

OLYMPIC CHAMPION ERIN JACKSON INDUCTED INTO BLACK HISTORY MUSEUM



In this issue:

Erin Jackson Inducted Into Black History Museum of Marion County

City of Ocala's Local Hire Program Changing Lives

Kimberly's Center for Child Protection: Keeping Kids Safe

VOCAL: Providing Compassionate Care for Pets



Scholarships for CF Early Childhood Education Minority Students

College of Central Florida minority students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education program are eligible to receive the Minority Teacher Education Scholarship Program scholarship. The award amount is \$2,000 per semester for fall and spring.

COLLEGE OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
Office of Financial Aid
CF.edu | 352-873-5801

Scholarship Requirements

- Be a Florida resident and a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen.
- Have less than 18 hours of upper-division courses in education at the time of application.
- Be one of the following: African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian American/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaskan native.
- Be enrolled full time in the Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education program at CF.
- Have a cumulative 2.5 grade point average.

Visit the Florida Fund for Minority Teachers at www.ffmt.org for application deadlines.

For additional rules and requirements, download the PDF at www.floridafundforminorityteachers.org/SSEAD/faqsheet/MTES.pdf

COME SUPPORT OUR LOCAL ARTISTS

The Historic Ocala Preservation Society is hosting its upcoming Historic Home & Art Tour! Six historic homes will be available for viewing in two of Ocala's downtown Historic Districts.

Local artists will have their work on display at multiple homes along the tour route. Food and drinks will be available for purchase from various food trucks and mobile bars. Saturday, April 23, 2022, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at two starting locations: 712 E Fort King Street, Ocala FL 34471 and 120 NE Sanchez Ave, Ocala FL 34470).

Tickets available for purchase online at SpringHomeTour.eventbrite.com and at Your Hearts Desire, 915 E Silver Springs Blvd, Ocala FL 34470.

Our mission is to record the rich history of the people, places and events in the community and share information that impacts the lives of residents in Marion County.



TOWN Talk MAGAZINE

Sharing the good news happening
in our community.

Founders

Monica Bryant & Cynthia Wilson-Graham

Editor

Monica Bryant

Photography/Editor

Cynthia Wilson-Graham

Contributors

Scott Hackmyer

Cain Davis ~ Pamela Lewin

Let's Talk

We want to hear from you:

Email your submissions, events, comments or questions to Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com. Please include contact information (name and phone number) on the submission. Deadline is the first Monday of each month for the following month's publication.

Policy Statement

All submissions become the sole property of Town Talk Magazine.

The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of Town Talk. All articles, announcements and advertisements submitted are subject to refusal and editing at the editor's discretion.

Contact Us:

Town Talk Magazine
P.O. Box 6212
Ocala, FL 34478
(352) 897-1817

Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com
or Towntalkmagazine.org

EDITOR'S DESK



Wow! What an awesome community we live in. In the past, Ocala/ Marion County has been in the national spotlight for things that did not accurately reflect the generous and kind hearted people we really are.

But this time, we're in the news for all the right reasons with the accomplishments of our, yes our, very own Olympic Champions Erin Jackson, Brittany Bowe and Joey Mantia, plus their coach Renee Hildebrand.

We should no longer be referred to as Slo-cala or Horse Capital of the World because we've moved up. We should now be known as the Speed Capital of the World!

It was truly amazing to see the love and support the community has for these young people as they were welcomed back home with a weekend celebration for the champions they are.

We hope the example these role models set with their hard work, determination and perseverance will inspire the next generation to set goals and pursue their dreams and remember that nothing is impossible if they only believe.

As a community, we are and should be proud, but State Representative Yvonne Hinson summed it up best when she said:

We Are



Proud!

Congratulations Erin, Brittany and Joey!

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Here's some Tips for stopping Child Abuse:

- Try to understand your children. Learn how kids behave and what they can and can't do at different ages. Have realistic expectations and be reasonable if children fall short.
- Keep your children healthy. Denying children food, sleep, or healthcare is abuse by neglect.
- Get help with alcohol or drug problems. Keep children away from anyone who abuses those substances.
- Watch your words. Angry or punishing language can leave emotional scars for a lifetime.
- Get control of yourself before disciplining a child. Set clear rules so the child knows what to expect. Avoid physical punishment.

Source: www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?contenttypeid=1&contentid=1565

Subscribe with Us:

To receive a **free** copy via e-mail, subscribe at Towntalkmagazine.org
Annual subscription (printed copy) via mail: \$50

Advertise with Us: Business card: \$35 ~ **Quarter-page:** \$65
Half-page: \$100. Ads are black and white and must be submitted in Jpeg or Pdf format and sent to Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com.

Payments can be made via Cash App (**\$Towntalkmarion**) or make check payable to Town Talk Magazine and mail to P.O. Box 6212, Ocala, FL 34478



Let's Talk!

Monica

Monica T. Bryant, Editor

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

KIMBERLY'S CENTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION



Kimberly's Center for Child Protection

If Dawn Westgate could wish for one thing, it would be to take away all the suffering of every child that comes through the doors of Kimberly's Center for Child Protection, formally known as Kimberly's Cottage. But most days, she settles for knowing that they've made a really tough day, week or month a little easier for some brave children.

"So many cases have broken my heart over the years ... the type of hurt that our children experience is, at times, truly unimaginable," said Westgate, Executive Director of the organization. "I do not, in any way, understand how someone can hurt a child."

The month of April, designated nationally as Child Abuse Prevention Month, brings attention to the work that Kimberly's Center does and recognizes the importance of families and communities working together to strengthen families to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Westgate said Kimberly's Center, which has been in the community for 23 years, is part of the system of care that becomes involved after an allegation of child abuse or neglect. She said the organization serves between 1,200 to 1,300 children annually with Child Abuse Intervention Services, and was founded by a taskforce in 1996. It became a nonprofit in 1999. Kimberly's Center works closely with law enforcement and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to assist in investigating allegations of abuse and then they provide the ongoing advocacy and therapy needed to help children recover from childhood trauma. The organization serves newborns up to age 18 and some young adults too, and provides a school based prevention curriculum that teaches children and teenagers about body safety, online safety and anti-bullying.

"Child abuse happens so much more frequently than people realize, even right here in Ocala/Marion County," Westgate said. "Every year Marion County has more than 4,000 reports of suspected abuse and neglect, this impacts more than 9,000 children annually."

Westgate, who was initially hired in 2003 as a Child Advocate, said she's honored to work alongside a team of 23 amazing child abuse experts consisting of a Pediatrician, Nurse Practitioners, Therapists, Forensic Interviewers, Child Advocates and administrative staff at Kimberly's Center.

"They're a truly incredible mix of people who work tirelessly on behalf of some of the most vulnerable children in our community," she said.

The most commonly reported maltreatments to DCF are Family Violence and Substance misuse, she said, and the majority of the 1,300 cases that come to Kimberly's Center are for Sexual and Physical Abuse.

"The situations that tend to stick with me the most, are when we have a child disclosing sexual abuse, but for whatever reason, their mother does not believe them or actively chooses to stay with the abuser rather than protect her child," Westgate said. "The suffering of that child is compounded by that situation and I know that their road to healing is just infinitely more challenging but not impossible!"

Westgate said referrals from the Investigations program comes directly from law enforcement or DCF and Trauma Therapy program referrals are also received from community partners in the school system, the Guardian ad Litem program and other agencies that serve children.

Westgate said their greatest challenge right now is funding and awareness. She said there is so much uncertainty in the world of fundraising right now that they are always looking for one time or monthly donors to support their work.

Westgate said they welcome opportunities to share their mission and information about child abuse by conducting scheduled tours of Kimberly's Center, or by going out into the community and providing workshops or trainings. Their Facebook and Instagram pages are also great ways to stay connected with upcoming events and opportunities to get involved.

"I love the mission at Kimberly's Center. It's difficult work, but so rewarding," she said. "Opening doors to conversations about abuse and neglect ultimately creates a safer Ocala/Marion County for our kids."

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP KEEP KIDS SAFE

- Awareness speaking up when you see or hear something that is a red flag.
- Open communication with children and teenagers - a "we can talk about ANYTHING mentality."
- Limiting or eliminating one-on-one situations
- Offering respite to tired or overwhelmed caregivers
- Know what to do if a child chooses to disclose abuse/neglect to you. Tell them you believe them and are going to try your best to get them help.
- Understand that making a call to the 1-800-96ABUSE Hotline is not so much accusing someone of abusing a child, but instead requesting a professional service to explore if a child is safe or at risk. You could truly save the life of a child by just picking up that phone and making a report.

For more information about Kimberly's Center, go to <https://kimberlycenter.org>



The **Community Spotlight** highlights a person, place or event in our community. Tell us what's happening around town so we can share your **Good News** with others. Email submissions to Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com.

COME ON OCALA, LET'S GET HEALTHY

Submitted by Cain Davis

The Estella Byrd Whitman Wellness & Community Resource Center (EBWW) provides healthcare and social services to individuals of Tucker Hill and surrounding communities in Ocala; EBWW is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The Tucker Hill population consists of more than 50% African Americans and has existed for 150 years. EBWW provides services to meet the needs of the uninsured, minorities of color, homeless and low-income individuals. EBWW's success has positioned the organization to expand its services and impact in the community. The team consists of a physician, nurse practitioner (CEO), an administrative assistant and volunteers.



You can stand in the gap that exists between your uninsured and underinsured neighbors and the healthcare they need by partnering with the organization to increase healthcare for all. We have made it easy for you to partner with us. The Weight Loss Challenge provides an opportunity for you to have fun and enhance your relationships with family, friends, co-workers and neighbors while simultaneously and purposefully supporting those most vulnerable.

The Weight Loss Challenge concept was chosen, in part, because we learned from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other health officials that COVID -19 cases and deaths were disproportionately higher in communities of color and other disadvantaged populations. By focusing on healthy choices, you and I can live and model a lifestyle to others that reduces the severe outcomes associated with COVID -19. Your participation in the Weight Loss Challenge is one way you can actively support these vulnerable populations. The Weight Loss Challenge is not just about losing weight; for two months, we will increase our efforts to promote healthy choices that will stay with you beyond the Weight Loss Challenge period (May 1, 2022 - June 30, 2022). Our educational outreach consists of group meetings and exercises led by experts in nutrition, physical therapy, fitness, wellness, Tai Chi, Zumba, etc. We hope you will also participate in our short (30 - 45 minutes) community walks, which should be fun and bring even greater community awareness to healthy choices.

This Challenge is for everyone, those desiring to lose weight, those who support making sustainable healthy choices, and those who support a healthier community. Therefore, even if it is not your goal to lose weight, your support is key to our success. Your investment, whether time, financial contribution, sharing with others (email, social media, meetings), etc., are boots on the ground as it relates to standing strong on the front lines of healthy choices.


Your options for participating in the Weight Loss Challenge are numerous We welcome your support as you desire to provide it:

1. Register your team to participate in the Challenge
2. Talk to a leader in your religious, workplace and neighborhood organizations about being a Community Healthy Choice Champion, leader and spokesperson.
3. Talk to a leader in your religious, workplace and neighborhood organization, requesting to enter multiple teams from your organization. The Weight Loss Challenge is the ultimate opportunity for a friendly challenge for an excellent purpose;
4. Making a personal financial donation and asking others (individuals, companies and other organizations) to do the same; and
5. Partner with our team during the Weight Loss Challenge to coordinate and execute the program.

The EBWW accepts direct donations to fund their services and programs that support the health and wellness of the uninsured, underinsured and marginalized communities, which continues to grow exponentially. EBWW provides desperately needed services by a professional staff, ensuring your direct financial support of the Center translates into direct relief and support of the most vulnerable in our community.

Additional information regarding the Challenge will be available as it gets closer to the Challenge period. We look forward to your partnership as we move toward a healthier community. For more information about EBWW or the Challenge, please call Cain Davis at (352) 871-4555 or Carolyn Adams, CEO, at (954) 562-2617.

Estella Byrd Whitman Wellness & Community Resources Center



Community Weight Loss Challenge

Exercising our choice to reduce our COVID-19 risks
DONATIONS TO SUPPORT THOSE WITH NO INSURANCE IS APPRECIATED

Purpose: To promote and encourage healthy weight loss. People who are overweight or obese are at a much higher risk of experiencing severe disease and even death from Covid-19. Studies suggest that losing weight can reduce our risk of being severely ill, hospitalized, or needing to be treated in ICU.

Application Deadline: April 30, 2022

Challenge Dates: May 1, 2022 – June 30, 2022

What Should You Do: Enter a team from your workplace, religious organization, family/friends, etc.

Team Size: Each team can consist of 3-5 people

Winners: We are all winners for making the conscious decision to make healthy choices, but EBWW will also provide monetary awards to the 3 challenge teams that lose the most weight at the end (June 30, 2022) of the challenge and the team that maintains the most weight loss in January 2023.

First Place	\$250.00
Second Place	\$150.00
Third Place	\$100.00
Long-term	\$250.00

Benefits: The Estella Byrd Whitman Wellness & Community Resources Center (EBWW) will host a challenge team meeting every other week during the challenge. The meetings will include discussions related to healthy choices and various exercises led by experts in various areas to include, but not limited to conducting exercises properly, improving body movement, using exercise as a means to relieve stress, and how to maintain a healthy exercise plan.

You can contact the EBWW staff at (954) 562-2617 to enroll your team or inquire about the challenge.

EBWW is a 501(c)(3) non-profit agency, your support and contributions serve those who cannot afford to pay for healthcare services.

CITY PROGRAM PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME



Dwyacia Edwards and Ocala City Manager Sandra Wilson

Dwyacia Edwards never thought she would land a job working for the City of Ocala, but a local program her mom told her about changed everything.

“This program changed my life simply by putting me in the situation of maturing. Coming from fast food to a government job was a dramatic change, but this program specifically brought out a side of me I had never seen,” Edwards said.

Ocala City Manager Sandra Wilson was introduced to the concept of the Targeted Local Hire Program while attending a National League of Cities conference in 2018. She said the City of Los Angeles has a similar program and she presented the concept to then city manager John Zabler, and he authorized the program to be implemented in the City of Ocala.

The program provides an opportunity for Ocala residents that live in economically challenged areas of the City to participate in on-the-job training, and when a position is available, obtain full-time employment with the City after completion of the six-month training period. Wilson said the focus is on residents living in Census tract 17 and 18 because approximately 53% of households in those two tracts live below the poverty line. This compares to 13% of households living below the poverty line for Florida as a whole. Households in those tracts also have a median household income of \$20,000 per year, which is 64% lower than the median household income for Florida as a whole.

Wilson said currently only four jobs are eligible for the program: Recreation Aide I, Maintenance Worker, Sanitation Worker and Groundskeeper. She said they chose those jobs because they are the most likely to have a position available to be filled by a program graduate. Participants not hired by the City can use the training and experience gained while working for the City to supplement their resume when seeking employment with another employer.

Edwards, 19, said she started the training program in August 2021, and was hired in February 2022. Her first official day working full-time for the City of Ocala was March 1, 2022. She said becoming a government worker at such a young age is definitely a big blessing.

“This program gives an amazing opportunity to young adults leaving high school or truly any age,” she said. “They take you under their wing and give you experience for any situation. You learn a lot within six months. It’s a great way to start off a future career.”

Since the program’s inception, Wilson said 15 people have participated in the program, but only six have completed it and received the Certificate of Vocational Training. The first participant started working at the City in December 2019, and five participants have been hired as full-time employees.

“Some participants have struggled with the responsibility of having a full-time job,” Wilson said. “The nine participants that did not complete the program either left on their own accord or were terminated for poor job performance or poor attendance.”

Anyone interested in applying for the program, must contact Career Source at **(352) 840-5700** in order to obtain a job ready designation. The career counselor will ask a series of questions and once you obtain the designation, contact the City of Ocala Human Resources at **(352) 629-8359** to make an appointment to fill out an on-line job application.

“It is my goal to make sure Ocala residents have an opportunity to have a rewarding career, and it was important to me to bring the Targeted Local Hire Program to Ocala to assist with that goal,” Wilson said.

Business Spotlight



Business Name: God's Gifts Christian Academy, Inc.

No. of Employees: 3

Business Owner: Shakira McCormick
Diamond McCormick

Business Address: 1601 N.E. 25th Ave. unit 401-402
Ocala, FL 34470

Business Phone: (352) 351-0819

What Year Did You Start Your Business? 2019

Hours of Operation:
Monday - Friday 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Products and/or Services: Childcare

Email: godsgiftschristianacademy@yahoo.com

Website: godsgiftschristianacademy.com

Are you on Social Media? Yes

Facebook: God's Gifts Christian Academy, LLC

What or Who Inspired you to start your business?
My mom and my sister who is special needs. My mom was never able to find any facilities that were willing or open long enough to take on the task of children who needed special accommodations, so we decided to open a facility that is inclusive of all children. We originally started in 2008 working alongside our mom and have continued to work in the industry for more than 10 years.

What Makes Your Business Unique or What's Your Specialty?

We are able to care for children with all needs.

What Advice Would You Give Someone Starting A Business?

Have a plan, Step out on Faith, Execute the plan, Trust God and keep going no matter what hurdles may try to come.



The Small Business Profile is FREE and open to small businesses located in Marion County with less than 25 employees or solo entrepreneurs.

To have your business featured, request a form from Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com. Completed forms can be returned via email or mailed to P.O. Box 6212, Ocala, FL 34478.

WELCOME HOME OLYMPIC CHAMPIONS: WE LOVE YOU AND

Erin Jackson does not remember writing in her senior year book that one day she wanted to win a gold medal. But for those who know her, actually fulfilling that dream is no surprise.

Growing up, Cathy Daniels said her niece wanted to go up in space and work for NASA, but once she started inline skating she wanted to win a gold medal.

Daniels said Jackson competed in beauty pageants at a very young age and won multiple trophies, but when she turned eight years old, she told her mom she didn't want to participate anymore.

Now, 21 years later, Jackson won a Gold Medal in the 500 meters speedskate in Beijing, and made history being the first Black American woman to win an individual gold medal in speed skating at the Winter Games.

"This occasion is one in which I will never forget. She represented our entire family," said William Stark, Jackson's grand uncle. "I remember when she was dressing like a doll. She was a winner back then too."



Olympic Gold Medalist Erin Jackson



Erin Jackson and her mom Rita Walker Jackson

Daniels said they were ecstatic and was jumping up and down and screaming at the TV as the family watched her skate to victory.

"It was so surreal, but amazing to see her dreams come true. We didn't know she could skate," she said. "What we do know is that whatever she decided to do, we knew that she would do it 100 percent. She gives everything she does 100 percent."

It was a proud moment for Jackson's dad too. He said he always worried about his daughter not standing still at the starting line, but she does that better than most. He doesn't use Facebook so she always called him to tell him what she was doing.

"She moved up so fast I couldn't keep up with her," Tracy Jackson said. "She was inline skating and all of a sudden she was on ice so fast. It's amazing, I couldn't believe it."

Olympic Champion Brittany Bowe said being a three time Olympian now and having the blessing of grabbing two Bronze medals she understands how difficult it is to win a medal at all and for Erin to win a gold medal is absolutely incredible.

"I could not have more respect for what she was able to do this past Olympic games," Bowe said.

For that accomplishment, Jackson was recently inducted into the Hall of Fame at the Black History Museum of Marion County located at Howard Academy Community Center. She is the youngest person so far to receive that honor.



Tracy Jackson, Corey Farmer and Erin Jackson

The induction was just one of several public and private celebrations honoring the Olympic speedskaters during the homecoming weekend, which kicked off with a breakfast and a Q&A session at Church of Hope. The Medalists spent time at their alma maters and a "Meet the Medalist" event was held at Skate A Way South for children in foster care and in group homes, children who were recently adopted and their caregivers. A luncheon was held at the College of Central Florida and the festivities ended with a parade and recognition ceremony on the Downtown Square followed by a Meet and Greet with the athletes.

The family was hoping to spend some quality time with her while she was home, like they used to. Daniels said, as a family, they always went on vacations, attended church and she was always by her sister's side at all of Erin's school activities.

WE ARE PROUD OF YOU AND YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS!

Their time together now, she said, is mostly texting and instant messaging, and she comes home for Thanksgiving when she can.

Daniels said her niece appreciates every sacrifice her parents and family has made for her.

“My parents were super focused on making sure that I had a great education. That was always a priority and outside of that, they supported me in whatever I wanted to do,” Jackson said.

Sadly, her mom, Rita Walker Jackson, passed away in 2011.

Jackson graduated from the University of Florida with honors from the Materials Science & Engineering program.



Standing: Renee Hildebrand; Joey Mantia, Erin Jackson and Brittany Bowe

Joey Mantia

Graduate of Vanguard High School; three time Olympian; Bronze Medal in team pursuit; and 28-time World Champion

Erin Jackson

Graduate of Forest High School; Two time Olympian; Gold Medalist in the 500 meters in Beijing; and first black woman to win individual gold in the World Games.

Brittany Bowe

Graduate of Trinity Catholic High School; Three-time Olympian with two bronze medals and seven gold medals at the World Championships She is the current record holder in the 1000 meters.

During their time home, the three Olympic champions talked about the impact their first coach, Renee Hildebrand, had on their successful careers. They all started skating at Skate Mania under her guidance.

“Renee Hildebrand is the reason why all three of us are sitting up here. She really set a solid foundation, high expectations and we were expected to bring our best every single day, Bowe said.

“One of the things that was so special about Renee was that she wasn’t just a speed skating coach, she was a physical therapist who took it upon herself to do the research on sports science and was way ahead of the time, Joey Mantia said.”

Jackson added: “We were all just really lucky to have got started with Renee. She’s an amazing coach and also an amazing motivator,” she said. “She just had a way of making us believe in ourselves so hard that there was no way we could fail. It was really awesome to learn from her.”

Jackson said she’s happy and really proud of what she was able to accomplish.

“I hope that I am a positive example. It would be awesome to see more people kind of follow in those footsteps,” Jackson said. “I hope it has an effect and I hope we can see more people out there trying new sports especially the Winter Sports.”

“We are the one’s that are honored to have such a bright light in our family,” Daniels said. “If its God’s will, we will be at the 2026 Winter Olympics.

Save Our Rural Area invites you to
Cowboy Up and Come on Down to the
14 TH ANNUAL MARION COUNTY
FARMLAND PRESERVATION FESTIVAL
April 9th 9am - 3pm
 at
Rock Star
Arena
 20751 NW 87 Ave Rd Micanopy, FL 32667
 Free Admission Donations Welcome
 Tractor Parade 10 am
 Great Food •Live Music
 Local Farmers Market • Cottage Crafts
 Cowboy and Country Art
 Homemade Ice Cream
 Farm Animals
 Stay at the Rock Star Arena after the Festival for
 Beat the Beast Rodeo @ 7pm - \$15 Admission
 For more information visit www.FarmlandFestival.org
 Find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/FarmlandFestival.org) @FarmlandFestival.org

OMEGA PSI PHI • PSI CHI CHAPTER
TALENT HUNT High School Talent Competition
 Howard Academy Community Center
4.23.22 • 5-8PM
 INSTRUMENTAL
 DANCE
 VOCAL
 DRAMA
 VISUAL
 CALLING all talented 10th and 11th graders.
 First, second and third place prizes will be awarded.
 The winner will move onto the State Talent Hunt Competition in September to be held in Miami.
 All expenses will be paid for trip.
 CONTACT DUYO RONALD JONES, JR. • 852-696-1459

Free for everyone
RAVENS
 Free for everyone
FREE SPORTS PHYSICAL

 Dr. Theresa Harris
 Tia Barriner-ARNP
MAY .14 .2022
8:00am -12:00pm
 Lillian Bryant Park (Inside)
 2200 NW 17th Pl., Ocala, 34475

VOCAL: PROVIDING COMPASSIONATE CARE FOR YOUR ANIMALS

Linda Norman remembers when Marion County was euthanizing thousands of animals each year because they had no place to go and the intake and euthanasia rates were extremely high. She said back then, there were limited options for low-cost spay-neuter so she, along with her partners, believed that stopping overpopulation at its root cause would make a big difference.

They were right!

Norman and her partners created Voices of Change Animal League (VOCAL) to solve the homeless pet program. Their first goal was to open a low-cost, high-volume spay-neuter clinic to work towards becoming a No-Kill Community. She said Marion County did become a No-Kill community in 2018 and more options for low-cost spay-neuter became available.



Norman, Co-Founder and Board President, said VOCAL was initially conceived in January 2015 and officially became a nonprofit. It was incorporated a month later. The clinic opened in late 2019, starting with spay-neuter and TNR (trap, neuter, return) services but quickly found that there was a huge need for lower-cost basic veterinary care.

“Today, our low-cost services include spay-neuter, specialty surgeries heartworm treatment, dental care, vaccine clinics, mass removals, diagnostics and wellness,” she said. “All of our services are low-cost and sometimes we are able to provide them at no cost to qualified pet owners. We like to say that we serve under-resourced pets and the people who love them.”

Norman recalls the time when they had just did surgery on a dog name Elizabeth who had been suffering for nearly two weeks from pyometra, a painful and potentially deadly infection of the uterus. She said the owner had no money and could not find a vet that would take payments. He was desperate for help and he couldn't bear to watch her in so much agony. Fortunately, he found VOCAL and the surgery got scheduled just in the nick of time.

“Elizabeth is feeling so much better and his owner has thanked us every day since,” she said.

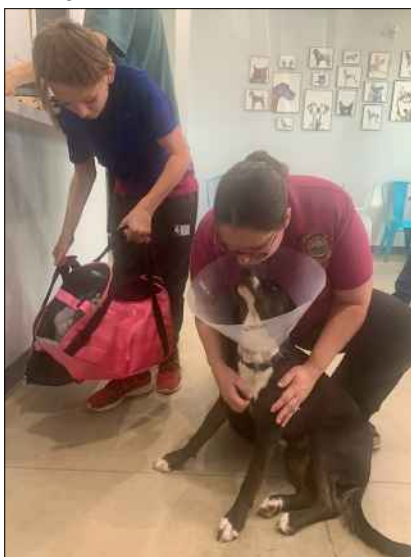
VOCAL offers a variety of membership opportunities. Members receive a quarterly newsletter to keep them informed. The newest membership level is the Legacy Membership for \$18 per month. Pets can also be honored or memorialized on one of the pavers that will be installed on the front porch, called Edna's porch, in honor of Edna, a very special dog.

Their greatest challenge, Norman said, is keeping up with the growth. Last year, the clinic saw 3,404 patients and they are on track to double that number to 7,000 this year. To keep up, they will need additional staff. Currently, they have nine employees and approximately 50 active volunteers, but they plan is to add two additional staff positions as soon as they can fill them.

“We need dog walkers, but our most urgent need at the moment is for lawn maintenance and weed eating,” she said. “We have 22 acres to mow and keep looking its best.”

VOCAL has one application, located under the Applications tab on their website at vocalforpets.org, for all their outreach services, which includes needing food for a pet, medical care, surgery or help with anything they may need to provide to keep a pet in its home and out of the shelter system. There must be a stated need to qualify, and if applying for food assistance, all pets are required to be spayed or neutered.

Norman said VOCAL is funded in several ways. The Clinic and Community Resource Center brings in revenue through its low-cost services to owners and other rescue groups. They have generous donors who love their work and contribute to special initiatives, and they receive grants for some of their programs.



“Where we make a difference in our community is through our clinic and the number of animals that we are able to provide veterinary care for that in the past have not had much care due to financial barriers,” Norman said. “At the end of the day, when the owners pick up their pets after surgery, we see the special bond that most people have with their pets. Knowing that we have relieved the painful conditions, or even addressed life-threatening issues and restored quality of life is a priceless gift to give these animals.”

“We are so grateful to be able to witness these wonderful transformations,” she said.

VOCAL is located at 6393 S.W. 52nd St., Ocala, FL 34474. For more information, visit their website at vocalforpets.org

How You Can Help

VOCAL always accepts monetary donations and they have a wish list on Amazon.

Donations needed include:

- Dry cat food for their feeding program
- Cans of tuna for the TNR program
- Blankets to keep animals warm after surgery
- Cleaning items
- Paper products

*Chewy supplies them with dog food so that is not a need at this time.

PINWHEELS

for prevention

FAMILY FUN DRIVE-THRU,
PARK & PLAY





ELCMC Early Learning Coalition of Marion County, Inc.

United Way **SUCCESS BY 6** Marion County **Help Me Grow** Florida

SAT. APRIL 30, 2022
10 A.M. - 1 P.M.
COLLEGE OF CENTRAL FLORIDA (EWERS CENTURY CENTER)
3001 SW COLLEGE RD., OCALA, 34474

FREE:

- Kids Activity Area
- Face Painting
- Children's Books
- Balls & Blocks*
- Resources for Parents
- *Balls & Blocks for children birth-8 w/ free developmental screening

For more information, call (352) 369-2315
Visit www.ELC-MARION.org






COME SLIDE WITH US 2022

THE OCALA POLICE DEPARTMENT
PRESENTS:
"COME SLIDE WITH US 2022"
FEATURING KDC AND THE SUNSHINE SLIDERS

SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 2022
11 AM-1:00 PM
AT THE ED CROSKY CENTER
1510 NW 4TH ST. OCALA, FL 34475


**3 POINT CONTEST
OPD OFFICERS AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS**




**KDC PRESENTS:
SILENT AUCTION**
ALL PROCEEDS WILL GO TO
KDC'S SCHOLARSHIPS AND
COMMUNITY EVENTS



**TIK TOK ROLL IT ROLL IT,
GIVEAWAYS, AND MORE**

**FREE HOT DOGS, CHIPS, AND
DRINKS WILL BE SERVED**





FREE ADMISSION
on the first Saturday
of each month.



Appleton Museum, Artspace and Store
Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sunday, noon-5 p.m.
4333 E. Silver Springs Blvd. | AppletonMuseum.org



COMING ATTRACTIONS

Marion County Museum of History and Archaeology

All programs are held on the third Sunday of odd months, at 2 p.m. at Green Clover Hall, 319 S.E. 26th Terr. A reception follows the program inside the museum. Admission free to members, \$5 to nonmembers. Individual and family memberships available for sale at events.

– **May 15, 2022:** Martha Lynne Allen (Ross Allen's granddaughter) and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

– **July 17, 2022:** Dr. Joe Knetsch (Cousin Bob). His latest book about a Jewish-American World War II Hero Robert Warren attached to Patton's Third Army coming across France after the Normandy breakout. It's based upon Warren's personal letters, some reports from the Fort Benning collections, etc. and the usual secondary accounts now available.

MONEY SMART TIPS

By Scott Hackmyer

Got Junk? That's the catchphrase for a junk removal company up in Georgia, but it's a great question. I recently visited a woman in West Ocala who needed help paying a utility bill. I noticed two junk cars in her backyard that obviously have been there for a long time. They will never run again so it's just like having a stack of money sitting in your yard.



With prices going up on just about everything, many people are having trouble paying their normal monthly bills including gas for their cars. Selling some of your junk might be a way to help you get through some tough times. Prices change daily, but as I write this a non-stripped complete junk car sells for about \$14 per 100 pounds. Most cars weight is at least 3,000 pounds, so a car that weighs that much would be worth about \$420.

Take a look around your house for any aluminum or metal items that have just been lying there unused forever. Aluminum cans are selling for 92 cents a pound, scrap metal today is worth \$9.75 per 100 pounds. My suggestion is to call Trademark Metals Recycling (TMR) at (352) 351-3383 or visit their website at www.tmrecycling.com to get information on what they will buy. They are located at 2406 N.W. 6th Street.

As you look around your house, see if you have items that might have value but that you never use. Many people turn these items into cash by selling them on eBay or at consignment shops.

If you don't know how to sell online ask your friends or look online as someone will be able to show you how. One last suggestion for this month, if you are paying for a storage facility go take a look at what you are storing and decide if it is really worth making a monthly payment to keep it. In 2019, more than 22 billion dollars was spent paying for storage units in this country. We all tend to have too much stuff. When you are paying rent just to hang on to "stuff" it is possible you too have more than you need. Sell it, donate it or just throw it away and eliminate that monthly payment. Getting rid of clutter may not only bring you money but it also reduces stress and is good for your mental and physical health.

HOW TO BUILD YOUR IMMUNITY

By Dr. Pamela Lewin

Our magnificent bodies have the ability to recognize us as "self," and other things that impact our bodies as "foreign." In so doing, we have a self-defense system, our Immunity, that goes into action when the body comes in contact with things likely to harm us, (Host Defense). As part of this system, we have trillions of bacteria that reside in our intestine, (our Microbiome), that not only help us digest and absorb our food, they go into action, along with certain hormones and cells in the blood, to protect us from harmful elements that impact our bodies. They reside in our gut in harmony with our cells, and when we are well, we have no awareness of their presence.



These gut bacteria (Probiotics) play a fundamental role in training the host immune system and alert the body of an attack. Occasionally, and unfortunately, certain conditions cause our bodies to fail to recognize our own cells, which are then attacked and destroyed, making us ill with an Auto-Immune Disorder, such as Lupus, Rheumatoid arthritis or some thyroid disorders. But these conditions represent a disorder of our immune system,

which is designed to keep us healthy. When we get ill, and take antibiotics, these pharmaceuticals are indiscriminate in their destruction of bacteria, including our 'protectors,' leading to a derangement in our immunity. Our bodies are self-healing, as long as we nourish ourselves well, do some moderate activity, and take care of the stressors in our lives. Increased immunity means not only less disease, but a longer, healthier lifespan.

In today's world, especially when we face situations like the current pandemic that challenge our immunity, we need to be absolutely sure that we strengthen our ability to maintain our health, against viruses and bacteria that would make us ill. Apart from taking available preventive measures like vaccines and early treatment in our present situation, there is much that we can do to help. Our immune defense system is activated by contact with organisms that our cells encounter on a daily basis, whether through the food we eat, through our skin or the air we breathe. The skin is a mechanical barrier, containing lymphoid tissue, proteins and cells and a layer of bacteria on the surface, all of which provide for our protection.

Keeping our gut microbes healthy and happy does more for our health than any antibacterial soap and even hand washing, not saying that we should abandon these healthy habits. But paying attention to the foods that feed our good bacteria (Prebiotics), is of paramount importance. Sometimes we need to avoid certain dietary elements (SUGAR is very inflammatory and its consumption should be minimized), and sometimes we need more of others (Proteins from plants, fermented foods, such as Kimchi, Aloe Vera; and fiber, for example, broccoli, cauliflower and leafy greens). Water is necessary as over 60% of our bodies consist of water, so it is necessary to be well hydrated. A rule of thumb for water consumption is to take half our body weight in ounces of water daily. So, a 160 lb person should take in 80 ounces or 8x 10 ounce glasses of water a day. Other things we can do to increase our immunity include getting 6-8 hours of sleep per 24 hours; get a moderate amount of exercise, approximately 30 minutes a day five days a week.

At this time, it is not a bad thing that we are socially distancing, it might be good to avoid crowds. Also, certain habits are detrimental, such as tobacco use and excess alcohol consumption and excess caffeine intake should be avoided. Next, take care of stress by proper time management and healthy relationship development and practice maintaining a positive mental attitude. Not only will these help us cope but, together with an attitude of gratitude, our immune systems will be supported to our benefit. Our Microbiome and our immunity are doing the best they can to make sure we live happily ever after!

Save the Date

2nd Annual Juneteenth "Freedom Day" Celebration
Saturday, June 18, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Webb Field, 1501 W. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, FL 34475



In business in Ocala for over 15 years, we are dedicated to serving women who have experienced Breast Cancer by providing Post Mastectomy and Breast Form products, in a private and caring atmosphere. We only work with manufacturers

who are as passionate and committed about quality products as we are. We listen to your needs, value your input, and strive to earn the confidence and trust you deserve.

We are in business because we believe we can make a difference by helping you cope with the dramatic changes to your body, by helping you regain your self confidence.

We also provide non-mastectomy bras, custom fitting (size ranges: 28AA - 56N), nursing bras, breast pumps, wigs, camisoles, slips, and special undergarments for bridal and evening attire.

"We cater to the forgotten woman"

Our facility is ABC accredited, and BOC/ABC certified, and we also bill most insurances in and out of network.

Edna Turner - DeGeneste, CEO/ Founder
Sandra Brown, Manager

Please contact us to schedule your fit appointment today!

Walk-ins are welcome!

Hours of Operation:
Monday-Thursday: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Friday by Appointment

202 SW 17th St. Unit C; Ocala, FL. 34471

Phone: (352) 877-8700

Email: uniquelingerie@embarqmail.com
www.TheUniqueLingerie.com

RESIDENTS INVITED TO SUBMIT NAMES FOR NEW LIBRARY

Marion County Public Library System is looking for the public's help in naming the new library slated to be built inside the Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place. Named after former Ocala City Councilwoman Mary Sue Rich, the community center is being built on the site of the former Royal Oak Charcoal Plant that was demolished in 2018.

The 41,750-square-foot community center is currently under construction on the northwest side of Ocala near the Ocala Wetland Recharge Park. A Marion County Public Library branch is one of several amenities inside the new community center scheduled to open in the fall. The new center will serve as a community hub for northwest Marion County and not only includes a library, but banquet space, fitness equipment, an indoor walking track, two basketball courts and several multipurpose rooms.

A naming committee will present up to three names to the county administrator for final approval.

The Marion County Public Library System is opening naming suggestions to the public! Anyone with ideas for a name is encouraged to contact Julie Sieg, Marion County Public Library System director at (352) 368-4500 or Julie.Sieg@marionfl.org.

SAVE - THE - DATE

Commitment to Zero Safety Action Plan
COMMUNITY WORKSHOP
April 14, 2022, 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

College of Central Florida, Klein Conference Center,
3001 S.W. College Road, Ocala, FL 34474



An Action Plan for Safer Streets in Ocala Marion

Save the Date

R.A.M.A.L. Educational and Social Services, Inc.

Presents

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT EVENT

Howard Academy Community Center
306 NW 7th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34475

Saturday, April 30, 2022

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Action Steps To Own A Home In 2022, Improve Credit Scores, Get More From Financial Institutions, Leaving A Financial Legacy, Investing Like A Pro, Talking To Your Children About Saving

**Vendors
Giveaways
Food
One Grand Prize \$250 Value
Free And Open To The Public**



Contact: Barbara J. Brooks, Ph.D.
(352) 875-4237 • www.ramalservices.org

SPONSORSHIP/VENDOR SPACE AVAILABLE

Town Talk Magazine
P.O. Box 6212
Ocala, FL 34478

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
OCALA, FLORIDA
PERMIT NO. 748

ECRWSS

MAN IN THE MIRROR

Conversation for men, by men

Workshop for Adults and Teens

At our interactive workshop, male parents, guardians, mentors, and youth will learn how to navigate and assist with various male struggles that young men may face using growth, personal development and self discovery.



Guest Speaker
Jamie Gilmore

Free event for
Adults & Youth
11yrs and up

5:30–8 P.M., Tuesday, April 26
College of Central Florida Webber Center
3001 SW College Rd., Ocala, FL 34474

Event is free and includes dinner and giveaways!
Preregistration recommended but not required.
For more information call 352-644-2687

