

When you want to say "impossible," try saying "I'm possible" and get after it!

*Chris is a successful entrepreneur, author and head coach at Traction in Florida. He's passionate about helping entrepreneurs get what they want from their business. Learn more at [www.tractioninflorida.com](http://www.tractioninflorida.com).*

Get it  
Want it  
Capacity to do it

This is a simple tool to evaluate whether or not an employee fully understands their position.

We all have three to five major roles and responsibilities that require 80% of our attention daily. What occurred to me as I continued to read this chapter is that most employees take a passive approach to self-mastery. They wait for their company to offer training instead of actually taking the initiative to improve their skill set.



## Tough Things To Talk About: Summer Screen Time

BY VANESSA POULSON

We've all been there, in the thick of the Florida summer, finding shelter and taking solace in our air-conditioned houses, staring at our phones or computers, and waiting for the relentless summer sun to set a bit before we even dare step out of the house.

I've always thought of Florida's summertime to be somewhat like a hibernation period for most Floridians, which I'm sure comes across as both ironic and depressing to some of my friends in the Midwest and Northeast. Children and teens spend the majority of the year in school only to be let out during summertime, where the weather is too oppressive to want to do anything besides sit inside in the first place.

It's a sticky situation if you ask me, and no, I'm not just referring to the concoction of sunscreen and bug spray you have to rub all over your skin in order to somewhat function in the outdoors. This leaves so many people to spend the majority of their time inside the house, wallowing in the light of a cell phone, laptop, tablet or television, wasting each of the precious summer days away.

This isn't just a guess on what summer vacation is turning into for students: A study

by the United Nations Children's Fund, or UNICEF, which surveyed the online experiences of children and youth around the world, found that adolescents and young people are the most connected generation and that children under 18 represent one in three Internet users worldwide. Though this can make young people some of the most well-connected and resourceful people, it also comes with major risk factors, such as the ties between Internet use and mental health problems like anxiety and depression, as well as the potential for accidental exposure to sexual abuse, child pornography and sex trafficking.

Ninety-eight percent of households with children 8 and under, rich and poor, now have access to a mobile device, such as a tablet or smartphone. That is up from 52 percent just six years ago, according to a nationally representative parent survey from Common Sense Media, a nonprofit organization.

As more and more children and teenagers are taking their summer break through online platforms, valuable time that could be spent connecting with others face-to-face or with the natural environment is being tossed to the wayside.

So, what's the solution here? As more kids are getting access to technology at a younger age, parents are struggling to keep up with the tides of technological advancement and balancing all the pros and cons of giving children early access to the Internet or not.

The key here is balance and the correct adjustment of choices. When young people are given a variety of engaging and entertaining options, they might be more likely to choose the ones that do not require a screen in their face for hours on end. Parents these days can struggle to keep up

with the constantly changing culture wave that has spawned from the Internet – from memes to challenges, new social networks and games, it can feel like there are more reasons than not for children and teens to stay on their phones for hours on end.

However, if the idea to find new ways to spend time together as a family or even with friends without the inclusion of technology emerges, you have to take it. Each of us has to be okay with putting down the smartphone, ignoring the notifications and emails, and disregarding trying to capture each second in our camera roll, and instead embrace the world around us. Offer to go to the beach or a natural park. Go to a nice restaurant and enjoy a meal together, where phones stay in the center

of the table. Pick up a book. If you lead your children and teenagers by example and encourage finding other ways to interest your child rather than just handing them an iPad when they start acting up (trust me, we've all seen it), you can use face-to-face engagement in real time rather than through pixels on a screen.

All in all, life is about balance. Balance between work and school, family and friends, and, of course, sunshine and screen time. Though the weather may be hot, you don't have to curl up into a ball in the A/C (at least not ALL the time) in order to take a vacation.



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# The 49 Fund Marks Pulse Anniversary With Scholarships For Local LGBTQ+ Students

ARTICLE BY VANESSA POULSON  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE 49 FUND



Left to right - Collin Reilly (The 49 Fund scholarship recipient from last year), Francis Jarusiewicz, City of Orlando Commissioner Patty Sheehan, Jonathan (Jon) Covert, Barry Miller, Neil Rios, Courtney Ring, William (Billy) Budd, Mark Brewer, Congressman Darren Soto, Jasmine Flowers, Tena Gordon and Osher Ostroff are not pictured.



Left to right - Congressman Darren Soto, Barry Miller (Founder of The 49 Fund), City of Orlando Commissioner Patty Sheehan, and Mark Brewer (President-CEO of Central Florida Foundation)



## Fisher House Receives Universal Orlando Foundation Grant

ARTICLE BY BRITTANY BHULAI  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE FISHER HOUSE FOUNDATION

Since its official opening earlier this year in February and taking its first guest in April, the Orlando VA Medical Center's Fisher House has received \$30,000 in grants. Universal Orlando Foundation donated \$25,000, and Lockheed Martin gave \$5,000.

Maureen Karkovice is the secretary to Friends of Fisher House Orlando, (FOFHO), a non-profit community group that supports the Orlando VA. She is the one responsible for bringing in the donations. "This spurs me on and motivates me to become a grant-writing queen," states Karkovice.

Her son was working in guest communications at Universal Orlando and sent an email reaching out to them in regards to qualifying for their contribution. Universal could give between \$1,000 to \$25,000. Karkovice reached out to the Fisher House manager, Terri Turner, and asked how much money a typical 16-suite Fisher House consumed in a month. Turner got back to her with a figure of about \$3,000 per month. In response, Karkovice requested Universal for their full amount, and she was gifted just that. The grant will be for a year, fueling the Fisher House with a little more than \$2,000 a month.

The funds can be used for any needs the

Fisher House guests might have. For example, a guest might need a gas card, or if they have a baby with them, they don't have to worry about spending money on diapers or formula. Keeping the house's food supply full will also be in check.

Karkovice intends to build on the relationship with Universal as she is grateful for their donation. The Fisher House will be growing in the time to come as more patients are taken into the Orlando VA. The objective for FOFHO is to make each guest feel at home and to provide them with a stress-free environment to stay in as the veteran they are associated with receives care in the VA.

To be able to fill these shoes for the Fisher House means the world to Karkovice. She herself was a guest at a Fisher House when her son was in need of care.

nessman Barry L. Miller following the tragic events at Pulse. Miller said he wants the scholarships, now and in the future, to not just empower futures but to also continue to memorialize those who lost theirs. Pulse survivors or family members of victims who died are given special consideration.

"Central Florida Foundation is honored to host The 49 Fund to ensure this important legacy continues on to support the educational goals of LGBT students in our community," said Mark Brewer, president and chief executive officer of Central Florida Foundation.

This year's recipients, their hometowns and schools include:

- William (Billy) Budd (New Smyrna Beach) – Florida State University
- Jonathan (Jon) Covert (Deland) – Champlain College
- Jasmine Flowers (Winter Springs) – Columbia University
- Tena Gordon (Palm Bay) – Florida International University
- Francis Jarusiewicz (Merritt Island) – Florida State University
- Osher Ostroff (Orlando) – Valencia College
- Courtney Ring (Oviedo) – Seminole State College
- Neil Rios (Orlando) – Valencia College connecting to University of Central Florida

"After the Pulse tragedy rocked our com-

munity two years ago, we are proud of how Orlando has demonstrated that we are a strong and vibrant city," said Miller. "The 49 Fund scholarship recipients have all committed to taking a leadership role in the community to ensure we continue to grow, educate and flourish in the memory of those we lost at Pulse."

For more information and to donate, visit [www.The49Fund.org](http://www.The49Fund.org).



# The Artist: Ona Silverio

ARTICLE BY VANESSA POULSON  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF ONA  
SILVERIO



Ona Silverio's story of discovery in terms of forwarding her artistic craft does not emerge until later in her life. Though many artists discover their innate artistic nature in their youth, Silverio found her footing in the artistic community later in life and has worked toward mastering and perfecting each and every piece that she creates.

A new resident in the Lake Nona area, Silverio was born in Queens, N.Y., but spent most of her life in Melbourne, Fla. She arrived in the Nonahood this past year.

Silverio has worked as a beautician for most of her career, inspired by being able to create a work of art through her clients' haircut and color. It wasn't until one venture to the store where she purchased a single blank canvas that she made the decision to test her artistic limits and take her creativity one step further.

"Subconsciously, I always wanted to create art," said Silverio. "From day one, I fell in love with creating art in many forms and became inspired and passionate with expressing myself through the freedom of creation on a canvas in which you could hang and view throughout time."

As her artistic career has continued over the past five years, Silverio has experimented with a variety of different styles, saying she is unable to pick a specific one that she enjoys the most. She discovered her passion for painting and continues to use the medium to express herself through intricate abstract portraits and landscapes.

Her work mostly revolves around an abstract point, with a variety of different patterns, colors and line work. Many of her subjects include abstract people or figures and scenes of nature and the natural environment mixed in-between different me-

diums. She finds inspiration to create her work through the different wonders of the world and her own dreams.

As Silverio continues through her artistic journey, she hopes to someday create a master project that combines all the elements of an abstract piece that she finds potent and powerful.

"Art cannot be defined," says Silverio in discussion of her own work, not falling



## NOMINATE AN ARTIST

We are looking for interesting artists who live in the Nonahood to be featured. If you or someone you know should be nominated to be a Nonahood News Featured Artist, send your nomination to <http://nonahood.to/artist>.



# World's Largest Annual Wheelchair Event Coming To Orlando This July

BY BRITTANY BHULAI  
PHOTOS COURTESY NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES



July 30 through August 4, the 38th National Veterans Wheelchair Games will be happening at the Orange County Convention Center. Some of the sports that will be held at the Convention Center are power-lifting, table tennis and basketball.

Off-site competitions will also be going on throughout the community. An aquatic center in Oviedo will be holding swimming; Boardwalk Bowl Entertainment Center on Colonial Drive will be the host for bowling; track will be held at The First Academy; trap shooting will be located at Polk County Skeet & Trap; golf will be happening at Shingle Creek; and a team relay will be held at the National Training



Center in Clermont.

As for Lake Nona, the VA Medical Center will host handcycling. It will be the first event of the games beginning on July 31 at 7 a.m. It is a 5k and a 10k that will start and finish at the VA. Community members can still register to volunteer to help with the handcycling event. Simply email [vhaorlwgcgames2018@va.gov](mailto:vhaorlwgcgames2018@va.gov). Volunteers younger than age 14 must have a signed parental release form.

The event moves from city to city and is held once a year, particularly in summer. Last year, the games were held in Cincinnati. This is first time Orlando will be hosting the games. All of the events are open to the public and are free of charge. Next year, it will be held in Louisville.

"500 to 600 have participated over the past few years. This year, we are expecting over 600," says Karen Shamlin, coordinator for the 38th NVWG. The games exist as a rehabilitation event for veterans, and the

intention is to get them back into a healthy and active lifestyle after sickness or injury. This year, there are a little over 120 novice athletes participating in an event like this. Shamlin goes on to say that it is also beneficial to the veterans because they get a chance to interact with their community.

She says the most popular game volume-wise would be bowling. Boccia, known as a "precision ball sport," has grown within the last five years, and this year there are 363 people registered to participate.

*To see the full schedule of games and times, go to [wheelchairgames.org](http://wheelchairgames.org), click on "Orlando 2018" on the right side and hit "Master Schedule." Additional information can also be found on the website, such as their mission and sports programs that are offered to veterans.*



  
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# City of Orlando Holds Sixth Orlando Speaks Workshop Event at Lake Nona High School

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY  
BRITTANY BHULAI



The City of Orlando hosted the sixth Orlando Speaks event, a series of interactive workshops facilitated by the Valencia College Peace and Justice Institute, on June 4 at Lake Nona High School, where citizens were able to build relationships with the Orlando Police Department (OPD) by engaging in innovative communication strategies. According to the director of the Peace and Justice Institute, Rachel Allen,

the goal is to bridge the gap between law enforcement and local citizens by opening up dialogue in a safe space.

The interactive workshop consisted of everyone sitting around tables. Each group had four people. Out of these four people, one of them was a police officer. The objective was to have conversations with one another in a judgment-free manner. Full confidentiality was also promised to everyone who participated. Sergeant Eduardo Bernal, who is a public information officer with OPD, stressed that he always encourages people to come out and have these conversations with the local police because a community member can gain so much perspective from an officer's on-the-job standpoint.

For the first activity, each person was given one minute to share their personal experience with law enforcement while the other group members listened. Abiding by the rules of the activity, no one was allowed to ask questions or comment in regard to the stories being told until allowed to do so by the instructor.

This gave everyone the chance to be heard without being interrupted or spoken over. At the end, everyone was able to speak to one another by asking questions and commenting on the stories that were told.

Handouts were also placed at each seat that included more resources to help enlighten people on overcoming biases and stereotypes that they might assume upon others. Among the handouts was a sheet by the Peace and Justice Institute called *Principles for How We Treat Each Other*.

The paper's 13 bullet points were to:

- Create a hospitable and accountable community
- Listen deeply
- Create an advice-free zone
- Practice asking honest and open questions
- Give space for unpopular answers
- Respect silence
- Suspend judgment
- Identify assumptions
- Speak your truth
- When things get difficult, turn to wonder
- Practice slowing down
- All voices have value
- Maintain confidentiality

Campus, Jennifer Keefe, mentioned she holds an occasion at the campus called "Coffee with a Cop." She invites a bunch of officers over to casually hang around and talk to students. "It's not an us-versus-them world, it's just an us.... Sometimes, I think people get intimidated by a uniform. We all want to be heard and understood," stated Keefe.

A local community member can support the movement by liking the Peace and Justice Institute on Facebook at [facebook.com/valenciacollegepeaceandjustice](https://facebook.com/valenciacollegepeaceandjustice). One can also become a member of the organization by calling 407-582-2291 or contact Rachel Allen at [Rallen39@valenciacollege.edu](mailto:Rallen39@valenciacollege.edu).



Allen said the City of Orlando partnered with the Peace and Justice Institute back in 2015 when the nation was facing a lot of issues with civil unrest. "With Ferguson, with Baltimore, with issues around excessive use of force coming out of police departments and even locally, we were called in at that point," she stated. Since then, they have held an Orlando Speaks event in each of the city's districts. Mayor Buddy Dyer commented that there has been a great give-and-take between residents and police when this workshop is held.

The campus coordinator for the Peace and Justice Institute at Valencia's Lake Nona

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# Motley Cue To Bring Lake Nona to Las Vegas

BY SOPHIA ROGERS  
PHOTOS BY RYAN THOMAS

Growing up watching my late father play billiards, some of my fondest memories are watching him practice with his APA League. Each year, the goal was to win a spot to compete in Las Vegas.

APA stands for the American Poolplayers Association and is the world's largest amateur pool league with more than 250,000 members competing in 8-Ball and 9-Ball leagues throughout the United States, Canada and Japan. Every team that participates has the chance of winning a trip to Las Vegas to play in the World Championship.

Team APA of Central Florida has been operating for over 30 years in the Orange, Lake, Seminole, and Osceola counties. It is one of the largest leagues in the state of Florida. Of the four teams from APA of Central Florida



competing in Las Vegas, one of them is Motley Cue based out of Lake Nona.

When I heard that a group of players in Lake Nona had united to compete in a 9-Ball league, I jumped at the opportunity to share their story. More than luck, competing in a league that makes it to Las Vegas is a notable achievement. Being the team to go to Vegas without any organized billiards experience... well, that's just unheard of. Laureate Park resident Ryan Thomas shares with us how this all came together.

After moving here in July 2016, Thomas had not yet found a local pool hall to continue his love for the game. After taking a friend up for some pool at Trick Shots in Waterford Lakes, he recalls the server complimenting his game and suggesting he join a league. Thomas' only time playing organized pool was a short stint in New England before moving to Florida. So, he went home and posted on a few Facebook pages to recruit members. And soon, he had a team. They showed up on Tuesday nights and just played.

With Thomas as captain, Motley Cue includes Donna Mazzarelli, Jeff Amorim, Chad Wentz, Buddy Bowers, and Michael Hanley. Drew Tanski deserves a shout out, too. Tanski helped the team place in Tri-Cups, however, once qualifying, he couldn't continue to the next competition because handicap levels had increased.

Thomas recalls one of the matches where



they were down 29-11 and came back to win. Breaking his finger on an early break, Thomas won 15-5, Amorim won 12-8 (playing a 30-year vet), and Bowers came in and won as well. Again, winning and going undefeated in Tri-Cups, they are ready to compete in Las Vegas.

Beating out teams that have played for 20 years and never made it to Nationals, here is a team out of Lake Nona who has never played organized pool, wins Tri-Cups, goes undefeated in cities and now on to Nationals. Thomas attributes all success to the team.

Speaking of the group, Thomas is proud and humbled. "I started this team looking for a sense of community to form bonds of friendship while eating, drinking and playing pool," said Thomas. "We take pride in embracing camaraderie and coaching; we do it for each other."

The APA 9-Ball World Championship is Aug. 9-13 with a first prize of \$15,000 at Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino. Finals will be televised. Congratulations, Motley Cue!

*Sophia Rogers is a six-year Lake Nona area resident and Realtor/founder of [NonaHomeGuide.com](#). A wife and mom of four, family, relationships and real estate are her passions. She can be reached at [sophia@nonahoodnews.com](mailto:sophia@nonahoodnews.com).*



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## Families Belong Together Rally at Orlando City Hall

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY  
BRITTANY BHULAI

ple who spoke. She stressed that she had a son who would be turning 10 years old soon and she could not imagine being separated from him. Wenninger also drove all the way from Jacksonville to support the cause. She wanted people in Orlando to know that there were people in Jacksonville who stood with Orlando. In her opinion, it is important to stand up for what she believes is right.

The protest in downtown Orlando was just one of many that happened in the nation on this day. Other states such as New York, California, and Texas participated as well.

McMillon claims to be satisfied with the turnout and feels there will be a change, considering that this was a nationwide rally. She encourages people who share a similar stance with the movement to go to [familiesbelongtogether.org](http://familiesbelongtogether.org) to sign a petition that will ultimately strengthen their existence in society. The co-host of the rally, Jessica Torrence, says this was just the start of bringing awareness, and they will be putting together more marches in the future.



Local citizens rallied in front of Orlando City Hall on June 14 in support of the Families Belong Together movement, a group that does not condone the separation of immigrant children and their parents that has been taking place along the U.S border. Directly stated from the organization's website, [familiesbelong.org](http://familiesbelong.org), the cause "opposes the inhumane policies... and calls for immediate reform."

The crowd circled the building chanting "immigrants rights are human rights." and "No hate! No fear! Immigrants are welcome here!" Each participant was asked to wear yellow and was given a yellow wristband. According to Sylvia McMillon, the Orlando Families Belong Together rally coordinator, the significance behind the color tied into the fact that yellow wristbands were placed on the children being detained by border control. McMillon further comments, "We're wearing yellow in their honor." Around 75 people showed up, and many carried signs that portrayed their aid to immigrant families being separated.

Orange County's first Latina Teacher of the Year, Johanna López, was one of the speakers at the event and wanted to stand up for her students that were being personally affected by the situation. "I have a lot of students who experienced horrible stories when they were trying to walk through the border...specifically, students from Honduras and Mexico," says López. She goes on to say that the issue at hand is something that will affect the nation as a whole, not just one group of people.

At the end of the event, the floor was opened up to anyone in the crowd who wanted to voice their opinion on the mega phone. 31-year-old CJ Wenninger was one of the peo-



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## **N** HEALTH & WELLNESS

### **USTA National Campus July Programming Offers Something for Everyone**

BY DANIEL PYSER

July marks a big month at the USTA National Campus, with a number of family oriented events and a prestigious junior tournament coming to the courts of Lake Nona.

First, starting the week of July 16, the USTA Boys' 12s National Clay Court Championships return to the USTA National Campus for the second consecutive year. This Level 1 junior event is one of the most prestigious junior tournaments that will be played at the USTA National Campus this year.

The field consists of the top 12-and-under junior boys in the country who will be competing for a coveted USTA Gold Ball.

The week-long tournament will be played on the campus' clay courts and will conclude with the singles and doubles championships on July 22.

A week later, the USTA National Campus will host a very special event that is coming to Lake Nona for the first time, as the American Tennis Association will stage its 101st ATA National Championships, from July 28-Aug. 4. The annual week-long event will feature more than 2,500 participants and visitors.

As the oldest African-American sports organization in the country, the ATA was founded in Washington, D.C., in 1916, with a mission to promote black tennis in America. The ATA founders established the first ATA National Championships a year later. Held in Baltimore, the inaugural Championships included just three events, including men's and women's singles and men's doubles. Today, the tournament has grown to include 50 competitive

categories, with thousands of competitors ranging from 10 to 80 years of age.

Known as an annual cultural and tennis family reunion, the ATA National Championships will now be hosted at the USTA National Campus every three to four years through the ATA and USTA's partnership. This year's National Championships will include a variety of opportunities for players and fans to engage in a wide range of activities led by USTA Player Development throughout the Campus, including tennis exhibitions, Net Generation clinics, seminars and parent trainings, to name just a few. The event welcomes youth and families, including NJTL, Junior Team Tennis and tournament players. ATA membership will be waived for first-time youth participants.

Also of note in July at the USTA National Campus is the launch of the new Summer Nights program.

For five weeks, starting on July 9, special discounted family packages will be offered on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings. Court rentals will be half-price all day on those days, and pizza, as well as beer and wine specials, will be available after 3 p.m.

Family Night will be featured on Tuesdays, when a family can pay \$25 for an hour and 15 minutes of pro-led tennis activities, music and games.

The Summer Series Team Tennis Challenge will be held on Wednesdays, offering a series of creative team tennis challenges for 10-and-under players in the Nemours Family Zone. USTA National Campus coaches will organize competition for the players to test their skills in a fun team format. Play will take place between 6-7:15 p.m. and cost \$10 per child.

And, finally, Rock n' Roll Doubles will take place on Thursdays, when all levels of players are invited to play in round-robin social doubles, directed and supervised by our campus pro staff. The cost is \$10 per person.

*For more information on USTA National Campus programming, please visit [www.ustanationalcampus.com](http://www.ustanationalcampus.com).*



# Mackenzie Soldan And Shelby Baron - Two Wheelchair Paralympians

BY BRITTANY BHULAI



Photo by Brittany Bhulai

Mackenzie Soldan is a new Lake Nona resident who moved here to train at the USTA National Campus. Soldan is a wheelchair tennis player who played in the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games. She is originally from Michigan and attended the University of Alabama.

"I was injured at [age] one, I found out that I had a spinal cord tumor," says Soldan as she begins to explain just what happened to spark the beginning of her athletic career. The surgery that removed the tumor left her paralyzed from the waist down. The tumor came back after six months, this time larger and possibly cancerous. Doctors gave her a maximum of eight months to live. However, eight months had passed and she was still alive. At 1½-years-old, they found out the tumor had stopped growing, and doctors were able to remove it

for good.

Both of her parents had played tennis in high school, and her sister played as well. She describes it as a "family sport." While playing tennis, she also found joy in playing basketball. Her mom found a local basketball team for her to play on, and she stayed on the team until she was 18. This allowed her to get a college scholarship to play basketball at the University of Alabama.

While she was making her way through basketball, she also made her first junior USA team for tennis when she was 15. She competed on this team until she went to college. It was not long before someone dropped out of the Rio 2016 Paralympics, and the team needed a replacement qualifier. She was in the middle of leaving class when she got the call from her coach that said, "Hey, can you go to Mexico in a month?" Soldan ended up winning the gold in singles and doubles.

Throughout her athletic career, Soldan bumped into someone who is now a good friend of hers, Shelby Baron. Baron is originally from Hawaii and was born with spina bifida, which is a defect of the spine and spinal cord. She was using crutches up until her third grade P.E. teacher contacted an adaptive P.E. specialist. "She came and put me in my first wheelchair," states Baron. Just like Soldan, she picked up a liking for both tennis and basketball. For tennis, she joined a junior team and kept playing for recreation.

Soon, Baron found herself going to a wheelchair camp, which was the first time she had been around people her age playing wheelchair tennis. This is also where she met Soldan. Soldan was her camp counselor. Baron was soon placed on a national tennis team and transferred over to the University of Alabama (where Soldan went to school) on a full wheelchair tennis scholarship. She was the first to do this, and now she has her residency there.

Baron also competed in the Rio Paralympics. She applied as a "wild card" and someone had dropped out, allowing her to get the position.

Both Soldan and Baron recently left to compete in the World Team Cup representing Team USA. They anticipate going to Tokyo, Japan, to compete in the 2020 Paralympic Games and are currently training for it.



Photo by Mackenzie Soldan



Photo by Mackenzie Soldan

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# Why Choose an Anterior Hip Replacement?

BY OBINNA ADIGWEME, MD,  
UCF HEALTH



Dr. Obinna Adigweme, MD

When patients are experiencing persistent pain, inflammation, and aches in their hip due to arthritis, it might be time to consider getting a hip replacement.

Most surgeons choose the posterior approach

when performing a hip replacement, but there are other options available. One option is the anterior approach, which is now regarded as a viable alternative to the traditional approach and offers many benefits to the patient.

## Less Muscle Damage

In a posterior approach hip replacement, an incision is made on the side of the hip and the surgeon is required to cut through muscle and then reattach it at the conclusion of the surgery.

With the anterior approach, a five-inch incision is instead made on the front of the hip. The surgeon is able to reach the hip joint by going between muscles. The surgeon does not have to detach or cut muscles or tendons, which results in less damage to the tissues. This is simply because the muscles in the front do not block direct access to the hip, and the procedure can be done by separating the muscles rather than cutting through them.

## Less Restrictions After Surgery

After the traditional posterior approach, patients must avoid flexing and internally rotating the hip for three months. These "posterior hip precautions" are put in place to avoid dislocation, even though the risk is relatively small. An advantage of getting an anterior hip replacement is a significant decrease in the risk for dislocation after surgery. This decrease is due to the lessened soft tissue dissection from the anterior approach. There are therefore less restrictions, if any, after this approach, depending on the surgeon's preference.

## Shorter Recovery Time

Since the anterior approach leaves all of the muscles, ligaments, and tendons intact, along with generally utilizing a smaller incision, many patients experience a shorter recovery period. This means significantly less pain, a shorter hospital stay, and less physical therapy required after surgery.

Patients who receive an anterior hip replacement are walking immediately after surgery and subsequently without a walker or cane around two or three weeks after the procedure.

## Are There Any Risks?

As with any surgical procedure, there are risks to an anterior hip replacement. Like the traditional approach, there is always the risk for infection, blood loss, dislocation and blood clots after surgery. In addition, the risks of fracture are slightly

higher with the anterior approach.

Also, due to a small nerve encounter in the anterior approach, the patient can sometimes experience a small area of skin numbness after surgery. Overall, though, the risks are comparable between anterior approach and the traditional methods.

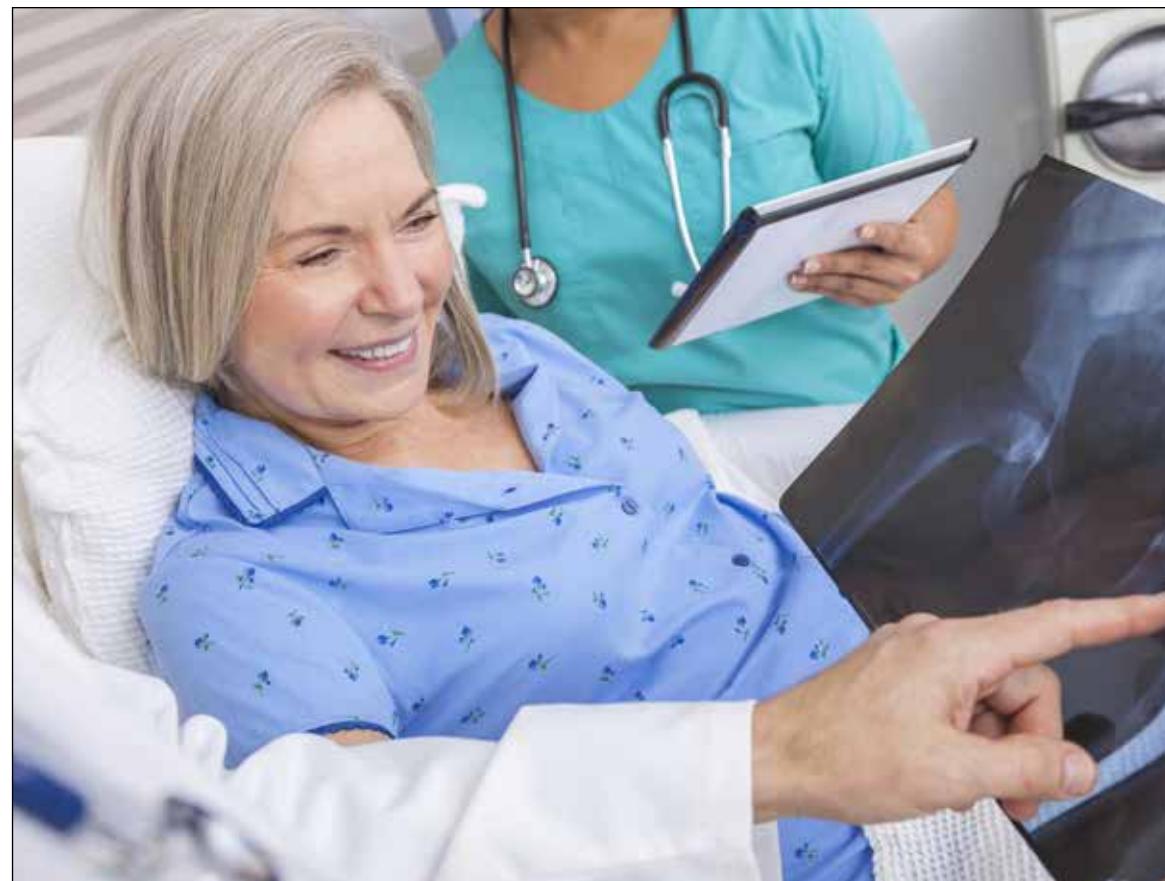
## Choosing the Right Option

Ultimately, when choosing which method to undergo, the patient must be open and vocal with his or her doctor to receive the best care and option for his or her specific needs.

Seeing an orthopaedic specialist and noting the details of the symptoms he or she is experiencing – such as location of the pain, when it hurts, and what activities

make it better or worse – can help the patient get one step closer to finding the option that will allow them to get back to feeling normal again.

*Dr. Adigweme is an orthopaedics specialist at UCF Health. His special interests include hip and knee replacement surgeries to restore patient's mobility and quality of life. Learn more at [ucfhealth.com](http://ucfhealth.com).*



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# From Surviving to Thriving

## How Lifestyle Changes Can Help You Thrive Following Cancer Treatment

BY NATHALIE DAUPHIN MCKENZIE, MD, MSPH,  
FLORIDA HOSPITAL MEDICAL GROUP



Nathalie McKenzie

The journey to overcome cancer takes so much of the human spirit. Harnessing every ounce of courage, strength, support and hope, completing treatment and transitioning from a cancer patient to a survivor marks the start of a new path, one that's all about getting back to feeling your best and being empowered to thrive.

As a gynecologic cancer specialist and a cancer survivor, I have a unique perspective to share. I want cancer survivors to do everything they can to optimize their overall wellness to reduce the chance of their cancer recurring, and to live full, healthy lives. Research-backed evidence shows that a lifestyle optimizing balance in mind, body, and spirit can make a huge impact on health outcomes.

### Prevention Whenever Possible

There are about 12 million cancer survivors in the U.S., and with a growing number of early detection methods and promising cancer treatments, this number is expected to rise. So, how do we help our survivors? By decreasing the risk of recurrence, supporting continued healing and optimizing long-term health.

Lifestyle factors such as mental fitness (resilience), body weight, physical activity, diet, alcohol consumption and smoking could hold the key to improved health outcomes and quality of life among survivors. Good health is all about balance, and this is as true in cancer prevention as

in any other field of medicine. Poor nutrition, bad health habits and stress can increase risk for recurrence.

### Take an Aggressive Approach

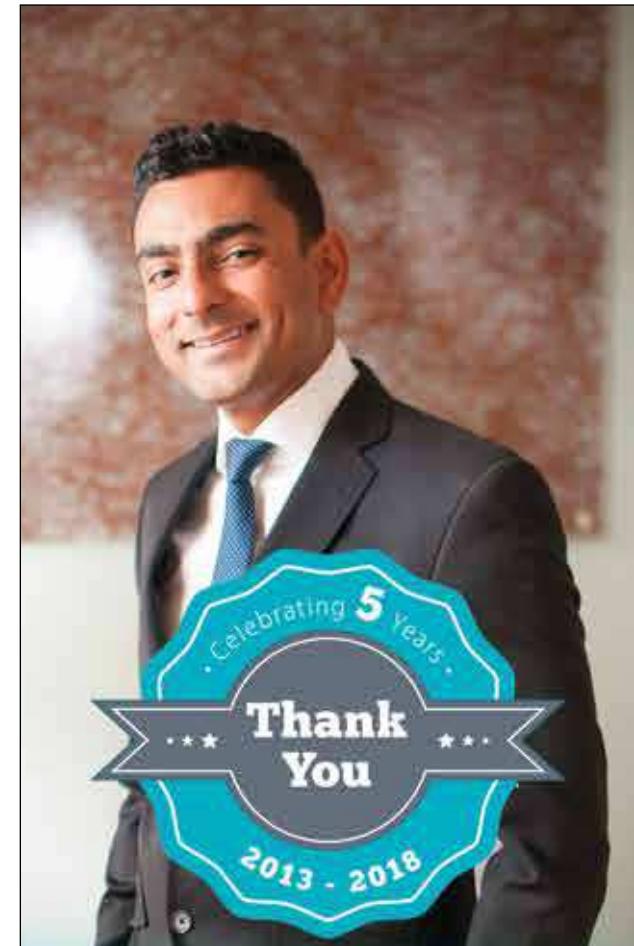
I believe in being aggressive about both treatment and survival. My patients are women who are being treated for some of the most difficult cancers. When they come through to the other side, I want them to feel truly well and for their lives as cancer survivors to be as abundant as possible. As research shows, new habits are essential in going beyond survival into a thriving next chapter.

### Prepare to Thrive

Adopting the following lifestyle changes is the cornerstone of your journey to thrive:

- **Stress** – Learning how to reduce stress and increase mental fitness sets the foundation from which all other lifestyle changes will take place. This is the first component to making sustained lifestyle changes.
- **Diet** – You are what you eat, especially after enduring cancer treatment. Limit processed foods such as sugar and red meat, and switch to a predominantly plant-based diet with five to nine servings of vegetables and fruits each day. Also, incorporating good fats and eliminating vegetable oil is the way to go.
- **Exercise** – You don't have to train for a marathon, but moderate exercise for 30 minutes each day can make a huge difference. Know your personal limits and, after being cleared by your doctor, start an activity that works for you such as swimming, yoga, cycling, running, high intensity training and even Zumba.
- **Smoking** – This seems obvious, but it's one of the most essential things on the list. Multiple studies have shown that smoking significantly increases the chances for cancer recurrence.
- **Consuming Alcohol** – There has also been research indicating that alcohol is linked to increased recurrence rates after treatment. Consider reducing intake, and, for some, elimination may be crucial.

*Nathalie Dauphin McKenzie, MD, MSPH, is an award-winning GYN Oncologist for Florida Hospital Medical Group and director of the GYN oncology fellowship training program at Florida Hospital Cancer Institute. She is an experienced surgeon, researcher and strong patient advocate with multilingual fluency in English, French, medical Spanish and Haitian Creole. Learn more at [FHMedicalGroup.com](http://FHMedicalGroup.com).*



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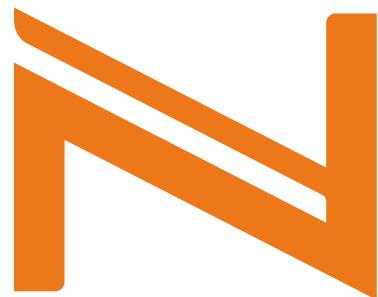


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## NONAVENTURES: ORLANDO STARFLYER

PAGE E8



Photo By Nicole LaBosco

## Sunflower Heaven

ARTICLE BY BRIELLE PEREZ  
PHOTOS BY VANESSA POULSON  
AND BRIELLE PEREZ

I know what you're thinking "Sunflowers?! In Florida?!"

Why, yes, the dream of frolicking through a field of sunflowers has become a reality! Vanessa and I found ourselves traveling about an hour away from Lake Nona to explore a field of flowers as far as the eye can see!

Roses, carnations, and peonies cannot compare to the beauty of the flowers at Lancaster Family Farm. This quaint little field of sunflowers is located in Center



Hill, Fla., and is owned by the Lancaster family. In 1988, the father of the family, Brian Lancaster, began preparing the land outside of his home as a crop field. He had the idea of planting sunflowers, along with sunflower hybrids, as a way to nourish the ground for his crops. As soon as the flowers began popping up, the family knew planting the flowers would become a yearly tradition.

Going on their third year in the sunflower business, the Lancasters began tending to the field and preparing it for visitors when their neighbors and friends suggested how scenic it would be for photos. Not only is the field planted yearly by the family, but each member of the Lancaster family has a part to play in maintaining the crop and business.

As Van and I embarked on our one-hour journey toward sunflower heaven, we had our fingers crossed that the moody Florida storm clouds would hold out while our dreams came true. The sky abruptly opened up into a beautiful blue array around our last 20 minutes of the drive,



and we knew from that moment that we were headed toward heaven (flower heaven, that is!).

As we pulled down an unfamiliar dirt road, the moss-covered trees guided our path toward the farm. We were immediately welcomed with warm smiles and helpful faces but could not resist staring at the colorful blooms. The field stretched out as far as the eye could see and had pre-cut paths marking different trails through the flowers. Several trails were heavily cut to allow large families room to walk through together. Props covered in botanical goodness hid amongst the flowers, almost like a scavenger hunt to find the intentional photo decorations.

Van and I were drawn immediately to the wooden swing they had placed in the front left corner of the field. This swing is perfect for senior photos, engagement sessions, professional headshots, or even family photos. We also enjoyed posing against an antique door prop that included a chair nestled by vintage suitcases decked out with more flowers. Not only did we

without a doubt a beautiful backdrop for photos of every kind, as well as the perfect centerpiece for your dining room table. The family allows visitors to pick a flower for \$1 apiece, making it possible for each family member to take with them a memento that is both beautiful and economically smart.

After speaking with the mother of the family, Missy Lancaster, and daughter, Ashley Oliver, we discovered that sunflowers are strictly a summer crop, in which the blooms only last for a few months from spring into summer. Unfortunately, these beautiful flowers are only in season for a little while, but the family has other crop opportunities for the fall and winter months. Now that the sunflowers are retired, the family will begin planting and tending to a wheat crop to create a fall maze. They will host a fall-themed event beginning in September and carry out the fun into December with a Christmas-themed field.

Overall, Van and I rate this magical field of sunshine with five stars, a 10/10 experience, and lovely, heart-warming service.



find a "sunflower stand" prop, a rustic bench covered in blooms, and an old tractor hidden in the sunflowers, but we also found the most beautiful blue bike carrying a basket full of colorful greenery.

Talk about a photographer's playland! The family allows visitors to schedule an appointment to bring their own photographer or fancy DSLR camera for a fee of \$40 an hour. A high-res camera or professional photographer is definitely not a must if you are looking for stunning flower photos. Visitors can explore the fields and take stunning photos using their own camera phone for free (I mean, who doesn't love a good portrait mode?).

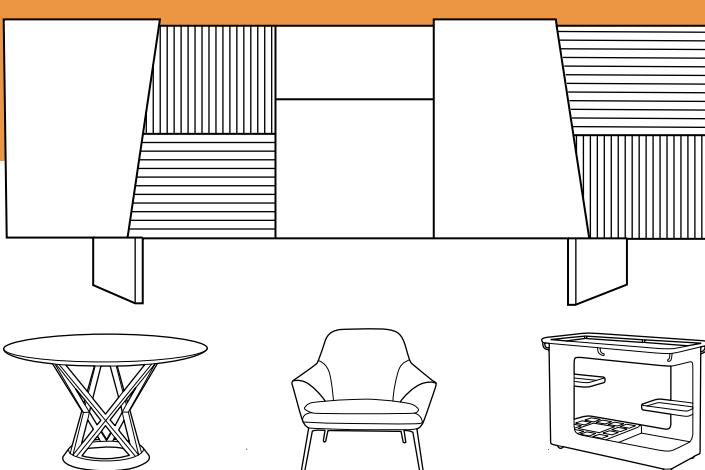
These vibrant blooms are

Check out everything they have to offer and learn more about their business by visiting their Facebook page at [Facebook.com/LancasterFamilyFarm/](https://www.facebook.com/LancasterFamilyFarm/) or book your appointment now at (352) 457-5229.



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# Nona's Natural Wonders: Split Oak Forest

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY  
VANESSA POULSON



Welcome to Nona's Natural Wonders, a column designed to take you to some of the parts of the greater Lake Nona community that have been left untouched by developers and highlight some of the best places for each of us to rediscover our personal connection with the great and wonderful world around us.

In all the hustle and bustle of Lake Nona, it can be easy to get caught up in the frenzy of rising buildings, tasty restaurants, and enticing entertainment. So much of what makes the Lake Nona community so unique is the growing metropolis that is gradually coming together before us, yet, it can be easy to lose track of other impor-

tant aspects of everyday life, including our connection and commitment to the natural environment.

These days, moments of pure solitude and quiet are so hard to come across. Most of us lead such busy lives and often forget what it means to embrace staying active and being outside in such a beautiful place. We're so often attached to our tablets, computers, and cellphones that we forget about stepping back and stepping in to places that provide once-in-a-lifetime experiences. It isn't always easy to recommit to nature because, so often, it can be more favorable to stay inside in our conditioned air, have access to cold water, and sit around and watch the world go by. The trick is, however, remembering that the world is alive and out there, and all you have to do is take the step to go experience it and do all you can to protect what cannot be given back.

First and foremost, we tackled one of the most well-trekked and beautiful forests in the Lake Nona area: Split Oak Forest, a nature preserve that features a variety of beautiful hiking trails, natural wildlife, and well-kept Floridian flora and fauna. The park has some of the most beautiful views in the area. Within the boundaries of Split Oak, you can find plenty of small lakes and ponds, winding paths, and lots of lush plant life.

Split Oak can be accessed through both the Moss Park entrance and down Narcoossee Road and on to Clapp Simms Duda Road, near the Back to Nature Wildlife Refuge (which we will highlight in a later edition). The entrance at Moss Park requires a small parking fee, but the entrance on Clapp

Simms Duda is free and gives you immediate access to a map and the trails that wind through the park.

There are a variety of different trails you can take throughout the forest, some being much longer than others. The first time we journeyed out there, we stuck to the smaller trail that looped around the park and brought you back to the entrance. The second time, we tackled the longer trail that takes you from one end of the forest to the other. Each of these is manageable, but make



sure that you bring water, as the heat of the Florida summer can often be quite draining.

Keep your eyes open for wildlife. While we were there, we ran into a couple of deer, a variety of squirrels, and plenty of butterflies. It's definitely worth bringing a good camera to see if you can capture any photos of what you spot along your journey.

One of the best parts about Split Oak is the perfect, quiet nature that you can find while you're hiking through the forest. It's hard not to feel completely at ease while you walk through the trails, especially if you hike in the morning just as the new dawn is bursting through the clouds. When the world is just starting its day, I can think of no better place to be waking up than with Mother Nature herself.

So, next time you want to take a break from all the hustle and bustle of daily life or you're looking for a spot where you can hike in quiet without all the noise and congestion of the city, check out Split Oak and remind yourself just why it is so important to take a break and see Nona's Natural Wonders every once in a while.



## Family Fridays: Rock Springs And Kelly Park

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY  
VANESSA POULSON

Summer time is in full swing here in the state of Florida, and that means that families all over Lake Nona are looking for new ways to cool off.

As someone who lived in the Sunshine State for the first 17 years of her life, I've learned a thing or two when it comes to Floridian summers. If you're new here, you might be unaware that anything exists outside of pools and the beach as far as cooling off for the summer goes, but some of us long-time residents are well aware of some of Florida's best kept secrets: the variety of beautiful, natural, freshwater springs scattered all around the state.

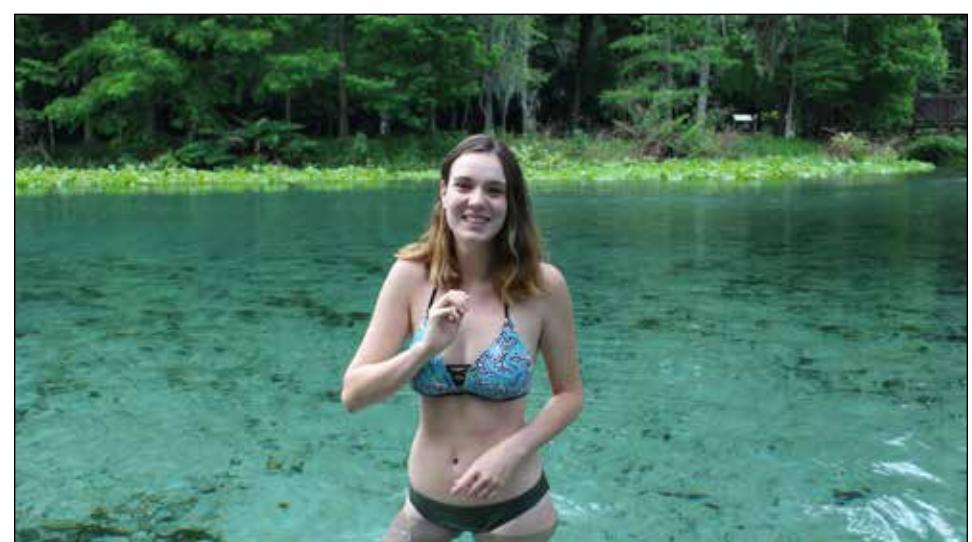
These springs have been featured across social media, with videos of the clear,

crystal blue water reaching over a million views on Facebook or Instagram. The water in the springs stays around 70 degrees all year round. Each of these springs has a plethora of beautiful traits and a variety of scenery, but for the purposes of this edition of Family Fridays, we visited Rock Springs and Kelly Park.

Rock Springs and the accompanying Kelly Park is a 14,000-acre state park. The main entrance is located about 30 miles north of Orlando in Sorrento, three miles west of the Wekiva River bridge on State Road 46 and extends into Orange and Seminole counties to the south. The park is located just north of Apopka, around an hour-and-a-half north of Lake Nona. The drive is incredibly easy, and upon arriving at the park, you can see just how worthy making the trip is.

Now, if I were to make any kind of suggestion, it is to arrive at the park early. The car lines for the springs can wrap out of the parking lot and down the street at times, simply because the spot is so sought after and absolutely beautiful. Weekdays are notably less busy than the weekends, so plan accordingly.

My other suggestion would be to make sure that you either bring your own tubes or bring cash to stop at one of the vans on the path to the springs to rent a tube for the day. I made the mistake of not doing either the first time that I went to the springs, and I regret not being able to do one of the best attractions in Rock Springs: the nine-mile long Rock



Springs Run tubing and kayaking portion of the springs. On the Rock Springs Run, you have the opportunity to run into a variety of natural Florida wildlife, including fish, native plants, and even otters!

The views in Rock Springs are absolutely stunning. It's hard not to be taken aback by the natural beauty of the place, even if the water can be a bit cold when you first step into it! After you set your towel or umbrella up on the side of the springs, find one of the many ladders in the springs and make your way down into the water. If you bring a tube with you, you can enjoy relaxing in the cool water or bring a beach ball for a game in the water. Just make sure you don't bring any food or drink into the springs: the water from the springs is part of the natural Florida aquifer, so using them for trash or other things can damage the fragile water ecosystem present in the area.

Since the springs isn't very deep, little ones can wander through the majority of the water with ease. If you have feet on the sensitive side, I suggest bringing a pair of water shoes with you, as the floor of the springs is covered in, you guessed it, rocks! Some areas are less rocky than others, but they can be uncomfortable to those that are caught off guard by the change in texture.

There is a small snack stand located inside of Kelly Park, near the beginning of some of the various hiking trails also located in the area. These trails lead around the park and offer awesome nature encounters with some of Florida's notable wildlife. Make sure to bring bug spray, however...you are in Florida, after all.

I had a ton of fun at Rock Springs, and it makes a great Friday trip this summer for those of all ages.



## Second Chance At Prom

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY NICOLE LABOSCO



Hair done? Check. Nails done? Check. Limo? No, but we arrived in my CX-5!

I was just scrolling through Facebook like most people do nowadays and came across an event called 2nd Chance Prom. Curious, I clicked the event post and learned that it was an adult-only event and immediately had an idea. Andrew, my boyfriend, never went to prom, and my junior year prom was pretty awkward at the time. (I was one of the only people who went dateless.) Looking back, I still had a good time, but I wanted to see what this 2nd Chance Prom had in store, and I wanted to surprise Andrew. It was just too perfect a scenario.

I began brainstorming up ways to do a promposal, and my excitement surrounding this event was building! I unfortunately didn't get around to legitimately proposing to Andrew, but I did ask him to go to prom with me. The result was too funny. He laughed and immediately denied. I was scrambling on how to convince him. I had already received the tickets. After realizing my intentions behind the whole scheme, he caved. We were going to prom!

The theme surrounding this prom was "A Night in Paris," and it included dinner, dancing and a professional prom photo. Formal attire was required, and tickets were \$40 for a couple and \$25 for a single ticket. Over 75 tickets were sold! All money raised through this event went toward Watoto Ministries, which helps abandoned women and children in Uganda. The overall event was hosted by Paint Life and Call ME Marketing. Mindy Bergeron Hungerford is the creator of 2nd Chance Prom, and she travels to Uganda to deliver life-saving supplies, all from the proceeds of this event. She's also part of the two teams that hosted the event. Hungerford will

work at an orphanage in Uganda from late June to early July.

It was prom day! I scrambled to get ready as I had a long list of things to do: hair, nails, makeup, get dressed, etc. Andrew threw on his suit, and we hopped in the car and were off. The event was held at The BreakRoom in Winter Garden (a coffee shop), which took a little over 30 minutes to get to. The prom was BYOB (bring your own beer/wine), so we stopped to grab a bottle of wine and arrived at prom! This massive coffee shop was a bit hidden from the road, but the interior was so cute!

Lots of other prom-goers were in attendance, too. I scanned the room and saw nothing but sequins, gowns and suits. Some businesses came together...staff bonding, anyone? Groups of friends, both young and old, could be found grabbing food, drinking and mingling. The dance floor opened up, and even a king and queen were

crowned.

The royalty was chosen by holding a dance-off battle. I wanted to go and just completely embarrass myself on the dance floor with Andrew, but he wasn't as on board with making a complete fool of himself. I can't blame him. There were some seriously talented dancers!

Overall, the 2nd Chance Prom was



enjoyable. It was a fun excuse to dress up and go out on the town. The only thing missing for me, and I'm sure Andrew as well, from an actual high school prom was the comradery. Having friends at any event always makes it that much better. Maybe that's something we'll take into consideration if there's a next time...

This was the second annual 2nd Chance Prom, and future events are currently being planned. Anyone interested in donating to Watoto Ministries can visit [www.watoto.com/app/donate/categories](http://www.watoto.com/app/donate/categories) and can like the Facebook page entitled 2nd Chance Prom of Central Florida.

## When Summer Camp Is Not an Option!

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS  
BY MARNIE BROPHY

What's a mom or dad to do to keep their child active and engaged over the summer when camp is not an option? That has been my challenge the past few years, but here is a list of my favorite activities close to the Nonahood that I've discovered over time that hopefully will keep you sane and your kids happy this summer.

### Outside days:

- Pack a picnic for lunch in different locations (pool, beach, parks)
- Sidewalk chalk art
- Visit the local parks (Moss Park, Northlake Park, East Lake Park, Econ Park)
- Invite and get invited to different pools in the area
- Have some water fun in your backyard
- Splash pads (St. Cloud and Kissimmee lakefronts have great ones)
- Go in front of a lake and sketch the view

- Catch the Sunrail at Sand Lake station and ride to Winter Park, have a burger, do some shopping or take a boat ride and come back
- Visit Back to Nature Wildlife Refuge (10-minute drive to 10525 Clapp Simms Duda Rd.)
- Hike the trails of Split Oak State Forest (next to the Wildlife Refuge)
- For the little ones (0-5), contact Tiny Tumbles to join their playdates at Laureate Park: [www.tinytumbleus.com/contact](http://www.tinytumbleus.com/contact)
- Party with friends at the pool (order pizza and a cake)
- Backyard games

### Inside days:

- Roller Skating (Astro Skate – 866 S Goldenrod Rd. – \$6-\$8 depending the time you get in; skate rental \$3-\$5)
- Drive Shack (free game room) and ice cream on the rooftop
- Bowling (Three Point Bowling, 7470 Hoffner Ave.)
- Board games
- Create a family flag each year
- Waterford Lakes' Chuck E. Cheese's
- Find a class in the Orange County Public Library
- Summer Movie Express \$1 Waterford

Lakes or the Loop Regal every Tuesday and Wednesday at 10 a.m. all summer

- Rock painting
- Visit Nemours fish tank (1,500-gallon fish tank located on the ground floor); have a snack in the cafeteria and walk the gardens outside
- Meet with friends at Yogurt Breeze (10727 Narcoossee Rd. #4); they have games for kids to play
- Take a tour at Wycliffe Discovery Center (11221 John Wycliffe Blvd.)
- Go to Canvas Market, play Jenga, Connect Four or Tic-Tac-Toe and have a yummy treat

One thing not allowed in our home is to say: "Mom, I'm bored!" And if they say it, ask them: "What do you think you can do about it?" And remember to have fun and enjoy it; we only have 18 summers with them.



## Say Cheese!

ARTICLE AND PHOTO  
BY NICOLE LABOSCO

*The Spanish say queso.  
The French say fromage.  
I say cheese and more of it, please!*

*This special feature follows a cheese-driven girl on her journey to try all of the sweet, creamy, sharp, stinky and spicy cheeses the world is lucky to devour. I'm the friend who is constantly tagged in those cheese memes on Facebook about drowning in grated cheese when the waiter/waitress asks you to "say when." In queso emergency, just say cheese!*

I tend to get lost in the cheese section of Publix's deli, and this month, I embraced a cheese worthy of the summer vibes: Mango Habanero Gouda. A little spice and a little fruity, what could be better? I couldn't wait to try it!

Upon opening the plastic wrapping, an aroma similar to cheddar cheese filled my senses, and I immediately began to salivate. I cut my first slice and took the long-awaited bite. The gouda had a pretty smooth consistency, and I immediately thought of how this cheese would pair nicely with some crackers or hold its own

on a charcuterie board.

A bit upsetting for me was the fact that I couldn't quite taste the mango as much as I would've liked. I had expected to bite into a semi-sweet cheese with fruity undertones and a kick of heat at the end. Although I was wrong about the mango flavoring, I was right about the bit of spice. It was a good amount of heat, although not mouth burning. The cheese left a bit of heat on my tongue, which I didn't mind. I still can't get over how lacking the mango was for me. I would've made the fruit more noticeable if I'd had my way.

With that said, I would still gladly enjoy this cheese any day, and I look forward to trying different variations of the flavor combinations. If you're interested in trying out this cheese, I purchased it at Publix for \$5.99.

What does cheese say to itself in the mirror? Looking gouda!

*Is this article too cheesy? DEFINITELY.*

*Send me your favorite cheese meme or joke to [nicole@nonahoodnews.com](mailto:nicole@nonahoodnews.com) and let me know your thoughts on your favorite cheese-filled meals! Is anybody else hungry all of a sudden?*



## Katie's Cucina: Grilled Southwestern Pork Chops With Mango Peach Salsa

ARTICLE, PHOTOS AND RECIPE BY  
KATIE JASIEWICZ,  
[KATIESCUCINA.COM](http://KATIESCUCINA.COM)

Hello, summer!

It's hot out, and we are grilling a good three to four times a week in my home. I'm excited to share my recipe for grilled southwestern pork chops with mango peach salsa. I love grilling fruit in the summertime, and it pairs perfectly with pork chops. This is definitely a twist on the classic pork chops and applesauce but grilled, and there's no applesauce here. Just a fresh and vibrant grilled mango peach salsa!

Let's talk about seasoning the pork chops.

You'll make a rub with a combination of chili powder, brown sugar, garlic powder, salt, and ground cumin. Then, you'll rub the seasoning mixture all over the pork chops. I preheat my grill screaming hot. That's how I'm able to achieve those gorgeous grill marks. I'm going to let you in on a little secret on how to obtain perfect grill marks.

You need a super hot grill; ranging over 500 degrees Fahrenheit.

You want to do the 10-and-2 method. You'll place the chops diagonal as they are at 10:00 on the clock, then turn them to 2:00 on a different side of the grill where the grill grates are super hot. Then, you'll do the same thing once you flip them over. Think of your grill as four zones. By the end of your grilling experience, you will have used every zone. Or pair it down if you have other items on the grill and use the front and back half of the grill.

Okay, so now that I've divulged my perfect grill mark secrets, let's talk about the process of this meal. You'll start grilling the pork chops first. During the last five minutes of cook time, you'll throw the fresh peaches and mangoes on the grill. Once they have a slight char to them, you'll remove them from the grill, dice them up and serve the fruit salsa on top of the southwestern pork chops.

These pork chops are the ultimate sweet and savory mix. I can't get enough of this recipe. My family loves this recipe during the summer months while both peaches and mangoes are in season. I serve it with brown basmati rice, black beans, and steamed green beans or even grilled squash – whatever I have in the fridge the night I make this meal.



### PORK CHOPS WITH MANGO PEACH SALSA

**Yield: 4**  
Prep time: 10 min. | Cook time: 15 min. | Total time: 25 min.

#### Ingredients:

- 4 boneless pork loin chops, 1/2 inch thick
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon dried cilantro
- 2 ripe peaches, peeled and halved
- 2 ripe mangoes, peeled and halved
- 1 thick 1-inch slice of red onion
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro

#### Directions:

1. Heat gas grill on high heat (in upwards of 500 degrees Fahrenheit).
2. Mix together the chili powder, brown sugar, garlic, and salt. Rub the chili powder mix on both sides of each pork chop. Set to the side, and then peel the peaches and mangoes, slice them in half.
3. Reduce grill heat to medium and spray the grill with no-stick cooking spray. Place pork on grill. Cover grill; cook six to nine minutes, turning once, until pork is no longer pink in center and internal temperature reads at least 145 degrees Fahrenheit. Remove the pork from the grill, set on a plate and tent with foil.
4. Place the peaches, mangoes, and onion on the grill. Cover and cook for five minutes, turning once. Remove from the grill, and chop into cubed pieces. In a bowl, add the chopped fruit plus add 1 tablespoon fresh cilantro and 1 tablespoon lime juice. Serve pork chops topped with mango peach salsa, or serve salsa on the side.



# Back to Basics: Tasty Teas And Lovely Lemonades

ARTICLE BY NICOLE LABOSCO  
AND VANESSA POULSON  
PHOTOS BY VANESSA POULSON

Welcome to Back to Basics, where we classy ladies try to establish just how basic one can be in the Orlando area. Each month, we'll be taking on a new theme, and we'll be searching for the best in basic trends. We've all heard some of the most recent popular foodie trends: charcoal, galaxy and unicorn, as well as familiar classics such as pumpkin spice and peppermint. We hope we can inspire the rest of the Nonahood to embrace their inner basic.

In the heat of the summertime, what's better than a glass of cold tea or icy lemonade? Both of these drinks embody the essence of summer like no other, so if you're looking for a sweet and refreshing treat this July, check out some of these awesome stops.

**Place:** Dandelion Communita Cafe

**Order:** Sacral Chakra Tea



**Final Review Vanessa:** Though I did this adventure solo, I have to say, Dandelion never disappoints. The cafe is located inside of the most adorable multi-colored house, with plenty of large open windows and fun seating. They specialize in organic and all-natural foods and teas. Speaking of tea, their menu is absolutely massive and has a large variety of flavors for each and every liking. You can get any tea on their menu hot or iced, which is quite helpful in the warm Florida summer. I really enjoyed this tea because of the cinnamon flavor that it has and just how refreshing it was. Personally, I don't usually drink tea with a lot of added sweetener in it, and I can say honestly that this tea really did not need it anyway. Though, if you do enjoy a little more sweetener, there are simple syrup and sweetener packets to be found inside the restaurant.

**Place:** Chroma Modern Bar + Kitchen

**Order:** Raspberry Lemonade, Ginger Lemonade, Blueberry Tea, and Peach Tea



**Final Review Nicole:** I was amazed at how many options Chroma had and was totally excited to try them! All of the flavors can be either lemonade or tea, and there was a black cherry flavor which we did not try. The peach tea was light and

refreshing, but I would've enjoyed it more with a stronger peach taste. It's a perfect summery drink! The blueberry tea was my favorite because I love, love, love blueberries. It's perfectly light and refreshing, and it's a combination you don't see too often. I was a bit hesitant to try the ginger lemonade, but what else are we here for, right? It was actually surprisingly tasty! I'm not a huge ginger fan (unless I can choose my portions of it on my sushi), especially when it comes to drinking it, but this combination was good. Once the ice melted, the ginger aftertaste was a bit too bitter for me. Last was the raspberry lemonade, which was essentially summer in a glass. It was definitely sweet...the sweetest and most tart out of the four we tried. Once again, it was super refreshing as it was made with raspberry purée. I'm ready to be drinking this poolside, but I think I'd only be able to drink half of it in one sitting.

**Final Review Vanessa:** These teas were delicate and absolutely beautiful. The aesthetic value that each drink had was for sure there, which of course with Chroma, you expect nothing less. My favorite out of this selection was the raspberry lemonade. I've always been a fan of things that are pretty and pink, and it was just enough tart and sweet for it to be a tasty treat that is both refreshing and beautiful. The other ones were good but lacked a bit of flavor and didn't shine as much as the raspberry. My second favorite was probably the blueberry tea. It was tasty.

**Place:** Dunkin' Donuts

**Order:** Coconut Sweet Tea and a Frozen Strawberry Lemonade

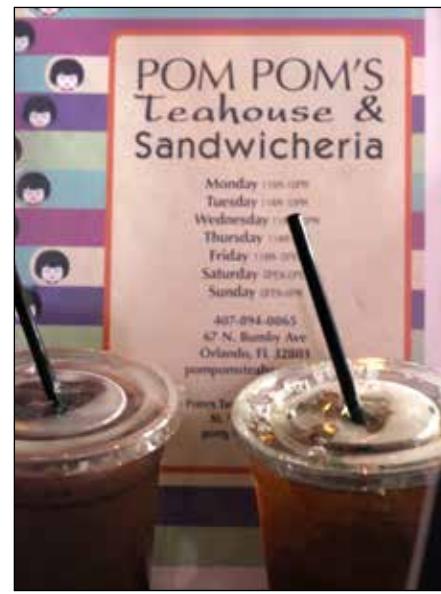


**Final Review Nicole:** OH MY GOD, this coconut tea combo is amazing! I've always wanted to mix the coconut and sweet tea flavors but never had until now and, boy, have I been missing out... . It's light, but sweet enough to truly enjoy without feeling guilty. This will be my go to at Dunkin' when it comes to the tea flavor combinations. The frozen strawberry lemonade was just WAY too tart for me. This thing is overloaded with sugar. I'll stick with my coconut sweet tea.

**Final Review Vanessa:** Coconut to me is good in small doses, but it definitely isn't anything that I would put in a drink too often. This drink was definitely more up Nicole's alley than mine. I really enjoyed the strawberry lemonade a lot more. Tart lemonades are definitely something I enjoy. It reminds me a lot of being a little kid and enjoying the summer sun with a lemonade.

**Place:** Pom Pom's Teahouse and Sandwicheria

**Order:** Mocha Milk Tea and Cotton Candy Sweet Tea



**Final Review Nicole:** Imagine my excitement when we walk up and see that the featured tea of the day is Cotton Candy! I didn't even have to think about what I was going to order at that point. What's a better treat to represent summer other than cotton candy?! I was pretty curious as to how the flavor would be created: through a combination of blueberry, pear and kiwi. At first sip, the cotton candy taste was barely there, but the more you drink, the more it begins to taste like the fluffy, sweet treat! The mocha milk tea was pretty good, too! A plus about Pom Pom's is that you can get up to three refills on your tea at no extra charge

**Final Review Vanessa:** I LOVED THIS MOCHA! So sweet, and so yummy. It was a little weird with the flavor coming from tea and not coffee, but I was surprisingly okay with it. I could VIBE with it. I really liked the aesthetic of Pom Pom's, too. It's very quiet and cute with plenty of seating. I liked both of the teas that we ordered, but I preferred the milk tea over the fruit-based cotton candy one. I'm sure either would work for different tastes.

**Place:** Urban Hibachi

**Order:** Green Tea Smash Strawberry, Green Tea Smash Raspberry, Green Tea Smash Lychee, and Milk Tea Blis



**Final Review Nicole:** At the grand opening, I tried the raspberry green tea smash and was pleased at how tasty it was, but I was disappointed in my choice for this edition of Back to Basics. I originally wanted to try the peach flavored tea, but they were all out. I decided to try the

lychee green tea, and upon first sip, immediately regretted my decision. It tasted exactly like soap, in my opinion. I seriously only took like two sips and that was it. Guess it's safe to say I'm not a lychee fan. The strawberry tea was good, but it had a light strawberry flavor...nowhere near as potent as the raspberry one. The milk tea blis was AMAZING! Think of it as a root-beer float, but the milk tea replaces the rootbeer. That's how our waiter described it to us and he was totally right! I for sure did not expect the ultraviolet purple color of the dessert-like drink, but it was super exciting to have. A couple of other customers had asked what it was. The taro milk tea was better tasting than previous taro-flavored items I've tried, and the scoop of vanilla ice cream was so rich, sweet and creamy! I will definitely order the milk tea blis again!

**Final Review Vanessa:** All of these drinks with the exception of the milk tea were very perfumey and tasted a bit like soap. Some of the fruity flavors were overpowered by the taste of what could be an overwhelming shampoo. The milk tea, however, was BLISSFUL! Taro milk tea with sweet and creamy ice cream was absolutely delightful. It is also visually really aesthetically appealing, as who doesn't love a good purple drink? I know I'm certainly going to come back and order this drink again. I don't recommend the teas unless you're very much into floral and soapy flavored teas. The milk tea, however, 10/10.

**Place:** Rubio's Coastal Grill

**Order:** Mango Sweet Tea



**Final Review Nicole:** We also stopped in Rubio's Coastal Grill to test out its Pomegranate Lime Lemonade, but the machine was out of order. I've had it before and it is a great summer drink but just a tad bit too sour/sweet for my taste.

In an attempt to try the Rubio's Pomegranate Lime Lemonade a second time, I failed yet again because the machine was still out of order. However, Rubio's does offer a freshly brewed mango sweet tea, and it was delicious! Not too overwhelmingly sweet, but sweet enough to truly enjoy. I even mixed a little bit of the mango lime agua fresca with it, which was super tasty!

Check back next month for when we tackle the greatest coffee trends of tomorrow! The jitters have already begun!



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## Finding Now: A Complaining Detox

BY ODETTE VACCARO



Odette Vaccaro

How easy would it be for you to go a full 24 hours without complaining? At first glance, it really does not seem like that much time. But once we actually try to put it into practice, it becomes painfully obvious how much of our time we waste complaining.

I am embarrassed to admit that I still have not been able to complete this challenge successfully. Having the intention to not

complain has definitely helped to curb the need for obvious lamenting. We can all agree that some complaints seem valid and understandable. But, boy, do we love to grumble about an endless list of minor and silly things! Most of us have grown accustomed to nitpicking and talking about how things are not going the way we would want them to.

When we choose to complain, we choose to shift our focus from what is going right to what is going wrong. We stray from the present moment to instead "fantasize" about how we think things "should be." Let's call a spade a spade. Complaining is nothing but a focus on the negative. What is complaining, really, if not to find fault and mope over what you don't like?

Furthermore, the ugliest side of complaining is that no amount of it ever changed anything. The only thing we accomplish with every gripe is to bring our spirits down and shift our energy into negative. Thankfully, we have the amazing ability to transform our attitudes and actions. With intention and an open heart, we can create positive habits that enable us to have more optimistic outlooks, have richer lives, and nurture our happiness. We can start by eliminating our need to complain or, at the very least, reducing it significantly.

In reality, things don't always go well, and there are many instances when change is absolutely necessary. Yet, we can only accomplish transformation by taking positive, informed action. In no way does complaining result in evolution. If there are things or situations that we legitimately feel need adjustment, the best way to move forward is to: a) fully understand the need, and b) take action to affect positive change. This can be achieved only when we cultivate presence, contemplation and mindfulness.



Choosing to get off the complaining bandwagon doesn't mean pretending everything is always rosy or ignoring when things go wrong. Rather, the next time you feel the urge to complain, take the same approach as we use with thoughts during meditation. Notice your resistance and your dislike. "Ah, yes. There you are." But instead of following or holding on to it and letting it become a rant session, just gently let it go. Become present. Notice what is truly in front of you and try to reframe.

Imagine you're drinking a tall glass of cool water and suddenly notice something in the water. Complaining or protesting about it does nothing to solve the problem.

All it can accomplish is to get you in a bad mood, while the object sits in your cup and you're not getting a drop to drink. What if instead you notice whatever is in the water, acknowledge it and get a new cup? Simple, right? Same situation, different approach.

We often go to great lengths to remove anything from our diets and homes that isn't healthy or harms us. Why don't we step up and take the same care with our approach to life? Let's all go on a complaining detox. Will you commit to spending just 24 hours without complaining?

## Nona Alumni: Aaron Virgilio

ARTICLE BY NICOLE LABOSCO  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF AARON  
VIRGILIO

*In this recurring monthly special, Nona-hood News will be featuring those who've graduated from Lake Nona High School and will recognize the achievements they've made since. Some will have been a part of the first graduating class. Others might have graduated a few years later. Few have stayed in the Lake Nona area, and many have explored the world or are still doing so. Let's see where life's journey has taken them so far!*



View from Aaron's house in Hawaii, he lived on Mauna Kea, about 6,500 feet above sea level

**Name:** Aaron Virgilio

**Age:** 25

**Year Graduated:** 2011

**Occupation:** Software Developer for Travelclick

**Current Location:** Orlando, FL

This month's alumni has been in the Lake Nona area for quite some time.

"My parents were longtime residents of the Vista Lakes area and wanted to get closer to the new and upcoming Nona area. In addition, with the new high school being built, my parents saw an opportunity to not have to pay high school tuition."

While a student at Lake Nona High, Virgilio had some pretty great goals for himself after graduation as he grew up and furthered his life experiences. "[I wanted] to be married, have traveled to new places around the world, own my home, finish my college degree, and have a Golden Retriever," recalls Virgilio. "Most of my goals were achieved; I just had a realization that some of them were conflicting with one another."

Virgilio went on to explain how he did get married, but he's now divorced as he felt he married way too young. He graduated from UCF with a degree in mechanical engineering and met his golden furry best friend named Hercules. He also had the pleasure of exploring the world.

"I did get to travel! I've traveled to 12 countries, visited 16 states and other various places around the world, and just recently moved back to Orlando from Hawaii. Traveling so much, I realized it wasn't logical to own my home, so I rent until I'm ready to make the leap to home ownership." He sees himself potentially being back in Hawaii in the next five years but plans on staying exactly where he's currently at as far as his career goes.

Some of Virgilio's current goals consist of losing the infamous "freshman 15" every

college-goer seems to gain and continue to travel while he still can. However, if he doesn't travel as often, he would like to purchase his first home on Captiva Island in Florida.

He enjoys spending time with Hercules (who just turned five), working on his car or going to trivia nights and food truck events around town. He also still hangs out with some of his friends from high school, and they are able to pick up right where things left off.

How did Virgilio get to where he is now?

"Well, I was heavily career-driven while going through school. I got married right out of high school to my girlfriend at the time. In doing this, it gave me perspective on what's important when becoming an adult towards 'wants vs. needs.' Sadly, after years of doing this, the marriage wound up failing, but I did manage to take some

life lessons from this and gave myself new direction...by not having one! Since this realization, I've just been riding the current of life in the most positive direction I can, whether it be never refusing a night out or never closing myself [off] to new experiences. I recently started a new career, which I'm truly excited and passionate about. I've traveled to many places with my dog, which is one of my true passions, and [I] will do [it] until the end of my days..."

*Written for current and future Lake Nona alumni by a Lake Nona alumna. Check back in to our August issue to learn about our next Nona graduate(s)!*



Aaron and his golden retriever, Hercules

# NonaVentures: Orlando StarFlyer

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY  
NICOLE LABOSCO



*We all have that one friend who is a die-hard adrenaline junkie who loves to discover their next greatest adventure. That friend is me...*

*This feature is all about uncovering Lake Nona and Orlando's greatest activities, especially if you enjoy living life on the edge!*

This month had me dying with anticipation as I waited for the June 1 grand opening. The Orlando StarFlyer is located at Vue at 360 on International Drive, right by ICON Orlando (formerly known as the Coca-Cola Orlando Eye). There are 35 structures like it in the world, but at a whopping 450 feet tall, the Orlando StarFlyer is the world's tallest. Naturally, that achievement has my name written all over it.

The StarFlyer was designed in 2007, and the parts were fabricated in Lienz, Austria, in 2017. (That explained the Austrian band performing in lederhosen at the grand opening.)

You can enjoy the Orlando StarFlyer for just \$12 per ride (online ticketing coming soon), and additional same-day rides are \$7. There is no age limit or weight limit, you just need to be able to fit in the seat safely and be able to fasten the seatbelt. There is a height requirement of at least 44 inches. The Orlando StarFlyer is "a unique attraction that appeals to the young and old and the adventurous and not so adventurous. A family friendly high-thrill experience," according to the official website. I'd have to agree. It's pretty easy to get distracted taking in the views while you're on the ride rather than focusing on how high up you are.

The massive swing reaches speeds of 45 miles per hour but can go as fast as 60 miles per hour! I joked that I'd probably be throwing up all over I-Drive as I can't handle the slightest bit of spinning. That was the only aspect of the ride that had me

anxious.

I arrived to the grand opening with my excitement through the roof. I watched intently alongside several other news organizations as the ribbon was officially cut. The Orlando StarFlyer was open for business!

I met with Ritchie Armstrong, the general manager of both the Orlando Slingshot and the Orlando StarFlyer. This guy knows what people are looking for to experience adrenaline, fun and adventure, all things I aspire to discover throughout Orlando! Armstrong led me past the line and to my chair, which had a special GoPro rigged to it so that I could capture the experience. Next thing I knew, I was secured in and off I went, along with the other 23 riders, spinning over the bustling landscape of Orlando. There was just one problem: The GoPro wasn't in the rig! The production company that was filming forgot to put it in.

I got over the missing camera pretty quickly as it soon hit me that this monument I had watched get built up and repeatedly tested was now a skyscraper, and I was among the first few to experience it. I let out a scream of joy. I was having WAY too much fun as I rotated around, enjoying views for miles. The wind felt amazing! After all, it was the hottest point in the day at 2 p.m., and I was sweating so badly. I threw my arms up in the air. Was it because I was having a blast or to air out my underarms? The world may never know...

As we began to descend back to Earth, I had totally forgotten about my fear of throwing up and feeling sick. I didn't feel nauseous at any point in the roughly four-and-a-half-minute-long ride. Once my feet touched the ground again, I didn't want to leave. Luckily for me, I had the pleasure of riding again so I could capture the footage I needed. The second time around was just as fun as the first, but it felt even faster. Pedal to the metal, baby!

I couldn't help but think about when the best time of day would be to ride the Orlando StarFlyer. Immediately, I thought of nighttime. All of the lights would be mesmerizing. One of the staff members mentioned that during sunset is an ideal time to ride as well.

Lo and behold, Andrew and I ended up back 450 feet in the air later that night, and I hate to say it, but I was right! In my opinion, experiencing the StarFlyer at night was unbeatable! I didn't think it could get any better on my first two rides, but I was in awe with the swing at dark. All of the lights along I-Drive were so eye-catching, just as I expected they would be. I admired the rainbow which was the Orlando Eye and couldn't take my eyes off of the ever-changing light show that casted its way up and down the StarFlyer. And on top of all of that,

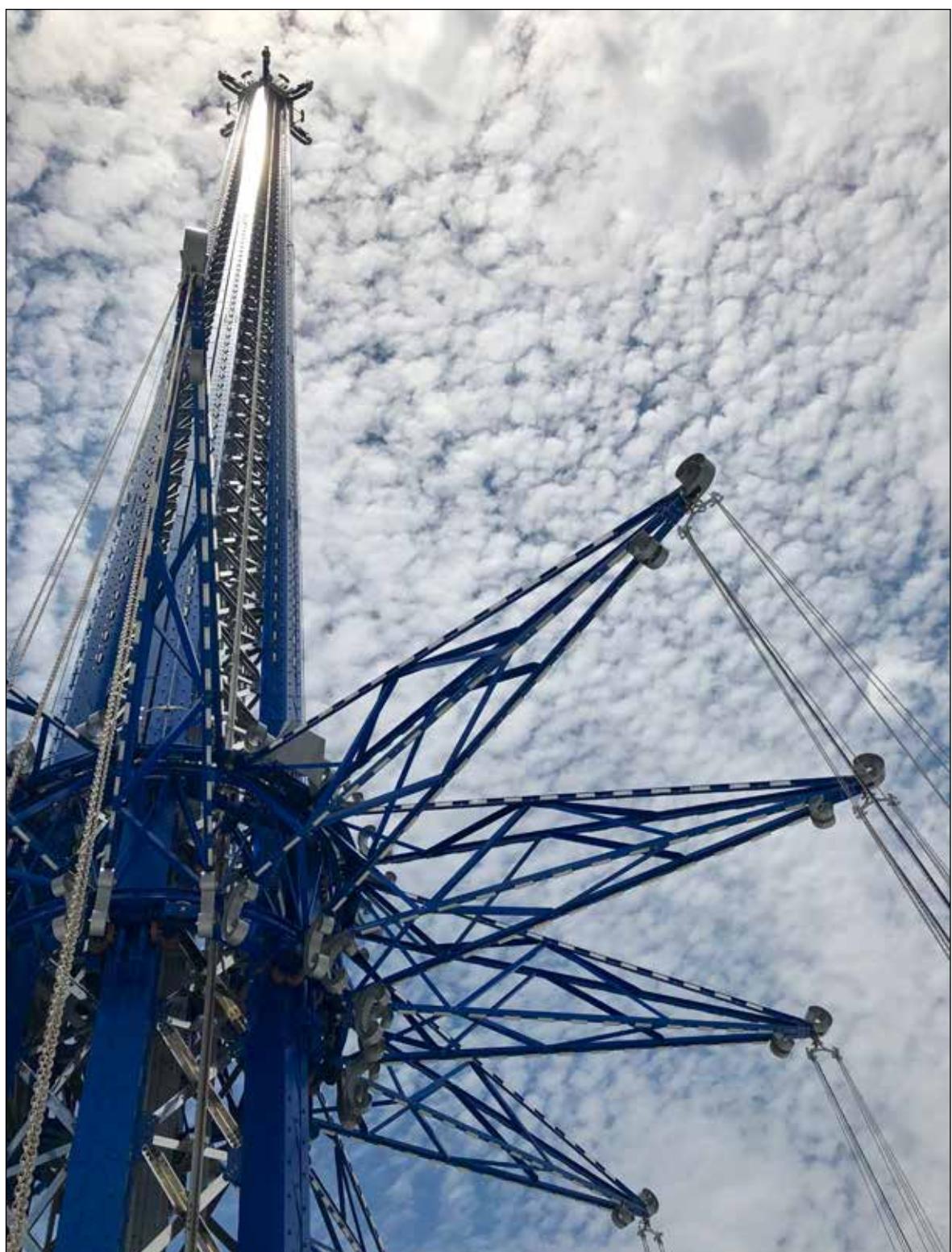
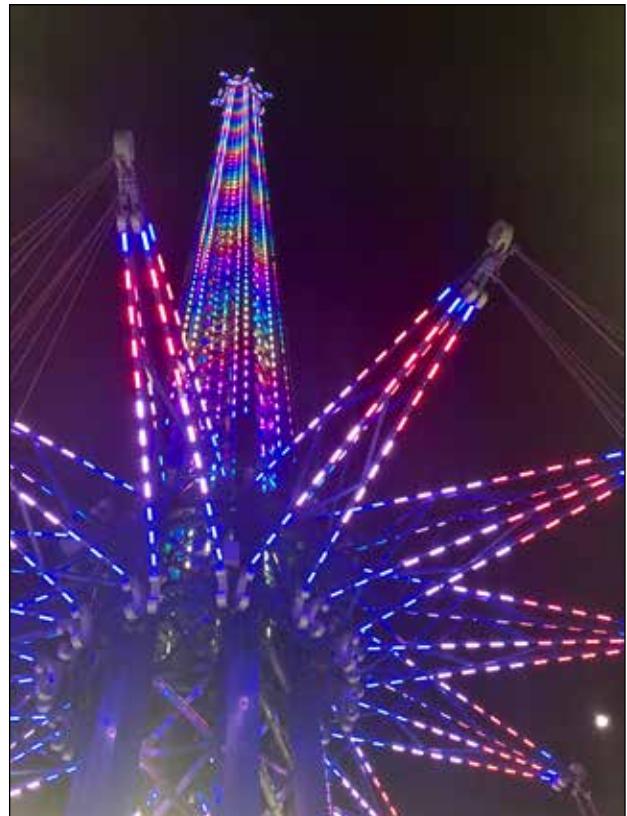


the ride felt longer and I felt like we were spinning much faster than we did during the day. I loved it!

Hey, Ritchie, can I get one of these things in my backyard?! Seriously, I could ride the Orlando StarFlyer all day, every day, and I can't wait to find myself flying amongst the stars again! Until next time!

*Have a suggestion? Send an email to [nicole@nonahoodnews.com](mailto:nicole@nonahoodnews.com) or fill out our NonaVentures column form at [nonahood.to/nonaventures](http://nonahood.to/nonaventures). What do you want to see me review next?*

—N—



# Nona Your Neighbor: Gian Perez

ARTICLE BY VANESSA POULSON  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF  
GIAN PEREZ

Gian Perez is an exceptional performer, master of his craft. Though his studies at the University of Michigan have taken him far from his Lake Nona roots, he continues to be an exceptional and accomplished member of the community.

## NHN: What brought you to Lake Nona?

GP: When my family and I moved here from Puerto Rico five years ago, we searched for houses in several different areas in Orlando. Out of all the ones we considered, Lake Nona definitely felt like it [was] the most homey. Everyone knew each other and cared about each other. And, most of all, it felt like it was still growing. That was most exciting for me; being able to take part in the growth of such a young community.

## NHN: Tell me an interesting story or event from your life.

GP: I'm currently studying acting at the University of Michigan. This past year, I was fortunate enough to take part in some amazing productions, including In the Heights and Equus. Diving into these plays was such a rewarding and fulfilling experience, mainly because I felt an exponential growth in my craft as an actor. On top of this, I had to balance grades and a job, which was tricky, for sure. However, I'm fortunate enough that my hard work not only paid off but was recognized by the university. I was just awarded the Ruth Lobdell Scholarship for my academic and artistic achievements.

## NHN: How long have you lived here?

GP: Five years now.

## NHN: Where are you from originally?

GP: Guaynabo, Puerto Rico.

## NHN: What do you do for work?

GP: I am an office assistant by day. By night, I'm a musician, playing gigs around the local Ann Arbor music scene with my band, Sushi, named after our saxophone player's cat, who is named after the food.

## NHN: What are you most excited to have in the Nonahood? What do you think the future is for Lake Nona?

GP: As Lake Nona continues to grow, the reach of its community members only expands. I'm proud to say that I graduated from Lake Nona High School with a class

of students who went to some really impressive colleges and some who went into rewarding careers. I'm most excited to see where the future generations of Lake Nona go. Because as the community grows, so do its people. The future is bright. The people here are going to go far.

## NHN: If you could tell one thing to someone considering moving here, what would that be?

GP: The best Chinese food spot is Zhang Garden. It's by Lake Nona Middle School. Their pepper chicken is wild.



Want to nominate YOUR neighbor (or yourself) to be featured? Follow this link: [nonahood.to/nonaneighbor](http://nonahood.to/nonaneighbor)



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# Nona Motors Ride of the Month: Jon Larsen's 2017 Nissan GT-R

BY BRITTANY BHULAI

PHOTOS BY CHRIS BHULAI



**Make:** Nissan  
**Model:** GT-R Premium Package

**Year:** 2017

**Mileage:** 5,000

**Price:** \$105,000

**Horsepower:** On pump gas, it's 700. On E85 Ethanol gas (which allows more horsepower), it's 790.

**Background:** Over the course of Larsen's car-owning years, he claimed to have had seven Mustangs. Later, he ended up with a 2013 GT-R and had a thirst to upgrade. He

scanned for 2018 models and used 2017's with low mileage. Soon, he stumbled upon a 2017 Nismo that was almost a fair price, but Larsen claims could have been better. There was a company in Georgia that he had been speaking with for a few months about purchasing, and they had the 2017 premium package.

"The car was a good buy because it had pretty much everything done on it that I would do to it myself," said Larsen. Before he knew it, he traded in his 2013 and adopted his 2017. The gentleman in Georgia who sold him the car did the build himself.

He's loved his car since he got it. Some of his favorite features about it are the carbon fiber touches on it and the wheels. He is also a fan of the amber red leather interior, stating, "They made the car look a lot more high end, exotic." Larsen also adds that he is an airline pilot for United, so he definitely likes the speed factor.

He bought the car with a little over \$50,000 worth of upgrades already on it. The car has an Alpha 9 Turbo Kit.

Some of the modifications off of the build list are as follows:

- AMS Bolt-on turbocharger upgrade kit
- AMS Street Intercooler
- Cobb AccessPort with TCM AP-NIS008
- Cobb Intake System
- AMS Downpipes
- Ohlins Nissan Road & Track coilovers
- Nissan GT-R OEM Black Edition Matte Carbon Trunk Wing
- JDM LED Side Markers
- Michelin Pilot Super Sport Tires
- GTC Titan 102mm Titanium Exhaust



- System, including Midpipe  
• Walbro 450 High Pressure Fuel Pump E85 Compatible  
• Rexpeed Matte GT-R R35 Carbon

## Fender Vents

As for future modifications, Larsen says he would probably upgrade his transmission since it is still stock, but he is fairly satisfied with what he has. He can give the car a punch once in awhile and enjoys driving it. However, he prefers to not use the car as his daily ride and has another vehicle he uses for everyday needs. He likes to save his GT-R for showing and something to get a solid and powerful drive out of. Down the road, he could see himself getting a Porsche or a Ferrari, but that's in the years to come.

To submit your car for a possible feature, email pics and basic info such as make, year and model to [brittany@nonahoodnews.com](mailto:brittany@nonahoodnews.com).

## In the Garden: How Hot Is Your Summer Garden?

### The Summer Heat Is Here, And It's Time to Transition To a Summer Vegetable Garden

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS  
BY AMBER HARMON

The Florida heat is here as we get up into the 90s each day. The lettuce, basil and cilantro have all bolted up to the sky and started to flower. Not to mention the havoc it wreaks on cucumbers, squash and zucchini plants.



Romaine Lettuce Bolting

The bolting of heat-sensitive plants can cause low yield for the season. Once a plant bolts, it will no longer produce new growth, fruit, or vegetables that season.

The reason plants bolt is because the environment and, in this case, the temperature signal the plant that its season is over and it's about to die. This causes the plant to shoot up and produce flowers and shed seeds for the next season. Those seeds then lay dormant until the temperature is right and the growing cycle begins again. It is a beautiful process and just prepares our gardens for the seasons to come.

There is no way to prevent heat-sensitive plants from bolting, but you can delay the process for a couple of weeks by taking these steps:

1. Harvest plants and herbs often. If the stalks are shooting up and beginning to flower at the top, snip the flowers off. Then, harvest the plant to stimulate new growth.
2. Provide some shade for the plants if possible during the hottest part of the day. Use a patio umbrella for container gardens.
3. Select varieties of plants that are "slow bolting" and "heat-tolerant."

Spring has been a challenging season this year all around for Central Florida vegetable growers. The amount of rain we received in one week of May was equivalent to the entire year up to that point. This caused powdery mildew to run rampant. Now, there's the heat. There are some spring vegetables that can tolerate the heat and continue to produce, such as heat-loving cherry tomatoes, eggplant and peppers. These plants could have continued to produce into June. Other heat-sensitive varieties will include squash, zucchini and cucumbers. If it is possible to provide some partial shade for these plants, that can help encourage production in these unseasonably hot months.

It is not possible to prevent bolting altogether. When the heat takes over the garden in Florida, many gardeners pack it up for the summer. That is a respectable decision for gardeners that would like a break. There are, however, some other options.

Once the heat-sensitive lettuce and herbs bolt, it will be time to move on to summer vegetable varieties. Many believe that growing a summer garden in Florida is just more work than it's worth. With traditional in-ground gardening and daily manual watering and weeding, that certainly can

be true. However, there are ways to beat the heat and grow vegetables throughout the summer.

To be successful in vegetable gardening throughout the summer, regular watering is key. Since most busy people do not have the time to water a garden every day, ensure you have an automatic watering system, such as drip irrigation or a soaker hose with a timer. This will ensure your garden is cared for during the busy and hot summer days. A raised or elevated garden can significantly minimize the amount of weeding required as well by using a sterile potting mix. This reduces the overall time needed to spend in the garden.

Be sure to choose vegetable varieties that grow well in the summer, such as calabaza squash, okra, jicama, and southern peas. Malabar and longevity spinach can also be grown as a substitute for greens in salads and smoothies throughout the summer. There are some hearty herbs such as African blue basil, parsley, thyme, mint and rosemary that grow well during these months. For a more comprehensive menu of summer vegetables, visit [mynonasgarden.com/seasonal-menu](http://mynonasgarden.com/seasonal-menu).

Amber Harmon is the owner of My Nona's Garden, an organization with a mission to bring health, promote growth and provide education to local communi-



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# Nona Heroes: Major Scott Meehan

ARTICLE BY NICOLE LABOSCO  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF SCOTT  
MEEHAN

In this recurring special feature, Nona-hood News recognizes and honors those everyday heroes who have served or are currently serving our country and making a difference in our community. Those who reside in the Lake Nona and surrounding area are our Nona Heroes.



During Pre-Phase; Ft. Bragg, NC in 1980

Born in 1958 in Baltimore, Md., this month's hero has been on quite the journey. Scott Meehan grew up living in seven states and three foreign countries and attended 13 different schools. He joined the U.S. Army Special Forces in 1980 after a hitch-hiking tour through Colombia, Peru and Ecuador.

"After speaking with recruiters from all branches, I chose the Army because I had just finished the book by Robin Moore, *Green Beret*, and that is what I signed up to do," stated Meehan. "So, at age 21, I joined the Armed Forces. ... I needed something compelling to make a man out of me."

Meehan served for a total of more than 22 years, seven years enlisted and 15 years commissioned. He explained how the Army did not give him credit for the ROTC break he took. "I met my wife in the Amazon jungles of Ecuador, and I got married after being in the Army for just over one year. Seven years after joining the Army, I, along with my wife and two children, got out and attended college at Southeastern University and ROTC at Florida Southern, both in Lakeland."

After three years, Meehan returned to the Army as a commissioned officer in military intelligence. His return was just in time for Desert Storm deployment in 1991. "There, I was part of a psychological warfare team attached to the First Marine Expeditionary Force, where I gathered top-secret intelligence from front-line enemy defectors

who reported that the Iraqi soldiers were all ready to surrender," described Meehan. "Eleven years after returning home from the Gulf War, I was promoted to Major and deployed to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in 2003. After one year at LSA Anaconda in Balad, I received the Bronze Star for several actions on the battlefield, which included information gathering that led to Saddam Hussein's capture. I returned for a second tour in 2005 to Baghdad's Green Zone before retiring in 2005."

Saddam's capture was a huge moment for the U.S., so I asked Meehan to elaborate. He spent two months building a trusting relationship with a large Iraqi vendor base as a contingency contracting officer when, on Dec. 3, 2003, one of the vendors approached him with information. "He claimed of having two cousins in Baghdad (they used 'cousins' often) that had important information about Saddam's people," Meehan described. "...Turns out they were aware of a safe house in Baghdad where Saddam's people were staying."

Meehan continued to describe how, 10 days later, Special Forces specialized in hunting down HVTs (high-value targets), and 4th Infantry soldiers swept through a farm area near the banks of the Tigris River. One of the soldiers spotted an old, worn-out rug that was covered in dirt and out of place. A search was ordered.

"Suddenly, uplifted hands appeared, one of them holding a pistol. Kicking the weapon away from the slowly appearing hand, they quickly seized the man beginning to crawl out of the hole and jerked him out. The soldiers stared in disbelief! What they saw was a beleaguered old man with a scraggly gray and white beard. 'I am Saddam Hussein; I am the president of Iraq! I want to negotiate,' the man said in English," Meehan recalled. "Days after Saddam's capture, I learned from my sources in Balad that it was one of Saddam's close ties, his truck driver, I believe, [who] was the one who told the American forces where he was hiding. This informant was just captured in a Baghdad safe house. The official word was that the raid conducted by the Americans came after receiving information from 'local sources' shared with the Americans in Balad! Basically, the information given to me about the safe house led to the raid that captured the informant who told American Forces where Saddam was hiding."

Having served all over, the locations where he was based include:

- Fort Leonard Wood, MO/Fort Sam Houston, TX/Fort Benning, GA/Fort McClellan, AL, and Fort Bragg, NC (1980-1984)
- Berlin, Germany (1984-1987)
- Lakeland, FL (ROTC; 1988-1989)
- Fort Huachuca, AZ/Fort Bragg, NC/Saudi Arabia (Desert Storm deployment; 1990-1994)
- Fort Polk, LA (1995-1996)
- Fort Bliss, TX (1996-1998)
- Orlando, FL/Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (1999-2003)
- Balad, Iraq/Baghdad, Iraq (2003-2005)

During Meehan's time spent serving our country, he made a progression through the ranks. "I started at the bottom as a Private. I made Corporal while in the Special



Flying over the plains of Iraq



ARCOM

Forces in 1981. In 1983, I was promoted to Sergeant before getting out the first time. I came back in as a Second Lieutenant in 1990. By 1992, I was promoted to First Lieutenant and then a Captain in 1994. Finally, in 2002, I was promoted to Major, which is the rank I retired with in 2005."

Besides aiding in the capture of Hussein, some of his best memories from serving included airborne school. "During our first full week of training, we learned to exit from a door position by jumping out of a 34-foot tower while being hooked up to a bungee cord. The cord slid down a long wire that extended to the far end of the field, where other soldiers waited to catch those who had just jumped," Meehan described. "Two weeks after the finish of ground zero, and four years after I first began searching for direction in my life, I was walking out the door of a C-141 jet aircraft...while in flight," continued Meehan's recount. "The red light above the door turned green. 'Go,' said the jumpmaster. The soldier in front of me began moving, and I found myself following like a robot, inching closer and closer to the open door. My mind was in the fast lane thinking of all the things I had trained to do in the past three weeks, leading up to this very moment. Then, in seconds, before I knew it, the soldier in front of me vanished. It happened so fast. I looked into the eyes of the jumpmaster, less than a second, and handed him my static line, not wanting anything bad to happen. Then, I put my head down, my hands over my reserve and began walking 45 degrees toward the open door of the jet aircraft. 'Whoosh! I'm a Nolan Ryan fastball' was my first thought. I immediately began my count, 'One thousand, two thousand, three ugh...' a tremendous jerk yanked me higher into the sky. I yelled like a spectator at a sporting event!"

Meehan was based in Berlin, Germany, while the Berlin Wall was still erect. He spoke about his journeys of crossing from West Berlin to East Berlin and how when the wall fell, "I never thought I would see this day come."

Meehan has lived in the Lake Nona area



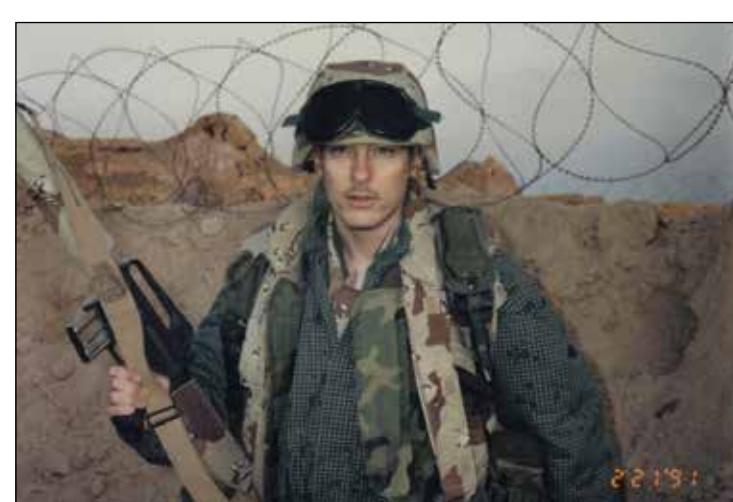
Berlin; 1984



Class A pose at Berlin Wall

since 1998 and is currently the Business Department Lead at City College. He oversees the business program and teaches computer and business classes. Reflecting on his previous experiences, Meehan mentions that he's ready for a change.

"After traveling and living all around the world, I am exhausted and am ready to stay home for the rest of my days... to play with my four (soon-to-be five) grandchildren."



Frontlines; 1991

If you would like to nominate someone for our next Nona Heroes feature, please send an email to [nicole@nonahoodnews.com](mailto:nicole@nonahoodnews.com) or complete the form here: <http://nonahood.to/nonaheroes>.



# MCO Adds 15 New Nonstop Travel Destinations In Addition To Recent Expansion

BY VANESSA POULSON  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOAA

"The Orlando Experience" encompasses everything from the mission of the Orlando International Airport (MCO), the design concept, its customer service, and, of course, a vision for the future of one of the busiest airports in the United States. This "Orlando Experience" is present in many aspects of the Orlando International Airport, from a complete makeover of many of the interior aspects of the airport, the expansion of the APM, and the 2,400-space parking garage "C," all arriving just as passenger traffic surpasses the 44 million mark in 2017.

Since the beginning of 2018, Orlando International Airport has added 15 new nonstop destinations, bringing the total offered at MCO to 139 – more than Tampa and Jacksonville combined. This brings the total to 57 destinations in 26 countries, 19 of which have been added in the past three years. Orlando remains the most-visited destination in the United States.

The recent expansion for MCO has included adding a variety of new nonstop travel destinations to their already impressive list of routes. International nonstop locations added so far this year include Amsterdam, Zurich, Belfast and Monterey, Mexico.

The full list of nonstop international destinations can be found below.

1. Bahamas
2. Brazil
3. Canada (Alberta, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec)
4. Chile
5. Colombia
6. Costa Rica
7. Cuba
8. Denmark
9. Dominican Republic
10. England
11. France
12. Germany
13. Haiti
14. Iceland
15. Ireland
16. Jamaica
17. Mexico
18. Netherlands
19. Northern Ireland
20. Norway
21. Panama
22. Peru
23. Scotland
24. Switzerland
25. Trinidad and Tobago
26. United Arab Emirates

MCO has evolved from its humble origins as McCoy Air Force Base to the 11th busiest airport and fourth largest by land mass in the U.S. MCO also ranks as the busiest airport in Florida with more than 45 million passengers annually. MCO had a record-breaking first quarter with overall passenger traffic going up 7.76 percent, totalling 12,041,616 passengers.

Lake Nona has also played a critical part in MCO's ability to expand in recent years. When airlines are selecting an airport to bring routes to, discussions are held not only in regards to the airport's capacity to



handle the amount of foot traffic but also the resources and selling points located around the airport. Lake Nona, Medical City, and the USTA are some of the biggest selling points to airlines when it comes to pitching MCO to airlines to host new routes. Along with Disney and some of the other major Orlando attractions' recent growth, balanced with key business factors, more airlines are seeing the appeal and potential for MCO.

"We mention and talk about what's happening in Lake Nona" said Victoria Jaramillo, senior director of marketing and air service development at the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority. "One of the reasons Lufthansa came in 2007 was because they were looking for the next medical destination. They announced originally just four flights a week, but by the time they launched in October, it had already increased to five because of the demand."

Now, Lufthansa has a daily flight from Frankfurt, Germany to Orlando, and it maintains a load factor – or the number of seats occupied for a flight – in the 90s, meaning the flights are, or almost are, completely booked.

Other airlines are recognizing the potential in Orlando to become a bigger hub for domestic and international travel, including legacy carrier Delta introducing a flight from Orlando to Amsterdam, Netherlands, seven days a week, Orlando to Atlanta, GA., on JetBlue seven days a week, Orlando to Richmond, VA., seven days a week on Spirit, and Virgin Atlantic to Belfast, Northern Ireland, twice a week. Each of these planes have load factors of up to 88 percent.

With the recent announcement of KPMG's selection of Lake Nona for its \$400 million learning, development and innovation facility, Southwest has responded to the new interest in the Orlando area provided by

KPMG by adding a new route from Orlando to San Jose. Other airlines are also considering making this adjustment in response to KPMG.

"[Lake Nona] has so many different levels," said Carolyn M. Fennell, the senior director of public affairs and community

into Miami. Travel time from Orlando to Miami on Brightline is supposed to take just about three hours. When Brightline arrives at MCO, it will be the only airport in the United States to have an on-airport hub for intercity rail.

With Orlando's continued evolution from



relations at the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority. "Education to health research and services, [Lake Nona] makes up a large traveling population as well. It builds the case for the airlines."

MCO continues to stand out against other airports across the United States, especially with the new South Terminal as well as the addition of the Orlando International Airport Intermodal Terminal. This terminal will also house the Brightline Train that will run from Orlando through West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale

just a destination to be traveled to into one of the largest markets for world travelers, this expansion is set to continue to open domestic and international doors for all of those living in the area and across the state of Florida.

"The local market is so very critical as well," said Jaramillo. "There are people that live here and also want to travel."



# ReThink Life: A Conversation About Life, Leadership and Relationships

## Becoming a Person Of Focus

BY RODNEY GAGE, LEAD PASTOR



Pastor Rodney Gage

Over 22 years ago, Matthew Emmons is an American rifle shooter. In the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece, Matthew was on his way to winning his second gold medal. In fact, he was so far ahead of the competition that all he had to do

was hit the target anywhere he wanted and he still would have won his second gold medal. As Matthew took aim, like he always did, he aimed high at 12 o'clock and slowly lowered the barrel of his gun down until he took dead aim at the bullseye. As he gently pulled the trigger, Matthew's shot hit the bullseye. The crowd cheered when suddenly Matthew realized a major problem. He aimed at the wrong target! He instantly moved from first place to 8th place, losing his chance for a second gold medal. All of this happened because he was focused on the wrong target.

Have you ever confused activity with accomplishment? I know I have! Dr. Howard Hendricks says, "The secret to concentration is elimination." At some point, we all have to focus on less so we can accomplish more. As the Chinese proverb teaches, *If*

*you chase two rabbits, both will escape.* A divided focus always works against us! It causes us to major on the minors and minor on the majors.

### How to Become a Person of Focus

#### 1. Work at Your Priorities.

Make sure your commitments reflect your priorities. Author Freya Stark once said, "There can be no happiness if the things we believe in are different from the things we do." It is important that we know what is most important to us *prior* to committing to something new. This allows us to say "no" to the good so we can say "yes" to the best. This is why having a set of core values is so important. Our values should drive our decisions.

#### 2. Focus on Your Strengths.

Author John Maxwell says to focus 70% of your time on your strengths. Do what you do best. Run your race. We all must identify those things that only we can do. Since most of us are masters at multitasking, we convince ourselves that we can do everything if we're given enough time. However, time is our most precious commodity. If we spend unnecessary time doing things outside of what we do best, then we're not running our race and operating in our sweet spot. The end result is fatigue and frustration.

For me personally, I am a visionary, speaker and content creator. I have learned the hard way that when I get bogged down with administrative details and tasks, I get very irritable, frustrated and fatigued. It sucks the life out of me because that is not what I do best. Restructuring how we spend our time and what we make commitments to allows us to create margin in our lives.

Focusing on your strengths and doing what you do best gives you time to focus on new things. If we spend 70% of our time using our strengths, we can put 25% of our time learning new things. It's been said that if you keep doing the same things you've always done, you'll keep getting the same results you've always gotten. As

we focus our lives, it allows us to grow by learning new things to enhance our areas of strength.

What about the last 5%? Use the remaining 5% to improve your weaknesses. If you don't think you have any weaknesses, just ask someone and they'll be happy to point out a few!

#### 3. Create An Edge.

I heard someone say that the difference between where you are and where you want to be is what you know. What new knowledge or skill can you acquire that will set you apart from others? Here is a great question to ask yourself any time you need to focus or refocus your life: "What three measurable priorities could I accomplish in the next 90 days to make a 50% difference in the results I see by the end of the year?" This question will help you cut through the fog and get clarity on where you should focus your time and energy. This allows you to work smarter rather

than harder. What would it take for you to go to the next level in your area of strength and influence? Spend time and money on improving yourself. When you get better, everyone around you gets better!

Rodney Gage is an author, speaker and the founding pastor of ReThink Life Church. His passion is to help people live life on purpose. To learn more, check out [rethinklife.com](http://rethinklife.com).



Matthew Emmons, 2004 Olympics

## Mama's Turn: Time Out

BY SHARON FUENTES

I used to wish time away. You know, wish for the days my kids would sleep through the night, be out of diapers, old enough to drive themselves to school. But as my oldest son gets ready to start his senior year of high school, all of a sudden I desperately wish that time would slow down...or better yet, stop completely. The problem is that wishing is not halting the inevitable hands of time – the same hands that patted my boy's back until he fell asleep, taught him to go potty, helped him navigate the streets of our town.

I have been spending my entire summer telling myself daily, "Next year at this time, he'll be [this many] days away from the dreaded college drop off goodbye." This is usually followed with a hefty swig of uneasiness...and wine, lots and lots of wine! Then one day, while trying to locate old childhood photos of my boy and pooh-pooping the younger me who didn't keep all these scrapbooks up to date, I had an epiphany: "You can't stop time, and you can't get any of these moments back once they've passed. All you can really do is accept that this is part of life; it is what being a parent is all about."

Acceptance is a life-changing behavior to master, and I say this as someone who has yet to master it. When traffic comes to a standstill on I-4, I'm the person smashing her head against the steering wheel and crying out, "You gotta be kidding me!" But,

when we accept, we can see things, people and situations for what they are, how they are, and who they are! Then and only then can we love them purely and eventually let them go.

I'm guilty of this resistance to accept, perhaps more than anyone I know. The list of things I tell myself I can't accept is massive, ranging from the improper hanging of the toilet paper roll (for goodness sake, people, OVER not UNDER) to the very existence of flying cockroaches (yuck!). Every item on the list of things I can't seem to accept is another trigger of frustration. This has had a profound impact on my health, happiness and even my marriage. Who wants to be married to a constant complainer forever grumbling that her feet kind of hurt? For that matter, who wants to be that lady, or have her as their mother?

My goal is to accept the fact that, like it or not, my kids are growing up. Sure, I will meticulously detail all the "LASTS" of my son's senior year on social media with exclamation marks, happy face emojis and "LOLs" to balance out the conflicting emotions brewing inside me. Yes, my heart will ache a bit (or even more than a bit), but I will keep reminding myself how exciting and wonderful all these "lasts" are. My hope is that by accepting that these are the



"LASTS," I will be able to appreciate all the extraordinary "FIRSTS" that are coming our way.



Sharon Fuentes is an award-winning freelance writer, special needs parenting advisor and the author of the book, *The Don't Freak Out Guide to Parenting Kids with Asperger's*. You can reach her at [sharon@sharonfuentes.com](mailto:sharon@sharonfuentes.com).

# Travel: Lake Como

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY  
DEBORAH BULLEN

Lake Como is surrounded by villages, each with its own unique charm. The best way to visit them is by boat, so I'll begin there.

## Menaggio

Menaggio was home base for us during this trip. We rented a spacious apartment tucked into the side of a mountain that was both family-friendly and sleekly modern, with sweeping views of the lake and surrounding area. Menaggio is known for its elegant lake promenade, the *Piazza Garibaldi*, complete with gelato shops, open-air restaurants, shops selling local products, a grand hotel, boat docks and fishing piers, and a very old-fashioned mini-golf course. And, although we loved going into Menaggio proper, we shared some of the best family time right at the property, swimming, having long dinners on our terrace and twilight bottles of wine surrounded by one of the most beautiful views the world has to offer.

One day, we hiked up a trail to *Refuggio Menaggio*, about 300 meters vertically, although only about a mile in length. Props to my daughter-in-law for doing so with an 11-month old baby and my son for carrying (at least half of the way up) his four-year-old on his backpack. It was both challenging and rewarding as we got some great photos along with a hearty lunch.

## Verenna

We took the ferry over to Verenna on our first full day in Lake Como. If you go, be sure to make a reservation at *Al Prato Ristorante Enoteca* (and order the squid ink pasta with frutta del lago – amazing!) This village is probably the most scenic. Around every corner is a delightful view of the lake, vine-covered archways, cobblestone pathways, charming shops and outdoor restaurants, and steep, narrow, cobbled alleys waiting to be explored.

## Bellagio

Bellagio is slightly larger than either of the other villages with a lot more shopping, so allow yourself a bit more time. We took the ferry over again, explored, shopped a little (expect to pay tourist prices, but the silk scarves and ties that are the specialty are reasonably priced in many of the shops), and had another incredible lunch at *Cava Turacciolo*. This restaurant in a tiny wine cave built into the side of the mountain is well worth making an advanced reservation. Again, kudos to my daughter-in-law, Emily, and son, Joey, for researching all the best places. Food, wine, service and atmosphere were all superb.

Since we were traveling with young children, we opted to forgo visiting the famous villas of the region. It would be a very unusual four-year-old who enjoyed fine paintings, antique furnishings and history. Instead, we rented a boat and viewed *Villa Balbianello* (where parts of *Casino Royale* and *Star Wars* were filmed), *Villa Carlotta*, Richard Branson's Villa and many more by water on what turned out to be the most gorgeous weather of the week. The day before was rainy. We went to Lugano in Switzerland (just a short hour drive from Menaggio) for the day.

Then, suddenly it was our last day. It would be hard to imagine a better last day of vacation. We spent the morning swimming before getting ready to have lunch at a local agriturismo, *Ca' Del Lago*, just 20 minutes away from Menaggio.

Agritourismos are all over Italy and are known as being reasonably-priced places to stay, with organic, local cuisine and bucolic settings where children can run and play among olive groves (or lemon trees or another variety). *Ca' Del Lago* also had goats and a playground area, so we could relax while the kids played. We came back and had afternoon naps to sleep off the wine with lunch, then went back down to the main piazza for a farewell Aperol Spritz (one of the most popular aperitifs in Italy), a light dinner, a few sunset family pictures and a final gelato.



Varrena



Varenna, Lake Como



The view from our terrace of Menaggio, Lake Como, Alps



Near the Ferry in Bellagio



Lunch at Ca' Del Lago



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# SPORTS & FITNESS

## Camp Gladiator Trainer Talk: Let's Get Motivated!

ARTICLE AND PHOTO BY  
VERNICE SALVERON-GASPER



Vernice Salveron-Gasper

Lack of motivation is one of the biggest killers of our personal health and fitness goals. We all experience phases where lack of motivation or obstacles in our lives override our mission to achieve a healthier life and well-being. This is why it is so important to have some tools, tips and reminders of how we can kick start our motivation, especially when the going gets tough. These are my top tips.

### 1. Find Your WHY.

Identifying the reasons WHY we want to achieve certain health and fitness goals is important to maintaining motivation. Whether it be to feel more confident, to be more functional or to be able to run a 5K, we all have our unique reasons. It is important to find what resonates with us and to continue to remind ourselves of WHY we are doing what we are doing each day, especially when the going gets tough.

### 2. Start Small.

Slow Progress Is Better Than No Progress. Often, people lose motivation because they do not set realistic expectations and goals. This causes them to unintentionally set themselves up to fail. For example, if someone who has never worked out before sets a goal to work out every day, this may be a recipe for disaster. The goal may be set with the right intentions, however it may not be sustainable or even physically achievable. A more realistic goal may be to work out two to three times a week and increase days once this is achieved. Nobody likes to fail, so set yourself up for success!

### 3. Be Consistent.

Find a routine that works for you and stick to it! Motivation is needed until consistency leads to habit. After you have developed a healthy fitness and diet regimen that works for you, it should become part of your everyday life. I always use the analogy of cleaning the house when it comes to exercise. It's not always something that we WANT to do, but it's something we HAVE to do. If we neglect cleaning the house for too long, the mess will slowly get larger and eventually impact the way we live. This is the same with our health. If we do not make a consistent effort to improve our health, then it is inevitable that injury, ailment and disease will manifest.

### 4. Reward Yourself.

Staying motivated and aligned with your health and fitness goals is hard at times, especially if you sacrifice staying in your comfort zone. For example, missing out on sleeping in because you choose to work out in the morning. In the real world, positive behavior is typically positively reinforced, right? So, every time you work out, place a dollar in a jar and after a month or two buy yourself something, guilt-free!! You've earned it!

### 5. Find Things You Enjoy.

If you don't like doing something, then you are not likely going to continue doing it! If you love to run, then run. If you love to walk, then walk. If you don't know what you like, then try as many different things as you can until you find something you enjoy. One of the best things about Camp Gladiator is that it is fun and interactive! Just recently, one of my campers advised me that "whilst the workout is challenging, you forget you are working out because of the type of exercises and the community." Find something that you enjoy!

### 6. Grab a Buddy.

At Camp Gladiator, we have a saying: "We are better together." This is so true when it comes to health and fitness because of the simple fact that it's easier to quit on ourselves than it is to quit on someone who is counting on you. So, grab a friend, set a day and time that you will both work out, and don't let them down. At Camp Gladiator, we have a whole community of accountability buddies not only in Lake Nona, but all over the nation. Your presence is counted, and your absence is noticed!



Please contact me for a free ONE MONTH of UNLIMITED WORKOUTS to get you motivated this summer!

### LOCATION & TIMES

Lake Nona Family Dentistry – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 5:15 a.m.

Spring of Life United Methodist Church – Tuesday, Thursday 5:45 p.m.

Moss Park Elementary School – Monday, Wednesday 6:30 p.m.

### CONTACT DETAILS:

Vernice Salveron CPT

Partner Trainer

C: (321) 947-9948

W: [campGladiator.com](http://campGladiator.com)

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# Nona Cycle: Heroes Among Us

BY DEBRA LOWE



Tampa to Toronto by Nick Hall

the everyday people who cross our paths with the seemingly sole purpose of inspiring and connecting us to each other.

Through my work with the Rotary Foundation, I have been privileged to meet Minda Dentler. As an infant in India, Dentler contracted polio, resulting in the paralysis of her legs and her being left in the care of an orphanage. As a toddler, she was adopted by an American family from Spokane, Wash., and underwent a series of surgeries on her hips, legs and back, which enabled her to walk with leg braces and crutches. This in itself would be an inspiring story, however, as a young adult, Dentler discovered the sport of handcycling. In 2013, she became the first female wheelchair athlete to complete the Ironman World Championship in Kona, Hawaii, completing all three disciplines of this legendary, grueling triathlon with only her arms. It took two attempts before she succeeded, and her story is truly one of what determination and perseverance can enable a person to achieve. Dentler is one of the most gracious and humble people I have ever met and has encouraged me to continue to train and believe in my abilities as I pursue my cycling goals, something I find amazing given how they compare with her achievements. She continues to compete and serve as an inspirational speaker, and she also is now the mother of a young daughter.

Recently, I was on vacation in North Carolina and took a drive on the Blue Ridge Parkway, where the elevation at the Cradle of Forestry overlook I stopped at is 4,710 feet. Admiring the view was a lone, past-middle-aged woman on a road bike. I felt a mix of awe and curiosity – how far had she ridden and from where? To my surprise, the first thing she told me was that she was 14 weeks post-surgery from a full hip replacement. She then shared that her ride that day would take her more than 50 miles, half of which would involve serious climbing at a level I could only dream of cycling. She couldn't give credit to her bike as it was the same make/model I rode in my last Century Ride – a spectacular bike with carbon frame, internal shocks and electronic shifting. In reality, it was her determination alone that got her where she was and where she was going. This chance encounter with this cheerful woman has been a source of encouragement as

I struggle to get back in the saddle after work derailed my riding for the past two months.

As I write this, my biggest hero to date is a man who is slight of build with an unflappable sense of optimism. Nick Hall is currently riding his bike, solo and unsupported from Tampa to Toronto, Canada – a distance of more than 1,900 miles, which he intends to cover in under two weeks time, translating to 120 miles per day in the saddle – or 14 Century Rides and a bit more back to back for two weeks straight. He has endured rain, wind, a sprained ankle, vehicle traffic and more... why? To raise funds in support of Rotary's more than 20-year campaign to eradicate polio from the earth. He chose Toronto as his destination because it is where this year's annual Rotary International Convention kicked off from June 23-27. Hall's Pedal Power to End Polio fundraiser is something he launched on his own for the sole reason of raising money to save the lives of children in distant countries whom he will never meet.

When I wait in the checkout line of the grocery store where the latest issues of gossip and pop-culture magazines are strategically placed, I can't help but think how wonderful it would be if the cover photos and stories inside were of people we actually know and love: our friends, family members, neighbors, perhaps even ourselves



Photo Credit: Paul Phillips / Competitive Image / @ CompimagePhoto

– the true heroes who inspire and motivate us to become a better version of ourselves. But, given the unlikelihood of that happening, I hope all of you will reach out to the people who are your true heroes and thank them for the difference they make in your lives, community and beyond.

*Do you like to cycle or want to learn how?  
Join the Nona Cycle group for weekly  
rides: [nonahood.to/nonacycle](http://nonahood.to/nonacycle)*



Nick in Coastal, Georgia



## Lake Nona Youth Sports

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#### Football & Cheer:

- **Football & Cheer** – Registration is now open!
  - July 28 – Parent Meeting
  - August 1 – First Day of Football and Cheerleading Practice
  - August 25 – First Football and Cheerleading Game
- **Boys and Girls Lacrosse** – Speed Lacrosse League for new and experienced players starting in August. Check out website for updates.
- **Summer Rowing Programs Open Now** – June, July  
Check out website for updates!

#### Opportunities to Help

**We are always looking for those wanting to make a difference in our community! Let's work together. Just send us an email.**

#### Fundraising and Marketing Opportunities:

- Sponsor a Child Program – Local families in financial need.
- **T-shirt sponsor** opportunities to market your business.
- **Volunteer** at games and practices.

**Congratulations, Brandon Marshall, our new JR Lions director of wrestling!**

Please email: [lakenonajrlions@lakenonayouthsports.org](mailto:lakenonajrlions@lakenonayouthsports.org) for more information.

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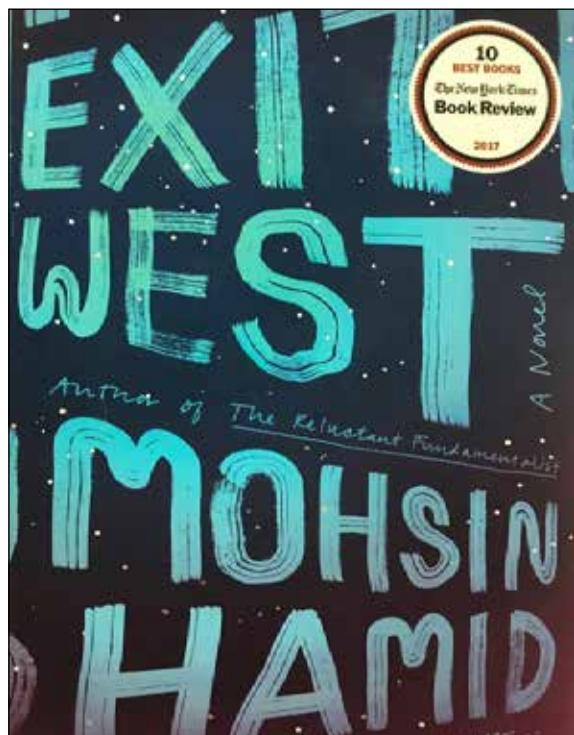
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## The Lake Nona Book Maven Review: *Exit West*

**Author:** Mohsin Hamid

**Genre:** Fiction

**Format:** Paperback; 231 pages



This book was a monthly selection in the TV and online PBS Book Club and was named one of the best books of 2017 by several newspapers and magazines. It has won other awards as well, so I wanted to read it before recommending it to my book group.

On the surface, it's the story of two young people who fall in love in an unnamed country collapsing under the Civil War.

Eventually, they leave together, becoming refugees and moving on to another country for safety and to start their lives over. The interesting thing that makes this story different is that the author, all too familiar with the fact that we are inundated almost daily with pictures and stories of refugees in camps, on rafts, and at borders, skips over the characters' actual movements from place to place. Instead, he focuses on what thoughts, emotions and situations encourage or force people to leave their homeland. And then, how they manage in an entirely new place.

Curiously, Mohsin Hamid moves his characters from place to place by employing a literary device sometimes called magical realism but here is really more fan-

tasy – he uses magical doors. There are secret doors the characters find through friends or tips. Once they enter, they exit in a different place (another country/continent), and after a few moments of recovery, they continue on their way in a new and hopefully a safe place to start a new life – no borders, no documentation and no idea where the next door might take them. Other minor characters mentioned but unrelated to the main story use the magical doors as well, so they seem almost common by the middle of the book. The idea of magical doors is not new, but they appear much more often in children's literature. So, it's particularly interesting to see them employed in a new way in an uber-contemporary novel of literary and political fiction.

Hamid's basic story is a good one following Saeed and Nadia on their physical wandering and their relationship journey. After they meet in a college classroom, they become friends. It's hard even for them to imagine romance in a city experiencing bombings and death almost daily. As their relationship evolves, it becomes clear that in times of chaos, what we need most is social connection. As external events escalate and curfews and cultural restrictions limit their time together, Saeed and Nadia realize they must leave...together.

As the story continues, they use the magical doors to move from place to place.

First, they find themselves on the Greek island of Mykonos, where they live like refugees. Next, they're in a commune-like setting in London, where civil society begins to fray as well. Eventually, they decide to take another door, ending up in the city of Marin in California. Throughout their travels, they contemplate and discuss refugee issues and how and why people move from place to place as societies and countries break down.

Hamid's writing is sometimes beautifully descriptive and occasionally emotionally insightful. He uses Nadia and Saeed's relationship to take us on a reflective journey of our own, allowing us to consider the real internal conflicts that arise when we're faced with such overwhelming external crises.

This book isn't for everyone. It's a novel set in a culturally- and politically-charged environment. But kudos to Hamid for being able to do that so well – to put such a large global issue in a relatable, personal story. I'm definitely recommending it to my book group!

## Short Stories: A Million Miles Away, Part One

BY BRITTANY BHULAI

I sat there in my one bedroom apartment watching the rain wash against my window. The pitter patter sound it made as it fell was quite relaxing. The water went from pouring, to moderate, then back to drizzling. I held a small black bag in my hand that I began to toss up and down. A friend had stopped by earlier and delivered it to me.

I can't remember the last time it rained so much. It had been awhile. My thoughts began to wander. I looked down at my hands as they were black and musky. They were dirty from a project I had been working on for the past few years.

Whistle, whistle, whistle...I heard the kettle of hot water going off in my kitchen. I immediately got up and slid the bag into my pocket. When I entered the kitchen, I saw my cat curled in a ball next to my empty mug. He sensed my presence and popped his head up to stare at me. After a few seconds, he elegantly unfolded his body and leaped onto the floor. He rubbed his tiny head on my sweats as I stood there admiring his soft purr.

I proceeded to pour my hot water into my mug. When I finished my tea, I grabbed a nearby notebook and pencil and made my way down into my basement. Break time was over.

It was a project that I had been working on for some time now, as I said before. No other human in the world knew what it was. I kept it a secret from society. It was the first of its kind, and no one was to be trusted with my invention. After all, it could end up in the wrong hands.

While I was away, I placed a blanket over it for safekeeping. Clutching the sheet, I slowly peeled it back. There stood a tall chunk of

metal. The inside was hollow, just enough space for a human to walk into. Above the opening in the center was a gun that shot a laser at its subject. An automatic sliding door was in the front of it, it too made of metal. The beast that stood in my presence could take you back by decades. Or, if you preferred, it could reveal elements beyond your imagination that were never seen before. It was a time machine.

Today was the day I had been anticipating for so long. My masterpiece would finally be complete. After endless hours of labor and sleepless nights, I was going to finish what I started. A grin came across my face as I pulled the tiny sack out of my pocket. Cautiously, I pulled the bag apart. I opened the palm of my hand and spilled several round red crystals into it.

All I needed to do to activate the machine was to pour the stones into the laser. The gems had such great energy that they could generate the beam used for blasting. So, I set up a ladder next to the machine, climbed to the gun and poured the crystals inside. A small light began to cook up inside of the hole where the laser would ideally shoot out.

I had never tested it before. I was very nervous. Who knew if the beam would kill me or actually send me to another time period? There was only one way to find out...my cat.

I quickly went upstairs to find the ball of fur curled up in the corner near the front door. With one quick snatch, I made my way back down to the basement.

I placed the cat in the opening of the machine where someone would stand. He wasn't reluctant at all. The cat laid there lazy as ever in a half-yawn.

There was a remote controller on a desk in the room. I walked over and picked it up. I made it about three months ago and had not touched it since. I trusted that it worked well with my contraption. There was a green switch on the side that would turn everything on. This might have been the sacrifice of my cat, but I was willing to risk that for my life's work.

Hesitation got the best of me for a few seconds, but I took a deep breath and flipped the switch with my thumb. Before my very eyes, a wave of light shot out from the roof of the metal frame. A blinding bright flash traveled across the room, causing me to turn away. When I looked back where I last saw my cat, a cloud of smoke had emerged in his place. He was gone.

Tune in next month for Part Two of the *A Million Miles Away* series.



# Meet the Press: Michael Perez

BY VANESSA POULSON

Michael Perez is new to the *Nonahood News* team, but his computer and technological skills are unmatched and a major asset for the team.

**Extrovert or Introvert?** It's hard to say. I'd like to say extrovert, but I can be both.

**Indoors or Outdoors?** Outdoors, for sure. I've grown up hiking/camping/hunting.

**Sun or Snow?** I love everything in its respective season!

**Dogs or Cats?** Dogs. Cats are strange creatures. However, I love large cats. Lions are my favorite animal.

**Coffee or Tea?** Neither, I'm more of a juice connoisseur.

**Adventurous or Laid Back?** Both again, I need a bit of both to have stability.

**Canon, Nikon or Sony?** If we're talking cameras, you got me beat. I'm a computer guy. Sony is a nice brand, though.

**Books or TV?** I would prefer a good book, but I can be funny about finding the right place to read. I am in desperate need of a nook to read in.

## What brought you to the Nonahood?

The challenge. I really needed to expand on my knowledge with many things. Learning to build websites and help with the paper has stretched me a good bit. I love it; I didn't have this sort of thing back in Louisiana.

## What's your favorite hobby?

It used to be running, but after my surgery



Photo by Brielle Perez

I needed to find something new. I'm still on the search for something, but I keep myself busy with plenty of random things to do.

## What's your biggest dream?

My biggest dream is to fully realize all of my talents and giftings. I've gotta shoot higher if I ever want to truly do anything amazing.

## NHN: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

In 10 years, I want to own some land and horses. As far as anything with my career, I'm doing my best to keep my options very open while also being focused and concentrated.

## What are you most excited about in Lake Nona?

A home.... We've just moved here this past week [at the time of this interview], and I'd love to be settled in with my future wife as soon as our apartment is built.

## Who's your biggest inspiration?

I've looked up to many talented and inspirational people, but recently I've learned to set my own standards and expand on my own aspirations. I'd like to say that my biggest inspiration is my future self.

## What's your favorite book?

I love *Hatchet*.

## What's something you've done that scared you the most or brought you out of your comfort zone?

I'm a little bit more on the wild side. I've been on survival trips, I've been shot at, and I've had countless near-death experiences. Every one of those experiences has showed me that I have to be willing to come out on top.

## Describe one of your most memorable experiences.

One of my favorite stories is of my dad. We were out fishing in Lake Pontchartrain near New Orleans. I hooked a fish and, out of nowhere, my fishing line and reel became entangled in the largest mess you've ever seen. I was defeated and heartbroken. I had been waiting for hours to hook a fish and finally the chance that I had had been lost. So, as I sat in frustration, my dad did the unthinkable. He grabbed my fishing line and began to pull in a beautiful speckled trout with his bare hands. It was insane. It gave me the perfect picture of a true father...one who steps in and does for you what you never thought possible.

Check back next month to meet another Nonahood Staff member!



Photo by Rhys Lynn



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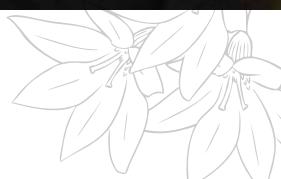


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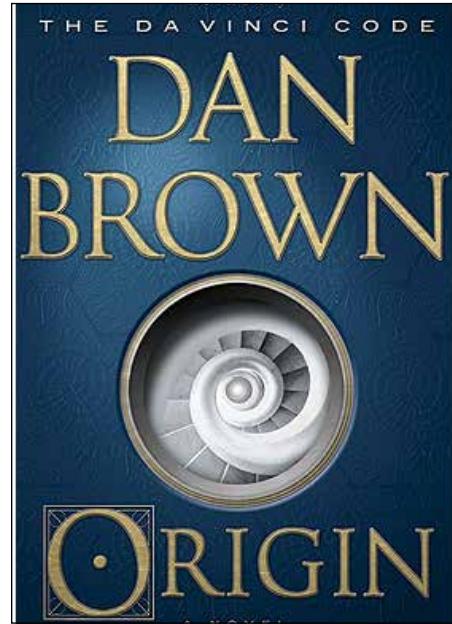
## Book Review: Origin

BY AARON VAIL

**Book:** Origin

**Author:** Dan Brown

**Publisher:** Doubleday Publishing, 2017, 461 pages



Author Dan Brown had written three books prior to his global best-seller in 2003, *The DaVinci Code*. I bought that book and instantly became a fan, not just of him but the genre which is a fiction-thriller using real-world places and history as the setting and background for the current story. I had only really read fantasy books, so when I discovered authors like Brown, I thought this technique was genius.

This is the fifth book featuring the protagonist Robert Langdon, who is a professor of symbolism at Harvard University. His eidetic memory comes in handy once again as he uses paintings, ancient poems and symbols and cryptic texts to solve the mystery and perhaps even save the world.

Brown has a pretty good pattern for his novels, and this one falls right in step. The story takes place over a small window of just a few hours that starts (albeit in chapter 21) with the assassination of a friend about to present an incredible revelation that will have devastating effects in the religious and scientific communities of the world during a live broadcast. Robert sets out on a path to finish his friend's presentation and avoid getting killed in the process.

However, knowing Brown's pattern as well as I do by now, I decided to make a list of things to expect in this adventure before I began reading. Here's what I found.

### Robert meets a woman:

The hero can't go alone; not without the assistance of a beautiful woman, anyway. Her name is Ambra Vidal, and not only is she the director of the Guggenheim Museum

Bilbao, but she's also the new fiancée to the prince of Spain, who's on the cusp of taking the throne from his ailing father; lucky for Robert because he'll need some bonus help only if a future queen has access to.

### Robert is chased by security or police:

Yep, gotta get the police and security involved. Not just any police, but The Guardia Real, the King's royal elite guards, have been dispatched to protect, then hunt, then protect Robert and Ambra.

### Robert is the only one who knows how to stop the bad guy:

Robert is the only one smart enough to unravel all the mysterious symbols and hidden messages in cryptic texts, and to understand the mind of the people he's tracking.

### Claustrophobia:

For added drama, Robert is claustrophobic, relating to an incident from his youth. So, it only makes sense to add some drama by being put in elevators and narrow stairwells, all while being chased by bad guys or police.

### Robert gets kidnapped:

I was surprised here. Normally, Robert is caught at some point and has to escape. That didn't really happen, but he is accused of kidnapping the future queen. Does that count?

### Robert joins forces with the police:

He ends up working with The Guardia Real agents after they've been told by the

royal estate that he didn't really kidnap the future queen. Good thing, because it's always a good idea to have people around to take a bullet for you so you can be the hero.

In all seriousness, I really enjoyed this book. Brown does a great job of creating a vivid world and keeping the story moving forward. There are a couple of times toward the end that I felt the story stalled so we can learn some background of a painting or character's past or historical information that, for some reason, wasn't explained earlier, but they didn't distract too much from the pacing.

This story was much more memorable than Brown's previous two books, *Inferno*, a story of a madman's quest to reduce the global population by a third, and *The Lost Key*, which I can only remember involved the Masons.

This book wasn't overly technical, which made for a smooth read, and the pacing is quick, which makes this a great page turner. The last 20 chapters really kept me engaged, and I found myself reading faster so I could finish before my Amazon Fire's battery died. I didn't want to stop for a couple of hours to recharge. It was a close call at nine percent, but I made it!

If you're a fan of Dan Brown, you won't be disappointed with *Origin*. And if you're looking for other authors in this genre, take a look at Steve Berry.

## At the Movies: *Ocean's 8*

A CONVERSATION WITH AARON  
& ELAINE VAIL



© Warner Bros. Pictures, Village Roadshow Pictures, Photo by Barry Wetcher

Based on the *Rat Pack* film from 1960, the *Ocean's* franchise began in 2001 with George Clooney, Matt Damon and Brad Pitt as the stars of the heist trilogy. On June 5 this year, exactly 11 years after the release of *Ocean's Thirteen*, the all-female cast spinoff directed by Gary Ross, *Ocean's 8*, hit the theaters. The powerhouse cast includes Sandra Bullock, Cate Blanchett, Anne Hathaway, Helena Bonham Carter, Rihanna, Mindy Kaling, Sarah Paulson and Awkwafina. Just WOW.

Bullock plays Debbie Ocean, the estranged sister of the late Danny Ocean from the original trilogy, who is freshly released from her five-year, eight-month, 12-day incarceration. Released on good behavior only after she spent her prison days quietly developing the grandest heist of her life, Miss Ocean wastes no time assembling and recruiting the perfect team of women con artists to pull off her complex plans.

Blanchett, playing the intimidatingly beautiful and authoritative Lou, is the first and key partner in Debbie's team. They clearly have a history and are very close friends. Together, they enlist an eccentric and bankrupt fashion designer (Rose Weil, played by Helena Bonham Carter), an eager-to-leave-home jewelry maker (Amita, played by Mindy Kaling), a scary-good computer hacker who goes by Nine

Ball (played by Rihanna), a predictably unpredictable street hustler and pickpocket (Constance, played by Awkwafina), and the thief-turned-stay-at-home-mom who reluctantly leaves her family for a "work trip" (Tammy, played by Sarah Paulson). If you're keeping count, you'll notice that is only seven women on this team of criminals, but you'll have to watch the movie to see who becomes Ocean's eighth.

This unlikely but perfectly matched team sets out to steal the \$150 million Cartier diamond necklace, named the Toussaint, which the squad cleverly orchestrate being worn by actress Daphne Kluger (played by Anne Hathaway) at the upcoming Met Gala. Their elaborate campaign is met with unexpected flaws (as expected), but the movie has plenty of comedy and enough unanticipated twists toward the end that keep the audience engaged.

**Elaine:** I LOVED IT! I've been a huge Sandra Bullock fan since before I met you, Aaron, so I've been excited about this movie since the moment I heard about it! I thought it was clever, beautiful, funny, and oh, so glamorous!!! The elegant and sexy dresses and outfits, the unbelievably crafted jewelry, the spot-on hair and makeup all had me drooling and grinning the whole time!

**Aaron:** I didn't know what to think. I assumed it was just Hollywood trying another reboot with an all-female cast. Like they tried with *Ghostbusters*. I was pleasantly surprised with the premise and flow of the movie. I didn't feel like it was a remake just for the sake of a remake. Sure, it's the same old heist movie plot, but it was so fun.

**E:** It definitely wasn't a reboot – it's a clever sequel taking place a decade later. I've always felt a little weird about enjoying a movie where I am rooting for the success of a criminal or villain. But, to take it in just for entertainment's sake, I truly enjoyed it.

**A:** Haha. I see your point, but I didn't really feel like it sent a wrong message. This

was a plan so audacious and elaborate that no one could actually pull it off. These aren't just eight women holding up gas stations.

**E:** Definitely. Well said – it really was audacious and elaborate! As far as performances go, I think the actress who surprised me the most was Anne Hathaway. I know you're not a fan of her, and I wouldn't go as far as saying I'm a fan, either, but I do enjoy almost every movie she's been in. THIS performance, however, was her very best. I was so impressed with her! She was a lot of fun to watch in this!

**A:** Could not agree more with that. Anne was in rare form. True, she's not my favorite actress, but it was so fun to see her play a snobby, yet very accessible, Hollywood megastar. You can tell she just had fun with the role. I thought they all did very well in their parts. Cate Blanchett with an American accent, Helena Bonham Carter, who is English but had an Irish accent here, Rihanna was Jamaican, I believe. Just a lot of fun.

**E:** I loved the chemistry between Bullock and Blanchett. Those two are undeniably two of the most talented women in Hollywood. I feel that, together, those two could accomplish anything, on or off screen.

**A:** Yes, they are amazing. They did a great job with what they had to do. The plot wasn't overly complex, which was nice because I wasn't in the mood to take notes and try to follow along too much. Things happen, and fun follows. It did seem a little too easy, but Sandra's character had



Image Source: Getty, Alessio Botticelli

five years of prison to work out the details in her mind. Some of the supporting cast could have had more value and screen time, but overall I had a lot of fun with this movie. 100% would watch again!



Cartier named the official jewelry partner for the *Ocean's 8* film

**E:** Yeah, not a movie you want to overthink on the details, kind of like watching *National Treasure*, just go and enjoy it. I already want to see it again and want to buy it on Blu-ray! I'll add it to my Sandra library. Can't wait for *Ocean's 9*!

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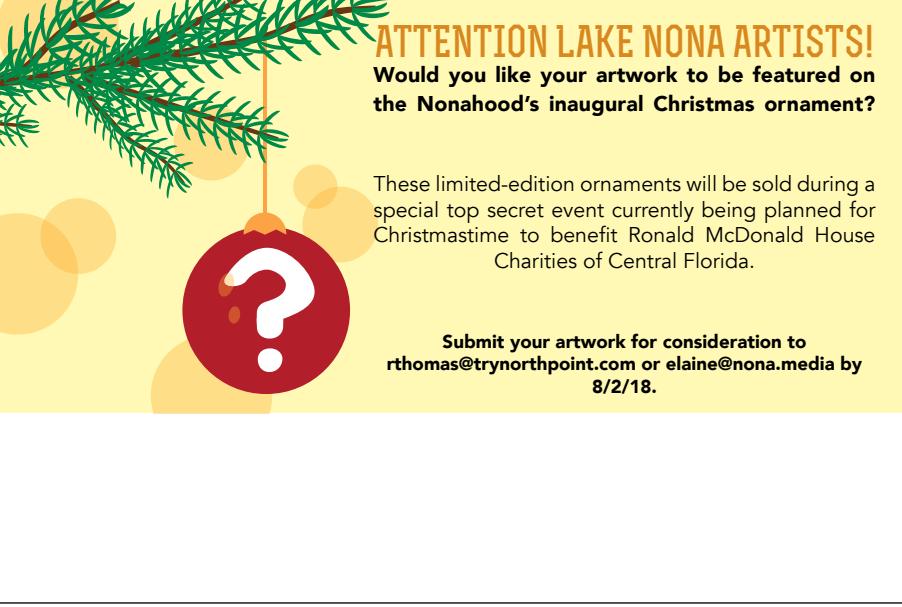
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Visit [www.nonahoodnews.com/events](http://www.nonahoodnews.com/events) for updated events and detailed information.

- 1 Lake Nona American Block Party (5-9 p.m.)
- 4 Fireworks at the Fountain, Lake Eola Park (4-10 p.m.)
- 5 EOCC Coffee Club East (8:30-9:30 a.m.)
- 7 Reymont St Community Garden 1 (9 a.m.)
- 11 LNRCC Breakfast Connections at Lakehouse (8-9:30 a.m.)
- 18 EOCC Chamber Luncheon: Hurricane Season 101 (11:30 a.m.-1:15 p.m.)
- 21 Homebuyer Workshop at Keller Williams (12-1:30 p.m.)
- 21 BTN Sleuths Mystery Dinner Summer Event! (6:30-10:30 p.m.)
- 21 Laureate Blvd Community Garden 2 (9 a.m.)
- 26 EOCC Coffee Club Nona (8:30-9:30 a.m.)
- 27 LNRCC Business Luncheon at GuideWell Innovation Theater with Mayor Buddy Dyer (11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.)
- 30 Halloween in July at Monday Market (4:30-8:30 p.m.)
- 30 Through Aug 4: 38th Annual National Veterans Wheelchair Games  
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