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THE LEADERSHIP LIE THAT’S QUIETLY KILLING YOUR INFLUENCE

BY DR. LINDA TRAVELUTE | MAXIMIZED LEADERS COACHING, TRAINING, & KEYNOTES



What if the very thing you think makes you a strong leader is actually holding you back?

Let’s rip the Band-Aid off: **Control is not leadership.**

In fact, the more you try to control... the more influence you lose.

And yet, this lie persists.

From the moment we step into a leadership role—whether we’re managing a team of five or steering a

full-blown organization—we’re taught to believe that being in control is the mark of a good leader. Keep your hands on the wheel. Don’t let anything slip through the cracks. Check every box. Monitor every step. Approve every decision.

But here’s the truth no one wants to swallow: **Control is not the same as trust. And control does not equal influence.**

Reality Check: Why Control Backfires

Let’s look at the psychological side of leadership for a second.

When leaders try to control everything, they unknowingly send a message:

“I don’t trust you to do this without me.”

This kind of micromanagement may get short-term results, but it comes at a massive cost:

- Your team stops thinking for themselves.
- Innovation screeches to a halt.
- Motivation tanks.
- You become the bottleneck.
- And burnout? Inevitable.

Control feels productive... but it actually strangles the very growth you’re trying to lead.

The best leaders don’t control the process—they cultivate it. They create an environment where trust is the currency, and people are free to think, stretch, and lead from where they stand.

A True Story from the Trenches

A client of mine—let’s call her Rachel—was a regional

manager for a retail chain. Smart, driven, and constantly in the weeds. She spent her days reviewing store-level reports, rewriting staff schedules, and double-checking every inventory order.

When I asked her why, she said, “Because if I don’t stay on top of it, it’ll all fall apart.”

Sound familiar?

She wasn’t wrong in her intention. But she was exhausted. Her team was frustrated. And turnover was at an all-time high.

So we stopped playing by those old rules.

Rachel started shifting from controlling to *delegating*. She gave her store managers decision-making authority—along with clear vision and expectations. She stopped hovering and started *equipping*. Within three months, she had cut her working hours by 20%, team engagement skyrocketed, and she finally took her first vacation in years—without checking her phone every 10 minutes.

Control didn’t create that success. **Letting go did.**

Wisdom Drop: Influence > Control

Let’s be clear: This isn’t about being passive. Letting go of control doesn’t mean letting go of responsibility. It means trading *command-and-control* for *coach-and-empower*.

Great leaders don’t have their hands in everything. They have their heart in the right place—and the vision to build a culture that leads itself.

Influence is what happens when people follow you because *they want to*, not because *they have to*. And influence only grows in environments where people feel trusted, empowered, and safe to stretch their wings.

From Control Freak to Influence Architect

If you’re ready to drop the lie and lead with real power, here’s where to start:

- 1. Start Asking, Not Telling.**
Before you give an answer, ask a question. Shift the spotlight to your team’s thinking and creativity.
- 2. Paint the Vision, Then Step Back.**
Your role is to clarify the “why” and “what.” Let your team figure out the “how.”
- 3. Celebrate Mistakes as Learning Moments.**
Control freaks fear mistakes. Influence architects use them as fuel for growth.
- 4. Resist the Urge to Fix Everything.** Sometimes, the best thing you can do is not intervene. Growth happens in the gap.

Final Thought

Control feels safe. Predictable. Clean.

But leadership was never meant to be tidy. It’s meant to be



transformative.

So if you’re feeling overwhelmed, stretched thin, or like you’re the only one keeping everything together—maybe it’s time to let go.

Not of the mission. Not of the excellence.

But of the lie that says *you have to do it all*.

Because the moment you stop controlling everything?

That’s the moment real leadership begins.

Want more leadership fuel so you don’t run out of gas? Tune into the Leader Fuel Podcast with Dr. Linda Travelute. It’s the fuel leaders need to keep going and growing. Find it on iTunes, Spotify, or Amazon Audible.

WITH HUNGER RELIEF FUNDING HALTED, MILLIONS OF MEALS ARE OFF THE TABLE

BY DERRICK CHUBBS



For years, the bipartisan approach to hunger relief has been straightforward and sensible: Get food to American families and support American farmers who produce it. This solution has not only been a lifeline for millions of people,

it has also been a cornerstone of local aid and economic stability. But recently, it came crashing to a halt.

At the end of March, the USDA canceled all supplemental funding from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), a vital funding source for federal government programs – including supplemental support for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). That funding allows food banks across the nation to obtain food for millions of families facing hunger, while providing a significant economic boost and stabilizing effect for American farmers.

The abrupt suspension comes at a time when we are already facing cuts to some of our other most cost-effective tools for hunger relief. Vital programs, like the Local Food Purchase Assistance Program (LFPA), have already been scheduled for termination, and the possibility of severe cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) looms on the horizon.

What’s certain is that the impact of these decisions will be devastating and immediate. Across our community, a half a million neighbors – kids, seniors, working parents, veterans, and more – who seek charitable food assistance in Central Florida each year will no longer have access to fresh produce, dairy and shelf-stable food from American growers and producers.

Every one of those meals will be missed. One of those meals could mean dinner for a 10-year-old who sits quietly in class, distracted by hunger pains. Another may be the only protein a senior on a fixed income gets all week. Or a box of fresh produce for a single mom working two jobs who skips her own meals so her kids can eat.

Right now, Florida is experiencing unprecedented demand for food assistance, driven by high prices for groceries, housing and essentials. More people need help now than at any time in the last 50 years – and the health, well-being, and productivity of roughly one in eight people in Central Florida are heavily linked to the assistance provided through Second Harvest and our network of 870+ feeding partners.

Hunger relief is about helping people; it’s about feeding hope to American families and supporting American farmers and growers at the same time.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program was created by previous administrations of both parties, supporting U.S. agriculture through roughly \$1 billion in annual food purchases. In fact, the first Trump administration’s efforts toward trade issue mitigation provided some of the highest levels of CCC-funded purchases of U.S.-grown commodities in recent history. Leaders on both sides of the aisle can and must work together to solve this crisis –

and the need for action is urgent.

Until there’s a long-term – or even short-term – solution, Second Harvest and our partners must rely on support from local community members and businesses to bridge the gap of hunger in our community. To learn how you can get involved – as a donor, volunteer, or partner – visit www.feedhopenow.org.

Derrick Chubbs is President and CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida (SHFBCF). As the region’s largest emergency food provider, Second Harvest secures and distributes enough food for 300,000 meals a day to more than 870 local nonprofit feeding partners across a seven-county service area. By also investing in job training programs and advocating for access to nutritious foods, SHFBCF is leaning into the root causes of hunger to help transform lives.





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FINANCIAL FOCUS®: DON'T LOSE TRACK OF FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

BY KALEY MORA



For years, people save and invest in 401(k) plans, IRAs and other financial accounts. They wouldn't lose track of this money, would they? You might be surprised. About 1 in 7 people has unclaimed cash or property, totaling billions of dollars, according to the National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators.

People lose track of their money for a variety of reasons: They change jobs and forget about their retirement accounts; they move and leave no forwarding address; they change names and don't notify former employers; or their employers go out of business or merge with another company. Whatever the reason, losing tabs on accounts that could be worth thousands of dollars is never a good thing. What can you do to avoid suffering this type of loss?

Here are a few suggestions:

- *Maintain good records.* Keep records of all your financial, investment and retirement accounts – and let a family

member know where these records are kept.

- *Keep a manageable number of financial accounts.* The fewer bank and brokerage accounts you have, the easier it will be to keep track of everything. You might even want to consolidate accounts when possible.
- *Report your change of address.* Whenever you move, contact your financial services providers and any former employers with whom you may have retirement accounts.
- *Report name changes.* If you change your name, notify new and old 401(k) plan administrators, banks, brokerages and any other institution connected to your money.
- *Manage retirement accounts when you change jobs.* If you leave your job, you might be able to leave your 401(k) behind with your old employer. But if you do, keep track of it. On the other hand, you could roll your old plan into your new employer's plan or into an IRA.
- *Inform your financial professional about all your accounts.* If you work with a financial professional, they can help you track your accounts, so inform them of all past and present IRAs and 401(k)s or similar employer-sponsored plans.

So far, we've looked at ways you can prevent losing track of financial accounts. But can you do anything if you suspect you've already left some money behind? If you think you've lost tabs on an IRA, you can check old tax returns and bank statements to help you track your contributions and find the name of the financial provider that held your account. If it's a 401(k), you can contact your old employer's plan administrator.

You can get some help from other sources,



too. The Department of Labor recently launched a retirement savings lost-and-found database (lostandfound.dol.gov)

that can help you find pension or 401(k) plans connected to your Social Security number.

For a stray IRA, you can check unclaimed.org, the website of the National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators. And for various other sources of money – including uncashed checks from corporations and financial institutions, inactive brokerage accounts and unclaimed safe deposit boxes – you can check MissingMoney.com, the unclaimed property website of the National Association of State Treasurers.

These sites offer no guarantees of finding your lost or missing accounts or other sources of money, so you still may have to do your own sleuthing. But as the old saying goes, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" – which, in this case, means you'll help yourself greatly by tracking your accounts from beginning to end.

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

You talk. We listen.
In person.
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PHONES DOWN, EYES UP: COMMIT TO WATER SAFETY THIS SUMMER

BY JOHN LEWIS, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT
OF AQUATICS
YMCA OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Summer is quickly approaching, and as families are making their way to the pool, beach and water parks, the YMCA is reminding families of a simple but life-saving message: Phones Down, Eyes Up.

With drowning being the second leading cause of death among children five to 14 years old, this national campaign for Water Safety Month urges parents and caregivers to stay present when their children are in or near water.

The YMCA prioritizes swimming safety year-round with its programs, including Safety Around Water and Safe Start to teach children water safety while building confidence, but there are practical steps families can take to protect each other this summer.

1. Phones Down, Eyes Up

With 60% of drownings happening within 10 feet of safety and 88% occurring under the supervision of an adult, being present is the most important thing you can do whenever kids or swimming or playing near water.

To help encourage undistracted supervision, we recommend large groups assign a designated adult Water Watcher, who should avoid distractions like texting, socializing or multitasking while on watch, and switch out every 15 to 20 minutes.

The YMCA designed a Water Watcher badge to clearly identify who's on duty and so the kids know who can help if needed. Scan this QR code to download a free "Water Watcher" badge during your next pool party so everyone can celebrate safely.

2. Prioritize Protection

While most families feel safest at home, the majority of drownings occur in residential pools. The most effective way to protect your child, even at home, is to utilize layers of protection such as four-sided fences, self-latching gates and alarms around pool access points, and pool and drain covers.

Whether at home, visiting family, friends or in public spaces, it's critical to teach children to ask permission before entering water.

3. Take the Safety Around Water Pledge

Living in Central Florida means water is almost always within reach, making water safety a year-round commitment. By taking the Safety Around Water Pledge you are making a commitment to advocate for water safety by staying informed, staying distraction free while supervising kids in and around water, enrolling them in swim lessons, learning CPR, ensuring proper protection at your residential pool and sharing these tips with others.

Visit your local Y or ymcafl.org to take the pledge and receive even more tips to keep you safe this summer.

Whether you're six or 60, making a splash in the pool with friends and family creates fun summer memories, but those memories should always come second to the safety of each other.

These are just a few of the steps to creating a fun, worry-free summer. YMCA programs like Safety Around Water and Safe Start, which teaches non-walking infants to float, rest, and breathe, are just part of the Y's efforts to equip families with life-saving skills.

For more water safety tips or to enroll in swimming lessons, visit your neighborhood YMCA or check out ymcafl.org.



NAMI EARNS MICHELIN GUIDE DISTINCTION IN 2025 FLORIDA GUIDE, MARKING CULINARY MILESTONE FOR LAKE NONA AND TAVISTOCK RESTAURANT COLLECTION’S THIRD MICHELIN RECOGNITION

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAKE NONA

Tavistock’s Culinary Director Freddy Money and Nami Executive Chef Jason Beliveau Honored at Prestigious MICHELIN Guide Ceremony in Orlando



Nami has officially earned a coveted spot in the 2025 Florida edition of the MICHELIN Guide, solidifying its reputation as one of the state's premier dining destinations. The announcement was made during a ceremony at the Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort.

Located in the world's most technologically advanced hotel, Lake Nona Wave Hotel, the restaurant's recognition enhances the property's culinary prestige. With MICHELIN-recommended Nami, MICHELIN-recommended BACÁN and Lake Nona Wave Hotel's One Key distinction, Lake Nona continues to shape Orlando's evolving dining landscape. As part of the Tavistock Restaurant Collection, this milestone elevates Nami's role in reshaping modern Japanese cuisine across Florida's evolving culinary scene.

Nami's Culinary Director Freddy Money is one of the rare U.S.-based culinary leaders celebrated by the MICHELIN Guide across multiple states, recognized for both Atlas Restaurant in Atlanta and now Nami in Lake Nona in Orlando. Executive Chef Jason Beliveau brings Nami's vision to life nightly, shaping the restaurant's evolving culinary identity and offering a personal experience at Nami's Chef's Counter.

"We're incredibly proud to be recognized by MICHELIN," said Greg Walker, president of Tavistock Restaurant Collection. "Our vision was to craft an experience that tells a story with every bite. Chef Freddy, Chef Jason and the entire team have poured their hearts into that vision, blending bold flavors

and artistry in a truly exceptional style. We're honored to see that commitment recognized in such a meaningful way."

MICHELIN inspectors praised Nami for "making a splash with its lofted ceilings and sexy vibe," highlighting its dual-concept approach that features a refined à la carte menu and an immersive Chef's Counter experience. Dishes like barbecue unagi over rice and "a whimsical riff" on a corndog with caviar and triple cream Brie were among the standouts. The inspectors noted the restaurant's balance of bold flavor, luxury and playfulness, cementing its place among Florida's most compelling dining experiences.

This latest honor, with MICHELIN's vivid praise for Nami's ambiance, innovation and artistry, not only validates the restaurant's excellence but also fuels the region's momentum, inspiring a new era of culinary creativity in Central Florida.



Inside its intimate, 67-seat dining room, Nami blends modern Japanese flavors with European technique and innovation. Guests are invited on a sensory journey through artfully crafted small plates and shareable dishes from signature items like *Lobster Donuts* with matcha and cucumber salad with crispy chili to refined fare such as *Miso-orange Chilean Seabass* and *Mushroom Donabe* with ginger and truffle.

For those seeking the pinnacle of Nami's culinary artistry, the exclusive 10-seat Chef's Counter, available Thursdays through Saturdays, offers a masterfully curated tasting menu, presented in four waves of storytelling. This immersive dining experience goes beyond Nami's standard menu, offering a rare opportunity to explore bold flavors and global inspirations, meticulously crafted by the chefs behind Nami's rise.

Nami joins an elite group of award-winning restaurants within the Tavistock hospitality portfolio, including MICHELIN-Starred Atlas and The Garden Room in Atlanta, MICHELIN-Recommended BACÁN in Lake Nona and Timpano in Hyde



Park in Tampa. Also among the group are Pier Sixty-Six's signature waterfront experiences – Calusso, Pier Top, and Sotogrande in Fort Lauderdale – as well as Boston icons Abe & Louie's and Atlantic Fish Co. and other standout concepts across the country.

For reservations, visit namilakenona.com. Follow @namilakenona on Instagram for updates, events and exclusive offerings.

ABOUT NAMI

Nami is a contemporary Japanese restaurant located within the award-winning Lake Nona Wave Hotel in Orlando, Florida. Offering an intimate, design-forward setting, Nami presents a bold take on Japanese cuisine through a globally inspired menu of refined small plates, signature dishes and an immersive Chef's Counter experience. Guided by Tavistock's Culinary Director Freddy Money and Nami Executive Chef Jason Beliveau, Nami blends precision, artistry and innovation to create a dining experience unlike any other in Central Florida. Debuting in 2023, Nami is part of the Tavistock Restaurant Collection, an esteemed group of culinary destinations across the United States, including the MICHELIN-Starred Atlas and The Garden Room in Atlanta, MICHELIN-Recommended Timpano Hyde Park in Tampa, Florida, and acclaimed concepts in Boston and beyond. With its MICHELIN-recommendation distinction, Nami continues to help shape Lake Nona's emergence as a national culinary destination. For reservations, visit www.namilakenona.com. Stay connected and follow Nami on Instagram at @namilakenona for the latest updates, events and exclusive offerings.

ABOUT TAVISTOCK RESTAURANT COLLECTION

Tavistock Restaurant Collection is an Orlando-based, privately held company operating iconic and unique dining concepts across the United States. Since its founding, Tavistock Restaurant Collection has been recognized for its creativity and dedication to excellence in food, drink, service and atmosphere with each and every dining experience. The collection includes MICHELIN-Starred Atlas and The Garden Room in Atlanta; MICHELIN-Recommended Nami in Lake Nona, Orlando and Timpano in Hyde Park in Tampa, Florida; and beloved destinations like Abe & Louie's and Atlantic Fish Co. in Boston. Tavistock Restaurant Collection strives to consistently create innovative hospitality experiences that enrich the lives of its guests, its teams and the communities they serve. For more information, please visit tavistockrestaurantcollection.com.

ABOUT LAKE NONA

Planned and developed by Tavistock Development Company, Lake Nona is one of the fastest growing and most innovative communities in America. Located in Orlando, Florida, the 17-square-mile community has established a new standard of living for its residents with groundbreaking initiatives around technology, mobility and wellbeing. Lake Nona is located contiguous to Orlando International Airport in the most visited destination in the U.S. The smart and connected community's advanced infrastructure and commitment to collaboration has drawn visionary companies and entrepreneurs from across the globe to join its living lab environment, accelerating economic growth and opportunity across health and life sciences, education, hospitality and sports and performance. Lake Nona's attractive business ecosystem is enhanced by a thriving cultural landscape defined by iconic architecture and engaging public art installations, miles of trails and walkable green spaces, weekly signature events, shopping, dining and entertainment options set amongst Central Florida's beautiful natural landscape and year-round sunshine. Lake Nona also anchors Tavistock's expanding portfolio, including Sunbridge, a 27,000-acre, nature-forward community in Central Florida, and Pier Sixty-Six, an iconic waterfront destination in Fort Lauderdale. Debuting at Pier Sixty-Six are three signature restaurants – Calusso, Sotogrande, and Pier Top – set to elevate the city's culinary scene. For more information, visit www.lakenona.com and TavistockDevelopmentCompany.com.





NAVIGATING YOUR BUSINESS THROUGH ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

In times of financial uncertainty, it is easy for fear to take control of our actions. With rising concerns about the economy, many small business owners and operators find themselves wondering, “What’s next?”

While we cannot predict the future, we can certainly prepare. That is where your local Chamber of Commerce can be a valuable partner and help steady the course.

Trusted Information:

Through partnerships with business leaders and experts on the regional economy, we work to stay informed about upcoming legislation, market trends, and financial shifts that may impact businesses operations in the region.

Community Support:

In uncertain times, community matters more than ever. Things like networking events, masterminds, and roundtables help foster meaningful connections with others who likely share your concerns; places where business leaders can share their ideas, challenges, and potential solutions.

Advocacy:

The chamber continues to be a consistent voice advocating for policies that support business stability, workforce development, and sustainable growth. While we are not a lobbying chamber, we do work to ensure members have up to date information on issues that may impact their organizations

as well as work with state and local elected officials to ensure a climate where small businesses can thrive.

Business Amplification:

The Lake Nona Regional Chamber of Commerce’s mission is to amplify business growth and innovation through connection, education, and advocacy in our community and region. One of the key words in that statement is amplify. In this case, it means to increase the intensity, impact, or reach. It means to make something stronger, more noticeable to achieve a greater effect.

So what is the bottom line here? The bottom line is that you are not alone. As the economic and

political landscapes continue to shift, we are here to help you stay grounded, informed, and connected.

We may not control the climate, but we can choose how we show up in it. If you want a seat at the community table, the chamber IS that community. We are resilient, collaborative, and ready for whatever may come next.

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



HEALTHY SMILES,
CLEAR VISION

BY FLORIDA BLUE

As we go about our daily lives, it's easy to overlook two crucial aspects of our overall health: our eyes and teeth. Many people skip regular vision and dental checkups and only see a dentist or eye doctor when something goes wrong. But neglecting these areas can put your health at risk in unexpected ways.

Skipping checkups can be risky

Nearly half of adults over age 30 in the U.S. suffer from some form of gum disease. However, many of us do not go to a dentist or dental clinic each year for a checkup. Similarly, an estimated 93 million adults in the U.S. have conditions that put them at a high risk for serious vision loss, but only half visited an eye doctor in the past year. Routine dental and vision exams are important to overall health and can actually help uncover serious conditions in other parts of the body.

How gum disease affects your body

Your teeth and gums play a big role in your overall health and well-being. Let's look at one common example: gum disease. In Florida, nearly 80% of adults have experienced tooth loss due to decay or gum disease. Also, having gum disease is linked to nearly 60 serious health conditions, including:

- Alzheimer's disease
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Poor pregnancy outcomes, like premature birth and low birth weight

Dental exams help spot gum disease and prevent tooth decay. That's why it's recommended to visit the dentist at least once a year. And if you're pregnant, it's especially important to visit a dentist regularly since 60 to 75% of pregnant women have gingivitis, an early stage of gum disease.

Healthy Habits, Healthy You



Regular eye exams could detect high blood pressure.¹



Regular dental exams could spot prediabetes or diabetes.²

Florida Blue 
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Sources:
¹National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research: Periodontal Disease in Adults (Age 30 or Older)
²Forbes Health: Dental Facts and Statistics in 2025

Your eyes can be windows to other health issues

Besides checking your vision and getting your glasses or contact lens prescriptions updated, eye exams can reveal issues in other parts of your body. Many serious health conditions can be detected during an eye exam, including:

- Diabetes: The leading cause of blindness in American adults
- Hypertension: One in three American adults has high blood pressure

Adults under 65 should get an eye exam at least every two years, and those 65 and over should go every year. However, if you have a family history or are at risk of eye disease, you may need to visit the eye doctor more frequently.

A dental or vision health insurance plan can help you stay on top of your visits and keep costs down so you can focus on what matters – a clean bill of health!

Need help finding affordable care?

If you don't have insurance or think you can't afford to get dental or vision care, a community specialist or registered nurse can help. You can stop by your local Florida Blue Center in person or connect with them by phone or even video chat for help finding affordable vision or dental care, like a low- or no-cost clinic or other community resources that may be available. There is no extra cost for this type of help, whether you have a Florida Blue plan or not. Find a location near you at [FloridaBlue.com/Center](https://floridablue.com/center).

Learn more about health insurance

If you'd like to shop for a dental plan or a health insurance plan that includes vision coverage, you can connect with a local licensed Florida Blue agent, visit your local Florida Blue Center, or call 1-800-876-2227 for help.

Sources:

- National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research: Periodontal Disease in Adults (Age 30 or Older)
- Forbes Health: Dental Facts and Statistics in 2025
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Fast Facts: Vision Loss
- Florida Department of Health, FLHealthCHARTS: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Dashboard
- National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research: Oral Health in America
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Talking to Pregnant Women About Oral Health
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Oral Health Tips for Adults
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Why Eye Exams Are Important
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: High Blood Pressure Facts
- American Optometric Association: Comprehensive eye exams

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NONA YOUR NEIGHBOR: MONA MAKAREVIC

BY ANGELICA MEDINA
PHOTOS COURTESY OF AMIR MAKAREVIC



Nonahood News had the opportunity to interview Lake Nona Luminary Middle School student Mona Makarevic, a decorated tennis player with 16 medals and eight trophies. At 12 years old, Mona plays on every tennis court: regular hard court, grey clay, red clay, synthetic and real grass. In WTN (World Tennis Number), Mona currently stands 15th in the region and 154th in the state of Florida for the 12-and-under age group. Here is her interview with us.

Nonahood News: Tell us your name and three fun facts about yourself!

Mona Makarevic: My name is Mona Makarevic and my three fun facts are I love to hang out with my friends, travel and play the violin. My favorite place for travel is Bosnia and Herzegovina.

NHN: When did you start playing tennis and what got you into the sport?

MM: I started to play tennis at the USTA Lake Nona campus when I was 4/5 years old. Since then, I have gone through all categories, red ball, orange ball, orange ball plus, orange ball club, green ball and the last level where I am now is yellow ball. Since my first tournament

when I was 6 years old, I participated in 24 tournaments, and I won 22 tournaments and 2 tournaments I finished in 2nd place.

NHN: Who's been your biggest tennis influence – like a coach, parent, or even a pro?

MM: My biggest influences are my dad and the greatest tennis player in the world, Novak Djokovic.

NHN: How do you get ready before a big match?

MM: Before every tournament, I prepare in many different ways, including mental preparation and more intense training.

NHN: What do you tell yourself to stay confident on the court?

MM: My experience gives me more confidence to win.

NHN: Do you have a favorite tournament or match you've played in?

MM: Every tournament has to be valued and the importance of one of them is my biggest trophy, which has intense matches to win. For me, a very important win was during the tournament at USTA 2022, Billie Jean tournament (10 & Under). I was the winner in the South Division group.

NHN: What's something in tennis that was hard at first but you've gotten better at?

MM: One of the skills I have improved throughout my career is my serves.

NHN: What motivates you to keep practicing even when it is hard?

MM: My biggest motivation is to practice tennis, to get better at tennis, and to become the number one tennis player in the world.

NHN: If you had to give your tennis racket a name, what would it be?

MM: I am playing with my favorite brand racket Head, and I would name it "Power."

NHN: What advice would you give to other kids just starting out with tennis?

MM: My advice to other kids is to trust in yourself and to never give up.

NHN: Where do you see yourself as a player in a few years?

MM: I see myself in the future playing a tournament at Wimbledon.



CELEBRATING MOTHER'S DAY: HONORING THE HEART OF EVERY HOME

Each second Sunday of May, families across the world pause to honor one of the most pivotal roles in society—motherhood. Mother's Day, more than a calendar event, is a heartfelt tribute to the women who nurture, sacrifice, and inspire.

Originating in the early 20th century through the efforts of Anna Jarvis, who campaigned to recognize her own mother's dedication to caregiving and community, the day has since blossomed into a global celebration. It's a time not just for flowers and greeting cards, but for reflection on the everyday acts of love that often go unnoticed.



In homes, hospitals, offices, and communities, mothers wear many hats—caretaker, teacher, provider, counselor, and often, silent hero. Whether biological, adoptive, foster, or chosen, the essence of motherhood transcends bloodlines. It's found in the quiet midnight feedings, the relentless encouragement during hard times, and the strength shown in the face of adversity.

As traditions evolve, so do the ways we express our appreciation. Some choose breakfast in bed and handwritten notes, others make video calls across continents. Many visit the graves of mothers passed, laying flowers in solemn gratitude.

This Mother's Day, amidst the noise of daily life, let us take a moment to offer more than just thanks. Let us listen, support, and recognize the enduring contributions of mothers everywhere. Their resilience holds communities together, their love shapes futures, and their wisdom lights paths for generations.

Let it not be a single day, but a continuous act of honoring those who gave us life, and so much more.

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SAVOR TOOTH TIGER: MAGICAL BUTTERSCOTCH CUPCAKES

BY ALLYSON VAN LENTEN
PHOTO COURTESY OF ALLYSON VAN LENTEN

This is not your grandmother's purse candy. To me, real butterscotch conjures up images of giant copper kettles bubbling in old-timey confectioneries and candy emporiums. The smell of butter and sugar lingers in the air for hours. Butterscotch is easier to make than its fussy cousin caramel and has more flavor. It makes the best topping for cupcakes, ice cream or blondies. I was inspired to make this classic sauce by the butterscotch flavor of Butterbeer in the Harry Potter universe. You can make these cupcakes for any Harry Potter-themed party as well as the base for several versions of Butterbeer. Simply add milk to the butterscotch

sauce for a warm Butterbeer during your holiday season Harry Potter marathon by the fire. Add chilled cream soda and whipped cream for the iced version in the summer.

The difference between butterscotch and caramel is the type of sugar used. Brown sugar imparts more deep molasses flavor into butterscotch than caramel. Traditional caramel uses white sugar, which makes it easier to burn. Butterscotch was invented in Yorkshire, England, as you may have guessed based on its connection to the famous British book series. While this recipe does require three separate components, I promise these cupcakes are well worth it. You'll soon be rewarded with golden cupcakes topped with a beautiful vanilla buttercream and drizzled with the most magical sauce, fit for a witch or wizard.

Butterscotch Cupcakes (makes 12)

Cupcake Ingredients:

- 1 cup brown sugar (light or dark)
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 3/4 cup whole milk
- 1 1/4 cup all purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Line a muffin tin with 12 paper baking liners.
2. Combine the sugar and egg in a bowl. Whisk until very well combined and no lumps of sugar remain. Add the vanilla, oil and whole milk. Whisk to combine.
3. In another bowl, mix the dry ingredients together and then add to the bowl of wet ingredients. Mix until the batter is smooth but not over-mixed.
4. Divide the batter evenly in the muffin tin. Bake for 16 minutes. Remove cupcakes from the heat to cool on a wire rack. Allow to cool completely before frosting.

Buttercream Frosting Ingredients:

- 2 sticks unsalted butter (softened at room temperature)
- 5 cups confectioners sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2-4 tablespoons of milk or heavy cream

Instructions:

1. In a stand mixer with a paddle attachment, mix the butter on medium speed for 2-3 minutes. Make sure that your butter has been sitting on the counter for at least an hour so that it is soft enough to mix.
2. Add the sugar, vanilla and milk/cream. Beat the frosting on medium-low speed for an additional 2-3 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl so that everything is incorporated. Set aside until ready to pipe. I used a large star piping tip inside a piping bag to decorate my cupcakes.

Butterscotch Sauce Ingredients:

- 1/2 stick unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- Large pinch of salt

Instructions:

1. In a small sauce pan, melt butter over medium heat. Add the sugar and whisk until well combined, about 3 minutes. Add the cream and salt. Bring the heat to medium-high and whisk constantly as the sauce thickens, about 3-5 minutes. Remove the sauce from the heat and allow to cool. Drizzle the cooled sauce on the top of the cupcakes with either a spoon or a piping bag with a small round tip to decorate.

WE TAKE SO MUCH FOR GRANTED: PART II

BY HELENE CAVALLO



Communication:

Who remembers letter writing as communication?

If you made a friend who did not live locally and wanted to keep in touch or were going away for the summer and wanted to share your experiences with a close friend, you wrote letters. Long-distance phone calls were expensive, and you were charged by the minute, so not a

good option for a lengthy conversation.

As someone who always enjoyed writing, I loved handwriting a letter to a friend sharing recent life events. Of course, we needed a fair bit of patience because, after the writing, the letter had to be mailed and then came the waiting period. It could take up to a week for a letter to reach its destination, be read, responded to and then the mailing time again.

After checking the mailbox several times, finally it arrives! How exciting it was to get the letter and sit down to read it.

How communication has changed! A response can be received within seconds if the recipient reads the e-mail or text right away. How impatient we are if we have to wait a day or two for a response. As if texting is not enough of a shortcut, we have our abbreviations, which is a whole new language to learn since many texters assume you've taken the abbreviation classes. (TTYL; LMAO; K, for ok, but isn't that already abbreviated from Okay??; TLTR – too long to read ... what??)

Mobile Phones:

A scenario from the past:

You made plans to meet a friend or business associate. More than likely, a time and place was scheduled while talking on the phone. You arrived at the meeting place, but they are not there. You think maybe they're running late, so you wait another half hour. At this point, you're wondering if there was a misunderstanding about the time or place, or if there was an accident. At some point, you realize the meeting is not going to happen and wait until you can contact them, either at home or the office. I can remember this frustrating and disappointing scenario happening more than a few times in my lifetime. Of course, these days you would either call or text and say where the heck are you??

1985: The first cell phone, which is nothing like the cell phones we have today, was released in approximately 1985.

There were many different mobile phones, but up until the year 2000 they were not able to function with the internet.

2000: Nokia created an internet-enabled cell phone called the Communicator, which was before its time. It had a full keyboard and could be used as a web browser and e-mail support. However, it was large and bulky so not convenient to carry around.

Sharp created the "first commercially available camera phone," but it was only sold in Japan and the camera was not very good.

Nokia then came up with the 3310. It had a long-lasting battery and was light and pocket-sized.

2003: Then came the Nokia 1100.

The Nokia 3310 and 1100 are apparently two of the best-selling mobile phones of all time.

2003: The Blackberry 6210 was launched. This was widely used by businesses for their employees, who used it for e-mail, web browsing and the famed Blackberry Messenger.

2007: Skipping ahead a bit, it was announced on or about January 9, 2007, that the iPhone would be released in the United States on June 29, 2007. This changed from the previous mobile phone designs by featuring few physical buttons and a touch screen.

2008: The first Android Smartphone, the HTC Dream, had a touch screen, internet access and a QWERTY keyboard.

Since that time, smartphones have become very accessible and popular. Aside from being a phone, they give us constant access to the internet, GPS, e-mail, a camera and of course texting.

Texting is a really great way to communicate since you can send a quick message to someone and hopefully get an immediate response. You can send a message to multiple people and get responses from each of them. The problem is when someone includes you in a text with a large group of people and the texting is never ending.



Research:

What about when a student had a project requiring research?

Unless you were one of the lucky families who invested in a set of encyclopedias, off you went to the library to do your homework project. "Reference books" were not loanable. A set of encyclopedias could be purchased, possibly from a door-to-door salesman or ordered by mail. They cost quite a bit of money for a family since many families had only one salary to live on.

Then came the internet and e-mail.

The World Wide Web became available to the public in approximately April 1993.

Shortly thereafter, internet browsers made e-mail widely available to the public, and we were able to send and receive e-mails consecutively. We were also able to meet and communicate with people in chat rooms.

Not to mention social media. ... So, yes, especially the younger people who never knew what it was like before **take so much for granted**.

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.

LAKE NONA ARTS: LOCAL VOICES TAKE THE STAGE IN BROADWAY-THEMED COMMUNITY CONCERT

BY STEPHANIE HOUDE
PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAKE NONA ARTS

The sound of Broadway is coming to town as Lake Nona Arts gears up for its much-anticipated spring concert, *An Evening of Broadway*, set to take place Sunday, May 18, at 7 p.m. in the Lake Nona High School Auditorium.

The concert will feature a toe-tapping, heartwarming selection of beloved hits from Broadway musicals both classic and contemporary – including numbers from *Les Misérables*, *Wicked*, *Little Shop of Horrors*

and *Chicago*.

This show is a celebration of the magic of Broadway and the incredible talent we have right here in our community. Whether you're a Broadway buff or just love great music, there's something in this concert for everyone.

The community choir and band, made up of musicians ranging in age from young adults to seniors, has been rehearsing for months in preparation for this musical extravaganza. Several soloists and small ensembles will also be spotlighted, adding variety and energy to the evening's performance.

Admission is pay as you choose, with donations encouraged to support future choir events and local arts initiatives. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., and seating is first-come, first-served.

Don't miss your chance to experience the spirit of Broadway – right in your own backyard!

For tickets, you can scan the QR code or visit www.teachtix.com/lakenonarts to get yours today!



We appreciate your support!

The Lake Nona Arts theater program has also begun the summer playwriting season! There is still time to get involved as a performer. Reach out for more information.

We would love to have you join one of our ongoing community arts groups or reach out to connect with us to attend a concert or suggest an idea to expand the arts community in our area! Email lakenonachoir@gmail.com for more information, or check out the website www.lakenonaarts.com for ways to register.

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 more information, contact us at lakenonachoir@gmail.com.



THE WINNING FAMILY: THE 5-MINUTE HABIT THAT STRENGTHENS WORK AND HOME LIFE

BY PASTOR RODNEY GAGE



at home, but instead, many feel like they're constantly falling short on both fronts.

Here's the good news: Winning at work and home isn't about doing more, it's about doing the right things consistently. One powerful yet simple practice can help you create connection, boost morale, and build emotional resilience where it matters most. It's called the 5-Minute Habit – and it might just be the secret weapon for today's busy families.

This daily habit consists of just three short steps. Whether you do it at the breakfast table, during the school drop-off or at bedtime, these five intentional minutes can transform your family dynamics and even make you a better employee or leader at work.

Let's break it down:

I. Start With Gratitude

A thankful heart shifts your perspective.

Gratitude isn't just polite – it's powerful. According to research from the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley, people who practice gratitude consistently report better physical health, fewer aches and pains, improved sleep, and increased feelings of happiness and optimism. Gratitude has even been linked to reduced stress and anxiety.

So why not start your day by asking your kids (and yourself), "What's one thing you're thankful for today?" You might hear answers like, "I'm thankful for pancakes," or "I'm thankful my teacher moved the test," but that's okay. The point isn't to curate deep answers – it's to cultivate a grateful mindset.

When parents model gratitude, it teaches children how to focus on what's right instead of what's wrong. That simple shift in perspective can change the entire emotional atmosphere of your home.

II. Share One Win and One Challenge

Open communication builds trust at work and home.

Too often, families only communicate around logistics – "Did you do your homework?" or "What time is practice?" But what if, for just a few minutes a day, you invited meaningful connection?

The second part of the 5-Minute Habit is sharing one win and one challenge from the day. It creates a natural rhythm for open communication, honesty and empathy. At work, leaders who do this with their teams see higher employee engagement and retention. At home, it builds trust between parents and kids – especially as children enter the tween and teen years.

Why is this so effective? Because it normalizes both success and struggle. It tells your kids, "It's okay to talk about what's hard – and we're here to celebrate what's good, too."

Research from the Harvard Study of Adult Development (the longest-running study on happiness and well-being) found that strong relationships are the single biggest predictor of life satisfaction and success. Talking about wins and challenges helps create those deeper connections.

Illustration: A working mom of three shared how her "win and challenge" routine at dinner became the highlight of her day. "It helped my husband and I connect with our kids in ways we never expected. We learned about school drama, sports frustrations, and even their proudest moments. We feel like a team again."

III. End With Encouragement

A simple word of affirmation can change someone's day.

We live in a noisy, critical world. Kids hear messages all day about who they should be. Employees face pressure and performance reviews. Parents often feel like they're never doing enough. But encouragement? It breathes life into weary hearts.

Ending the 5-Minute Habit with a word of affirmation reminds your child – or your spouse – that they are seen, loved and valued.

This could be as simple as:

- "I'm proud of how you handled that situation."
- "You're so creative – never stop using that gift."
- "I love how hard you work, even when it's tough."

At work, leaders who offer regular praise see greater employee performance. At home, words of affirmation build confidence and emotional security in kids. According to Dr. John Gottman, a renowned marriage and family researcher, healthy relationships have a 5:1 ratio of positive to negative interactions. Encouragement helps you maintain that ratio – and create a culture of honor in your home.

One parent shared with me recently that their teenage son, who usually shrugged off compliments, quietly taped a sticky note above his desk. It read: "You're stronger than you think." His mom had written it on a whim. But to him, it meant everything.

Small Habit, Big Results

The beauty of the 5-Minute Habit is that it's not overwhelming. It doesn't require hours of planning or another app on your phone. It just requires intentional presence.



Five minutes a day can:

- Strengthen emotional connection in your family
- Improve communication and trust
- Set a positive tone before school or bed
- Increase your own sense of gratitude and peace

In a world that glorifies hustle, this small habit helps you prioritize what matters most.

So tomorrow morning – or tonight before bed – try it. Start with gratitude. Share one win and one challenge. End with encouragement.

Because five minutes a day could be the difference between just surviving...and truly thriving.

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 or ReThinkLife.com.

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committed to the care and improvement of human life, and Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida is a key partner in our mission through its vital work to provide healthy meals to families in need,” said David Shimp, CEO, HCA Florida Osceola Hospital. “We’re honored to support Second Harvest with today’s financial gift, as well as the service of our dedicated volunteers this month and all year long.”

The organization Feeding America estimates one in eight people, and one in six children, in Central Florida live in households that may be food insecure, which means not having enough nutritious food to have an active, healthy life. This year’s *We Show Up* initiative brings HCA Florida Healthcare’s total contribution to Second Harvest to \$70,000, more than 5,000 pounds of food and more than 800 volunteer hours since the partnership began in 2021.

“Every day, hundreds of thousands of our neighbors across Central Florida face hunger. It takes a caring and committed community to ensure families have the nourishment they need while working to regain stability,” said Dan Samuels, director of philanthropy, Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida. “We’re deeply grateful for HCA Florida Healthcare’s longstanding partnership in this fight. They exemplify what it means to Show Up and support those who need us most.”

We Show Up for Our Communities is part of HCA Healthcare’s enterprise-wide focus on providing the quality healthcare our patients deserve as well as showing up to address needs in our community. In 2024, HCA Florida Healthcare colleagues from 650 facilities volunteered more than 38,000 hours and committed nearly \$1.2 million to community partner organizations in the Sunshine State.



HCA Florida Healthcare is celebrating National Volunteer Month through its continued commitment to fighting food insecurity in Central Florida.

At least 80 colleagues from HCA Florida Healthcare sites of care across the Greater Orlando region came together at Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida on April 18 and April 23 to help sort and pack food donations. HCA Florida Healthcare volunteers also presented a \$20,000 donation to help provide food to families experiencing hunger. The events were part of HCA Healthcare’s national *We Show Up for Our Communities* initiative that occurs each April to address community needs through volunteering, making charitable donations and partnering with local organizations.

“The HCA Florida Healthcare family is



About HCA Florida Healthcare

HCA Florida Healthcare, a part of HCA Healthcare, is a family of more than 650 affiliated sites of care, including hospitals, physician practices, freestanding emergency rooms and urgent care centers. As one of the state’s leading healthcare networks, HCA Florida Healthcare’s 11,100 experienced doctors and more than 84,000 colleagues work together to deliver equitable, evidence-based collaborative care through more than 12 million patient encounters annually. HCA Florida Healthcare is committed to improving more lives in more ways and giving back to the communities it serves. In 2024, the network provided more than \$1 billion in uncompensated care and contributed more than \$3.7 million to community organizations across the state. In addition, HCA Florida Healthcare offers patients access to highly trained specialists, including the state’s most comprehensive cardiovascular network. A strong advocate for the next generation of healthcare professionals, HCA Florida Healthcare is a leader in training future healthcare professionals, offering 151 Graduate Medical Education (GME) programs at 27 different hospitals with more than 2,400 residents. For more information, please visit [HCAFloridaHealthcare.com](https://www.HCAFloridaHealthcare.com).

HCA Florida Healthcare facilities in Orlando includes five hospitals: HCA Florida Lake Monroe Hospital (with Level II Trauma Center) in Sanford, Oviedo Medical Center, HCA Florida Osceola Hospital (with Level II Trauma Center) in Kissimmee, HCA Florida Poinciana Hospital and UCF Lake Nona Hospital, as well as 12 freestanding emergency rooms, 13 MD Now Urgent Care Centers and numerous physician practices.

About Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida (SHFBCF)

SHFBCF is a member of Feeding America – the largest charitable domestic hunger-relief organization in the United States. SHFBCF secures and distributes food and grocery products to more than 870 local nonprofit feeding partners throughout Central Florida. With the help of food and financial donors, volunteers and a caring, committed community, the food bank distributes 300,000 meals every day to a seven-county service area, which includes Brevard, Lake, Marion, Orange, Osceola, Seminole and Volusia. Feeding neighbors facing hunger is only the beginning. By investing in job training programs, advocating for access to nutritious foods, and inspiring our community to get involved, SHFBCF is leaning into the root causes of hunger and helping our neighbors thrive. With support from the Central Florida community, Second Harvest Food Bank is feeding inspiration, change, achievement, health — and families facing hunger. To learn more about SHFBCF, visit www.FeedHopeNow.org.

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NEWBERY MEDAL WINNERS JERRY CRAFT AND KWAME ALEXANDER EMBARK ON NATIONAL BOOK TOUR

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JERRY CRAFT

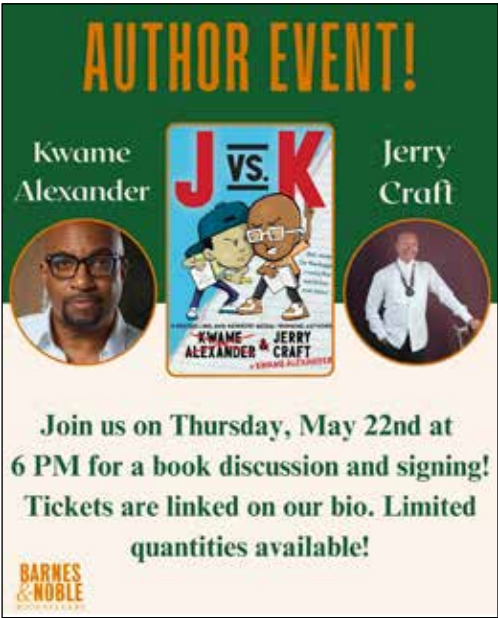
Award-winning author, illustrator and Lake Nona resident Jerry Craft has announced an exciting nationwide book signing tour alongside fellow Newbery Medalist Kwame Alexander. The groundbreaking event celebrates their latest collaboration—a children's book that marks the first-ever created by two Newbery-winning authors.


The tour will conclude with a special appearance at Barnes & Noble Colonial in Orlando, on May 22 at 6 PM. Fans will have the opportunity to meet both literary icons, get books signed, and celebrate a historic moment in children's literature.

Jerry Craft, known for his acclaimed graphic novels *New Kid* and *Class Act*, has long been a trailblazer in middle-grade fiction, combining authentic storytelling with powerful illustrations. More about Jerry and his work can be found at www.jerrycraft.com.

For full event details and updates, visit the Barnes & Noble event page.


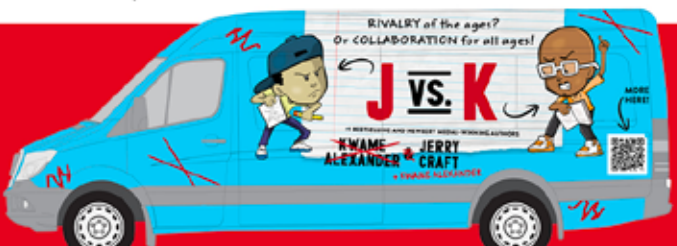
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MON, 5/5 • 6:30PM Bellmont Books Boston, MA	MON, 5/12 Information to come.	Mon, 5/19 • 6:30PM Mrs. Dalloway's Berkeley, CA
TUES, 5/6 • 6:00PM Books of Wonder New York, NY	Tues, 5/13 • 4:30PM Lemuria Books Jackson, MS	Tues, 5/20 • 6:30PM Torrance Public Library Torrance, CA
WED, 5/7 • 6:30PM Kindred Thoughts Bridgeport, CT	Wed, 5/14 • 6:00PM Whose Books Dallas, TX	Thurs, 5/22 • 6:00PM Barnes & Noble Colonial Plaza Orlando, FL
THURS, 5/8 • 6:30PM [words] Bookstore Maplewood, NJ	Thurs, 5/15 • 7:00PM Black Pearl Books Austin, TX	
FRI, 5/9 • 6:30PM Scrawl Books Reston, VA	Fri, 5/16 • 6:30PM Harris County Library Houston, TX	





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LAKE NONA INTERIORS INSIDER: VOLUME TEN RENOVATE OR RELOCATE? THE GREAT DEBATE!

BY EDINA HOUSTON



If you've ever stood in your kitchen thinking, *"This just isn't working for us anymore,"* while dodging a flying backpack or Lego piece, you're not alone. Families in Lake Nona are growing, evolving – and realizing that their homes might not be keeping up.

With high interest rates making moving less appealing (hello, unpredictable mortgage math), many homeowners are asking the question: **Should we move or just make this house work better for us?**

As a designer who helps families reimagine their homes every day, I can confidently say:

You don't always need a new address – just a new approach.

"Renovating allows you to preserve that emotional connection to your home, while moving offers a fresh start in a different environment."

If you love your neighborhood (hey cul-de-sac crew), your school zone and your street, a smart renovation might be the best decision you make all year.

Renovate for Function, Style and Happiness

Design is about more than aesthetics – it's about how your home supports your *lifestyle*. When I work with clients, we dig into how each space needs to *function* so it can finally work *for* you, not against you.

Let's look at a few game-changing updates that can transform your current home into your dream home – without the moving truck.

The Kitchen You've Been Pinning

Your kitchen isn't just a place to cook – it's the heart of your home. And if it's not flowing well, *everything* feels harder.

Imagine a large island where the kids do homework while you prep dinner. Deep drawers that actually fit your pots. A beverage station with a built-in espresso machine (yes, please). Let's ditch the outdated cabinetry and statement backsplash to customize every inch to match your lifestyle and aesthetic. It's your dream kitchen – why not make it real? Let's design a kitchen that inspires family meals, Sunday brunch and Friday night charcuterie.

Storage Goals: Built-Ins & Drop Zones

Say goodbye to cluttered counters and toy explosions. Built-in cabinetry in living rooms, mudrooms and laundry rooms can instantly organize your life. Add hooks for backpacks, pull-out drawers for shoes, and even a cubby for the dog. It's luxury meets practicality – and yes, it's life-changing.

Powder Room With Personality

A small space with big potential! Add designer wallpaper, a bold mirror, new sconces, maybe a floating vanity. It's the perfect room to take design risks – and wow your guests in the process.

Furniture and Style Refresh = Instant Vibe Shift

Your home may not need a full remodel – sometimes, it just needs a *refresh*. Swap that tired sofa for something sleek and plush. Add an oversized area rug, layer in textured pillows, and upgrade your lighting. With the right styling, even your existing layout can feel brand new. Plus, custom millwork instantly elevates a space.

Backyard Bliss: Create an Outdoor Oasis

Here in Lake Nona, outdoor living is part of the lifestyle. Why not lean into it? Add a pool (if you don't have one), install an outdoor kitchen with a beverage fridge, a pergola with comfy seating, outdoor fans, ambient lighting, even a putting green if that's your thing. Your back yard should feel like a luxury resort...that you don't need to worry about leaving.

Why It's Smart to Renovate Now

With today's high interest rates, moving into a bigger or "better" home often comes with a hefty price tag. Renovating means you can stay where you are, preserve your equity, and customize your space exactly how *you* want it. Plus, well-designed renovations increase your home's value for the long haul.

Final Thoughts from Your Designer Next Door

Before you start browsing new listings, ask yourself:

What if my current home just needs the right design to feel like my dream home?

From functional upgrades to fabulous finishes, let's reimagine your space together – so it not only looks amazing but works better for your family every single day.

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





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