

Designer Otto finds niche in women's outdoor clothing market with trekALLa

By Ken Datzman

COCOA — Growing up in Texas, Alisa Otto spent a lot of time outdoors. She enjoys hiking and has trekked through many trails and canyons in the Lone Star State.

While on her journeys, she often felt uncomfortable in the clothing she was wearing, because traditional fabrics such as cotton and denim are poor for most outdoor activities. Much preferred are moisture-wicking and breathable synthetic fabrics, including polyester and nylon.

“There are not many options for women to buy clothing that is comfortable for hiking, for camping, and for fishing. A lot of times women purchase men's outdoor clothing and just deal with their not fitting properly,” said Otto, whose company trekALLa LLC designs and produces women's outdoor clothing in sizes XS–6X.

Functional clothing is essential for canyon hiking because of the often extreme conditions of the environment, she added.

Otto has an in-depth background in apparel design and textile development. She has an M.F.A. degree in fashion design, with a concentration in apparel, from the University of North Texas and was a professor there.

Like many savvy entrepreneurs, she identified a specific, underserved group of customers and created specialized products to fill that gap in the market.

“I was on a hiking trip in 2018 in Texas. It was a hot and humid day. The clothing I was wearing made it even worse. That is when I decided I was going to design and manufacture comfortable clothing for women to wear outdoors. I have put all my experience and knowledge into my company. This is my passion,” said Otto.

Otto is tapping a growing segment. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, female participation in outdoor activities has increased by 15 percent over the past five years.

More women are engaging in outdoor sports and recreation such as hiking, camping, and climbing. They are fueling the demand for specialized, high-performance apparel.

“With this venture, we are focused on getting women outdoors at whatever level they choose,” said Otto, who has worked in the apparel industry her entire career. “The COVID-19 pandemic fueled a surge in outdoor recreation and I believe that trend is continuing today.”

In 2024, an estimated 181.1 million Americans participated in outdoor recreation, representing 58.6 percent of the U.S. population aged 6 and older, according to the Outdoor Industry Association's “2025 Outdoor Participation Trends Report.” This was a record figure, showing a 3 percent increase in participation from the previous year.

“I'm an advocate for getting outdoors and experiencing the natural world,” said Otto, who is active with the Midwest-based nonprofit “wildHERness.”

That organization empowers women by providing hands-on, accessible opportunities in outdoor activities, including hunting, fishing, and homesteading, along with fostering a strong community to support their confidence and skill-building.

“The organization focuses on helping women learn



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Entrepreneur Alisa Otto started her women's outdoor apparel company in Texas and relocated it to Brevard in 2023. She says sales at trekALLa LLC have been strong. Her clothing is sold online at trekalla.com. It's a sustainable and inclusive (sizes XS–6X) company with its manufacturing shop in Historic Cocoa Village. Her environmentally friendly fabrics have moisture-wicking and wind-blocking capabilities. Otto's business was selected for and completed the Upstart Cocoa program, which includes a \$7,500 'forgivable' loan. Otto, who learned to sew when she was 4 years old, is a former University of North Texas professor, with expertise in fashion design and apparel.

skills in the outdoors, such as archery or how to read a compass or a map” said Otto.

“Being active in this type of organization is one of my favorite things. And it has been a positive for business. That organization provides a huge amount of support for getting women outdoors to explore. It helps them physically and mentally, and builds confidence.”

Otto started her business in Texas and relocated it to Brevard in 2023. She is the founder, owner, and designer for trekALLa LLC, a micro-manufacturer of women's outdoor apparel. Formerly known as Ottomatic Threads, she rebranded her business as it evolved.

Please see trekALLa LLC, page 23

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United Way Space Coast announces Campaign fundraising goal of \$4.5 million; Superintendent Dr. Mark Rendell to lead the effort

By Melody Marler
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Strategic Engagement Manager
United Way Space Coast

ROCKLEDGE (Sept. 25, 2025) — United Way Space Coast launched its 2025 Campaign with some Friday night lights energy. Viera High School cheerleaders, band, and football players set the tone as guests arrived, energizing the event with excitement and school spirit. This marks the first campaign since the organization's transition from United Way of Brevard to United Way Space Coast.

Brevard County Schools Superintendent Dr. Mark "Coach" Rendell took the field as Campaign chair, announcing the 2025 goal to raise \$4.5 million. The kickoff program featured many high-energy moments, including a themed photograph booth, game-day inspired fun, and stories of local impact.

A Pacesetters panel, including representatives from L3Harris, Space Florida, Publix, and Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex, also shared some friendly challenges and best practices for running a significant campaign.

"I believe in the power of community, and this campaign is our chance to come together as a team for Brevard's children and families," Rendell said. "The United Way supports 33 local partner agencies that directly impact the lives of children, families, and neighbors across Brevard. I've seen firsthand how these programs touch our schools and strengthen the fabric of our county."

The 2025 Campaign marks a new era for United Way Space Coast, reflecting its strengthened commitment to changing lives and building a brighter future for Brevard. "As a board, we are inspired by the collective power of this community," said Jackie Barker, board chair of United Way Space Coast. "When people, businesses, and organizations come together, we create lasting change for children

and families across Brevard. This campaign is about uniting around that shared purpose."

Caron Partridge, United Way Space Coast president, agreed. "This campaign kickoff is more than an event," she said. "It's the start of a season of teamwork and possibility. I'm excited to see what we will accomplish together in the year ahead."

She added, "Together, we're ready for a winning season. 'United' is the way we rally together to change lives and strengthen our community."

For more information about United Way Space Coast and the 2025 campaign, visit uwspacecoast.org.

● About United Way Space Coast

United Way of Brevard became United Way Space Coast this year. With fresh energy, bold ideas, and a dynamic approach, United Way Space Coast is rising to meet today's challenges head-on. The new name builds on a legacy of impact that began more than a century ago. United Way's roots stretch back to 1887, when the Charity Organization Society formed in Denver to bring people together for good. Through the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, the United Way movement began to take shape, uniting business and labor leaders to reduce fundraising fatigue and maximize impact through a single, powerful campaign.

Locally, that story began in 1957, when a group of caring residents launched the Brevard County United Appeal and led the first countywide fundraising campaign. In the decades that followed, the organization evolved first into the United Fund of Brevard County in 1962, and then as United Way of Brevard in 1971.

United Way Space Coast is committed to changing lives and strengthening communities across Brevard. It brings people together to tackle the toughest challenges in the areas of health, education, and financial stability. Through local partnerships, strategic investments, and community-driven solutions, United Way Space Coast helps individuals and families not just survive but thrive. To learn more or to get involved, visit uwspacecoast.org.

Florida Department of Health in Brevard recognizes October as the National Breast Cancer Awareness Month; prevention suggestions

By DOH-Brevard Communications
doh-brevard.communications@flhealth.gov
Florida Department of Health in Brevard County

VIERA (Oct. 1, 2025) — The Florida Department of Health in Brevard County (DOH-Brevard) recognizes October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a time to spread important health education and encourage women to receive regular screenings to promote early detection and treatment of breast cancer.

Breast cancer is a disease in which cells in the breast grow out of control. Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer among women in Florida. Although rare, men can also develop breast cancer. Mortality rates have decreased by over 5 percent in the past 10 years, partly because of improved screening, access, and treatment.

Prevention suggestions:

- Routine screening and self-breast exams are important to breast wellness. Being familiar with your breasts can help you notice signs/symptoms such as lumps, discharge, or changes in size or nipple appearance. Contact your health-care provider if you notice any signs or symptoms.

- Women ages 40 to 74 should schedule a mammogram every two years with their health-care provider, or with DOH-Brevard if eligible for the Florida Breast and

Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program.

- At-risk women should schedule regular breast MRIs and mammograms every year. Risk factors include family history, genetics, breast density, and more.

- Healthy habits can help prevent breast cancer. A healthy lifestyle includes eating nutritious foods, avoiding alcohol and tobacco, regular physical activity, and adhering to recommended screenings.

- Breastfeeding lowers a woman's risk of getting breast cancer.

DOH-Brevard provides access to free or low-cost breast cancer screenings to women who are uninsured or underinsured, have a low income, and meet the program eligibility requirements. Mammograms can detect breast cancer in the early stages when it is easier to treat. To see if you qualify for these screenings, call (321) 984-4702 or visit the Florida Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program webpage.

● About the Florida Department of Health

The Department, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board, works to protect, promote, and improve the health of people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts. Follow on X at @HealthyFla and on Facebook. For more information about the Florida Department of Health and to learn more about the signs and symptoms of breast cancer and the benefits of early detection, visit FloridaHealth.gov.



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Commissioner Simpson announces approval to preserve more than 10,000 acres

By Communications Office
communications@fdacs.gov
Commissioner Wilton Simpson
Florida Commissioner of Agriculture
and Consumer Services

TALLAHASSEE (Sept. 30, 2025) — Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson today announced that the governor and cabinet, sitting as the board of trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund, have approved the preservation of more than 10,000 acres of working farms and ranches through the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Rural and Family Lands Protection Program.

Rural lands protection easements prevent future development of the land and allow agriculture operations to continue to contribute to Florida's economy and the production of food, timber, and other resources vital to the prosperity of Florida.

"At today's cabinet meeting, we took another important step to safeguard Florida's agricultural future," said Simpson. "By protecting more than 10,000 acres of working farms and ranches through FDACS' Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, we are ensuring that this land will remain in private, productive agriculture. This is how we secure our food supply, protect our water resources, and preserve the rural way of life that makes Florida strong."

Since its inception, the department's Rural and Family Lands Protection Program has permanently preserved

219,714 acres of working agricultural land, with 154,126 of those acres being preserved during Simpson's administration.

All three properties approved today are enrolled in FDACS Best Management Practices and are located within the linkage priorities for the Florida Ecological Greenways Network or the Florida Wildlife Corridor, which was established in state law in 2021 through the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act as a priority of then-Senate President Simpson.

The governor and cabinet approved rural lands protection easements for the following projects:

● Bentley Ranch

Bentley Ranch is a 2,559-acre cattle ranch and citrus operation southwest of Highlands Hammock State Park. The northern half of the site is mostly pasture and cropland. Oak Creek flows through the southern half. The southern half of the site is surrounded by similar agricultural lands, primarily pasture and citrus. It is adjacent to the Heartland Wildlife Corridor Florida Forever project to the east, Circle O Groves RFLPP proposal to the east, and Stevens Land & Cattle RFLPP proposal to the west. Crested caracara and gopher tortoise are documented on the ranch.

● Remlap Ranch

Remlap Ranch is a 5,940-acre cattle ranch. The protection of this property is a natural extension of the protected lands occurring in the Northern Okeechobee Watershed and Lower Kissimmee Basin, facilitating landscape connectivity throughout the state. It is primarily composed of improved pasture and supports the habitat of several threatened and endangered species.

The property is located less than 14 miles northwest of Lake Okeechobee, and it is found within the northern Okeechobee inflow sub basin; part of the larger Lake Okeechobee watershed. Several isolated freshwater marshes are found throughout the property. These marshes offer ecological services to the surrounding areas such as flood control and water purification for people and wildlife. The conservation of this property will contribute to enhanced water quality, aquifer recharge, flow attenuation, and flood hazard reduction.

● 4G Ranch

4G Ranch is an 1,893-acre cow/calf operation just north of Conner Preserve comprised of a mosaic of pasture, non-forested wetlands, cropland, forested wetlands, and altered open lands. There are also 10 acres of coniferous plantations. The property lies adjacent to the Crossbar/Al Bar Ranch Florida Forever project and surrounding lands are

undeveloped with a similar makeup of land cover types. Several surrounding lands are protected by conservation easements. This property contains suitable habitat for Florida scrub-jay, a federally endangered species known to occur in the vicinity.

4G Ranch has approximately 1.55 miles of direct road frontage along the north side of State Road 52. It has a future land use designation of a Planned Unit Development (PUD) for approximately 2,000 units over the property and an Ecological Conservation Corridor through a portion of the property that is designated as CON, which is part of the PUD. By placing a rural lands protection easement over this property, it will extinguish those 2,000 units and keep the property in agricultural use. The Pasco County Board of County Commissioners will provide 50 percent of the acquisition cost, reducing the Board of Trustees' acquisition cost to 50 percent.

● About the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program

Established in 2001 with the passage of the Rural and Family Lands Protection Act, the program recognizes that working agricultural lands are essential to Florida's economic future. Agricultural lands are being increasingly threatened by urban development. To counter this trend, the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program partners with farmers and ranchers to ensure sustainable production practices while protecting natural resources.

During the 2024 Legislative Session, Simpson helped to secure a \$100 million legislative appropriation for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program and another \$100 million each fiscal year, appropriated in Senate Bill 1638, to support the Florida Wildlife Corridor, including the acquisition of rural land protection easements under the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program.

Simpson has been involved in Florida's land conservation policy issues long before becoming Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture. As senate president, Simpson championed the successful passage of the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act, which directed the state to better protect and connect Florida's natural areas and wildlife habitats and to preserve working agricultural lands from future development. As senate president, he also secured a \$300 million legislative appropriation for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program.

A story map of all completed Rural and Family Lands Protection Program projects can be viewed at FDACS.gov/RFLPPMap.

For more information about the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, visit FDACS.gov.

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Satellite Beach Public Library awarded Flight Path grant, to educate about bird migration

By Morgan Roth
mroth@brev.org
Library Operations Specialist
Brevard County Public Libraries

VIERA (Sept. 19, 2025) — Brevard County Libraries has announced that one of its branch locations, the Satellite Beach Public Library, was recently awarded \$500 in grant funding and educational materials.

This funding was awarded by the STAR Library Network and HHMI Tangled Bank Studios through their Flight Path program.

The Flight Path program aims to educate the public about bird migration, promote bird health and safety, and encourage local communities to get to know their local birds. This program is the first campaign in the Spark of Science @ My Library initiative that was launched by STAR Library Network and HHMI Tangled Bank Studios.

The Satellite Beach Public Library will use the funds and materials from the Flight Path grant to implement engaging programs for youth and adults alike. They have already scheduled events with local organizations such as the Florida Wildlife Hospital and the Space Coast Audubon Society.

The branch is also gearing up for spring events that include story time, a visit from Dr. Kate Wells, Story Walk, and a celebration of The Great Backyard Bird Count.

On Sept. 24, the Florida Wildlife Hospital visited to present "All About Owls" to coincide with the library's STEM programming for ages 5-12. A second program geared toward adults, Beginning Birding with the Space Coast Audubon Society, will be presented at 9 a.m. Nov. 17. The program is free to attend.

To learn more about these special events, contact the Satellite Beach Public Library at (321) 779-4004.

To learn more about the Spark of Science @ My Library initiative, visit the STAR Library Network's website.



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Mr. Timothy Michaud
1791 Wekiva Drive
Melbourne, FL 32940

RE: Post-judgment issues

2019 FLORIDA NOT FOR PROFIT CORPORATION ANNUAL REPORT
DOCUMENT# N36299
Entity Name: THE COCOA BEACH AREA HOTEL AND MOTEL ASSOCIATION, INC.
Current Principal Place of Business:
976 BREVARD AVE
ROCKLEDGE, FL 32955

FILED
Feb 07, 2019
Secretary of State
0275169506CC

Current Mailing Address
976 BREVARD AVE
ROCKLEDGE, FL 32955

FEI Number: 59-3048626
Name and Address of Current Registered Agent:
MICHAUD, TIMOTHY
1300 N ATLANTIC AVE
COCOA BEACH, FL 32931 US

The above named entity submits this statement for the purpose of changing its registered office or registered agent, or both, in the State of Florida.
SIGNATURE: TIMOTHY MICHAUD
Electronic Signature

Officer/Director Detail :
Title S
Name NORONHA, DEBRA
Address 5575 N ATLANTIC AVE
City-State-Zip: COCOA BEACH, FL 32909 US

Title DP
Name WILLIAMSON, JENNIFER
Address 3425 N ATLANTIC AVE
City-State-Zip: COCOA BEACH, FL 32909 US

I hereby certify that the information indicated on this report or supplemental report is true and accurate and that my electronic signature shall have the same legal effect as if made under oath, that I am an officer or director of the corporation or the receiver or trustee empowered to execute this report as required by Chapter 617, Florida Statutes; and that my name appears above, or on an attachment with all other like empowered.
SIGNATURE: TOM WILLIAMS
Electronic Signature

2023 FLORIDA NOT FOR PROFIT CORPORATION ANNUAL REPORT
DOCUMENT# N97000002404
Entity Name: BREVARD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE CHARITY, INC.
Current Principal Place of Business:
440 SOUTH BABCOCK STREET
MELBOURNE, FL 32901

FILED
Feb 24, 2023
Secretary of State
0788171138CC

Current Mailing Address:
440 SOUTH BABCOCK STREET
MELBOURNE, FL 32901 US

FEI Number: 59-3441257
Name and Address of Current Registered Agent:
NASH, CHARLES IAN ESQ.
NASH & KROMASH, LLP
440 SOUTH BABCOCK STREET
MELBOURNE, FL 32901 US

The above named entity submits this statement for the purpose of changing its registered office or registered agent, or both, in the State of Florida.
SIGNATURE: CHARLES IAN NASH
Electronic Signature of Registered Agent Date 02/24/2023

Officer/Director Detail :
Title PRESIDENT, DIRECTOR
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City-State-Zip: MELBOURNE FL 32901

Title SECRETARY, DIRECTOR
Name PEARSON, JEFF
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Title VP, DIRECTOR
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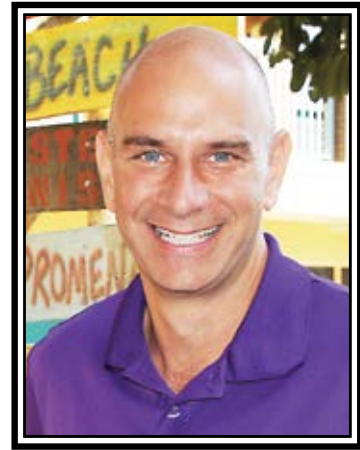
Title TREASURER, DIRECTOR
Name NEIDERT, TOM
Address 440 SOUTH BABCOCK STREET
City-State-Zip: MELBOURNE FL 32901

I hereby certify that the information indicated on this report or supplemental report is true and accurate and that my electronic signature shall have the same legal effect as if made under oath, that I am an officer or director of the corporation or the receiver or trustee empowered to execute this report as required by Chapter 617, Florida Statutes; and that my name appears above, or on an attachment with all other like empowered.
SIGNATURE: CHARLES IAN NASH
Electronic Signature of Signing Officer/Director Detail Date 02/24/2023

Please

SUMMARY

DATE	DESCRIPTION
Oct-09-09	Telephone modification
Nov-11-09	Meet with attorney against Michael Michaud
Nov-12-09	N/C - Telephone attorney on 11/24, 2009 and telephone being served



Timothy Michaud
File photo

'Based upon my investigation as a criminal investigator with the Craven County Sheriff's Department there is probable cause to arrest Timothy Michaud for sexual assault on R(xxxx) Michaud.'
John Whitfield
May 7, 2010



Brevard County Sheriff's Office photo
'I need to report suspected abuse.'
Dana Delaney Loyd
aka Theresa Smith
to Florida Abuse Hotline
at 11:12 a.m., April 29, 2015



Brevard County Sheriff's Office photo
'Loyalty is everything to me!!!'
Sheriff Robert Wayne Ivey
to Dana Delaney Loyd
at 5:19 p.m., April 29, 2015

IS THE EIGHTEENTH CIRCUIT AN ONGOING HUMAN TRAFFICKER?

BBN NOTE: John M. Stewart — a partner at Rossway Swan — is a past president of the 107,000 member The Florida Bar.
BBN 4341 PAGE 5
To Be Continued ...

Supreme Court disciplines 10 attorneys, summaries of orders issued from Aug. 29 to Sept. 29, 2025

By Jennifer Krell Davis, J.D.
jkrelldavis@floridabar.org
Director
Communications Division
The Florida Bar

TALLAHASSEE (Sept. 30, 2025) — The Florida Bar, the state's guardian for the integrity of the legal profession, announces that the Florida Supreme Court in recent court orders disciplined 10 attorneys, disbarred two, suspending six, and reprimanding two.

The Florida Supreme Court, The Florida Bar, and its Division of Lawyer Regulation are charged with administering a statewide disciplinary system to enforce Supreme Court rules of professional conduct for the more than 114,000 members of The Florida Bar. Key discipline case files that are public record are posted to attorneys' individual online Florida Bar profiles. Information on the discipline system and how to file a complaint are available at www.floridabar.org/attorneydiscipline.

Court orders are not final until time expires to file a rehearing motion and, if filed, determined. The filing of such a motion does not alter the effective date of the discipline. Disbarred lawyers may not reapply for admission for five years. They are required to go through an extensive process that includes a rigorous background check and retaking the Bar exam. Attorneys suspended for periods of 91 days and longer must undergo a rigorous process to regain their law licenses including proving rehabilitation. Disciplinary revocation is tantamount to disbarment.

● W. Jeffrey Barnes, 1515 N. Federal Highway, Suite 300, Boca Raton, suspended for three years effective Oct. 27. (Admitted to Practice: 1988) Barnes was suspended following a Sept. 25 court order regarding reciprocal discipline matters in Tennessee and Colorado; and misconduct in Florida that includes engaging in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, or misrepresentation; impugning qualifications and integrity of a judge, engaging in conduct in connection with the practice of law that is prejudicial to the administration of justice, failing to abide by court orders, neglecting clients, failing to refund unused fees and making disparaging remarks to clients and opposing counsel. (Case No. SC2024-1832)

● Kendrick James Blackwell, P.O. Box 7196, St. Peters-

burg, suspended for 30 days and ordered to attend Ethics School effective 30 days following an Aug. 28 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 1995) While representing the husband in a dissolution matter, Blackwell violated a temporary injunction issued by the court prohibiting Blackwell's client from any action that would affect the status of the marital assets. After entry of the temporary injunction, Blackwell signed and executed several quitclaim deeds on behalf of his client under his power of attorney, which impacted the status of the marital assets without approval of the former wife or court. Despite being advised by The Florida Bar Ethics Hotline to withdraw on at least two occasions, Blackwell failed to withdraw from the representation. (Case No. SC2025-1210)

● Todd J. Herman, 1 E. Broward Blvd., Suite 700, Fort Lauderdale, disbarred effective immediately following a Sept. 25 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 2010) Herman, failed to account for client funds, failed to deliver client funds to the clients, failed to keep clients reasonably informed about the status of their respective cases, and failed to respond to the official inquiries of the Bar. (Case No. SC2025-0228)

● Josh A. Howard, 4 W. Las Olas Blvd., Apt. 611, Fort Lauderdale, suspended for 91 days and probation with conditions effective one month following an Aug. 28 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 2011) In April 2021, Howard was arrested and charged with Driving Under Influence, Possession of Fentanyl and Possession of Paraphernalia. After successfully completing drug court, the possession counts were dropped. Howard pled no contest to the driving under the influence charge and adjudication was withheld. (Case No. SC2024-1261)

● Alejandro L. Marriaga, 1802 N. Alafaya Trail, Suite 152, Orlando, disbarred effective 30 days following a Sept. 18 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 2006) Marriaga engaged in a course of conduct where he intentionally misdirected funds from real estate closings he handled as the purportedly neutral settlement agent, failed to advise buyers of his significant ties to the seller, Steel X Homes LLC, and its affiliates, and failed to comply with the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar on lawyer trust accounts. Marriaga deviated from the closing disclosure statements and diverted builder draws to Steel X Homes, its affiliated entities and, in one instance, his own law firm. Because none of the builders received any funds from the closings, none of the four homes were

constructed. Marriaga then represented Steel X Homes in the resulting civil litigation despite the conflict of interest. (Case No. SC2024-1241)

● Marie A. Mattox, 203 N. Gadsden St., Tallahassee, public reprimand and participation in DDCS effective immediately following a Sept. 4 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 1988) Mattox was hired for a wrongful termination case that was settled at mediation with an agreement requiring the opposing party to pay \$50,000 within 30 days of execution of the agreement to the client. The opposing party failed to pay within the timeframe and subsequently filed for bankruptcy. Mattox did not respond to her client's requests for updates on both the initial case and the bankruptcy hearings. The debtor filed an objection to the claim filed on the client's behalf in the bankruptcy. The bankruptcy court adjudicated the claim by the client, and the client was awarded \$4,375.93. For eight months after, the client was unable to reach Mattox. Finally the client executed a settlement statement and received a check for \$3,375.93. Due to the lack of sufficient communication to the client, Mattox was found to have violated Rules Regulating The Florida Bar 4-1.4 (Communication). (Case No. SC2025-1087)

● Paige Sundance Mincieli, 2301 Del Prado Blvd. S., Suite 690, #169, Cape Coral, suspended until further order of the court effective one month following a Sept. 29 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 2019) Mincieli failed to respond to multiple official Bar inquiries regarding the investigation of four separate bar matters. Additionally, Mincieli failed to respond to an order to show cause entered by the Supreme Court of Florida requiring her response. Accordingly, the court found her in contempt and issued a suspension order. (Case No. SC2025-1188)

● Nabil Ibrahim Abu Nahlah, 2822 Pine Tree Drive, Apt. 2, Miami Beach, suspended until further order of the court effective immediately following a Sept. 15 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 2018) Nahlah was charged for major fraud against the United States in the Southern District of Florida and pleaded guilty. Nahlah was released under supervision for a term of three years. (Case No. SC2025-1370)

● Larry Edward Powers III, 931 N. State Road 434, Suite 1201, Altamonte Springs, suspended from the practice of law until Powers makes a written response to the Bar's investigative inquiries and until further order of the court, effective 30 days following a Sept. 12 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 2018) Powers was held in contempt by the Supreme Court of Florida for failing to respond to The Florida Bar's investigative inquiries and for failing to respond to the court's Order to Show Cause. (Case No. SC2025-1114)

● Thomas F. Rieger, 300 5th Ave. S., Suite 219, Naples, public reprimand effective immediately following a Sept. 4 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 1995) Rieger failed to produce responses to discovery requests and failed to produce documents after two subsequent motions to compel. In the second motion, monetary sanctions were also ordered against Rieger's client for failing to produce the documents, to which Rieger consented to the entry of. Rieger voluntarily dismissed the case prior to opposing counsel's motion to strike the pleadings, and he never informed his client of the monetary sanctions, nor did he have permission from the client to dismiss the case. Rieger also did not reduce to writing his contingency fee agreement. (Case No. SC2025-1273)

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Palm Bay's Rob Medina releases his October Mayor's Message, pays tribute to lives lost on Sept. 11, 2001

By Mayor Rob Medina
c/o Christina Born
christina.born@palmabayfl.gov
Public Information Officer
The City of Palm Bay

PALM BAY (Oct. 1, 2025) — It's a great day, Palm Bay! September was a busy month for the City of Palm Bay! On Thursday, Sept. 11, our community came together at Sacrifice Park to honor the lives lost on Sept. 11, 2001, and to remember the heroes who emerged that day and in the years since. Through heartfelt remarks, moments of silence, and reflections, we paid tribute to the nearly 3,000 lives lost, including those who gave everything in service to others. Thank you to Sen. Mayfield, Rep. Miller, and everyone who joined us in this moving ceremony. Together, we reaffirmed our promise to never forget.

Watch the highlights from Palm Bay's Patriot Day Remembrance Ceremony on our website.

Unfortunately, this past month, our nation witnessed the tragic loss of Christian Patriot Charlie Kirk. Through-

out his career, Mr. Kirk was recognized for his efforts to engage young people in civic and political life. His passing has sparked reflection across the country about the importance of respectful dialogue, community engagement, and the responsibilities that come with public service. As we remember his life, let us recommit ourselves here in Palm Bay to fostering a community where differences can be discussed with civility and where every resident feels encouraged to participate in shaping our shared future.

I will be presenting the City of Palm Bay's legislative priorities for the 2025 session at the upcoming Brevard Legislative Delegation meeting. The first is funding for the Sgt. Frank Tobar Tactical Training Building, which will expand our Police Range and provide state-of-the-art training for law enforcement, fire personnel, and even school faculty to better prepare for critical incidents. The second is funding to begin the widening of Babcock Street, one of Palm Bay's busiest corridors. This project will improve traffic flow, enhance public safety, and support future growth in our community. These investments reflect our commitment to keeping Palm Bay safe and moving forward.

To celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, I invite you to the 28th Annual Puerto Rican Day Parade & Festival, hosted by U.T.B. United Third Bridge Inc., on Saturday, Oct. 4. The parade begins at 10 a.m. in front of Walmart on Malabar Road and ends at Eastern Florida State College Palm Bay campus, where the festival will follow at 250 Community College Parkway. Beginning at 9 a.m., Malabar Road will be closed between Emerson Drive and San Filippo Drive, and San Filippo Drive will be closed between Malabar Road and Jupiter Boulevard. Roads are expected to reopen by noon. Traffic from I-95 will be directed east on Malabar Road. Motorists should use Palm Bay Road or Babcock Street as alternate routes. For more details, visit utbunitedthirdbridge.org.

The celebration will continue from 5:30-11:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 11, at the Hilton Melbourne with Viva Brevard Gala, an evening of music, food, entertainment, and recognition of community leaders, including veterans. This event honors the fastest-growing Hispanic community in Brevard County while uniting professionals, families, and supporters to celebrate culture, leadership, and growth. Register your spot today.

On Monday, Oct. 13, our nation observes Columbus Day, a time to reflect on the spirit of exploration and discovery that has shaped our history. This day reminds us of the courage it takes to venture into the unknown and the lasting impact of those journeys. As we commemorate this holiday, let us also celebrate the diverse cultures and communities that make Palm Bay such a vibrant place to live.

That same day just happens to be when we proudly celebrate the brave men and women of the U.S. Navy on their 250th birthday! Since 1775, the Navy has stood watch over our nation, protecting our freedoms at home and abroad. I am deeply grateful to the men and women who have worn the uniform and to their families who share in that service and sacrifice.

With Halloween around the corner, I encourage everyone to celebrate safely and enjoy all that our community has to offer. Don't miss the City's Fall Fest at Fred Poppe Regional Park on Saturday, Oct. 25, from 5-8 p.m. This free family-friendly event will feature food and craft vendors, a costume contest, trunk-or-treat, spooky hayrides, music, games, and more. I hope to see you there!

I invite all Palm Bayers to join me in honoring the brave men and women who have served our country at our Annual Veterans Day Parade at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 8. This special event is an opportunity for our community to come together in gratitude for the courage and sacrifices of our veterans and their families. The parade will begin at the Tony Rosa Community Center and travel east along Port Malabar Boulevard, concluding at Veterans Memorial Park. You're welcome to enjoy the parade from any point along the route, with some of the best viewing areas located near Veterans Memorial Park.

Green Gables in Melbourne to host 'House on Foggy Bluff' fundraiser

MELBOURNE (Sept. 12, 2025) — The nonprofit Green Gables at Historic Riverview will host its annual "House on Foggy Bluff" fundraiser on select dates in October and November. This year's theme is "Holiday Haunts." Green Gables' address is 1501 S. Harbor City Blvd. in Melbourne.

The times and dates are 7:30-10 p.m. on Oct. 17, 18, 24, 25, 31 and Nov. 1. The kids' "Not so Scary" trick or treat times and dates are from 5-7 p.m. Oct. 18 and 25.

Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for children 10 years and younger. Tickets are sold at zefly.com, foggybluff.com or greengables.com. All profits from this event go to the preservation of Green Gables.

To learn about sponsorship opportunities for this event, contact sponsor@foggybluff.com.



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The Greater Palm Bay Chamber of Commerce appoints Cory Skeates as new president, chief executive officer

By Carolina Rojas-Gee
carolina@greaterpalmabaychamber.com
Marketing & Communications Director
The Greater Palm Bay Chamber of Commerce

PALM BAY (Sept. 26, 2025) — The Greater Palm Bay Chamber of Commerce, a cornerstone of economic development and business advocacy for Florida's Space Coast, today announced the appointment of Cory Skeates as its new president and chief executive officer.

Selected by the executive board of directors after a rigorous national search, Skeates brings decades of proven leadership and a profound commitment to chamber excellence, positioning the organization for continued growth and impact.

With a career spanning more than 20 years in chamber operations and public policy, Skeates is a respected figure in Florida's business community.

As vice president of community development at Accelerate Brevard: Chamber of Innovation, Skeates provided leadership over government affairs, military

affairs, tourism (Visit Cocoa Beach), and space initiatives. During this time, he was also selected as chair-elect of the Institute of Organization Management Southeast, which is the professional development program of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. He is set to assume the role of chair in 2027.

In addition, Skeates was reappointed to the Florida Association of Chamber Professionals Board of Directors in 2024 and named an officer, serving as chair of the Advocacy Committee.

From 2015 to 2021, Skeates served as president and CEO of the Lakeland Area Chamber of Commerce, where he spearheaded initiatives that enhanced economic development, expanded membership, and supported local businesses through the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under his leadership, the chamber launched successful programs that brought businesses together, driving increased collaboration between local small businesses and regional partners.

Before his positions at the Lakeland Area Chamber, Skeates led the Oviedo-Winter Springs Regional

Chamber of Commerce, from 2007 to 2014, growing membership from 250 to over 600 while revitalizing community events and securing funding for a new headquarters.

His early career included roles as a senior legislative assistant to multiple Florida state representatives, where he honed his expertise in government relations and advocacy — skills that will amplify the Greater Palm Bay Chamber's voice in shaping policies for the Space Coast's economy.

"Cory Skeates embodies the vision and experience needed to continue propelling our chamber forward," said Chari Rigby, chair of the Greater Palm Bay Chamber's board of directors. "His deep-rooted history in chamber leadership, combined with his passion for connecting businesses and communities, makes him the ideal leader to continue building on our legacy of serving Brevard's business community. We are excited to welcome him to our team and to the vibrant Greater Palm Bay community."

Skeates will assume his position Oct. 20, 2025, succeeding Nancy Peltonen, who has led the Greater Palm Bay Chamber since 2015. The transition will ensure seamless continuity for the organization's proven programs, including networking events, professional development, and advocacy efforts that support businesses in aerospace, technology, and beyond.

Sean Williams, incoming chair of the board of the Greater Palm Bay Chamber, said replacing Peltonen was not easy. According to the Orlando Business Journal, the Greater Palm Bay Chamber is the fastest growing organization of its kind based on revenue growth for all Central Florida chambers.

"Nancy has grown the Greater Palm Bay Chamber in ways we never thought possible, elevating our membership, programs, and creating nationally recognized events," said Williams. "With his deep chamber expertise and visionary leadership, Cory is the perfect choice to carry forward her remarkable legacy and lead us into an exciting new chapter."

Skeates, a Central Florida resident, has a bachelor's degree in political science from Grove City College and a J.D. degree from Barry University School of Law.

"The Greater Palm Bay Chamber has long been a trusted advocate for innovation and growth in one of Florida's most promising regions," said Skeates. "I'm honored to join this dedicated team and board to champion our members — from home-based entrepreneurs to major corporations — as we drive economic vitality, foster strategic partnerships, and promote the Space Coast's unparalleled opportunities."

"I believe Cory is the perfect choice to continue the chamber's upward trajectory of growth and foster the business collaborations necessary for success throughout Central Florida," said Peltonen. "I have known Cory for over five years and worked with him on the Florida Association of Chamber Professionals and I'm confident in his ability to take the chamber to the next level."

● About the Greater Palm Bay Chamber of Commerce

The Greater Palm Bay Chamber of Commerce is committed to helping businesses grow and thrive through strategic partnerships, professional development, and advocacy. As a trusted voice for the business community, it promotes economic leadership and community enhancement throughout the Space Coast. For more information, contact the Greater Palm Bay Chamber of Commerce at (321) 951-9998 or visit greaterpalmabaychamber.com.

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Survey expectations show Florida CEOs more optimistic about economic growth than national peers

By Amber Statler-Matthews
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Vice President
Content & Media Relations
McNicholas & Associates

TAMPA (Sept. 30, 2025) — Once again, Florida chief executive officers appear more optimistic than their national peers, according to the Florida Council of 100 Third Quarter 2025 “CEO Economic Outlook Index.”

The index is a forward-looking measure capturing expectations from top Florida CEOs on sales, capital spending, and employment. It is modeled after the nationally recognized Business Roundtable (BRT) Index.

Increasing 8 points from last quarter, Florida’s overall CEO Economic Outlook Index score for the third quarter was 91, higher than the national number at 76.

“Florida’s economy is on the rise, and our CEOs are building for the future—growing teams, sparking innovation, driving investment, and creating new opportunities that strengthen Florida’s communities,” said Mike Simas, president and CEO of the Florida Council of 100.

Compared to their national peers, Florida CEOs are showing greater optimism across key indicators:

- **Hiring Confidence Significantly Higher:** Florida CEOs reported a significantly higher employment outlook (87) compared to national peers (37), highlighting strong confidence in workforce growth and talent availability.
- **Stronger Capital Investment Plans:** Florida leaders reported a capital spending index of (85) versus (77) nationally however, Florida increased by 9 points from last quarter while the nation jumped 12 points.
- **Measured Sales Outlook:** Florida CEOs projected a sales outlook (100) compared to the national index (114);

however, Florida increased 14 points and the national number only increased by 7.

“Confidence in Florida’s future economic growth and development is clear from the FC100’s Q3 forecast,” said George LeMieux, chair of the Florida Council of 100.

“The quarterly index signals increasing optimism among our members who are collaborating with business leaders around the world to create opportunity and welcome innovation so that Florida’s economy and

workforce can thrive.”

This quarter’s survey was in the field from Sept. 9 through Sept. 15, 2025. In total, 123 CEOs completed the survey.

To view the full results, visit <https://fc100.org/news/florida-ceos-more-optimistic-overall-about-economic-growth-than-national-peers>.

The next FC100 CEO Economic Outlook Index will be released in December.

Brevard County Transit Director Terry Jordan to lead the Florida Public Transit Association

By Rachel Horst
rachel.horst@brevardfl.gov
Public Information Officer
Brevard County Communications Department

VIERA (Sept. 25, 2025) — Terry Jordan, director of Space Coast Area Transit, was recently elected chair of the Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA) during its 2025 Annual Conference.

FPTA stands as one of the nation’s most active transit associations, with members including major public transit agencies, businesses, and citizens from across Florida.

The association represents 40 urban and rural transit systems, including commuter railroads, a heavy-rail commuter system, and people mover systems. Collectively, these systems carry 132 million passengers annually, with a fixed-route operating budget of \$1.44 billion. Many members also provide paratransit services to meet ADA and state requirements.

“We are excited to welcome Terry Jordan as the new chair of the Florida Public Transportation Association,” said Lisa Bacot, executive director of FPTA. “His stellar

reputation among his peers, combined with his visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to advancing public transit in Florida, makes him the perfect fit to lead us forward. I have full confidence in his ability to lead with integrity, creativity, and collaboration, driving our mission to strengthen communities and enhance mobility.”

In his new role, Jordan expressed his vision for the future of public transportation in Florida.

“It’s an honor to lead FPTA as we advocate for innovative and sustainable public transit solutions,” Jordan said. “Together, we will create stronger connections between communities, boost economic growth, and ensure every Floridian has access to the opportunities they deserve.”

Jordan has been with Space Coast Area Transit since 2017 and was appointed director by the Brevard County Board of County Commissioners in 2021. In his role as director, he leads a team of more than 100 employees and manages an annual budget surpassing \$45 million, which includes local, state, and federal funds as well as grants subject to rigorous compliance regulations.

Jordan is also instrumental in shaping policy, driving strategic planning, and expanding services to better serve the evolving needs of the community.



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GET MORE INFO



ChoZen Center for Regenerative Living opens in Sebastain on 40 acres of natural habitat, to host educational workshops, weddings, artisan markets

By Ken Datzman

SEBASTIAN — This area boasts abundant natural beauty and undeveloped wilderness, a community that retains the “Old Florida” charm.

An example is the newly opened ChoZen Center for Regenerative Living, situated on 40 acres and set in the lush, subtropical environment across from the 22,000-acre St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park, part of North America’s most biodiverse lagoon system.

“This is all untouched nature,” said businessman Tony Cho, co-founder of the ChoZen Center for Regenerative Living, a nonprofit dedicated to regeneration, community, and conservation.

“There was a recording of a panther a few days ago on the property. We think it’s pregnant. The Preserve is 22,000 acres. So, it seems endless. We have food forests, more than 350 fruit trees.”

The Florida panther is the state’s official animal, a federally endangered species with a population of an estimated 120 to 230 adults, primarily found in the rural areas of Southwest Florida.

The Preserve features more than 70 miles of hiking, biking, horseback riding, and birdwatching areas. On any given day, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, quail, bobcat, alligators, and red cockaded woodpeckers can be viewed on the multi-use trail system.

The ChoZen Center for Regenerative Living is located on Roseland Road. The 40-acre site is home to more than 10,000 plant and animal species, including 25 endangered species.

Its trails, food forests, and lush habitat provide an “immersive setting” for wellness retreats, weddings, corporate gatherings, and nature-based education.

He said the ChoZen Center for Regenerative Living is a “bioregional hub dedicated to demonstrating regenerative practices that protect biodiversity, foster resilience, and empower communities to thrive in balance with nature.”

Regenerative living is a holistic philosophy and set of practices that go beyond sustainability by actively working to restore and improve the health of ecosystems and communities, rather than just maintaining the status quo, he said.

Previously known as the ChoZen Retreat, a private facility, the ChoZen Center for Regenerative Living is open to the public and recently hosted its grand opening — “Roots and Ribbons.” The celebration was cohosted with the Sebastian Chamber of Commerce.

By becoming a nonprofit, the ChoZen Center for Regenerative Living ensures its programs and resources are dedicated not only to guests but also to the broader ecosystem and the local community.

“ChoZen has always been more than a retreat center — it is a living classroom, a sanctuary for biodiversity, and a gathering place for visionaries and changemakers,” said Cho.

“By transitioning to a nonprofit stewardship, we are ensuring that ChoZen’s impact will extend far beyond our walls, protecting this sacred land and empowering the community to co-create a regenerative future together. We want people to be part of our mission.”

Roots and Ribbons guests enjoyed “earth-to-table” snacks, handcrafted elixirs, access to the ChoZen Boutique, and the debut of the ChoZen Café and Harvest House Community Center.

“We have been hosting retreats as a private entity for



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Real-estate developer Tony Cho is the cofounder of the ChoZen Center for Regenerative Living on Roseland Road in Sebastian. The nonprofit entity is dedicated to preserving land and biodiversity, revitalizing the local economy, and advancing wildlife conservation. The facility, nestled along the 22,000-acre St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park, is open to the public. It’s available for all types of functions, including wellness retreats, weddings, anniversaries, corporate gatherings, and nature-based educational programs. The Center recently hosted its grand opening.

the last eight years,” said Cho, a South Florida real estate developer who is originally from Vero Beach. “Now, we are officially opening the facilities to the public. People can rent spaces in nature for weddings, anniversaries, workshops — all kinds of different functions.”

“From an environmental and tourism standpoint, we are highlighting the best of Indian River County,” he added. “We are promoting the beaches and the Indian River Lagoon, and we’re saving manatees.”

The concept centers on several pillars, including economic development, community outreach, and low-income senior support.

The ChoZen Center for Regenerative Living hosts artisan markets and weekly Farm Volunteer Days, as well as collaborative programs that offer “transformative” retreats and experiential learning in connection with nature.

The artisan markets are held every second Sunday from October to May, highlighting local makers, food vendors, wellness practitioners, and live musical performances. “The markets are one of our signature events,” said Cho, who attended Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. “We typically have 30 to 40 vendors from the region. We also support local musicians such as Tricky McSmadigan (who performed at the grand opening). These are free to the community. We are always seeking sponsors and partners to help support artisan market events.”

The ChoZen Café is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday–Sunday. It offers freshly prepared food and drinks, including superfood lattes, fresh juices, and a “regenerative dining experiences.”

Please see ChoZen Center for Regenerative Living, page 19

The Space Coast Contracting Summit to bring top defense leaders, agencies here; Young of 8-koi honored with Outstanding Service Award at WID event in Tampa

By Ken Datzman

MELBOURNE — The government contracting industry is a huge segment of the economy. In fiscal year 2024, the federal government awarded more than \$755 billion in contracts for goods and services across a range of industries, from cybersecurity to health care and construction.

The government is the largest buyer of goods and services in the “world,” with businesses of all sizes competing to win contracts. And multiple new rules and presidential executive orders that were issued in January 2025 are designed to reshape the contracting sector, with the goal to reduce bureaucracy, increase efficiency, and cut spending.

The government has changed its federal contracting and bidding rules to eliminate “race- and gender-based” affirmative action requirements, potentially reducing “set-aside” contracts.

A set-aside is a portion or the entirety of a government contract that is reserved exclusively for specific categories, such as small businesses and women-owned companies. The new government order aims to replace these with a “merit-based” system.

Federal law requires government agencies to award a minimum of 23 percent of all contracts annually to small businesses. In fiscal year 2024, the federal government awarded \$18.3 billion to small-business contractors.

“The government wants all businesses to compete on a level playing field for contracts, and we are prepared to do that. It will change our business model a little bit,” said businesswoman Igna Young, president and founder of 8-koi Inc., a government contracting firm with a 17-year track record.

Her woman-owned company operates three divisions: design engineering, construction, and technical services. 8-koi, which recently became a licensed electrical contractor, also serves commercial customers.

“We feel very fortunate in that over the years we have been able to grow to a position where we can navigate change and compete in an open market,” said Young, a University of Florida bachelor’s degree accounting graduate whose parents emigrated to America from China in the 1950s to pursue advanced degrees in science and engineering.

She was inspired by her mother’s groundbreaking career as a senior scientist at NASA’s Kennedy Space Center and started her own business to “deliver more personalized solutions for government and commercial customers.”

Her company has won service contracts with agencies such as NASA, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Over the years, 8-koi has made adjustments to meet changes in the market. “We were on the frontlines during the COVID-19 pandemic supplying personal protective equipment to health-care workers and the public,” she said.

Today, Young said “design engineering is our best-performing division. Construction contracting slowed in the first half of the year, but in July we started to see some requests for proposals. In 2026, I believe our construction and design engineering divisions will lead the company’s growth. We are waiting for one particular construction contract award to be signed. It’s a sizable contract and has already been negotiated.”

For three consecutive years (2023, 2024 and 2025),



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Businesswoman Igna Young is president and founder of 8-koi Inc., a 17-year-old government contracting firm. She was recently honored with the Women in Defense’s Outstanding Service Award at the Tri-Chapter Leadership Retreat in Tampa. The three WID chapters are Space Coast, Central Florida, and Tampa. Her company is now a licensed electrical contractor. Young will be attending the Space Coast Contracting Summit set for Oct. 21–22 at The Tides Collocated Club at Patrick Space Force Base. She is at 8-koi in Melbourne.

8-koi has been a Platinum recipient of the U.S. Labor Department’s “HIRE Vets Medallion” program. It’s the federal government’s “only award” recognizing employers who are leaders in recruiting, hiring, and retaining veterans.

Earning the Medallion “demonstrates a company’s commitment to veteran employment” and provides a “national signal to service members and veterans that a business is ‘veteran-ready’ and committed to investing in their careers.”

The Department of Labor accepts applications for the award annually. Employers must meet specific criteria, which include a “self-attestation and compliance with veteran-related labor laws.”

There are two award tiers: Platinum and Gold. Young’s company was a Gold award winner in 2021 and 2022.

She said “government contracting for a small business is both exciting and challenging. Our team includes engineers, construction management professionals, medical logistics experts, and personnel services staff — all working together to support our government and commercial customers with smart, sustainable solutions.”

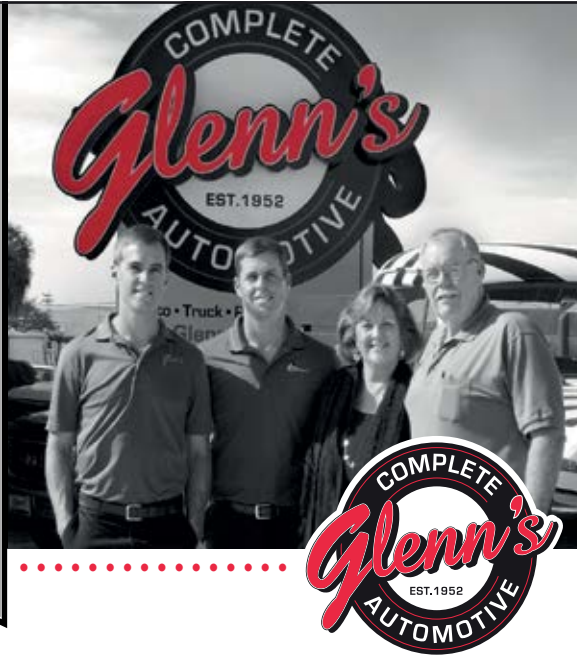
Executive order 14204, issued in March 2025, centralizes the procurement of “common goods and services,” such as information technology, under the General Services Administration (GSA). The new “OneGov Strategy” aims to streamline purchasing and reduce duplication, “but small businesses may need to adapt to competing on larger, consolidated contracts.”

Please see 8-koi Inc., page 21

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Massey Services awards \$50,000 to Central Florida Vocal Arts to advance arts education and community wellness; arts conservatory

By Angela Robbins
marketing@centralfloridavocalarts.org
Central Florida Vocal Arts

ORLANDO (Sept. 25, 2025) — Central Florida Vocal Arts (CFVA) has received a \$50,000 gift from Massey Services to support “Arts Education for All” programming.

This investment will fund inclusive arts education programming for youth and underserved populations across Central Florida — advancing CFVA’s mission to transform lives through the power of performing arts.

CFVA provides free music education and community classes weekly to students across Orange and Osceola counties, with the expectation of serving 50,000 individuals this year through private lessons, community classes and public performances.

CFVA’s programs are designed to address critical community issues, including youth mental health, by providing healthy outlets for self-expression and actualization.

“At Massey Services, we believe access to the arts is essential for building stronger, more vibrant communities,” said Andrea Massey-Farrell, president and CEO of the Harvey and Carol Massey Foundation and senior vice president of community relations with Massey Services. “By supporting Central Florida Vocal Arts and their Arts Education for All programming, we are helping to ensure that future generations have opportunities to learn, grow and thrive through the power of the arts.”

The support from Massey Services underscores a shared commitment to building healthier, safer, more compassionate communities, she said. “Just as Massey Services works to protect families and strengthen neighborhoods, CFVA nurtures well-being through creativity and connection.” With many shared partners between CFVA and Massey — including

Opportunity, Community, Ability Inc.; Quest; and Pace Center for Girls — Massey’s support fosters meaningful impact and creates programmatic sustainability for these critical arts initiatives.

This funding comes at a pivotal time as CFVA plans to build an arts conservatory in 2026 — a permanent home for the organization that will centralize teaching, rehearsal, performance and community programming. The conservatory is part of a plan to continue expanding CFVA’s capacity to offer classes, workshops and performances to the community; building a lifelong pipeline of arts education, all designed to build confidence, empathy and opportunity at every stage of life.

● About Central Florida Vocal Arts
CFVA (centralfloridavocalarts.org) and its sister company, Opera del Sol, are transforming the community through innovative arts education and inspiring professional performances. Rooted in the values of excellence, accessibility and innovation, CFVA is committed to reimagining opera and musical theatre for modern audiences as a catalyst for social good. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, CFVA works to foster creative expression and build a more connected and compassionate Central Florida through the power of music. For more information, visit

● About Massey Services
Based in Orlando, Massey Services is one of the nation’s largest companies of its kind. Celebrating 40 consecutive years of profitable growth, Massey Services and its subsidiary organizations employ more than 2,900 team members who provide residential and commercial pest prevention, termite protection, landscape and irrigation services for nearly 1 million customers from 193 service centers throughout Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, South Carolina, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Virginia and Tennessee. For more information, visit masseyservices.com.

Urban Prime in Viera receives the prestigious TripAdvisor Traveler’s Choice Best of the Best award; in top 1 percent

MELBOURNE (Sept. 25, 2025) — Urban Prime: Marketplace + Restaurant has been honored with the TripAdvisor Traveler’s Choice Best of the Best award, achieving the remarkable distinction of being the second-ranked “hidden gem” restaurant in the United States.

This accolade places Urban Prime in the top 1 percent of restaurants nationwide, a testament to its rapid ascent since its founding less than two years ago.

Chef Ercan Ekinci is the founder and visionary behind Urban Prime.

“This award is a remarkable achievement not only for Urban Prime but also for the entire Space Coast. We are deeply thankful for the love and support from our patrons in Brevard and beyond,” he said.

Urban Prime offers a unique blend of dining and retail experiences, transforming customers into family through their shop

and dine and gather philosophy.

The dedication of the 136-member team, a diverse and creative group, is at the heart of Urban Prime’s success, he said. From innovative chefs crafting bold recipes to marketplace staff curating seasonal gift baskets, “every team member contributes to the Urban Prime experience.”

The restaurant, adorned with local artwork, boasts a full liquor bar and acclaimed happy hour, while the marketplace includes a gourmet grocery store, bakery, deli, butcher and seafood shop, sushi station, gift basket, and wine shop.

As the holiday season approaches, Ekinci said Urban Prime is ready to host catering events, Sunday brunches, and create customized gift baskets.

For further information, call (321) 499-1188, email info@urbanprimefoods.com, or visit urbanprimefoods.com.

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Cocoa Beach Hit Songwriter Fest set for Oct. 17–19, to bring nationally acclaimed singers, songwriters to the Space Coast

By Lisa Dollinger
lisa@dollcomm.com
for Cumulus Media
Dollinger Strategic Communication

MELBOURNE (Oct. 1, 2025) — Cumulus Media announced that local stations 107.1 A1A, 102.7 The HitKicker, and 95.9 The Rocket will join Mirrim Entertainment and Downtown Cocoa Beach Main Street to present the Cocoa Beach Hit Songwriter Fest Oct. 17–19, 2025.

The event will bring nationally acclaimed singers and songwriters to the Space Coast for three days of live musical performances and stories behind the writing of some of today's biggest hits from the songwriters themselves.

Tickets are sold at <https://hitsongwriter.incentrev.com/Local/9083099-hit-songwriter-festival>.

The festival will take place in popular downtown Cocoa Beach venues, restaurants, and bars. With many free shows to select from, thousands of attendees will have the unique opportunity to experience the faces, personalities, and stories behind the songs. These shows will range in size from about 30 people for the intimate performances, to more than 3000 people at the kickoff street party Friday night, to the ticketed Heavy Hitters Main Event show at the Radisson Resort at the Port in the Convention Center on Saturday. That event will feature some of Nashville's top performers.

Mike Tyler, operations manager for Cumulus Melbourne, said: "The Cocoa Beach Hit Songwriter Fest pulls the curtain back on the internal workings of the music and songwriting industry and introduces festivalgoers to some of the biggest hit songwriters who help shape the music industry today. We invite all music fans, songwriters, and aspiring songwriters to join us at the Cocoa Beach Hit Songwriter Fest for three days of great music, stories, and insights from the talented artists who wrote them. We are thrilled to present this one-of-a-kind experience for Space Coast music lovers and look forward to seeing you there."

For more information and a full schedule of events for the Cocoa Beach Hit Songwriter Fest, visit <https://www.thehitkicker.com/cocoa-beach-hit-songwriter-festival-schedule>.

● About Cumulus Media

Cumulus Media (OTCQB: CMLS) is an audio-first media company delivering premium content to a quarter billion people every month — wherever and whenever they want it.

Cumulus Media engages listeners with high-quality local programming through 399 owned-and-operated radio stations across 84 markets.

Cumulus delivers nationally syndicated sports, news, talk, and entertainment programming from iconic brands including the NFL, the NCAA, the Masters, Infinity Sports Network, AP News, and the Academy of Country Music Awards.

For more information, visit www.cumulusmedia.com.

Make a Green Noise environmental justice forum set for Oct. 25

By Kathy Turner
kturner50@cfl.rr.com
Secretary
Environmental & Climate Justice Committee
South Brevard Branch NAACP

MELBOURNE (Sept. 25, 2025) — The Environmental & Climate Justice Committee of the South Brevard Branch of the NAACP, in partnership with Little Growers Inc., Florida Institute of Technology, and Nesbitt Design LLC, will host a free environmental justice forum on Saturday, Oct. 25.

The event will be hosted at Florida Tech's Evans Library, 150 W. University Blvd. The program — "Make a Green Noise: Charette Part 2 — Charging Ahead" — will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., followed by campus tours beginning around 1:30 p.m. With the tours, the event will conclude at 2:30 p.m. A continental breakfast and lunch will be provided.

Program highlights (9 a.m.–1 p.m.)

● Welcome and Partnership Overview — Camille Hadley, executive director, Little Growers Inc.

● Space Coast REsilience Solutions for Climate, Urbanization, and Environment update by Dr. Steven Lazarus, Florida Tech

● Energy for Resilience presentation by Dr. Hamidreza Najafi of Florida Tech. He'll talk about the critical role of energy efficiency and renewable energy in shaping resilient communities

● Resilient Prairie Planting at Stone Magnet Middle School by Dr. Emily Ralston, Florida Tech

● Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture, an introduction to fresh and saltwater systems supporting training, food production, and community economic opportunity

● Interactive Design Charrette: Brothers Avenue Project Site, to be led by Joe Nisbett, Nesbitt Design LLC
Tours (1:30–2:30 p.m.)

There will be guided visits to the Joy & Gordon Patterson Botanical Garden, a stormwater-storage wetland, and a campus Aqualab.

While this event is open to the public, registration is required.

Visit www.littlegrowersinc.org/makeagreennoise to register, or contact Hadley at littlegrowersinc@gmail.com with questions.

Registration is underway for Central Brevard holiday event Dec. 6

VIERA (Oct. 1, 2025) — Brevard County Parks and Recreation is now taking registration for the Merritt Island and Cocoa-Rockledge holiday parades.

This year the theme for the parades is "Rockin' Around the Holidays." Mindy from "Mindy and Company" on Lite Rock 99.3, an iHeartMedia station, will emcee the parades.

The Merritt Island parade will be held Saturday, Dec. 6, with step-off at 10 a.m. The parade will travel from Grove Boulevard at Merritt Island High School, south on Courtenay Parkway (State Road 3) to Edgewood Junior/

Senior High School on Merritt Avenue.

The Cocoa-Rockledge Holiday Parade will be held Saturday, Dec. 13, with step-off at 10 a.m. The parade will travel north on Florida Avenue at Rockledge High School to Brevard Avenue and conclude at Lee Wenner Park.

For additional information about the parades, call the Central Area Parks Operations office at (321) 633-1874 or email Delinda Griffis at delinda.griffis@brevardfl.gov.

Registration for the parades is also available at <https://registration.brevardfl.gov>.

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Hundreds rally for Walk to End Alzheimer's Space Coast, raises \$135,000 for Alzheimer's care, support, research

By Matt Eaton

meaton@alz.org

Vice President of Communications — Florida Alzheimer's Association

COCOA (Sept. 30, 2025) — Hundreds of families impacted by Alzheimer's gathered Saturday at Cocoa Riverfront Park for the Walk to End Alzheimer's Space Coast. Supporters rallied in a ceremony filled with brightly colored flowers — each representing a connection to the disease — before walking through the park.

"I see every day how this disease affects families," said Jennifer Barton, a Space Coast resident who works in senior care. "There is such a stigma, and no one wants to talk about it. But there are things we know now that we didn't before thanks to research."

More than 7 million Americans are estimated to be living with Alzheimer's, a progressive brain disease that affects thinking, memory and behavior. Florida has the second-highest number of residents living

with the disease, underscoring the need for local support and research.

Space Coast resident Katie O'Leary knows the toll Alzheimer's takes on caregivers. She has watched over the past seven years as her mother, Linda McKnight, cared for her stepfather, a U.S. veteran, living with the disease.

"I have seen this cruel disease take my American hero of a stepfather and reduce him to no quality of life," O'Leary said. "I've seen the stress and emotional pain take a huge toll on my mom, and I want to see the day that no one has to endure this."

Advancements in research have led to new FDA-approved treatments shown to slow the progression of early Alzheimer's. For the first time, families have hope for more time with loved ones.

"Alzheimer's is really a nasty disease, but there is hope," said Jim Sisserson, who walked for his wife, Janeille Sisserson, now in the later stages of Alzheimer's. "Progress is being made. But it can only be made through research — that's why I'm walking."

To date, Walk participants have raised more than

\$135,000 to benefit care, support, research, advocacy and awareness initiatives through the Alzheimer's Association Central & North Florida Chapter.

Donations are being accepted through Dec. 31 at alz.org/SpaceCoastWalk.

The Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's is the world's largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's care, support and research. Since 1989, the Alzheimer's Association mobilized millions of Americans in the Alzheimer's Association Memory Walk; now the Alzheimer's Association is continuing to lead the way with Walk to End Alzheimer's.

● About the Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association is a worldwide voluntary health organization dedicated to Alzheimer's care, support and research. Its mission is to lead the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support. Visit alz.org or call (800) 272-.3900 for more information about this disease.

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AgingMattersBrevard.org

Waste Pro's Emily Moran, corporate lead technical writer, brings interesting perspective to her role at the company

By Joy Kurtz
 jkurtz@wasteprousa.com
 Corporate Communications Manager
 Waste Pro USA, Inc.

LONGWOOD (Sept. 29, 2025) — Emily Brennan Moran, Waste Pro's lead technical writer, has brought a unique perspective to her role, shaped by her experience in higher education. Her journey to Waste Pro began after earning her undergraduate degree at Emory University in Atlanta. She then pursued a master's degree from the University of Central Florida and a Ph.D. in communication from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After completing her doctoral work, Moran was an assistant professor in the Department of Communication at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, where her role combined teaching, research, and writing.

"My husband and I were looking at returning home to Central Florida from Virginia," she said. "I wanted to pivot from higher education to a full-time proposal writing position and was hoping to find a company with a local presence. Waste Pro, with its headquarters in Longwood, felt like the perfect fit."

She discovered an opportunity to build something that was much needed: a library of standardized proposal materials that could be tailored for use across the company's multi-state footprint, coupled with assistance to local field teams as they implemented these materials in their municipal bids. The freedom to design the proposal program from the ground up was very appealing.

Her skill set encompasses research, writing, editing, and project management. Coming from her academic background, she approached the work of this new role from the standpoint of building a framework for municipal marketers to use when responding to requests for proposals. Waste Pro has empowered her to create with a wide latitude, experiment with implementing processes, and build a foundation that is utilized companywide for proposal writing. Moran said she appreciates the open-endedness of the managers involved and being able to look at things strategically to see where things need to be molded and shaped to serve the bid process as a whole.

Now, having been with the company for the last two years, she reflects on all that has happened in such a short time. "My role continues to evolve beyond assisting with individual proposals to include reviewing and revising municipal contracts. I enjoy the fact that no two days are the same, and I

love the fast-paced nature of the work. I learn something new every day, so I am never bored — and I don't think that will change anytime soon," said Moran.

Tracy Meehan, corporate communications director, acknowledges Moran's work, stating, "Emily has brought a level of organization, in-depth research, and knowledge that provides consistency and tailoring to each market in our 12-state footprint. Her contributions allow our field teams to not only showcase our strengths but share Waste Pro's story with clarity and confidence in a way that resonates with our current and prospective collection partners."

The communications department added Rachel Willis, another technical writer, last year, further expanding what the team can offer not only to marketers but also to other departments. Moran expressed her gratitude for how she and Willis collaborate and rely heavily on each other for their projects, enjoying the camaraderie they share to improve this growing segment of the company.

Last year, Moran and her husband Kevin, a computer science professor at the University of Central Florida, welcomed their first child, Sarah. Emily expressed her sincere appreciation for Waste Pro, sharing fondly that the company has given her as much as she has contributed.

"I am thankful for the opportunity to enhance the marketing process and serve not only my community but also neighborhoods and municipalities across the company's 12-state footprint. Balancing motherhood with this dynamic role makes this a joyful — and full-time — role in my life. I go from reading and marking up contract language during the day to making up new verses to 'Wheels on the Bus' in the evenings. Both roles stretch my creativity in the best possible ways, and I think this duality makes me a better mother and a better writer. I'm grateful that Sarah will grow up seeing that your career can be a key part of a rich and fulfilling life."

● About Waste Pro USA
 Waste Pro USA, Inc. operates in 12 Southeastern states and is one of the country's fastest-growing privately-owned waste collection, recycling, processing, and disposal companies. With revenues projected to exceed \$1.4 billion in 2025, Waste Pro serves over 2 million residential and 100,000 commercial customers from more than 100 operating locations. Waste Pro is headquartered in Longwood, Florida, and maintains approximately 260 exclusive municipal contracts and franchises.

Central Brevard Parks and Recreation board set to meet Oct. 15 in Cocoa

COCOA (Oct. 1, 2025) — A regular meeting of the Central Brevard Parks and Recreation Advisory Board will be held at 3:30 pm, Wednesday, Oct. 15, at the Central Area Parks Operations office, 840 Forrest Ave. The meeting is open to the public. If a person desires to appeal any decision made by this board, agency, or commission (as appropriate), with respect to any matter considered at this meeting or hearing, he or she will need a record of this proceeding.

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New UF/IFAS bilingual online resources help Florida farmers launch, enhance their business — practical tools

By Lourdes Mederos
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Public Relations Manager
Southeast District
IFAS Communications
University of Florida

GAINESVILLE (Sept. 18, 2025) — The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension has launched a new bilingual online resource to help Florida farmers strengthen their operations through effective business planning.

The websites for Building Your Florida Farm Business Plan/Construyendo tu Plan de Negocios Agrícola de Florida offer step-by-step guidance, practical tools and expert insights to support new and experienced farmers in creating comprehensive farm business plans.

“Farming is more than growing crops or raising livestock — it’s running a business,” said Luis Rodriguez, UF/IFAS Extension Polk County agent specializing in small farms and pesticide education and a member of the

Coalition of Florida Extension Educators for Latinos, also known as UF/IFAS CAFÉ Latino. “A solid business plan is a living roadmap that helps producers make informed decisions. And if farmers need local support, we can connect them with Extension agents across the state.”

The platform provides farmers with resources on:

- Crafting a clear business description.
- Developing a marketing plan, including nine actionable steps.
- Building operational and human resource plans.
- Creating financial documents such as income statements, cash flow, balance sheets and break-even analysis.
- Writing an executive summary to pull all the pieces together.

Business plans are not only essential for guiding everyday decision-making but are required when applying for loans and financial support. For example, the USDA’s Farm Service Agency requires a detailed business plan for loan applications — including direct loans, guaranteed loans and land contracts. Without one, an application will not be considered.

“As a farmer or rancher, whether you are just starting out or have many years of experience, there are times when you need to borrow money to expand, sustain or make changes to your business,” said Rodriguez. “Having a plan in place ensures you’re ready to meet those opportunities.”

By offering the resource in both English and Spanish, UF/IFAS Extension is making business planning more accessible to the diverse community of farm operators and entrepreneurs across Florida, said Rodriguez.

● About UF/IFAS

The mission of the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (ifas.ufl.edu, @UF_IFAS) is to develop knowledge relevant to agricultural, human and natural resources and to make that knowledge available to sustain and enhance the quality of human life. With more than a dozen research facilities, 67 county Extension offices, and award-winning students and faculty in the UF College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, UF/IFAS brings science-based solutions to the state’s agricultural and natural resources industries, and Florida residents.

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ChoZen Center for Regenerative Living

Continued from page 12

There are also programs and workshops in permaculture, ecosystem restoration, youth education, and regenerative living. Special events include ecstatic dance, sound healing, and movement workshops.

Permaculture is a holistic design approach for sustainable land use and living. Ecstatic dance is free-form dance movement inspired and led by carefully crafted music with the “intention of creating a healing journey.”

He said the programs include everything from “nature-inspired fitness activities to eco-tours and kayaking and canoeing on the Sebastian River.”

Cho founded the ChoZen Retreat with his wife, Ximena. She died of breast cancer three months ago after an eight-year battle with the disease. Ximena was 47 years old. “We were married in the ‘Love Garden’ on this property 14 years ago. My grandmother, Ma Jaya, married us. Ximena was a beautiful woman, very community-minded. We celebrated her under the stars,” he said.

Her legacy lives on through her husband and her family. The Ximena Cho Legacy Fund is being established through the Miami Foundation, a donor-advised philanthropic organization. The fund will continue Ximena’s service to future generations by supporting the arts, protecting nature, and uplifting underserved communities.

“She was the most inspiring, courageous, loving, compassionate, elevated, and exemplary human being I ever met,” posted Tony Cho on his Facebook page. “Ximena was a fierce advocate and defender of ‘Mother Nature.’ She touched the lives of all who were blessed to know her.”

In 2020, Tony Cho and his wife established the M1 Community Fund and the Cho Family Foundation. The first initiative of the M1 Community Fund was The Little Haiti Small Business Relief Fund, formed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ximena was a visionary leader, known for her “soft power,” which emphasized “grace, compassion, and a deep connection to nature.”

Cho is an “impact investor” and mixed-use real estate developer in Miami. “I have been a developer in Miami for more than 25 years,” he said. “I work in underserved communities.”

Cho is the founder of the “Magic City Innovation District Little Haiti,” an 18-acre large-scale regenerative mixed-use development located in one of Miami’s most vibrant cultural neighborhoods.

He has also played an influential role in several emerging neighborhoods, including Wynwood.

“I was one of the pioneers of the Wynwood Arts District in Miami and I’m also developing the Phoenix Arts and Innovation District in Jacksonville,” said Cho, who holds the Certified Commercial Investment Member designation and was honored by the Urban Land Institute with its prestigious “Young Leader of the Year” award.

As a founding member of the Wynwood Business Improvement District, he championed the progressive rezoning of that area.

The rezoning played a major role in transforming a former warehouse district into a global art destination, a burgeoning technology and finance hub, and a popular residential neighborhood.

The Phoenix Arts and Innovation District is an 8.3-acre “urban redevelopment” project in Jacksonville’s North Springfield neighborhood. The goal is to create a vibrant community for artists, entrepreneurs, and residents, Cho said.

The District focuses on sustainable development, affordable housing, and economic growth by repurposing adaptive use spaces for creative industries, offering community events, cultural programming, and fostering

innovation through public-private partnerships.

The first phase, “Emerald Station,” provides creative office spaces, community gathering areas, and an event facility.

Cho is the founder and chief executive officer of Future of Cities. The mission-driven consortium invests in transforming the “built environment” through the adoption of “environmental, social, and governance strategies to improve the quality of living.”

In the 1970s, Cho’s grandmother started Kashi

Ashram, a spiritual community where he grew up and where today the ChoZen Center for Regenerative Living is located.

“The property used to be Kashi. I bought most of it over the last six years to preserve it. The Kashi interfaith community church is next door. I went to school there. This is the community center where I grew up. I have a lot of great memories from those days. Now it is being reimaged and modernized. We want to bring people together and connect them closer to nature.”

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Gale Associates announces Alan Craigo to lead Florida office, the veteran civil engineer is a UCF grad

By Karen E. Noenickx
ken@gainc.com
Communications Manager
Gale Associates, Inc.

ALTAMONTE SPRINGS (Sept. 17, 2025) — Gale Associates Inc., a consulting engineering firm, has announced that Alan Craigo, has been appointed as the new leader of the firm's Florida office.

With an established presence in Florida for over 30 years, Gale Associates is a leading consulting engineering firm delivering evaluation, design, renovation, and restoration services for buildings, infrastructures, and sites.

Craigo joined the firm in 1997 and is a senior project manager in the Building Enclosure Consulting and Commissioning Group with 28 years of consulting experience in Florida. He is responsible for project delivery, client relations, employee development, and strategic growth initiatives across the region.

The Florida office has been serving clients since 1991,

with decades of experience in K-12 and higher education, entertainment, and municipal sectors, with a specialized focus on the planning and design of both new and renovated athletic facilities.

He began his career at Gale progressing through various engineering roles to senior project manager. A skillful manager and enclosure expert, he has managed a wide range of building-enclosure projects, responsible for all phases of evaluation, field testing, design, construction, and commissioning of enclosure systems and components.

He oversees project teams providing technical oversight and quality assurance of project deliverables for the Building Enclosure Consulting and Commissioning Groups.

"Alan brings tremendous project management expertise in building enclosure consulting and commissioning to this leadership role," said Steven Marshall, managing principal at Gale. "His history of serving key clients and mentoring staff ensures a continuity of project delivery excellence."

A Registered Professional Engineer in Florida, Craigo is a certified Building Enclosure Commissioning Process

Provider and certified Commissioning Authority + Building Enclosure.

He is an active member of the International Institute of Building Enclosure Consultants and the Society of American Military Engineers. He earned his bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Central Florida.

● About Gale Associates Inc.

Gale is a consulting engineering firm specializing in building enclosure consulting and commissioning, structural and civil engineering, athletic facilities planning and design, and airport engineering and planning. Its multidisciplinary team — civil and structural engineers, architects, enclosure specialists, and planners — provides evaluation, design, renovation, and restoration services for buildings, infrastructure, and sites nationwide, operating from offices across New England, the Mid-Atlantic, and Florida. Consistently ranked annually by Zweig Group as a "Best Firms to Work For," Gale fosters a collaborative culture that values opportunity, respect, and work-life balance, while remaining committed to ongoing community engagement. Learn more at www.galeassociates.com.



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Continued from page 13

The OneGov Strategy will evolve over time, according to the GSA, expanding into areas such as hardware, platforms, infrastructure and cybersecurity services, and other categories.

People who are interested in learning more about government contracting — the opportunities and the changes that are coming — are welcomed to attend the 2025 Space Coast Contracting Summit Oct. 21–22. The Summit will be held at The Tides Collocated Club & Restaurant, an oceanfront facility at 1001 S. Highway A1A, at Patrick Space Force Base.

The event is open to the public. Registration and a networking breakfast is from 7:30–8:30 a.m. each day. Admission is \$100 per person. Tickets are sold at www.WIDSC.org. Sponsorships range from \$500 to \$5,000 and include “high-visibility” packages.

The Space Coast Contracting Summit is hosted by the Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter, the National Defense Industry Association Central Florida Chapter, and the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association Space Coast Chapter. The Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter is an affiliate of the National Defense Industry Association.

There will be a keynote address, panel discussions, and targeted breakout sessions covering emerging technology, defense priorities, contracting strategies, and business matchmaking opportunities.

“This event will provide a platform for attendees to connect with top defense leaders, prime contractors, government buyers, and be part of business Matchmaking Sessions with procurement officials,” said Sirena Ozzello, president of the Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter and divisional program analyst at 8-koi. “It’s an opportunity to build relationships in the federal contracting industry.”

The Matchmaking Sessions will focus on connecting suppliers, small businesses, and vendors directly with large organizations, government agencies, and prime contractors seeking qualified partners.

“Whether you’re a small business aiming to break into new markets or an established firm looking to expand your reach, this event presents the opportunity to showcase your company’s capabilities,” said Ozzello.

There will be exhibitor booths featuring government contractors, innovative small businesses, and resource partners offering tools and support.

People attending the Space Coast Contracting Summit will gain insight into regional collaboration and federal procurement trends, with a focus on enhancing both small businesses and large prime contractors in the defense sector.

Ozzello said the speakers for the event will be announced soon. The panel sessions will include: “What’s Happening in D.C.,” “Contracting Opportunities in Space and Defense,” “Maximizing Military Resources: Strengthening Partnerships, Community and the Armed Forces,” “From Outreach to Award,” and “Academia and Industry Partnerships: Innovation in Research and Development.”

One topic that is critical and urgent for government contractors is the U.S. Department of Defense’s Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification.

The CMMC “final rule,” published in September 2025, mandates that contractors must be certified to win or maintain DOD contracts, including those for subcontractors.

The DOD introduced CMMC in 2020 to ensure companies protect sensitive information when working on government contracts.

The program requires that contractors handling “federal contract information” and “controlled unclassified informa-

tion” to implement adequate cybersecurity practices to protect the defense industrial base, according to the DOD’s Office of Small Business Programs.

Before CMMC, DOD contractors were required to “self-attest” compliance with the National Institute of Standards of Technology and meet a set of standards to “help improve innovation, security and quality across industries.”

Young said her company is “working toward that certification and looking forward to becoming CMMC compliant. It will give us a big lift as a small business government contractor.”

Phase one of CMMC will take effect Nov. 10, 2025. It signals to all defense contractors, especially small- and medium-sized businesses, that CMMC “compliance is no longer optional. As cyber threats grow in scale and sophistication, CMMC is a critical safeguard to ensure the resilience and security of the supply chain that supports national defense,” says the DOD.

Young was recently honored with the Outstanding Service Award, presented by the National Defense Industrial Association and Women in Defense. She received the award at the Central Florida, Space Coast and Tampa

Tri-Chapter Leadership Retreat in Tampa.

She is a former president of the WID Space Coast Chapter and has been involved with that nonprofit for years.

Young was singled out for her “leadership and commitment to WID’s mission, working tirelessly to support the organization’s growth, and to ensure its initiatives are carried out with excellence.”

“It’s an honor to have received the Outstanding Service Award,” said Young, whose company was named the Small Business Innovator of the Year in 2019 by the WID Space Coast Chapter.

Young is known within her company for her “people-first” leadership style, combining financial expertise with innovation and community impact.

“Our company is an engaged community partner, supporting education, professional associations, and workforce development,” she said. “We fund student scholarships, encourage peer learning and leadership development, and participate in civic and trade organizations. We’re looking forward to 2026 and the contracting opportunities for 8-koi.”

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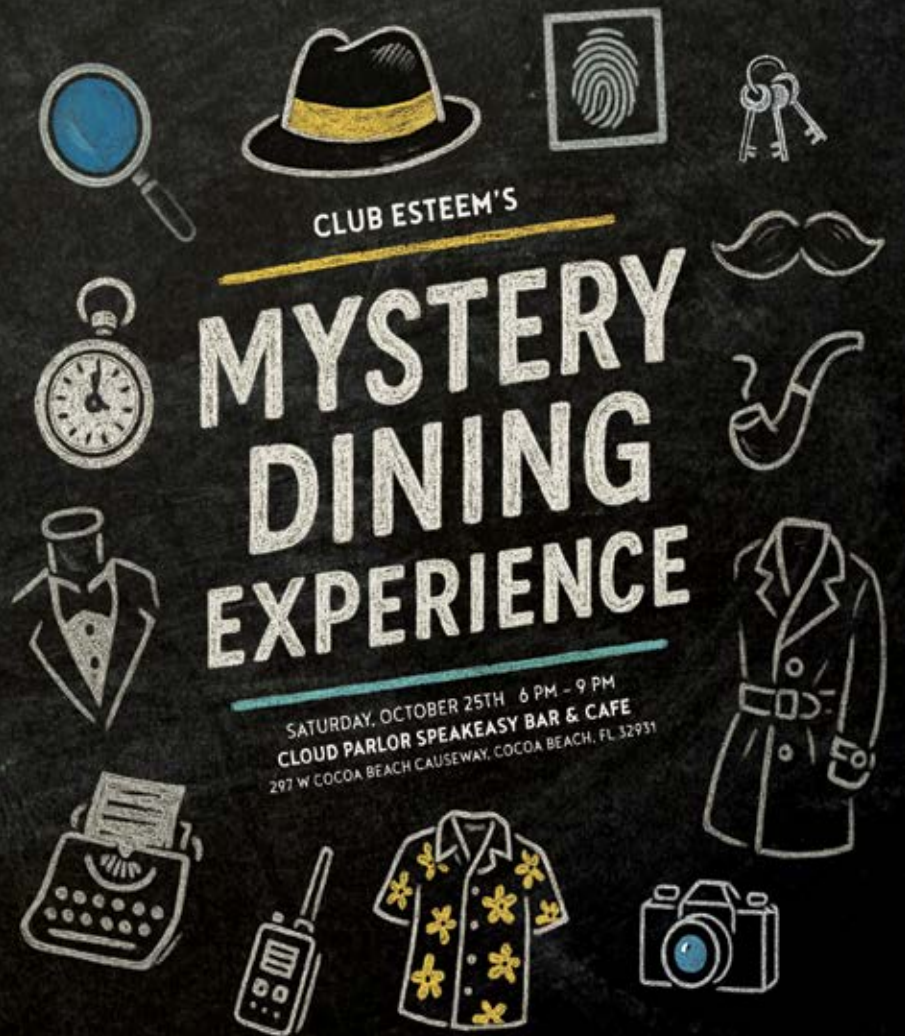
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trekALLa LLC**Continued from page 1**

"Sales have been great. We have received such a nice welcome since coming to Brevard. I didn't expect this kind of response when we got here. The Space Coast is a special place, I've learned. In my opinion, the small-business community here is unmatched."

She singled out the Historic Cocoa Village Association, which promotes businesses in that area. "I have met many super-supportive businessowners since becoming a member of the Historic Cocoa Village Association."

Otto added, "When I was searching for a location for my business, moving it from my home, I knew I wanted to be in Historic Cocoa Village. It's one small business after another lining the streets."

Her company uses eco-friendly materials and all products are manufactured locally.

"All the materials we use are sustainable. The apparel we make can be worn year-round. The yarns have moisture-wicking properties. It's great for the Florida market. We are selective in the fabrics we use because we want our products to be comfortable, we want them to last, and we want them to perform," said Otto.

One trend in the women's outdoor apparel market is the growing popularity of sustainable and eco-friendly materials. Experts say consumers are more aware of the environmental impact of their clothing choices and prefer brands that focus on sustainability.

Otto's company uses high-quality polyester, which differs from commodity-grade polyester. The synthetic nature of polyester causes it to move sweat away from the body to the fabric's outer surface, "where it can evaporate quickly, promoting dryness and comfort. Because of its low moisture absorption, polyester is ideal for sports and outdoor wear."

Her product line includes T-shirts, leggings, camp shorts, headbands, hoodies, and accessories.

"I do all the sewing and cutting in my shop in Historic Cocoa Village," said Otto. "Everything is done in-house. We have complete control over the quality of the products we make."

Her adventure apparel for women is sold in all sizes. "We're an all-inclusive retailer, making products for people of all sizes. We are especially known for our T-shirts."

The firm's online store is trekalla.com. "We are planning to open a small retail space in Magnolia Hall (in Historic Cocoa Village) this fall."

She's preparing for the holiday season and plans to have people help with packing and shipping. "That tends to be our busiest season."

Otto said trekALLa got a big lift when it applied for and was selected for the "Upstart Cocoa" program, which is designed to promote the growth of minority and women-owned small businesses in the city.

Upstart Cocoa was launched in 2021 as a business mentorship grant to attract new or expanding businesses to Cocoa. In Otto's case, she was expanding her business.

The Cocoa City Council recently approved Otto's company for a \$7,500 "forgivable" business loan as part of Upstart Cocoa.

The total award was \$10,000, of which \$2,500 was allocated for her to participate in management and mentorship courses through weVENTURE Women's Business Center at Florida Tech in Melbourne.

"I felt fortunate to have been selected for Upstart Cocoa," she said. "They have been incredibly supportive of my venture. I have used the money to market my company, purchase sewing machines that help me hem clothing a lot quicker, and buy fabrics — all are challenges for a small-business owner like me."

Buying equipment, for example, can strain cash flow

for a small business.

Otto said the courses at weVENTURE "were as valuable if not more valuable than the Upstart Cocoa forgivable loan. I had a team of five people at weVENTURE. We met once a month for six months. The team included finance experts and marketing experts. I felt much more comfortable running my business after going through the weVENTURE mentorship program. I can make clothes. That's what I do for a living. But all of the other dynamics of operating a business can be very challenging. That was a great experience having completed the weVENTURE program."

The mentorship courses through weVENTURE explore topics such as business management, finance and budgeting, marketing, product and service development, and human resources.

In addition, weVENTURE's "Ignite 360" business mentors partner with Upstart Cocoa recipients to refine a business plan appropriate for a startup or expanding business.

Once the business has successfully completed the weVENTURE program, they are able to receive the remaining portion of the forgivable loan.

"Alisa was an ideal candidate for this program," said Dr. Kathryn Rudloff, executive director of weVENTURE Women's Business Center. "She had the business knowledge. There are not a lot of micro-factories in the state of Florida. This is the first in Brevard. This is huge for Brevard."

Only about 2-3 percent of apparel sold in America is cut and sewn domestically, reports "The New York Times" and "Barron's," which is owned by "The Wall Street Journal." In the 1960s, roughly 95 percent of clothing sold in the U.S. was made here.

Today, U.S. apparel manufacturers are primarily micro-factories, according to the U.S. Fashion Industry Association.

Some factors considered for loan approval for Upstart Cocoa include the company's potential economic and fiscal impacts on the community, as well as its contributions to community development.

Otto said trekALLa is "committed to producing functional, high-quality designs using environmentally friendly fabrics made from recycled materials featuring moisture-wicking and wind-blocking capabilities."

In addition to growing her business, Otto gives back to the Cocoa community by offering free sewing workshops for children and teaching elementary school students how to sew.

"I love how apparel manufacturing can uplift communities," she said. "There are a lot of options for people who may not have the resources to go to college or perhaps are not interested in college. Knowing how to make clothing and alter clothing is a good way to earn money. My goal is to help this community grow. Community-building is very important to me."

Cocoa Mayor Michael Blake says the Upstart Cocoa program "strengthens the city's role as a vibrant and competitive force in the Space Coast economy. Our city remains dedicated to empowering a diverse range of small businesses, helping them grow, thrive, and enrich the overall quality of life for our community."

Small business economic development programs are highly beneficial for cities because they generate jobs, increase tax revenue, and foster community identity and vitality by supporting local entrepreneurs and revitalizing neighborhoods.

The programs also boost access to services and amenities for residents, contributing to the quality of life within the community.

Otto said she learned to sew when she was 4 years old,

with more structured lessons to follow.

"My grandfather had an apparel company and my grandmother gave me one of his sewing pins. I started messing around with it. My parents thought it was a phase I was going through, but it turned out to be my career. My father taught me about pattern making and how to create my own templates for projects. He would reupholster our furniture in the home."

Otto earned her bachelor's degree in fashion design from the University of North Texas in 2006 and "went back in 2009 to start my master's degree so I could teach people about this industry."

"Throughout my career, I have met many people who've had interesting ideas for startups in this industry, but they didn't know the first step in implementing those ideas. I now have the ability to guide them through the startup process and what I've learned has been helpful in creating my own business," said Otto.

Sewing is considered a skilled trade because it requires specialized knowledge, hands-on abilities, and can involve formal training through apprenticeships, trade schools, or on-the-job experience to create finished products.

These skills are used professionally in various industries, including the garment, upholstery, and entertainment sectors. Tailors, seamstresses, and costume designers earn a living through their abilities.

"I recently read an article that said sewing is cool again. I told my teenage daughter about it," said Otto, who taught digital pattern making, fashion history, and industrial construction at the University of North Texas.

According to the U.S. Food and Agriculture Education Information System, enrollment in apparel and fashion college majors grew by 12,000 students between 2020 and 2023.

Otto conducts sewing workshops and sewing lessons at her studio and micro-factory.

"Sewing is a wonderful skill and very learnable. You don't have to be amazing at it. Knowing how to do a few stitches here and there can have a big impact on what ends up in the landfill," she said.

Her workshops and classes include: "Sewing Machine 101," "Fashion Lab," "Zipper Workshop," "Pattern Drafting 101," "Sergers 101," "Introduction to Hand Embroidery," and "Cozy Sewing Day Camp." These classes are fee-based, but once a month Otto offers a free workshop to people who are interested in learning about sewing.

"I teach the participants a handful of various stitches. They do not even need a sewing machine. We show them how to repair clothing in a program called 'Repair, Don't Replace.' The program is to encourage people to first try to repair a piece of clothing before getting rid of it."

Her shop uses Juki sewing machines, which are considered the industry standard for professionals and sewing enthusiasts. They are known for their "quality, precision, reliability, speed, and powerful motors" that can handle thick materials.

Otto said she has just started offering her Fashion Lab class on Wednesdays. The attendees include a couple of home-schooled students "who are learning how to make their own clothes. They are creating their own patterns. The youngest in the group is 8 years old."

Every September, America celebrates "National Sewing Month." The observance of that month began in 1982 with a proclamation from President Ronald Reagan in "recognition of the importance of home sewing to the nation."

Otto said sewing offers a "blend of creativity, practicality, and personal satisfaction. Sewing is a rewarding career path. I am passionate about sewing."

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