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**11**

**2025 LAKE NONA  
IMPACT FORUM**

**13**

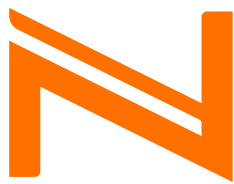
**WINNING FAMILY:  
BRIDGING THE GAP**

**14**

**LAKE NONA  
INTERIORS INSIDER:  
SECRETS TO DESIGNING A  
LUXURIOUS BATHROOM**

**15**

**BEST FRIENDS IN THE  
NONAHOOD:  
TWO CHAMPIONS –  
A VETERAN AND HIS DOG**



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# EDITOR'S NOTE: NEW BEGINNINGS

BY ANGELICA MEDINA, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**S**pring's arrival brings with it a sense of renewal – a fresh start for both nature and ourselves. It's the perfect time to let go of what no longer serves us and make space for growth, change and new opportunities.

This month in the Nonahood, you can expect events like a Daddy/Daughter Luau and Easter Bunny Brunch at Dockside. Art After Dark now every Friday and Saturday in the Town Center and the Lake Nona Farmers Market the first and third Wednesday of the month!

As we celebrate the power of fresh starts and the courage it takes to take that first step, we hope this issue sparks inspiration and reminds you that every new beginning, no matter how small, is a chance to create something extraordinary.

Here's to embracing the new, the unknown, and the exciting possibilities ahead!



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# 4 PROBLEM-SOLVING MISTAKES YOU'RE PROBABLY MAKING (AND HOW TO STOP!)

BY DR. LINDA TRAVELUTE, MAXIMIZED LEADERS COACHING & TRAINING



It was one of those mornings – coffee spilling, keys missing and, of course, running late for an important meeting. As frustration grew, I realized the biggest issue wasn't the messy morning, but how I was choosing to handle it.

Problems. We've all got them. And truthfully, how we handle them is what sets great leaders apart from the rest. I've learned – often the hard way – that problems don't magically get better or vanish on their own. In fact, the outcome entirely depends on what you choose to do (or don't do) when facing them.

Let's start with the "don'ts." Here are four common pitfalls I've seen leaders stumble into – and yes, myself included:

## Don't underestimate the problem.

Pretending it's "not that bad" won't shrink it. The longer you ignore its true size, the more overwhelming it'll become when reality hits.

I remember a team leader who consistently brushed off employee dissatisfaction. Eventually, morale dipped so low that productivity tanked. Addressing issues early could have prevented a total team breakdown.

## Don't overestimate the problem.

Panic helps no one. Magnifying the issue beyond its actual impact creates anxiety and clouds your judgment. Stay calm, objective and grounded.

Think of that time when your colleague spiraled into anxiety over an unexpectedly tight deadline. Their panic not only slowed progress – it spread to the entire team, making everyone less effective.

## Don't wait for the problem to go away.

It won't. Problems ignored today become crises tomorrow. Leaders act decisively, even when it's uncomfortable.

A friend of mine postponed dealing with minor financial irregularities in their business, hoping they'd resolve themselves. They didn't. Eventually, they faced a major audit that cost them both time and money.

## Don't make it worse.

Sounds obvious, but when stress spikes, rash decisions follow. Pause, breathe and think clearly before acting. Your reaction shouldn't amplify the issue.

Ever fired off an email in anger only to regret it immediately afterward? A heated moment can leave lasting damage to professional

relationships.

Now for the "Do This" section:

## Anticipate the problem.

This doesn't mean worrying – it means keeping your eyes wide open. If you need one, consider your clean-up plan and clean it up quickly!

Like when Netflix anticipated streaming would overtake DVDs, they proactively shifted their entire business model, staying ahead of the curve.

## Communicate the problem to those who need to be in the know.

Not the whole world. Not on social media. Otherwise, you sound like a victim, and no one enjoys hanging around a victim. Got that?

Take the airline industry as an example – effective airlines communicate delays and cancellations clearly to passengers, easing frustration and preventing unnecessary backlash.

## Size up your problem.

Get perspective. Ask yourself, "What's really going on here and how will it affect me or us?" Name the real issue; this takes honesty without the urge to find excuses. You game?

I recall a nonprofit director who noticed declining donations. Instead of panicking, they investigated and found it was simply a shift in demographics. Adjusting their outreach strategy quickly turned things around.

## Be grateful for the problem.

There's a lesson hidden somewhere within it. Be smart enough to find it and use it to your advantage.

Remember the story of Pixar? When their first computer-animated film faced endless technological hurdles, rather than seeing these as setbacks, they embraced each problem as an opportunity to innovate, ultimately changing animation forever.

Consider Johnson & Johnson's iconic response in 1982 when their Tylenol capsules were deliberately contaminated.

They swiftly pulled all Tylenol products nationwide, clearly communicated their actions, and prioritized public safety over profits. This bold, transparent handling not only resolved the immediate crisis but set new industry standards, ultimately restoring trust and strengthening their brand.

Your leadership is defined not by a lack of problems, but by your response when they show up. You've got this. For more on mastering your response under pressure, check out **Episode #12 of the Leader Fuel Podcast: Master Your Freakouts: The Secret Leadership Skill Everyone's Missing.** It'll give you deeper insights and practical tips to keep your cool and lead effectively when problems arise.

**Tune in to the Leader Fuel Podcast with Dr. Linda Travelute for the fuel you need to keep going and growing as a leader! Dr. Linda, a certified John Maxwell coach and CEO of Maximized Leaders, blends psychology with real-world leadership strategies to help you thrive in every aspect of leadership. Want to take your leadership to the next level? Listen to Leader Fuel wherever you get your podcasts and get ready to lead with confidence!**



# SAVOR TOOTH TIGER: MOJITO MOCKTAIL

BY ALLYSON VAN LENTEN  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALLYSON VAN LENTEN



Have you noticed the soaring popularity of non-alcoholic beverages lately? It seems that every major brewing company makes a buzz-free beer. You can find at least one mocktail (mock cocktail) on any restaurant menu these days. Taking a break from alcohol or a complete lifestyle change can leave some with the desire for something more celebratory or satisfying than water or soda. As a pregnant lady in my third trimester, I have had cravings for such tempting beverages. Mojito mocktails are just the thing to quench my thirst.

Mojitos were invented in Cuba during a time when rum production was at its peak in the Caribbean. Rum was a clever way to use the byproduct of sugarcane production, molasses. Best of all, rum traveled well on ships and kept sailors and pirates content along their journeys. Lime was added not only for flavor but for preventing scurvy and dysentery for seafaring folk.

A traditional Cuban mojito contains white rum, sugar, lime, mint and soda water. There are many variations of this popular cocktail, including changing out white sugar for powdered sugar for a quicker mix or Demerara sugar for a deeper caramel flavor. Various styles of rum can be used or not at all like in this recipe, sometimes referred to as a "no-jito" or a "faux-jito." Swap out the rum for tequila, and you have a Mojito Blanco. Mojitos, whether spiked or virgin, are just fun to make! No simple syrup to prepare. Not even a shaker is used. This recipe can be made in a tall glass with a muddler and a long spoon. While some use a simple syrup, I love any excuse for a sugar cube. The grain in the sugar actually helps break down the oils in the mint.

Simply take a tall glass, drop in the sugar cubes, sprigs of mint, a squeeze of lime and, using a muddler, release the mint flavor and dissolve the sugar. Next, top off the drink with crushed ice and cold soda water. Stir with a long spoon to mix the dissolved sugar throughout the drink. Finish with a garnish of lime. Of course, if you're so inclined, you can absolutely add rum here, but, take my word, this drink is so special that you won't miss it. My 5-year old likes to help make these perhaps because there is a lot of smashing and sugar involved. As someone who has been testing various non-alcoholic beers of the market, I can share that my favorites include: Clausthaler, Corona with lime, and Blue Moon, in that order. I hope you'll share this mocktail with someone you love who deserves a refreshing treat.



## Mojito Mocktail (No-jito or Faux-jito) Serves 1

### Ingredients:

- The juice of 1 lime (freshly squeezed), plus more for garnish
- 4 sprigs of mint
- 2 sugar cubes, 2 teaspoons white cane sugar (or 1.5 ounces of simple syrup)
- Soda water
- Crushed ice

### Instructions:

1. In a tall glass, add 2 sugar cubes or 2 teaspoons white cane sugar or 1.5 ounces simple syrup.
2. Roll the lime on the countertop before cutting in half to release more juice. Squeeze lime into the glass.
3. Add the mint to the glass and muddle everything together well until the sugar dissolves and the mint releases flavor but is not completely shredded. A wooden muddler works great, but if you don't have one, a spoon or fork will work, too.
4. Stir in a splash of soda water to help dissolve the sugar. Stir with a long spoon.
5. Top with crushed ice and even more soda water filled to the top.
6. Garnish with a wheel or wedge of lime.



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# FINANCIAL FOCUS®: FIVE MOVES FOR YOUNG INVESTORS

BY JOEL FERGUSON



If you're just beginning your career, what are your financial priorities?

You might have student loans to deal with. And you may even be thinking about saving for a downpayment on a house. These are certainly significant issues, and yet, you shouldn't ignore your long-term goals, such as retirement – which is why you may want to get started as an investor.

And as you invest, consider these suggestions:

1. *Take advantage of your opportunities.* Even while addressing your other concerns, such as loan payments, you

may well have space in your life to invest – if you take advantage of the opportunities presented to you. For example, if you work for a business that offers a 401(k) or other retirement plan, try to put in as much as you can afford or at least enough to earn your employer's matching contribution, if one is offered. And you may find that contributing to a traditional 401(k) or similar plan is more affordable than you think as your contributions may be deductible, lowering your taxable income.

2. *Think long-term.* Some people make the mistake of seeking short-term gains by trying to "time" the market – that is, they try to "buy low and sell high." While this is a great strategy in theory, it's almost impossible to follow, as no one can really predict market highs and lows. The most successful investors follow a long-term strategy and don't jump in and out of the market.

3. *Know your risk tolerance.* Your investment choices should be based partially on your risk tolerance. Typically, the more investment risk you take on, the greater the potential reward, but it works the other way, too – riskier investments can result in greater losses, at least in the short term. You need to find a risk level with which you are comfortable. Also, your risk tolerance can change over time – when you get close to retirement, for instance, you might want to invest more conservatively than you did when you still had decades ahead of you in the working world.

4. *Diversify your investments.* The financial markets affect different investments in different ways, which means that, at any given time, some investments will perform better than others. But if you only owned one type of investment or asset class, your portfolio could suffer if a market downturn had a particularly strong effect on that investment or asset. By spreading your investment dollars among a range of investments, you'll have more opportunities for success, and you can help reduce the effects of market volatility on your holdings. Keep in mind, though, that diversification, by itself, can't guarantee profits or protect against all losses.

5. *Prepare for the unexpected.* You don't always know when you'll face a large expense, such as a medical bill or a major home repair. If you're not prepared, you could be forced to dip into your long-term investments, such as your 401(k), to pay for these costs. To help avoid this problem, you may want to take steps such as keeping a cushion of cash in your portfolio and building an emergency fund containing several months' worth of living expenses, with the money kept in a liquid account.

By putting these moves to work, you can help yourself make progress on an investment journey that could last a lifetime.

*This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.*

Edward Jones

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**QUEST ACCEPTS ENROLLMENT FOR NEW ORLANDO KIDS ACADEMY CAMPUS**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SCHENKEL SCHULTZ

## INNOVATIVE DOWNTOWN CAMPUS TO OPEN IN AUGUST

Quest, Inc. is preparing to open a new innovative learning and therapy center in the heart of Orlando. Quest Kids Academy is now accepting applications for the 2025-2026 academic year.

For more than 15 years, Quest Kids Academy has offered a supportive educational environment for children and teens with autism and other developmental disabilities. The school has operated in a shared interim location for the past five years and is now set to open a newly built campus, located

at 500 E. Colonial Drive, in late fall. The 16,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art building was designed by the renowned Schenkel Shultz architecture firm and has the capacity to serve roughly 65 students. The campus will also house a Quest Kids Therapy center, offering Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy to children with autism.

The school serves children, teens and young adults from ages 5-22 and uses the principles of ABA in two major focus areas:

- **Early Academics** with an emphasis on building foundational learning and classroom readiness skills.
- **Life/Employment Readiness** with an emphasis on developing social and vocational skills to transition into adulthood.

"With about one in six children being diagnosed with a developmental disability, the need for specialized learning environments has never been greater," said John R. Gill, president and CEO at Quest. "By fostering an inclusive, supportive setting, we are

equipping students with the tools they need to build confidence, gain independence and reach their full potential."

Financial assistance is available through the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Unique Abilities Program.

For more information about Quest Kids Academy, including how to apply and/or to invest in Quest, Inc.'s mission, visit [QuestKids.org](http://QuestKids.org).

*For over 60 years, Quest, Inc. has transformed the lives of thousands of adults and children with developmental disabilities through a range of services proven to increase capabilities and quality of life. From the humble beginnings of a single location serving eight individuals to currently over 20 locations, serving over 500 individuals each day in Orlando and Tampa, we continue to build communities where people with developmental disabilities achieve their goals.*

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# THE ARTIST: KELLEY MEYER

BY ANGELICA MEDINA  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF KELLEY MEYER AND  
MELISSA HANLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

**Nonahood News:** Tell us about you and your art.

**Kelley Meyer:** Beauty, an appreciation of aesthetics and art runs deep in my bones. It's always been a part of who I am. My name is Kelley Meyer and though I'm originally from Texas, I have lived in central Florida long enough to call it my home. The bright sunshine, the lime green grass when the sun hits it just right, and the deep purple clouds of the afternoon rainstorms have won my heart. I'm raising my family, two daughters and a son, with my handsome husband, and we are proud to call them Flo-grown.

**NHN: Recent artistic accomplishments?**

**KM:** Though most of my time is spent educating and raising my family, I have been honored to have some pieces chosen for permanent collections by Advent Health Orlando. I've also taught painting workshops and been featured in women's retreats both in Florida and in Texas. The highlight of my career so far, though, has been traveling to Hawaii to paint a mural just outside of Volcanoes National Park.

**NHN: Most challenging project?**

**KM:** My most challenging project so far has been an outdoor chimney in St. Pete. It was lovely, but the ground below the wall was gravel and the ladder didn't reach quite as high as the chimney reached, so the extra reaching coupled with the wobbly ladder made it a little nerve-inducing!

**NHN: Who or what inspires your art?**

**KM:** My life, the beauty and nature of Florida, birds and animals and color and contrast all inspire me. The way that every detail in creation is so purposeful and so profound and yet still so beautiful amazes me every time. Everything has a purpose and everything works together, and yet it is all so pleasing to the eye. I like to take the color contrasts I see in nature and try to bring in elements of surprise and pop to my work. I am also very



inspired by other painters and mural artists.

**NHN: Any passions besides painting?**

**KM:** I am passionate about giving my family a fun and adventurous childhood out of doors and off of devices. I want them to get dirty and be free from some of the plagues that their generation faces. I am passionate about following Jesus and bringing His Kingdom come. And I'm passionate about education and equipping the next generation with wisdom and knowledge.

**NHN: New projects in the works?**

**KM:** I'm currently working on a few projects in St. Cloud, which is where my family resides. I like to say we live in St. Nona, as we're right on the border of both!

**NHN: Describe your artistic style.**

**KM:** My style is a colorful, poppy, bold expression of nature, sometimes geometric, sometimes tropical.

**Where can people find you/your art?**

**KM:** People can find me on instagram @\_eternityshore

**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 \_nonahood.to/artist.**





## MANAGING STRESS AS A BUSINESS LEADER: WHY IT MATTERS AND HOW TO GET AHEAD OF IT

None of us is a stranger to stress, particularly when it comes to our work. The constant demands of decision-making, managing teams, meeting financial goals, and navigating unexpected challenges can easily take a toll on your mental and physical well-being. The reality is that stress is part of leadership. But unmanaged stress doesn't just impact you personally; it affects your business, your team, and your long-term success.

High stress levels can cloud your judgment, reduce productivity, and contribute to burnout; not only for you, but for the people around you who feed off your energy. When leaders are overwhelmed, it often

trickles down into company culture, morale, and even customer relationships.

The good news is stress doesn't have to run the show. Proactive stress management is a skill everyone can develop. It starts with recognizing the signs. These include irritability, poor sleep, decision fatigue, or lack of focus, and being intentional about how you respond.

**Here are a few practical strategies to help manage stress as a business leader:**

- **Prioritize and Delegate:** You don't have to do everything yourself. Focus on what only you can do and empower others

to take ownership of the rest.

- **Protect Your Time:** Block off time for deep work, strategy, and rest. Avoid back-to-back meetings when possible.
- **Stay Active & Rested:** Regular exercise, proper sleep, and short mental breaks throughout the day make a real difference.
- **Stay Connected:** Sometimes, the best solutions come from talking to others who understand your challenges.

As a Chamber, we're not just about ribbon cuttings and networking events. We are here to be a resource and partner in your business journey. Whether you need support navigating business

challenges, want to connect with other professionals facing similar pressures, or simply need to step away from the daily grind and re-energize, we're here to help.

Stress may be part of leadership, but you don't have to manage it alone. Lean on your community, build meaningful connections, and remember that the more you take care of yourself, the better leader you'll be.

*For information about how to join the chamber or to get the most out of your chamber membership, please reach out to the Lake Nona Regional Chamber of Commerce at administration @lakenonacc.org or call us at 407-796-2230. We would love to hear from you!*

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# PHOTO GALLERY

Representatives from AdventHealth show Osceola Magic Mascot Swish their booth at Nona Fest



L to R: Kristine Ford of AdventHealth and Rayna Sabra of Centennial Bank checking in vendors at Nona Fest



Incredible community leaders volunteer to help vendors load in at Nona Fest



Swish, Mascot for the Osceola Magic, shows Candy Cole his new love of tennis at Nona Fest hosted at the USTA National Campus



Orlando District 1 Commissioner Jim Gray with his family at Nona Fest hosted at the USTA National Campus



L to R: Wayne Alleyne of Nona Enviro Group, Jaye Silvagnoli of United Against Poverty, and Candy Cole at Nona Fest



First responders meet with members of the community at Orlando District 1 Commissioner Jim Gray's Spring Festival



L to R: Kristine Ford representing Nona Professional Ladies 2025 sponsor AdventHealth, discusses women's health programs with attendees



Dr. Tara Griffin of Sleep Solution Centers discusses the health challenges of sleep issues with Nona Professional Ladies luncheon attendees



L to R: Candy Cole, Dr. Tara Griffin, Joselyne Muszynski, and Goretti Garcia at Nona Professional Ladies

# NEMOURS CHILDREN'S HEALTH OPENS NEW PRIMARY CARE AND SPECIALTY CARE LOCATION IN LAKE NONA



BY NEMOURS CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Nemours Children's Health has announced the opening of a new, nearly 8,000-square-foot location in Lake Nona, increasing access to high-quality primary and specialty care services closer to home for members of the community.

Primary care will include newborn care, well-child and sick-child exams, immunizations and physicals, behavioral evaluations and more. Additionally, the new location will offer four specialty services, including adolescent medicine, developmental medicine, genetics and neonatology.

"The opening of the new Lake Nona site is the latest example of our commitment to increasing the availability of world-class health care for children and families in Central Florida," said Martha McGill, MBA, MHA, president of the Central Florida Region for Nemours Children's. "With more Nemours Children's Health primary and specialty care services within reach, we are able to elevate pediatric care in the community. Our children deserve the best, and Nemours is committed to providing the best!"

The new site was designed to provide children and families a comfortable, welcoming environment. Staffed by a team of skilled pediatric health care professionals dedicated to delivering high-quality patient and family-centered care, the new location will collaborate directly with nearby Nemours Children's Hospital, Florida to provide comprehensive, personalized care.

Join the team that is committed to keeping Lake Nona kids safe!

Orlando school crossing guards earn \$18.50 per hour  
Work 1 hour before school and 1 hour after school



Call ACMS 689-688-5932 or visit [acmssafety.com](http://acmssafety.com)

Nemours Children's new Lake Nona location will be open Monday, Tuesday and Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Wednesday and Thursday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. It is located at 6718 Lake Nona Blvd., Suites 270 and 280.



**About Nemours Children's Health**  
Nemours Children's Health is one of the nation's largest multistate pediatric health systems, which includes two free-standing children's hospitals and a network of more than 70 primary and specialty care practices. Nemours Children's seeks to transform the health of children by adopting a holistic health model that utilizes innovative, safe and high-quality care while also addressing children's needs well beyond medicine. In producing the highly acclaimed, award-winning pediatric medicine podcast *Well Beyond Medicine*, Nemours underscores that commitment by featuring the people, programs and partnerships addressing whole child health. Nemours Children's also powers the world's most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, [Nemours KidsHealth.org](http://NemoursKidsHealth.org).  
The Nemours Foundation, established through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy and prevention programs to the children, families and communities it serves. For more information, visit [Nemours.org](http://Nemours.org).

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# 2025 LAKE NONA IMPACT FORUM CELEBRATES MEDICAL COURAGE, GENTLE ACTIVISM

BY DENNIS DELEHANTY

What is it about Lake Nona that draws presidents and big-name celebrities so dependably to our town? Here are some clues. For a start, we denizens of the Nonahood look upon our town as a hub for health, wellness, and sports performance, now expanding to encompass art. Then, our community's biggest annual event – at least measured by national importance, if not local participation – is the Lake Nona Impact Forum, the 13th iteration of which took place in our suddenly not-so-humble neighborhood on February 26-28.

As you went about your business that week, you likely had no idea that former president George W. Bush and basketball legend Magic Johnson had descended upon the KPMG Lakehouse to address health issues with the 750+ invited guests attending this year's Forum. While Bush's daughter Barbara, Co-Founder and Chair of Global Health Corps, interviewed her relaxed father, who displayed unexpected wit, Magic Johnson wowed the crowd with an inspiring account of the challenges he has faced along his personal health journey.

Big names are not new to the Impact Forum. Speakers in recent years have included Bill Clinton (addressing the crowd the very day, three years ago, that Russia launched its attack on Ukraine), former UK prime minister David Cameron, philanthropist chef José Andrés, Jeff Bezos, Katie Couric, Chris Evert, Sanjay Gupta, John Grisham, Goldie Hawn, Martin Luther King III, Brooke Shields, Shaun White ... the list goes on and on. A friend recently asked me, "How do they get all those big names together in one room anyhow?" A question, we are guessing, that Tavistock Vice President Gloria Caulfield, the mastermind behind the Forum, might reveal to us someday.

In all honesty, little news had trickled out from the first twelve Forum conclaves. It was as if the Forum did not want to draw attention to itself, for reasons we can only speculate on. Was it because the Forum is invitation-only, where just a few locals are admitted? Or was it for security reasons, given the elevated status of the speakers invited? Or some other consideration? We don't know. But no worries, because we are happy that this "don't tell" approach shifted over the past year, as Tavistock created Facebook and LinkedIn accounts that provide timely updates about the Forum that anyone can access and follow. (Just look for Lake Nona Impact Forum on either of those two apps.)

As at previous Forums, the 50+ expert panels this year followed one another at a dizzying pace. Timings of the panels were strictly controlled, a remarkable achievement by the Tavistock team managing the event. The discussions showcased the unexcelled knowledge of an array of national leaders in health and wellness, who steadily stunned us with announcements of medical innovations of transcendental importance. You got the feeling you were hearing the news for the first time anywhere. Hollywood premieres of sorts, medical style.

Experts sharing the latest developments in medicine and wellness is, of course, the central focus of Forum deliberations. But your reporter was moved most by the stories of average folks – patients, mostly – who brought to the stage an intimate, and profoundly personal, feel often missing from the more cerebral panel discussions. A doctor can sit before you to explain a pioneering operation, but the impact of the procedure really hits home when the patient herself appears on stage. These are special moments. Let's explore three of these stories.

## The Brain Implant, Blackfeet Nutrition, and the Xenotransplant

Meet Nathan Copeland. In 2004, at age 18, a car accident left Nathan a C5 paraplegic, that is, paralyzed from the chest down. On stage,

moderator Sanjay Gupta asked, "What were those first ten years like?" The gentle, laconic Copeland responded, "Boring." Then, in 2014, against the objections of his worried mother, Nathan agreed to have four minuscule electrode arrays, each supplied with 100 pin-shaped electrodes, inserted into his brain, the work of a company called Blackrock Neurotech. The implants, which to an observer resemble large buttons sprouting from Nathan's scalp, would allow him to use a robotic arm to pick up small objects and gain sensation in his hands. Videos presented at the panel showed the effectiveness of the implants, as Nathan cycles through his moves, toying with cubes, containers, and rocks of odd shapes and sizes. In one video we watch President Obama perform a historic handshake, squeezing Nathan's robotic fingers. Signals flowing back to Nathan's brain make him feel, quite distinctly, Obama's grasp. Mr. President, meet Mr. Cyborg.

For lunch that day, I ordered a cooked-to-order pasta dish from KPMG's fine dining café. By chance, Nathan sat at a nearby table, his friendly gaze directed unmovingly at me. As I struggled with the slippery pasta, I felt caught in an awkward performance. Did my struggles remind Nathan of his own trials with his robotic arm? "You're a brave man," I sheepishly assured him as I strode back to the hall. The guy who proudly refers to himself as the world's first cyborg is just that: a genuine hero. So what's next for Blackrock Neurotech? According to CEO Marcus Gerhardt, that would be to make brain-computer interface (BCI) machines scalable and affordable, terms we heard often at this year's Forum.

Acclaimed National Geographic photographer David McLain then kicked off a deeply moving panel on health inequities. McLain, a native of Maine, has crisscrossed the country documenting cases of such injustice. His findings are troubling. Black women are much more likely to die in childbirth than white women; Hispanic women are inordinately susceptible to late-stage breast cancer; and African Americans die twice as often from diabetes than the general population. McLain raised the issue of amputations connected to diabetes, 85% of which, he says, are preventable. Blacks are three times as likely to suffer such amputations due to a dearth of awareness and compassion from the medical community. "We all deserve health equity," stresses McLain, whose photographs and videos vividly document a health crisis we otherwise prefer to ignore.

Amid enthusiastic applause, Danielle Antelope-Gervais joined David McClain on stage. Danielle, the Executive Director of the non-profit Fast Blackfeet – the Food Access and Sustainability Team – switched to her native tongue to introduce herself. (A real treat. Seldom do we hear Native American speech live.) Danielle opened our eyes to the plight of her Montana community which is now trying to reclaim a minimum of food security in the wake of government policies that swept away the tribe's traditional source of food, the bison. By the late 1800s, nearly all the remaining bison in this country had been slaughtered (though some survived by crossing the border into Canada). In replacement, the U.S. government set up distribution facilities that supplied the Blackfeet with rations such as beef, cheese, flour, and sugar. Foods high in fat, sodium, and sucrose. Over the ensuing decades, the Blackfeet developed staggering incidences of diabetes and other chronic diseases. Tribe members even forgot how to collect and cook their own traditional foods. But Danielle is changing that. A video produced by McLain shows Danielle in the fields of Montana gathering wild plants – the tribe's ancestral food sources – and teaching her neighbors how to coax nutrition from them. And the bison, so central to Blackfoot culture, have returned, in part repopulated by the cohort that had escaped to Canada. That meat is now available year-round at Fast Blackfeet's food pantry, where locals now also have access to cooking classes and recipe sharing. Relearning the food sources of their past now teaches the tribe how to safeguard food security for their future. An astounding development. "Come visit us in Montana!" a smiling Danielle hollered to the audience as she closed the panel.

Our third unexpected hero is Towana Looney of Alabama, the world's longest-living xenotransplant recipient. More about xenotransplants in a moment. First, let's have a look at panelists Dr. Robert Montgomery of the NYU Langone Transplant Institute and

his celebrated wife, mezzo-soprano superstar Denyce Graves. How did they meet? As Robert recounted, the pair, by chance sitting beside one another on a flight to Paris, talked non-stop to touchdown. Deplaning, they made a pact: he would agree to watch her perform an opera if she would observe one of his operations. The pact sealed their bond, and they married a few years later.

Robert, though, faced serious challenges resulting from his unlucky medical history, a condition known as familial dilated cardiomyopathy. At age 29, he was already outfitted with a defibrillator implant, and as he aged, he regularly suffered cardiac arrests. One such attack dramatically interrupted a Broadway show in Manhattan. Two later events struck Robert on separate trips to Patagonia, the latter of which left him in a coma for a month. But his most frightening episode occurred in 2018 in a small town in southern Italy, when Robert's heart stopped, and he was propelled unconscious to the floor of his hotel room. Local hospitals were ill-equipped to care for him. So, against medical advice, Robert booked an emergency flight home to New York City, and checked himself into his own hospital, the Langone Transplant Institute, to seek a heart transplant. Later, halfway through that operation, the doctors assured Denyce that all was going well. By the way, they said, don't worry, but Robert has no heart at the moment. "What!? He has no heart!?" Denyce shrieked. Nonetheless, the Langone doctors successfully inserted a replacement heart into Robert's chest, thanks to a donor who had succumbed to Hepatitis C. Robert subsequently had to treat and cure himself of that ailment. "I'm hard to kill," he quips.

Thunderous applause greeted Towana Looney as she strode on stage sporting a dark gray caftan. Her entrance electrified the audience. Standing before us was the one human being who has lived the longest – three months so far – following a xenotransplantation. You don't know that word? Neither did I. The dictionary defines the term as "a tissue graft or organ transplant from a donor of a different species from the recipient." In Towana's case, the species was a pig, and the organ was a kidney, a gene-edited kidney.

Can you imagine the bravery of an otherwise ordinary woman who volunteers to undergo such an experimental operation so fraught with risk? But Towana had proven her medical courage earlier in life when she donated one of her kidneys to her mother. "The donor has to be of the family," Towana was told at the time. Years passed, and Towana's own remaining kidney began to fail. Anger welled up within her as she learned that her only recourse was dialysis.

Here Dr. Montgomery interjected the unwelcome fact that the odds of securing a transplant are not good for dialysis patients. On average, for patients like Towana, an offer for a kidney transplant donation emerges once every ten years. But the alternative – not obtaining a transplant – is dangerous as well: 50% of dialysis patients die within five years. After nearly a decade on dialysis, Towana was ready to try a new approach, a xenotransplantation, though her family members pleaded with her not to submit to that operation. Towana, however, was built of stronger stuff. "If I can do it, then anyone can do it!" she proudly announces, showing a measure of mettle many of us wish we, too, possessed. May the months and years stretch out ahead for Towana Looney.

## A Cerebral Drenching at the Impact Forum

Reporting with any sense of completeness on the torrent of news gushing forth at a Lake Nona Impact Forum is an exercise in futility. This article may be the closest to such an effort that you may find anywhere. A future article on these pages might offer a deeper look into some of the more startling innovations in health showcased at this year's Forum. For now, here's some of the buzz we overheard over the three days.

A new star moderator at this year's Forum was science correspondent Matt Kaplan for *The Economist*. In a panel dubbed "I Told You So – The Suppression of Science", Kaplan schooled us on Louis Pasteur's theft of research conducted by a colleague, Henri Toussaint, for the development of an anthrax vaccine. Pasteur presented the research as his own. Who knew? We'll probably still keep drinking pasteurized milk, though ... In the following panel, Kaplan addressed the

ethical questions surrounding human longevity with Dr. Venki Ramakrishnan, the former president of the Royal Society and Nobel laureate in chemistry. Over the years, Forum panelists have obsessed over this topic. The view often aired at the Forum is that we should all seek out ways to live longer lives. Who could argue otherwise? Not so fast, says Ramakrishnan. As economics teaches us, what may be good for an individual is not necessarily good for a community, a nation, or for that matter, the world. Sure, dramatic advances in health, nutrition, and economic well-being have lengthened our lives over the past century, and of course we welcome that development. But pursuing medical means specifically to prolong human life for its own sake seems to fall into a different category. Our current demographics warn us that there soon may not be enough young people to support our growing elderly population. In other words, even if we can prolong human life, *should we?* Perhaps a future Impact Forum will explore this issue in more detail ...

Women's health gained a more prominent profile at this year's panels, one of which was led by Carolee Lee of Women's Health Access Matters (WHAM). The discussions on this subject took a tack rarely heard elsewhere, which is that men must be invited to engage in our national dialogue on women's health. The subject must not remain the private preserve for women, in a sort of segregation of the sexes. Currently, women make 80% of health decisions and health purchases, but only 2% of health investments are devoted to women's health. Plenty of work lies ahead in this realm ...

CNN's Sanjay Gupta, in two separate panels, curiously stressed that these Forums are "more important than ever." Was he making an oblique reference to the current chaos in Washington, where funding cuts threaten needed medical research? ... Later, in an exhaustive discourse, former Treasury Secretary and Harvard University president Larry Summers excoriated the current administration's economic policies. "Tariffs," he said, "are like radiation." Both are good for certain uses, but lethal if applied indiscriminately ... The Bay State seemed to dominate proceedings on Day 2 of the Forum. The morning's two first panels featured former U.S. representative Patrick Kennedy and Charlie Baker, former governor of Massachusetts, both speaking on mental health. Baker, now president of the NCAA, is urging state governments to prohibit betting on college sports. The gambling addiction, he says, starts as a trickle, but eventually develops into a serious mental health issue ... One Forum panel, "Healthy Hustle" served to showcase the career of Shark Tank celebrity and investment phenom Daymond John, founder of the FUBU clothing line (and a big fan of our favorite local sculptor Jéfré). "I'm the only Black American on TV who did not come from politics or sports," John announced.

In 2024, the Impact Forum inaugurated an "Adversity to Impact Award." This year's awardee was two-time cancer survivor and Harvard Business School grad Kathy Giusti, the founder of the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation. Rarely would you meet a more inspirational individual than Kathy, who has devoted her inexhaustible energy to fighting the scourge of multiple myeloma. Thirty years back, she was diagnosed with that disease and told she had three years to live. At the Forum, we were awed to view video testimonials by several stars – David Letterman, Cindy Crawford, Matt Damon – extolling Kathy's superhuman achievements, plus photos of Kathy with the three U.S. presidents she has worked with. In the 1990s, no drugs existed for multiple myeloma; now there are fifteen. That same decade, no research focused on the disease; now the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation supports 20 research labs. All this thanks to work guided by one supremely dedicated individual. The Adversity to Impact Award presentation offered a touching scene when, to Kathy's utter surprise, her twin sister Karen, who decades earlier had donated life-saving bone marrow to Kathy to fight the myeloma, stepped on stage to hand her the prize.

So that's our abbreviated report on this year's Impact Forum. Much more could be added to this account, but we've regrettably run out of space. Let's just end by recalling that line from Sanjay Gupta. Yes, the Lake Nona Impact Forum really *is* more important than ever.

# OUC CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT RAISES \$50,000 FOR LOCAL NONPROFITS

ANNUAL EVENT SUPPORTS ORGANIZATIONS  
MAKING A LASTING IMPACT IN CENTRAL FLORIDA



**O**n March 8, participants in the annual OUC Charity Golf Tournament, held at Eagle Creek Golf Club, raised \$50,000, bringing the event's total contributions to over \$1 million since its inception in 1995.

Proceeds from the tournament benefit nonprofit organizations in Orange and Osceola counties that are dedicated to strengthening Central Florida through social impact, economic development, educational outreach, and environmental stewardship.

"This tournament is more than just a day on the course – it's a testament to the power of partnership and community," said Linda Ferrone, OUC's chief customer and marketing officer. "Each year, we come together with our sponsors and participants to support organizations that make a real difference in people's lives. We are proud to continue this tradition of giving back."

This year's tournament awarded \$12,500 donations to each of four nonprofits:

- Orlando Fisher House
- Haitian American Chamber of Commerce
- UF/IFAS Extension Orange County
- Osceola Arts



### About OUC – The Reliable One

*For more than 100 years, OUC – The Reliable One has provided exceptional value to its customers and community through the delivery of sustainable and reliable services and solutions. The utility provides electric, water, chilled water, lighting and solar services to more than 400,000 accounts in Orlando, St. Cloud and parts of unincorporated Orange and Osceola counties. As OUC prepares for the next century, it remains committed to a goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 while supporting the Central Florida community with conservation, sustainability and energy efficiency resources. Visit [www.ouc.com](http://www.ouc.com) to learn more.*

## EARTH DAY: A REMINDER TO HONOR AND RESPECT NATURE

BY HELENE CAVALLO



### History:

In 1970, Earth Day began with 20 million Americans demonstrating against the impacts of 150 years of industrial development with no restrictions. This left behind air and water pollution, resulting in a deteriorating environment and serious health problems in both humans and wildlife. The demonstrations led to the establishment of the United States Environmental Protection Agency as well as the passing of other laws, including the Environmental Education Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and the Clean Air Act, to be followed by the Clean Water Act two years later. Since that day, Earth Day has been observed each year on April 22, followed by many more milestones being reached in observance of this day.

### How We Can Help in Our Community:

Each and every one of us can help keep our local environment to be clean and healthy by doing the following:

- Cut down on garbage by recycling, reusing all those containers we get from takeout as well as plastic bags; using a reusable drinking cup; and bringing reusable bags with us to the grocery store instead of getting our purchases put into plastic or paper bags. Or bringing the plastic bags back to the store for recycling.
- Conserve water by observing the city's rules about when to water our lawns and fixing any leaks or dripping faucets promptly.
- Choose to use non-toxic chemicals to clean our homes and offices, fertilize our lawns and plants and help keep them free from harmful pests with organics instead of pesticides..
- Use long-lasting, energy-efficient light bulbs and turn off lights when not being used.
- Choose sustainable seafood.
- Drive less by car-pooling or walking or biking whenever possible.
- Pick up after your pets and bag and discard waste in a proper trash receptable. Aside from ruining the aesthetics of our neighborhoods and causing a terrible odor, dog feces contain harmful organisms, such as Salmonella and E.coli. This should never be disposed of near any body of water or storm drain as this pollutes the environment and can end up in our drinking water.



- Plant a tree, as hundreds of thousands of trees are being cut down for construction, which takes away life-sustaining oxygen from our ecosystem.
- Install a pond, bird feeder, bird bath or birdhouses to draw animals into your yard.

We should also teach our children and grandchildren to follow all the above practices on a daily basis and to volunteer in their free time. They can help clean up the waste and debris left behind on our beaches, around our lakes, in our parks and on our streets. If we all do our part, we can keep our community clean and beautiful.

### 2025 Events in the Orlando Area

- |                                      |                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Earth Day Mount Dora:                | Saturday, April 12, 9 a.m to 3 p.m<br>Donnelly Park, Mount Dora                                                                     |
| Central Florida Earth Day:           | Saturday, April 19, 10 a.m to 6 p.m<br>Lake Eola Park, 512 E. Washington Street, Orlando                                            |
| Earth Day Family Day:                | Saturday, April 19, 10 a.m to 3 p.m<br>Art & History Museums of Maitland<br>231 W. Packwood Avenue, Maitland                        |
| Earth Day Run:                       | Saturday, April 19, at 11 a.m<br>Waterfront Park, 330 Third Street, Clermont                                                        |
| Clermont Earth Day and Lake Cleanup: | Saturday, April 19<br>Festival 9-11 a.m<br>Lake Clean-up 7:30-10:30 a.m<br>Lake Hiawatha Park 450 12 <sup>th</sup> Street, Clermont |

To learn more visit [www.earthday.org](http://www.earthday.org).

*Helene Cavallo grew up in Brooklyn, New York, the oldest of four children, and moved to Florida in 1997. She currently resides in Clermont, Florida, and recently retired from her full-time job of many years as a legal assistant/paralegal. Her dream has always been to be surrounded by animals which she has fulfilled by becoming a dog sitter in 2017 until the current time. She has always enjoyed expressing herself through writing and has fulfilled this wish by being fortunate enough to have some of her articles and stories published by local newspapers. Her hope is that readers will enjoy reading her writings as much as she enjoys writing them.*

# VICTORIA FERRERA PETIT

## ANNOUNCED AS A SEMIFINALIST FOR THE JACK KENT COOKE FOUNDATION'S TRANSFORMATIVE UNDERGRADUATE TRANSFER SCHOLARSHIP

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PHI THETA KAPPA FLORIDA REGION AND VALENCIA COLLEGE



The Jack Kent Cooke Foundation announced that Victoria Ferrera Petit of Valencia Community College Lake Nona Campus is a semifinalist for the Transformative Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship. There are 467 semifinalists for the program in total. This scholarship aims to help community college students who have demonstrated exceptional academic ability, leadership and service transfer to top four-year institutions and avoided student debt.

The award, which is last-dollar funding after all institutional aid, can provide as much as \$55,000 per year for two to three years to complete a bachelor's degree at any accredited four-year undergraduate institution in the U.S. "Our Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship represents a lifeline for exceptional community college students to actualize their academic dreams," said Giuseppe "Seppy" Basili, executive director of the Cooke Foundation. "This year's semifinalists exemplify the extraordinary talent found within community colleges across America, and we're excited to congratulate this group as we celebrate

a quarter century of work as a foundation."

The 467 semifinalists were chosen from a pool of more than 1,600 applicants and attend 212 community colleges in 43 states. The rigorous selection process assesses candidates on their exceptional academic ability and achievement, demonstrated financial need, perseverance and leadership.

The Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship provides comprehensive support that extends far beyond financial assistance, recognizing that admission and enrollment are only the beginning. This scholarship is designed to help students not only reach college but successfully navigate and complete their journey. Selected Cooke Transfer Scholars receive personalized educational advising from the foundation's Deans of Scholar Support, who guide them through the transition to a four-year institution and help prepare them for future careers. Scholars also gain access to transformative opportunities, including internships, study abroad experiences, and graduate school funding as well as inclusion in a thriving community of more than 3,400 fellow Cooke scholars and alumni who provide mentorship and networking connections throughout their academic and professional lives.

A list of this year's Cooke Transfer Scholar semifinalists and their respective community colleges is linked here. The foundation will announce the 2025 Undergraduate Transfer Scholars in May. To learn more about the Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship, visit the website here, [www.jkcf.org/our-scholarships/undergraduate-transfer-scholarship/](http://www.jkcf.org/our-scholarships/undergraduate-transfer-scholarship/)



## WINNING FAMILY: BRIDGING THE GAP

### HOW PARENTS AND TEENS CAN OVERCOME CONFLICT AND STRENGTHEN THEIR RELATIONSHIP

BY PASTOR RODNEY GAGE



It starts small – a simple request, a thoughtful reminder, a common-sense rule – but suddenly, the tension erupts. Your teen snaps back, rolls their eyes, or storms off. Maybe there's shouting. Maybe silence. Either way, you're left frustrated, hurt and exhausted.

*Why does every conversation turn into an argument?*

*Why does my child push me away when all I want to do is help?*

*Why does parenting feel so much harder than I imagined?*

If you've asked yourself these questions, you're not alone. Parenting a teenager can feel like an endless tug-of-war – you're pulling for respect and obedience, and they're pulling for independence. The harder you pull, the harder they resist. Some days, it seems like the only way to win is to let go.

But here's the truth: Conflict with your teen doesn't mean you're failing. It means you're both growing. The struggle is real, but so is the hope! My wife and I have raised three children of our own, and we've worked with hundreds of parents who have faced the same challenges during their children's teen years. If you're willing to lean in and adjust, you can turn tension into trust and conflict into connection.

#### Why Do Parents and Teens Clash?

Parent-teen conflict isn't just common – it's practically a guarantee during the teenage years. Studies show that 75% of parents argue with their teen at least once a week, and 40% of teens report major conflicts with their parents regularly, according to the *Journal of Adolescence*.

But why? What is at the root of it?

#### 1. They Want Freedom, You Want Safety

You see the dangers they can't. To them, every boundary feels like a barrier, every rule like a lack of trust. They're fighting for independence. You're fighting to protect them. If all your teen hears is control, they may never feel your care and concern.

#### 2. They Feel Misunderstood

Teens are stuck between childhood and adulthood. One moment, they crave independence; the next, they collapse under any weight of responsibility. Their emotions frustrate them as much as they frustrate you.

At their core, teens wrestle with three big questions:

- Who am I? (Identity)
- Where do I fit in? (Belonging)



- What is my purpose? (How can I make a difference?)

These are monumental questions they're trying to figure out on their own. When they feel unheard or invalidated, the frustration often spills out as conflict.

#### 3. Their World Feels Different Than Yours

Your teen is navigating social media, peer pressure and mental health struggles you never faced at their age. They need your wisdom – but also your willingness to listen. The truth is, your teen doesn't need all the answers – they just want to know you're willing to listen.

#### How Parents Can Turn Conflict Into Connection

##### 1. Lead With Love, Not Lectures

When emotions run high, it's easy to jump into fix-it mode – lecturing, correcting, demanding obedience. But your teen isn't looking for another speech. They're looking for someone who sees them, hears them and loves them – even in their messes and mistakes. Before speaking, ask yourself: Will this build a bridge or burn one? You don't have to agree with your teen to affirm their feelings.

##### 2. Choose Influence Over Control

The more you fight to control your teen, the more they fight for distance. But when you shift from commanding to coaching, your words start to matter – not because they have to listen but because they want to. When my wife, Michelle, and I faced these issues with our three children, we learned that timing is everything. Finding a moment to connect – like grabbing ice cream or going for a drive – opened their hearts to talk. We learned through trial and error, instead of forcing compliance, we invited conversation. Here is what I know to be true: Rules without relationship lead to rebellion. But rules with relation-

ships lead to respect.

#### 3. Keep Connection Bigger Than Correction

Yes, your teen needs discipline. Yes, they need consequences. But if all they hear is what they're doing wrong, they'll shut down and stop listening. Correction should never outweigh connection. Try this and see what happens: For every criticism, offer encouragement. Notice the good. Celebrate effort. Speak life – even when they act like they don't want to hear it. Remember, your words can push your teen away or pull them closer. Choose wisely.

#### There's Hope: Your Teen Needs You More Than You Know

If you feel defeated, wondering if things will ever get better, don't give up. Your teen may not say it, but they need you. They need your love, your patience, your prayers and your presence. They need to know that, no matter how hard life gets, you're not going anywhere. So keep showing up. Keep loving them. Keep knocking on that door. Because one day, when they're ready, they'll open it – and they'll be grateful you never stopped trying.

Parents, remember: You're doing better than you think you are, and you matter more than you know.

**Rodney Gage is a family coach, podcaster, author, speaker and the founding pastor of ReThink Life Church, which meets at Lake Nona High School. His passion is to help families win at home and in life. To learn more about how you can get a copy of his new book called Why Your Kids Do What They Do, go to [www.thewinningfamily.com](http://www.thewinningfamily.com) or [ReThinkLife.com](http://ReThinkLife.com).**

# LAKE NONA INTERIORS INSIDER: VOLUME NINE SECRETS TO DESIGNING A LUXURIOUS BATHROOM

BY EDINA HOUSTON



If you've ever stepped into a five-star hotel bathroom and felt instantly transported to a world of elegance, you're not alone. A luxury bathroom isn't just about aesthetics, it's about creating a spa-like retreat that indulges your senses and turns daily routines into moments of relaxation.

As an interior designer, I'm here to reveal the best-kept secrets to achieving that opulent look in your own home – without breaking the bank.

## 1. Select a Sophisticated Color Palette

Luxury is all about timelessness, and nothing says refined elegance like a carefully curated color scheme. Stick to classic hues such as neutrals, crisp whites, rich grays, or moody deep blues greens or black. Layering earth tones creates depth – think creamy marble with hints of gold veining or matte black fixtures against pale stone tiles.

## 2. Invest in High-End Materials (or Their Lookalikes!)

Luxury is all about the feel of materials – so opt for the best your budget allows. Natural stone, such as marble or quartzite, adds an upscale touch while large-format porcelain tiles mimic high-end stone without the maintenance. If natural stone is out of reach, opt for a quartz remnant from a local stone fabricator, which provides a high-end look at a fraction of the price. Another great alternative is large-format porcelain slabs, which mimic real stone but are more affordable and easier to maintain.

## 3. Upgrade Your Fixtures and Fittings

Hotel bathrooms feel indulgent because of their attention to details like oversized rain showers, sleek faucets and deep soaking tubs. A freestanding bathtub instantly creates a focal point while a thermostatic shower system allows for a customized spa-like experience. **Budget hack:** Swap out outdated faucets and showerheads for modern matte black or brushed brass versions – affordable options are available at most home improvement stores and make a huge impact.

## 4. Layer Your Lighting Like a Pro

Lighting can make or break a luxurious space. Instead of relying on a single overhead light, layer different types of lighting to create ambiance. Install dimmable sconces or pendant lights beside the mirror for a soft, flattering glow. Stick-on LED strip lights under the vanity or behind the mirror can add a designer look at a fraction of the cost.

## 5. Incorporate Smart Technology

Modern luxury is about convenience. Smart mirrors with built-in lighting, heated floors and touchless faucets make the bathroom experience seamless and sophisticated.

## 6. Maximize Space With Thoughtful Storage

Clutter is the enemy of luxury. Built-in shelving, hidden storage behind mirrors and sleek cabinetry keep everything organized and out of sight. Use floating shelves, decorative baskets to maximize storage.

## 7. Finishing Touches for a Luxe Look

The final details matter. High-quality plush towels, a stylish bath tray and aromatic candles elevate the space. A touch of greenery, such as an orchid or eucalyptus in a chic vase, adds freshness. Shop at home stores for hotel-style towels, use glass jars for bath salts, and repurpose candle jars as stylish storage for cotton swabs and bath essentials.

## 8. Luxury on Any Budget

With these designer tips – whether you're splurging or sticking to a budget – you can transform your bathroom into a space that feels indulgent and inviting. A luxurious look isn't about spending excessively; it's about making intentional, stylish choices. Homeowners can create a retreat that feels elegant, comfortable and tailored to their needs, proving that true luxury is all in the details.



## 9. Avoid Costly Mistakes: Plan and Consult

Designing a luxury bathroom requires careful coordination of materials, finishes and fixtures to ensure everything works together harmoniously rather than competing. It's essential to have a clear vision before making major purchases. **Search Pinterest for inspiration** and create a mood board to visualize how colors, textures and styles will blend. If you're unsure, consider hiring an interior designer for a consultation before committing to a renovation. A designer's trained eye can help ensure that selections complement each other, preventing costly design mistakes. Having an expert review all the elements together can make the difference between a cohesive, high-end space and a disjointed design that falls flat.

## In Conclusion: Design Your Dream Bathroom

Creating a luxury bathroom doesn't require an unlimited budget – just smart, intentional choices. By carefully selecting a sophisticated color palette, investing in quality materials (or their lookalikes), upgrading fixtures, layering lighting and incorporating smart storage solutions, you can craft a space that feels indulgent and elegant. Whether you prefer a sleek, modern vibe or a timeless, classic retreat, the key is ensuring all design

elements work together harmoniously. With a little planning, creativity and expert guidance when needed, your dream bathroom can become a reality – one that rivals the elegance and comfort of a five-star hotel.

**About Edina Houston**  
Edina Houston is a professionally skilled interior designer dedicated to creating visually appealing and functional spaces tailored to her clients' needs. Specializing in creating luxurious, comfortable environments that uniquely reflect each project's individuality, Edina infuses her work with a deep passion for design and unwavering dedication to excellence. Connect with Edina on Facebook and Instagram @EDesignsAndCo

# LAKE NONA ARTS: IS YOUR MUSIC STUCK??

BY STEPHANIE HOUDE  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAKE NONA ARTS



In the movie *Groundhog Day*, Bill Murray's character wakes up each morning to the Sonny and Cher song "I Got You Babe" and finds himself stuck, reliving the same day over and over. Fortunately, we don't have to relive the same day, but we often find that the music we listen to does repeat over and over. Even when we hear a just-released song, it often sounds very similar to earlier songs that were hits, as the economics of the music business encourage reuse, maybe even exploitation, of a successful musical formula.

We can unstick our music with much more ease than it took Bill Murray's character to unstick his repeating day. We can select a different playlist or switch radio stations in our car, which lets us wander, for at least a little while, into different kinds of music. Even a few minutes of exposure to different genres could broaden our outlook, or maybe it just gets us to laugh at some witty but unfamiliar lyrics.

The Lake Nona Arts Choir is preparing for a concert in May that will feature music taken from Broadway musicals as long ago as the 1937 musical *Babes in Arms* and as recently as the 2015 musical *Dear Evan Hansen*. We have enjoyed learning a variety of styles of music and sharing them with our community. Our upcoming concert on May 18 could be the thing to help you jump into some new music! Upcoming ticket and time details will be on our social media page as soon as they are available!

If you are looking to participate in the choir, orchestra or theater group, you can join us for future seasons by sending an email to [lakenonachoir@gmail.com](mailto:lakenonachoir@gmail.com) for more information or check out our social media pages "Lake

Nona Arts" or our website [www.lakenonarts.com](http://www.lakenonarts.com) for ways to register. If you are not interested in performing but looking for a way to support the local arts in your community, please reach out to [lakenonachoir@gmail.com](mailto:lakenonachoir@gmail.com) to learn about the ways you can donate to our nonprofit.

**Lake Nona Arts is a registered 501(c)3 committed to creating an arts community for adults (18+) in the Lake Nona Area. There are no auditions required for the community choir or orchestra. For more information, contact us at [lakenonachoir@gmail.com](mailto:lakenonachoir@gmail.com).**



# BEST FRIENDS IN THE NONAHOOD: TWO CHAMPIONS – A VETERAN AND HIS DOG

BY PATTY REBER  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF MIA MUNIZ



Champ, this beautiful Boxer, will turn 3 years old in July, and you can certainly call him a “Champion” along with his owner, Marcus Muniz. Marcus, originally from New York, now resides in the Nona-hood with his family and their dog Champ, the incredible Boxer. Speaking of incredible, Marcus, a former Marine, served in the Gulf War as a counter-terrorist specialist. He also had the honor of training and working alongside the Navy Seals in San Diego. Thank you, Marcus, for your service!

If you know the Boxer breed, you understand how they actually box! The breed got its name because Boxer puppies use their front paws to box each other. So take a guess

how this relates? Champ, the one with four paws, loves to watch Marcus box, and since Marcus’ wife and three daughters weren’t interested in that sport – smart move – Champ became Marcus’ new boxing partner. As you can see by the photos, there are actually two champions here!

Aside from his boxing, Marcus is a tennis coach. He loves tennis, and he applies the same mental and physical conditioning from his military past into his tennis coaching. Marcus taught tennis at his academy in Belle Isle, but now he primarily teaches in the Laureate Park tennis courts. We wonder if he will figure out a way to get Champ onto the tennis courts!

If you are interested in a coaching lesson with Marcus (the two-legged champion!), contact coachmarcus.tennis@gmail.com.

*Patty’s business background has been supporting CEO’s of Fortune 500 companies as an Executive Assistant. Prior to relocating to Orlando in August of 2020, Patty was a member of the Seraphic Society which consisted of Executive Assistants who supported the most influential CEO’s in New York City. Patty has been a speaker at professional conferences mentoring younger women in the business arena. Aside from her business background, Patty has been writing non-fiction stories for many years and is currently writing a book about women for women. Patty and her husband Jan live in Laureate Park and are serious dog-lovers having owned Rhodesian Ridgebacks (multiple at once) throughout their years of marriage.*



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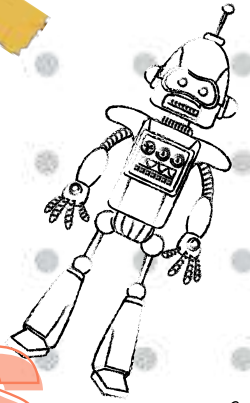
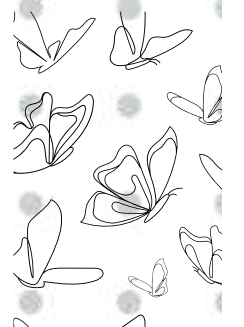
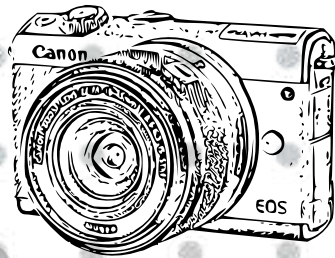
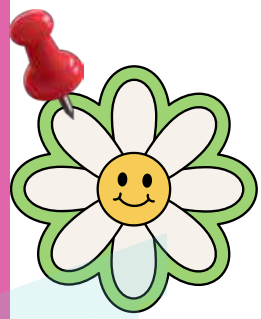
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