



Volume 4, Issue 5 ~ May 2024

MELISSA CASTO: BY THE GRACE OF GOD, I SURVIVED HER!



See story on page 8

In this issue:

Meet Heather James: Director of Communications and Community Relations for Estella Byrd Whitman Community Health Center

Amiracle Watson: The Pressure Made Me!

Tips to Overcome Change Resistance

Melissa Casto: By the Grace of God, I Survived Her!

Money Smart Tips: How to Save Money With a Little Effort!



The 3rd Annual Mind Over Matter Mental Health Awareness Event, sponsored by Bow in the Cloud Community Services, will be held on Saturday, May 19, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Ocala Citizen's Circle, 151 S.E. Osceola Ave.

The free event, open to the public, includes engaging activities, including educational workshops, art therapy sessions, live music performances, etc., for families and individuals of all ages.

For vendor registration, go to <https://www.bowinthecloud.org/copy-of-volunteer>.

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*Ticket required for live mural painting

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

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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.

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EDITOR'S DESK



Wow! Among the exciting events we celebrate in May, Mother's Day and Memorial Day, this month also marks the 3rd Anniversary of Town Talk Magazine. Thank you for your support!

Happy Anniversary to us!!! It's truly a labor of love. I'm still proud of the work my best friend Cynthia Wilson Graham and I have done, the people we've met and the stories we've told about ordinary people in our community doing extraordinary things. We believe the best is yet to come. If you haven't subscribed, we hope you will. It's FREE or a printed copy can be mailed to you for \$50 annually. Go to our website and click the subscribe button. If you missed an issue, past publications are available on our website at www.towntalkmagazine.org.

As I reflect on some of the people we've written about in the last three years, I'm grateful I had the honor of telling their stories, but also saddened that some of them are no longer with us, but remain in my heart and yours too. **Mary Monroe** took us back down memory lane and helped us remember the good times at Town Talk Supermarket, our community store, in our inaugural edition. This publication is named after it because it brought people together, and we hope this magazine will too. **Edmond Fordham** was my elementary school principal. He was a community leader with a servant's heart. The Fordham Early Learning Academy is named in his honor. **Mother Katie White**, a pillar in her community who will forever be remembered for her phone ministry at Mt. Olive A.M.E. Church. **Mr. William James** was the first African-American man to be promoted to the job of custodian supervisor for Marion County schools. The City of Ocala also named The William James Start! Walking Trail in his honor. The **Rev. Keith E. Blunt**, beloved pastor of New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church. he was the Moderator of Second Bethlehem Baptist Church They're gone, but never will be forgotten!

In 12 days, some of us will celebrate Mother's Day by expressing love and gratitude to our mom's. For those of us who still have our mother, I hope you know how truly blessed you are. For those who have lost their Mom, the day can be filled with pain and sorrow, especially if the loss is recent. Nothing will ever be the same and you may wish the day would go away as quickly as it came. Here's a few tips I hope will help get you through the day: Do Whatever You Want; **No Pressure. No Expectations**; Do Things That Remind You of Her; **Celebrate your mother's life by engaging in activities she loved**; Avoid Social Media That Day; **Celebrate Other Important People In Your Mother's Life**; Visit Her Grave and Simply Talk To Her; **Write Her A Letter Or Poem**; Take The Day Off ; **Allow Yourself To Grieve**.

Finally, as you make plans to celebrate Memorial Day, a national holiday that honors the country's military members who died in service, let us not forget that ALL gave some, but SOME gave all! This day should be our reminder of the high price of freedom and the debt of gratitude we owe to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Don't take it for

Let's Talk!
Monica Bryant
Monica T. Bryant, Editor

granted because our freedom is not free. Somebody paid the price for us to have it!



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COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

MEET HEATHER JAMES

ESTELLA BYRD WHITMAN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER'S DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Heather James wasted no time hitting the ground running in her new position, after all she's in familiar territory.

James, who has 36 years of combined healthcare, hospitality and marketing experience, is bringing her talents to the Estella Byrd Whitman Community Health Center (EBWCHC) as the Director of Communications and Community Relations.

"I am delighted to be a part of an enthusiastic team that is dedicated to the health, wellness, wellbeing and the betterment of West Ocala and its surrounding areas, and I look forward to building relationships," James said in a press release.

James started her new job on April 23, and has already set some goals she wants to accomplish: 1). To reintroduce/introduce herself to community partners and potential partners. Due to Covid, she said, there are many new faces in new positions, but she looks forward to building and nurturing new and past relationships; 2). With those introductions, the goal is to cultivate awareness and participation in the center's growth; and 3). Making the center be the community's first choice in their medical care and medical home.

She began her career in the medical/healthcare field in her late teens as a medical assistant. Throughout her early and mid-20's, she worked as a pharmacy technician and a patient technician in an Emergency Department for 10 years. She was headed down the nursing path when life took her in a different direction. She spent 10 years working in different aspects of the hospitality field before she returned to healthcare where she's remained for the past 16 years.

As the former Director of Public Relations and Marketing for the Heart of Florida Health Center, James said the decision to leave after 11 years was difficult and required a lot of thought. But, when the opportunity became available, she and her family thought she should pursue it, and she felt it was a good fit for several reasons. The first was having the privilege to work with Levonda Goodson, the former Chief Clinical Operations Officer for the Heart of Florida Health Center. Goodson was selected as the new CEO of the Estella Byrd Whitman Community Health Center in January.

"I have worked with her (Levonda) for the past 11 years and have witnessed her work ethic, knowledge and growth," James said. "I am also excited to work with an experienced team to continue to build from the Adams' vision, passion and what they have done with the community center. Finally, I am thrilled to have the benefit of being out in the community again as well as being a part of building something that helps the community."



Heather James,
Director of Communications
and Community Relations



James said she had the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Thomas from participating in their annual outreach events for many years. Although she believes that reconnecting with the community, community partners, elected officials and meeting new members will increase awareness of the EBWCHC and encourage support and ambassadors for the center, she hopes the community will support her efforts.

"I hope to be welcomed to the community and for the residents to be open to hearing about the services that are available to them and their families right here in their neighborhood," she said.



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.

AMIRACLE WATSON: THE PRESSURE MADE ME!

Amiracle Watson wants to make an enduring impact on the lives of young girls in her community and beyond, something she always dreamed of doing. Since her college years, she's always had a passion for working with children, and throughout her life, she pursued various jobs and volunteer opportunities i.e. coaching, teaching and counseling that allowed her to engage with kids.

"Through these experiences, I discovered the profound impact that a trusted adult can have on a child's life. I found that many of the girls I worked with were more receptive to guidance from someone outside their immediate family circle," she said.

While working as a counselor on a cruise ship and later at an alternative school, Watson gained unique insights into the challenges faced by young girls, particularly at-risk and at times privileged girls. She said it became apparent to her that these girls often felt overlooked and marginalized, as if society had already labeled them as lost causes.

"Despite their circumstances, I found that they shared common desires: to be seen, heard and supported," she said. "They craved acknowledgment, advocacy and guidance from trustworthy adults who could assist them in navigating life's complexities and decisions."

After witnessing the need firsthand, she felt compelled to create a supportive community where these girls could find the resources, mentorship and empowerment they deserved.



Amiracle Watson,
Chief Executive Officer
D.I.A.M.O.N.D Girls

D.I.A.M.O.N.D Girls was founded. The trauma-informed organization, which started on August 23, 2023, is committed to providing comprehensive support to girls who have experienced trauma on high and low levels. Given her experience working with both at-risk and privileged youth, Watson, Chief Executive Officer for the organization, said it was evident that there is a concerning rise in mental health issues among adolescents. The acronym stands for a set of affirmative statements they believe girls should carry with them daily: **I am** - Determined, Intelligent, Ambitious, Motivated, Optimistic, Necessary, Deserving.

"The pandemic has exacerbated these challenges, leaving our youth susceptible to the lasting effects of isolation, uncertainty and heightened stressors, she said. "D.I.A.M.O.N.D Girls, my organization, is dedicated to providing trauma-informed support and resources to girls who have encountered various levels of trauma. Our focus is on empowering and nurturing confident young women within the community."

According to NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), the number of children aged 3 to 17 who received mental health care in 2021 was 11.1% in Florida and 11.2% nationally; 180,000 Florida adolescents aged 12 to 17 experience depression; and each year, 1 in 6 youth aged 6 to 17 in the United States are impacted by mental health disorders.

During Women's History Month, which celebrated the achievements of women past, present and future, Watson held an EmpowerHer Brunch on March 23, to honor young ladies. The inaugural event included brunch, guest speaker Maj. Shalela Dowdy, workshops, photo booth and a community panel.

"I'm deeply passionate about nurturing the next generation of young girls into confident young women. Reviewing the feedback from the girls about their desires for future events, I've noticed a common thread: Many of them are requesting simple yet impactful elements," she said. "It's truly inspiring to see their shared aspirations and I'm excited to incorporate these insights into our upcoming initiatives."

EMPOWERING GIRLS TO RELEASE THE DIAMOND WITHIN

Continued from page 4



Watson said the EmpowerHer Brunch served as a crucial platform for building community, offering resources and raising awareness about mental health among middle and high school girls. She said it shed light on the unique challenges faced by young girls in our community and stressed the significance of mental health support in their lives.

Watson had the opportunity to make a meaningful impact on a group of girls from diverse backgrounds on her last day at the alternative school. She engaged in an art activity where the girls expressed their feelings through painting and she provided a board for them to write a letter to her if they wanted to.

To her surprise, most of the girls wrote heartfelt letters to her, which she cherishes deeply, and collectively, they decided to gift her all their drawings. One touching moment, she said, was when they took her phone and left a message expressing their appreciation stating: "You are the realest teacher at this school. If it wasn't for you, we would not be here. You are the one that keeps the peace at this school."

"This experience affirmed that my interactions with them had not only impacted them mentally, but also emotionally," Watson said.

On Saturday, August 3, D.I.A.M.O.N.D Girls will host a Picnic Soiree, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at Tuscowilla Park, 829 N.E. Sanchez Ave., to engage 15 girls between the ages of 11 - 17. The event aims to foster reflection, creativity and connections. Participants will set goals for the upcoming school year, journal their thoughts and find the artist within them.

Future events include collaborating with community leaders to sponsor a girls' Expo called Diamonation, a seminar showcasing Trailblazers and Trendsetters in business, and Beyond the Pressure is a summer program designated to teach girls financial literacy, self-care, self-awareness, creative expression and more.

D.I.A.M.O.N.D Girls serves middle and high school girls and is supported by donations and the organization's staff. Watson said they are working to secure funding to support their programs and initiatives effectively because with the increasing demands for their services and the need to reach more girls in the community, financial sustainability is essential for them to continue delivering high-quality programs and making a meaningful difference in the lives of young women.

"As a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering girls, we rely heavily on donations, grants and sponsorships to sustain our operations and expand our impact," she said. "We are actively exploring new fundraising strategies, cultivating relationships with potential donors and partners and seeking opportunities for collaboration to address this challenge and ensure the long-term success of our organization."

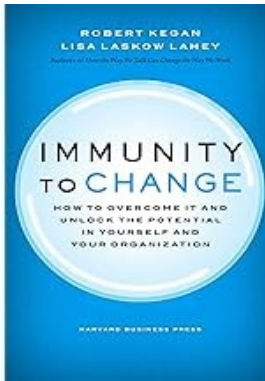
Watson said there are several ways the community can support the organization: Make a financial contribution; Offer in-kind support such as venue space, supplies or professional services; Volunteer their time and skills to assist with program delivery and organizational tasks; Advocate for their cause and share information about their programs with their networks; and Explore potential partnership opportunities to collaborate on initiatives that benefit girls in the community.

Long-term, Watson foresees D.I.A.M.O.N.D Girls being a beacon of empowerment, resilience, support and serving as a catalyst for positive change and transformation in the lives of countless girls.

"I envision D.I.A.M.O.N.D Girls as a force for systematic change, advocating for policies and initiatives that promote gender equality, educational equity and opportunities for girls to thrive," she said. "By leveraging our platform and collective voice, we can drive meaningful change at the community, regional and even national levels, creating a more inclusive and equitable society for all."

For questions or more information on upcoming events, ways to support, donate or to get your teen girl involved, contact Watson at **(352) 509-6691** or follow them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61552748827455>.

TIPS TO OVERCOMING CHANGE RESISTANCE



I just finished reading *“Immunity to Change”* and it was very eye opening in the sense that we sometimes have personal commitments that run counter to our goals. A good example of this concept is someone who is committed to everyone thinking they are wise and are averse to decisions that would make them appear unwise. The downside to that commitment is it will invariably keep them from making critical decisions that are outside of the “normal” way of addressing unexpected situations.

As a business strategist, my responsibility to my clients is not only helping them reach their stated goals but coaching them through removing self-imposed barriers. Therefore, I wanted to share three quick tips on not letting undeclared commitments keep you from achieving the success you desire.

Describe how important the changes are to your long-term growth

For this scenario, we are going to assume you have done your strategic plan and have identified a couple of resources necessary to reach your next stage growth; new software and one employee. In each case I want you to list all of the benefits of having each of the resources in a manner similar to below.

New Software

- Increased productivity
- Better customer behavior tracking
- CRM capabilities
- Shorter learning curve for new employees

New Employee

- Greater service capacity
- Consistent social media management
- Greater customer engagement
- More time for me to grow the business



While this may look like the beginning of a “pros & cons” chart, it is different because of the intent. The intent in this case, is to establish the value of the proposed change, not from a dollars and cents perspective, but for its ability to move you or your company towards growth and sustainability.

Describe what happens if you don't implement the changes

New Software

- Fewer clients due to input time and data tracking
- Less effective marketing
- Fewer add-on sales and up work
- Longer training period for new employees

New Employee

- Lower service capacity (stagnant sales)
- Longer path to thought leadership
- Sporadic customer engagement
- Slower market expansion due to working “in” the business instead of “on”

As you can see this is slightly different from just stating cons, this is a realistic expectation of what happens if your resistance to change persists. Resistance to change can manifest itself in many ways from believing it would be too expensive for the changes to feeling the pressure of bringing on your first employee and all the responsibilities therein. Therefore, the final step is to list what extraordinary steps you are willing to take to implement the changes. These are not change specific, but actions on your part.

Embracing Change



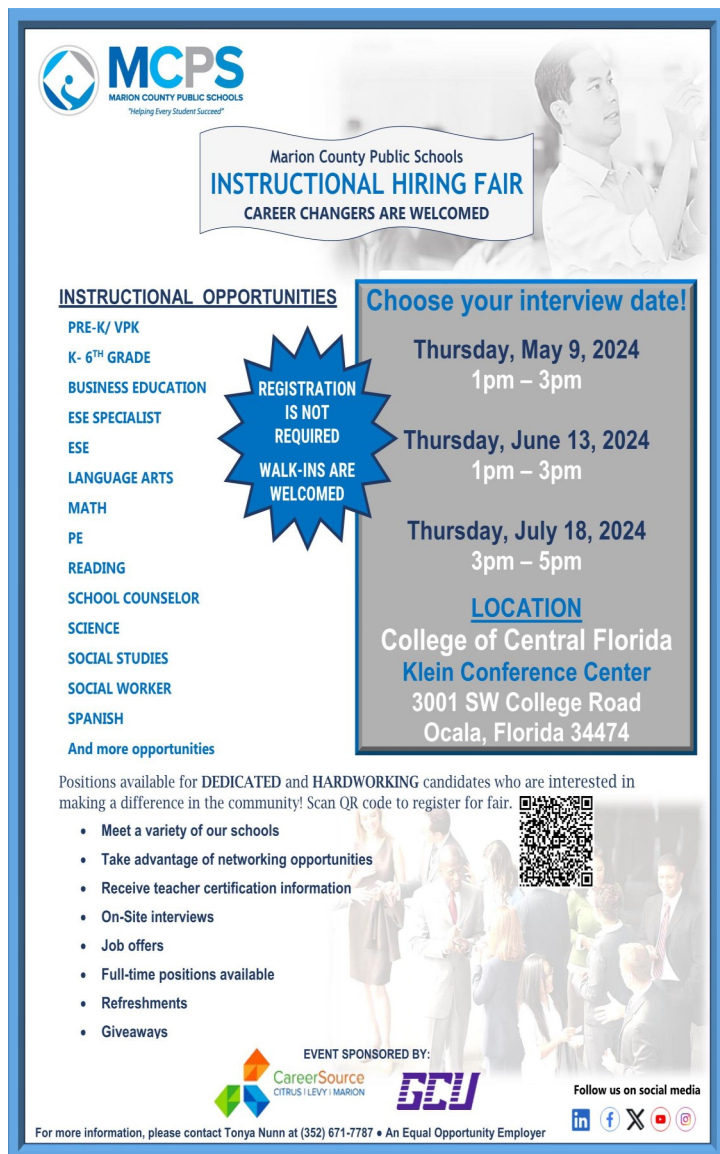
Continued on Page 7

Describe what extraordinary steps you are willing to take

- Add the software and employee and all the related expenses to your P&L and cashflow statements to show true costs.
- Perform two-year revenue projections, with anticipated gains in revenue because of change implementation.
- Build a detailed job description for the new employee based on their ability to drive the benefits listed previously.
- Develop strict timelines for implementation of each change including an action plan.
- Work with the software company to ensure their product can deliver within your timeline and what types of support is available to make certain it happens.
- Budget for the next quarter and making sacrifices to create the necessary capital.
- Get an accountability coach (free or paid) to keep you on task and not allow you to back out of the change process.

The most important strategy in this section is the accountability coach. This is someone you respect for their accomplishments, not how much money they have. Your coach should urge you to reach inside of yourself for the answer and not prescribe someone else's solution. Resistance to change many times is rooted in fear and we build in safeguards that keep us from feeling vulnerable or susceptible to those fears, even though they may be counter to our goals. A great book on this subject is **"Feel the Fear Do It Anyway."**

You can apply these tips to any change from losing weight to proposing to your love interest. They may not be scientific, but are very effective in helping you feel confident in making changes that scare or intimidate you.



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(Senior Scholarships | PEFMC)
<https://pefmc.org/scholarships/>

Eunice Richardson Scholarship for Girls
May 10, 2024 (Eunice Richardson Scholarship
for Girls | Bold.org)
<https://bold.org/scholarships/eunice-richardson-scholarship-for-girls/>

Chester Shell Scholarship – May 19, 2024
(2024 Chester Shell Scholarship Application)
https://bloqs.s3.amazonaws.com/1049-2083/787243_2024ChesterShellScholarshipApplicationRevised1.pdf

Marion Cty Area Scholarship Directory
(MARION COUNTY AREA SCHOLARSHIP
DIRECTORY STUDENT COPY.pdf)
<https://www.marionschools.net/Domain/151>

MELISSA CASTO: BY THE GRACE OF GOD, I SURVIVED HER

There's no doubt in Melissa Casto's mind that following her heart is the best decision she's ever made.

Casto, a former social worker, used to engage and assist children and families during their most challenging times helping them secure housing, employment or teaching them how to navigate social systems. Now, after years of working for several non-profit organizations and impacting their lives daily, she's stepped out on faith and started her own organization to support women and teenage girls' post-trauma, assisting them in the aftermath of experiences that may require clarification or resolution.

"I'm not certain if the impact is greater, but I do know that I'm now working in a different realm," she said. "These individuals have survived their traumas, but many still grapple with the repercussions, including poor life choices. My focus with #SurvivingHer is to help identify and change these behaviors."

Founded in December 2023, #SurvivingHer is a compassionate for-profit organization. Inspired by an unwavering faith in the inherent strength in every woman, it is dedicated to empowering women to not only endure life's challenges, but to thrive in the midst of them. Its mission centers around cultivating resilience, fostering a sense of community and illuminating transformative stories utilizing the arts.

Casto said the organization captures a deeply personal and transformative journey that started during a creative writing workshop she facilitated last fall. A participant bravely shared her literary piece during the workshop which summarized her experiences with childhood trauma, revealing the profound impact it had on her adult life and the unhealthy coping mechanisms it spawned. That led to a powerful group discussion where many women burdened by shame and silence, shared their own stories of abuse and trauma. Inspired by their courage, she proposed documenting the stories in a book she had been working on for years chronicling her journey through trauma and healing.

"The name #SurvivingHer emerged from this shared experience, symbolizing the struggle to overcome self-destructive behaviors and break free from the chains of past trauma," she said. "It's about surviving ourselves, our bad behaviors because of unhealthy coping mechanisms rooted in trauma. We must learn to transcend pain and find hope with strength in resilience. For me, it was my faith in God and writing coupled with art."

Casto said each career move and job opportunity led her to this point, revealing a clear connection to her life's plan. She said writing and art are integral parts of who she is and deeply embedded in her personality. She's been passionate about writing, books and visual art for as long as she can remember, however, it wasn't until she started working with Arts in Health Ocala Metro as an Artist Practitioner that she realized this was her true calling.

"My journey towards understanding this purpose required surrendering my heart and forming a relationship with Jesus," she said.

On Saturday, May 4, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Jervey Gantt Park, 2200 S.E. 36th Ave. #SurvivingHer is hosting a special Mother's Day celebration, "*Brush and Brunch In the Park*." The event, which includes brunch and supplies, is a painting picnic focused on mindfulness and strengthening the mother/daughter bond through art and faith-based life coaching exercises led by a certified life coach and a visual artist. In case of rain, the venue has a covered pavilion to accommodate guests. The cost is \$40 per participant. Contact Deb@survivingher.org for ticket availability or more information.

"This event marks our inaugural celebration, and we plan to make it an annual tradition honoring mothers, daughters and all maternal figures," said Casto, Founder and CEO of #SurvivingHer, LLC.

#SurvivingHer offers a variety of services tailored to empower women and teen girls on their journey towards personal growth and well-being. Debbie Osbourne, a certified Life and Health Coach from the Health Coach Institute, facilitates the life coaching sessions and introduces participants to healing journaling through workshops. The Clarity Catalyst "EmpowerHer" Life Mastery Workshop is designed for women, and the Clarity Catalyst Insights for Life is tailored for teen girls. Both can be done in a group or in one-on-one sessions to ensure privacy.

"As a for-profit organization, we charge fees for these specialized workshops with prices varying depending on the workshops' nature and duration," she said.

Additionally, Life Foundation Workshops, which are free and typically held monthly, cover diverse topics such as Financial Freedom, Overcoming Fear and Anxiety, Healthy Boundaries and practical ways to improve their life through healthy choices.



Melissa Casto, Founder & CEO
of #SurvivingHer

Continued on page 9

ONE WOMEN'S JOURNEY THROUGH TRAUMA AND HEALING

Continued from page 8

Casto said revenue streams are diversified to sustain operations effectively. Income is generated through workshop fees, private donations and sales from published books. She said expenses predominantly cover publishing, marketing, IT infrastructure and workshop facilitation. A capital investor is supporting their growth, but they are expanding their reach through an e-commerce platform by offering #SurvivingHer merchandise alongside book offerings on their website.

They conduct monthly workshop events, hold art workshops quarterly and offer 12-week coaching workshops for women and teenage girls.

Long-term, Casto wants to establish a sustainable model, offering life coaching groups in various formats, including in-person and online sessions and recruit mentors from among women and young teens who can eventually become certified life coaches to meet the growing demand. She said they encourage young teens passionate about literary arts to step forward as mentors and, under the guidance of #SurvivingHer, help them publish their literary works.

"This initiative will empower other women, reminding them they are not alone and can use their creativity to develop new coping strategies and improve behavior post-trauma," she said. "My goal for #SurvivingHer is sustainability, enabling me to focus on writing while supporting my family, the organization and contributing to philanthropic efforts aligned with the Kingdom of God."

Services are available online and accessible to anyone with internet and a computer. Women interested in life coaching services or participating in healing art events can be referred via their website at www.survivingher.org or email deb@survivingher.org for assistance.

Casto said their primary challenge is raising awareness about their distinctive services and offerings. While they operate with a unique approach within the for-profit sector, they maintain a philanthropic ethos that sets them apart from traditional non-profits.

"Initially, our business model was too individual-centric. As a result, we've pivoted to customize our services on a nationwide scale with no geographical limitations," she said. "Locally, establishing our presence in the community has been a hurdle due to our novelty as an organization."

Women interested in volunteering with the organization should have a genuine desire to serve women and teenage girls through a faith-based lens. Volunteers will provide mentorship support in #SurvivingHer Life Foundation workshops, assist the life coach in communicating with potential clients and support workshop activities. Additionally, they need women who are passionate about the literary arts to help them with book launching events, including book signings and reading sessions with children in the community.

#SurvivingHer is looking for space to host art events or literary readings, and they invite community agencies to co-host or partner with them for book readings and literary workshops to support women in the community and to promote the appreciation of written art alongside visual art. Private donations are welcome to offset the cost of providing scholarships on a select basis to assist women who face financial constraints.

Every piece of literature Casto crafts under #SurvivingHer, LLC., embodies the theme of overcoming adversity, persevering through faith and utilizing art as a healing tool. She said her brand encompasses children's books and adult and teen titles aimed at women and young girls. Her book titled "#SurvivingHer," serves as a testament to her journey of healing, resilience and empowerment surrendering to a purpose greater than ourselves. Bunny's Heart is her first children's book under #SurvivingHer.

"The inception of this business was driven by a glaring need for healing within our community, particularly among women," she said. "I identified a niche that was largely overlooked: the behavioral pattern stemming from deep-seated trauma."

Casto said through it all, she's come to understand the importance of self-care, healing and breaking the cycle of trauma for future generations.

"I rely on my faith in God, the original artist and Creator. He had already written my story, however, when He placed me with new people, places and things, those things ultimately brought freedom and healing," she said. "Through literary healing, I aim to shed light on those often-overshadowed aspects of the trauma response, offering insights and pathways to healing that combine faith, resilience and empowerment. By the grace of God, I survived Her – (me)," she said.

For more information, visit their website at <https://survivingher.org> or follow them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/survivingher/>.



#SurvivingHer





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AGES 16-24 WELCOME

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(2232 NE Jacksonville Road, Ocala, FL)



bit.ly/FIRSTJOBMARION



CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids/services are available upon request to persons with disabilities and in Spanish. Phone numbers may be reached using TTY/TDD equipment via Florida Relay at 711. For accommodations, call 800-434-5622, ext. 7878. Programs funded by CareerSource CLM as grants of the U.S. Department of Labor as part of awards totaling \$6.9 million, revised annually, with no funds from non-governmental sources. A proud partner of the American Job Center network and member of CareerSource Florida.

Please join
WWOP IN THE PARK
(Bring your own picnic)

Devotional/Study
FROM 4PM TO 6PM



jervey gantt park

YMCA Entrance
3200 SE 17th Street
OCALA, FL

FB @Women Walking On Purpose at KRC

Made with PosterMyWall.com

STOP THE VIOLENCE

COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENT

JUNE 29TH

Berkeley Pointe
2833 NE 7th St Ocala, FL 34470



Saturday **1-4PM**

FOOD AWARENESS

ACTIVITIES

GUEST SPEAKERS

FUN FOR EVERYONE!

FREE ADMISSION



R.A.M.A.L EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES, INC. ESTABLISHES ENDOWMENT



R.A.M.A.L. Educational and Social Services, Inc. presented a check to the College of Central Florida CF Foundation during the annual Donors Luncheon on April 13. The funds establish an endowment at CF. These funds are in addition to the \$1,000 scholarship that R.A.M.A.L. awards annually to CF students.



Thank you to everyone who has supported R.A.M.A.L. to enable the organization to help students attend college at CF.



R.A.M.A.L. Educational and Social Services, Inc. celebrated its 15th Anniversary with the Ocala Metro Chamber and Economic Partnership's Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. Since 2009 R.A.M.A.L. has been dedicated to improve people's lives and the community in which they live.

For more information, visit <https://ramalservices.org/>.

June & July COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY Tours

This immersive experience offers prospective students an unparalleled opportunity to discover the exceptional institutions that call Florida home.

June 3



Gainesville

- University of Florida
- Santa Fe College

June 17



Lakeland

- Florida Southern College
- Warner University

July 8



Orlando

- University of Central Florida
- Full Sail University
- Rollins College

July 17



Ocala

- College of Central Florida
- Marion Technical College

July 22



Tampa

- University of South Florida
- University of Tampa
- Webber International University

7 AM - 8 PM | Ages 13 - 17

\$25 per person per trip plus the cost of lunch.
Snacks will be provided on the bus for free.

Registration required: OcalaFL.gov/RecPark
More information call: 352.401.6980



"YOU CAN NEVER GET ENOUGH BOOKS INTO THE HANDS OF ENOUGH CHILDREN"

Dolly



INSPIRE A LOVE OF READING

Enroll your child in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and get a FREE BOOK every month until their 5th birthday.

"Our daughter **LOVES READING** and being read to, and the **VARIETY** she receives from the Imagination Library is a **SIGNIFICANT** part of this"

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is dedicated to inspiring a love of reading by gifting books free of charge to children from birth to age five, through funding shared by Dolly Parton and local community partners in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Republic of Ireland.



Early Learning Coalition of Marion County, Inc.

www.ELC-Marion.org | (352) 369-2315

SCAN HERE to enroll

MONEY SMART TIPS

By Scott Hackmyer

HOW TO SAVE MONEY WITH A LITTLE EFFORT



If you are a regular reader of this column you know I often talk about shopping with coupons and looking for Buy One Get One Free Sales. I keep repeating this because it is such a simple, successful way to save money that it almost becomes automatic for you. Just in the last week I paid \$9.66 for a \$15.99 bottle of

Tide, stocked up on all my favorite snacks on a Buy One Get One Free Sale at Publix and saved 30% by using coupons and a promotional offer at Big Lots. I even got a good deal when filling up at a Shell gas station.

When shopping, an important thing to always keep in mind is to look at the shelf tag and look at what is called the per unit price. Have you ever purchased a big box of cereal or crackers and when you opened it discovered you bought a lot of air as the contents of the box only took up half the space? It is important to know what you are paying per ounce so you can compare and determine which item is really the best value. Almost all stores have shelf tags below the item that shows the total price and then the price per ounce. Usually, the bigger item is cheaper per ounce but not always, so it is important to look. For items like vitamins the shelf tag will show you the cost per unit (cost per pill). This is especially helpful for items like vitamins as often the exact same product comes in multiple size boxes, be it 40, 60, 75 or 100 pills per box. The cost per ounce is very helpful when comparing different size bottles of items like spaghetti sauce or salad dressings. Often different brands package into different size bottles. Just look at your cost per ounce which helps you make a money smart decision. When shopping for items like this on Amazon they will also show you the unit pricing.

Unused gift cards are another source of money you may have. It seems piddly but I recently made a purchase at Cracker Barrel. I had .40 cents remaining on one gift card and .14 cents on another. The cashier didn't mind a bit as I used both of those to pay for a part of my purchase. At Shell I had a \$1.84 unused balance on a gift card. I used that and figure it got me a little over a half a gallon of gas, or enough gas to get me 15 miles down the road. In the United States 47% of the population has at least one unused gift card with the total value in the country being 23 billion dollars. The average household has \$187 in unused or remaining balances on their gift cards. See what you can find stashed away in your house or car and use those already paid for dollars!

Clark Howard is a favorite of mine for money advice. Lately he wrote about reducing unnecessary spending. He suggested looking at things like magazine and newspaper subscriptions that you no longer read, gym memberships that you don't use and wholesale club memberships. In Ocala it seems like a new car wash is opening every few blocks. Clark writes about the high number of people who sign up for the monthly car wash pass but then get there about once a month. He cautions against these car wash memberships unless you know you wash your car three or four times a month and then he still worries about their price increases once they have you as a member

Like many things, if you really want to save money you can wash your own car, mow your own lawn, iron your own clothes and make your own cup of coffee. You actually feel pretty good when you take care of yourself and leave money in your pocket.

Business Spotlight



Business Name: Watermark Design Concepts

No. of Employees: 2

Business Owner: Isaiah "Zay" Waters

Business Address: Ocala, Florida

Business Phone: (352) 497-7572

What Year Did You Start Your Business?

August 1, 2023

Hours of Operation: Monday - Friday (7 a.m. to 5 p.m.)
Saturday (11 a.m. to 5 p.m.) Closed on Sunday

Products and/or Services: Graphic Design Services. At Watermark Design Concepts, we focus on creating unique graphic designs that bring your brand's story to life. Let us enhance your visual identity through our customized design services.

Email: watermarkdesignconcepts@gmail.com

Website: Under Construction

Are you on Social Media? Yes

Facebook: Watermark Design Concepts

Instagram: WatermarkDC

What or Who Inspired you to start your business?

My journey started in October 2019 when I created digital flyers for my Pastor's 10th Pastoral Anniversary. Despite feeling unsure about my early design skills, those humble beginnings ignited my passion. Inspired by my family, Pastor Tanya Hanks and experienced designers, their support has been my driving force. It's a true blessing to have such a strong support system. It's their encouragement and belief in my talent that gave me the confidence to pursue my own graphic design business.

What Makes Your Business Unique or What's

Your Specialty? What sets us apart is our unwavering commitment to infusing each design with a blend of creativity and personalized attention.

What Advice Would You Give Someone Starting a

Business? Stay true to your vision, embrace challenges as opportunities for growth and never underestimate the power of perseverance and passion.

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 in an upcoming edition, please request a form by emailing Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com. Completed forms can be returned via email or mailed to P.O. Box 6212, Ocala, FL 34478.

Tickets and Sponsorships Available at
<https://checkout.square.site/buy/ERQRW3HURNLQWOEZABBW2C66>



A 501 (c)(3) Non-Profit Organization for Public Charities

Present!
**Juneteenth: Grown Folks
 A Night of Elegance**

FEATURED SPEAKER:
REV. DR. JOY L. GALLMON
 American Sunday Plate Catering
 Ex Chef Mario Mctier
 Kim's Unique DECOR * MORE
 Dances by:
 Be Heard Through Movement, Orlando, Fla

Special Guest **Ticket admission \$50**
 Sponsorship packages available
 Entertainment By: DJ Tony, Dothan, AL
FREE GIVEAWAYS
 3-\$1,000 Scholarship Awarded
**Mary Sue Rich Community
 Center at Reeds Place**
 1821 NW 21st Ave. Ocala FL 34475
 6pm - 11pm

Friday June 14, 2024




**KDC and the
 Sunshine Sliders**
 Line Dancing is what we do.

**JUNETEENTH
 CELEBRATION**

**Saturday, June 1, 2024
 6:00pm-10:00pm**
 Juneteenth Celebration Dinner & Dance Fundraiser


Mary Sue Rich Center at Reed Place
 1821 NW 21st Ave, Ocala, FL 34475

TICKETS \$65 EACH
 Attire: African or Business

Speaker Dr. Rik Stevenson, Live
 Entertainment, Dinner, Dancing, Raffles, Silent
 Auction, Vendors and more...

Contact: Barbara J. Brooks, Ph.D., President
 R.A.M.A.L. Education and Social Services, Inc.
 (352) 875-4237
www.ramalservices.org

Sponsorships Available!



**MEMORIAL DAY
 MURPH**

START AT 0800
 AT THE PARK

MORE INFORMATION
WWW.MARIONVETPARK.COM



**SATURDAY
 MAY 25, 2024**

SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE

- 4 STAR - \$250 (only 2 of these available) - name in largest print on top of shirt, on banner, mentioned during event
- 3 STAR - \$150 (only 3 of these) - name one position down on shirt, name mentioned during event
- 2 STAR - \$75 (only 4 of these available) - name two positions down on shirt
- 1 STAR - \$50 - (UNLIMITED) - name in small print below the 2 star names

SAVE THE DATE

The Ocala Juneteenth
 Celebration Commission



**JUNE
 TEENTH
 CELEBRATION**

**Saturday, June 15, 2024
 10am to 4pm**

**Webb Field
 1501 W. Silver Springs Blvd. - Ocala, FL 34475**

For more information, email
ocalajuneteenth2020@gmail.com

**FOOD ★ VENDORS ★ ENTERTAINMENT
 & MORE!**

CATCH UP WITH WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE CITY OF OCALA



Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place
1821 NW 21st Ave.

Saturday, May 4 | 9 - 10 AM
Mayor's Birthday Celebration at 9:50 AM

Activities include:

- Fit Workout with Clint Hart
- Meet the Machines
- Smoothie Bike
- Youth Fitness Activities
- Walking Track

Community Resource Spotlight:



Join us for a family friendly workout!
Commit to get fit, together!

OCALA
Recreation and Parks

352.401.6980 | [OcalaFL.gov/RecPark](https://ocalafl.gov/RecPark)

SAVE MONEY WITH THESE WATER SAVING TIPS

The City of Ocala Water Resources Department celebrated Water Conservation Month in April, which is designated as Florida's Water Conservation Month, to educate citizens about how they can help save Florida's precious water resources.

Customers can save water by taking the following steps:

-- **Looking for Leaks** - Don't let an outdoor hose or leaky toilet soak up all the spring-time fun. City of Ocala customers are encouraged to sign up for a free EyeOnWater® account at <https://eyeonwater.com> **signup** to receive potential leak notifications and to monitor their daily water usage.

-- **Watering Wisely** - Only irrigate if necessary and adjust controls to water before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m. on assigned irrigation days. It's important to note that no more than three-fourths inches of water may be applied per irrigation zone on each day that irrigation occurs, and in no event shall irrigation occur for more than one hour per irrigation zone on each day that irrigation occurs. While irrigation restrictions are helpful, customers are encouraged to carefully watch their yard, and only water when necessary.

-- **Planting Florida Friendly** -The City of Ocala is our place of choice, so let's plant accordingly. Plant the right plant in the right place by picking plants that match the location's light, soil and water conditions. Once established, plants that are planted in the right place require little to no additional irrigation. Customers can also increase water savings by adding mulch around plants to help retain moisture and regulate temperature.

For additional information on how to save water and have the best-looking lawn in your neighborhood, visit <https://www.ocalafl.gov/government/city-departments-i-z/water-resources/water-conservation>.

To schedule a tour of the Ocala Water Resources Florida Friendly Garden, contact the Water Resources Department at (352) 351-6772 or WRCoordinator@ocalafl.gov.

Additional workout dates:

- June 1: Jervy Gantt Recreation Complex, 2200 S.E. 36th Ave.
- July 6: Tuscawilla Park, 213 N.E. Fifth St.
- August 3: Ocala Wetland Recharge Park, 2105 N.W. 21st St.
- September 7: Fort King National Historic Landmark, 3925 E. Fort King St.
- October 4: Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place, 1821 N.W. 21st Ave.

Details for each workout will be announced on the Ocala Recreation and Parks social media pages, Facebook and Instagram.

COME OUT AND ENJOY THE MARION COUNTY MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Sunday, May 19, 2024 - Marthalyne Allen – Ross & Virginia Allen of the Ross Allen Reptile Institute, Silver Springs.

Sunday, July 21, 2024 - Dr. Joseph Knetsch, Florida historian and author. Florida in Flight.

All programs held on the third Sunday of odd months at 2 p.m. in Green Clover Hall, 319 S.E. 26th Ter. Reception following the program in the Museum. Admission is free for members and \$5 for nonmembers.

Individual and family memberships available for sale at events.

For information, call (352) 236-5245 M ~ Mailing address is P. O. Box 4383, Ocala, FL 34478 .

Men Working To Better The Community

ORDER FORM

Event: Scholarship Fundraiser

Due Date: June 1, 2024

Overview: We are a non-profit charitable 501c3 organization and are creating a souvenir book to assist with generating funds to:

- Grant graduating students with \$500 scholarships
- Participate in the annual *Back to School Bash*
- Assist the elderly, needy, or less fortunate families within our communities
- Sponsor Little League Football *Rattlers*
- Provide financial donations to community churches for youth uniforms
- Provide Thanksgiving dinners to families

We invite you to participate by purchasing an advertisement in the book. All donations received are returned to the community 100%.

Size	Donation
Full Page 8.5 inches x 11 inches	\$100
Half Page 5.5 inches x 8.5 inches	\$50
Quarter Page 4.25 inches x 5.5 inches	\$25
Individual Donation	\$

Individual Name or Name of Business, Church, or Organization

Complete Address

Contact Name, Telephone, & eMail

Ad Size

Please include copy/print-ready ads or desired wording and email to betterthecommunity2000@gmail.com. Checks should be made payable to: Men Working to Better The Community and mailed to P. O. Box 0312, Ocala, FL 34478.

If you have any questions or need additional information, contact Sheila Hagins at 352 812 3932.



Don't cook, stop by and pick up a delicious dinner on Saturday, May 4, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 4595 N.W. 61st Lane. Proceeds support **Men Working To Better The Community** Scholarship Fundraising Event. Menu includes Ribs, Chicken or Fried Fish, a dinner roll and choice of two sides: green beans, rice, macaroni and cheese or baked beans. Slab of ribs available \$30. (Limited quantity).



Town Talk Magazine

P.O. Box 6212

Ocala, FL 34478



KEEP FLORIDA BEACHES & PARKS ~~~~~ TOBACCO FREE

Cities and counties can keep our beaches and parks safe, healthy, and clean of debris, including cigarette butts and vape cartridges, by implementing local tobacco free parks and beaches policies, thanks to a recent update to the Florida Clean Air Act.

**Communities can protect public health and
be part of a cleaner Florida.**

For more information on how to get involved, visit
TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/get-involved.

