

# Florida Trend

FLORIDA'S BUSINESS AUTHORITY

JUNE 2022

HIGHER ED:

## Play to Pay

College athletes won the right to earn from endorsements, turning the pursuit of profits into a whole new game. p 38

PLUS ...

- ▶ Brian Lamb's Bank Shot p 58
- ▶ University Presidents: Turnover at the Top p 64

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Florida's Rural Communities p 80

\$4.95

Vanessa Pearl,  
UF swimmer





Board of Governors Chairman Brian Lamb p. 58



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*By Mike Vogel*

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*By Amy Keller*

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Florida's rural communities are anticipating record business growth.

Florida Trend (ISSN 0015-4326) is published monthly with one special issue, a total of 13 times per year by Trend Magazines Inc. Street address: 490 First Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701. Telephone: 727/821-5800. Subscription rates in Florida are \$29.95 for one year, \$49.95 for two years and \$59.95 for three years; \$24.95 for one year for elected officials. All other states: \$39.95 a year. Customer Services online: FloridaTrend.com or phone 800/829-9103. Periodical postage paid at St. Petersburg, FL, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Florida Trend, P.O. Box 528, Lincolnshire, IL 60069. Send air express and bulk shipments to 490 First Avenue South, FL 4, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.



## Florida's Future is Strong...

As publisher of *Florida Trend*, I travel the state from its most northern regions to its southern tip and all the places in between. As many Floridians know, many of the state's most precious treasures can be found in the lands tucked between the coasts.

From the picturesque beauty of inland lakes, trails and nature preserves to the abundance of agriculture to the rich history that abounds in these regions, Florida's rural communities are being recognized as true areas of economic opportunity.

Today, companies and individuals alike are looking for new options in setting down their roots. Employers look to provide employees with more work-life balance options and Florida's rural communities are eager to share all they have to offer to prospective suiters. In a business environment where technology provides new flexibility for remote work, rural Florida continues to attract attention for the quality of life it offers.

Florida's Rural Communities – a special feature starting on page 80 – shines the spotlight on rural Florida and many of the unique features these communities offer to prospective businesses, entrepreneurs and residents. The feature identifies Florida's rural areas of opportunity and provides an insightful look at the distinctive characteristics that make up the state's rural communities.

As the business environment continues to evolve with in-office, hybrid and fully remote employees, so changes workspace needs. In this month's Economic Backbone section, beginning on page 12, developers and brokers share their perspectives on Florida's commercial real estate market as it strives to meet future demand.

Florida's public universities are important drivers of the economy. Our team explores unique angles on this

vast system. Starting on page 38, South Florida Editor Mike Vogel reports on the emerging market of student athlete endorsements and the young entrepreneurs who recently gained the ability to profit from their names, images and likenesses. For all the promise of potential riches, the reality is vastly different than expected. Their stories are accompanied by one of a state leader who has walked in their shoes: Florida Board of Governors Chairman Brian Lamb. A onetime college basketball star whose dreams of an NBA career were derailed by an injury, he now plays an even bigger role for Florida than he might have ever imagined. Associate Editor Amy Keller profiles this fast-rising leader starting on page 58.

We then turn our focus to the changing of the guard at more than half of our state universities in recent years, where the roles presidents are expected to play have grown more demanding and the public scrutiny more intense. Are shorter tenures a new reality or just a sign of the current times? Turn to page 64 for Amy's report on the changing tides and what it means for these important institutions.

I would be remiss if I did not mention this is the first issue of Florida Trend under the new editorial leadership of Executive Editor Vickie Chachere. I could not be prouder to have Vickie leading the editorial department. Her knowledge of the state, its economy and business community, and her enthusiasm for telling the Florida story makes me excited for issues of our magazine to come. Please take time and read Vickie's introductory column on page 156. I know you too will be impressed and looking forward to her upcoming insights and perspective on Florida's future.

— David G. Denor, Publisher  
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## Top Influentials

Great editor's page, "Retrospective," in the April. I concur with you completely. I arrived in Palm Beach County fresh out of college in 1981. The transformation of this county and state is hard to believe over the 40-plus years I have spent here.

I was working out of Larry Pelton and Kelly Smallridge's office at the Business Development Board managing South Florida's InternetCoast at the time Jeb Bush became governor. He was in town a lot working to recruit Dr. Richard Lerner and Scripps to the state and our community. The entire community rallied around this initiative. Between the state and county, approximately \$700 million was on the table to bring Scripps to Jupiter.

Max Plank is also a testament to the BDB's efforts to bring life sciences and biotech to Palm Beach County. With

the University of Florida now managing Scripps, the sky's the limit.

Frank DiBello has done an absolutely wonderful job working with private businesses to improve the space industry in our state. It's incredible to see what has evolved with the space program.

In my position with CareerSource Palm Beach County, I am privileged to work with Kelly Smallridge and her staff at the BDB on numerous economic development projects. Wall Street South has become a reality because of her efforts and many others.

We are also blessed to see and work with Eric Silagy at FPL and his tremendous team.

Manny Medina just about lost his shirt during the tech downturn with the NAP of the Americas. But look how that turned around and what eMerge Americas has become.

Wayne Huizenga was also an asset for not only South Florida and our state but touching entrepreneurship globally.

Thank you for your work at FLORIDA TREND. It is always a highlight to finish reading the publication each month ending with your Editor's Page.

**Michael Corbit**

*Vice President, CareerSource Palm Beach County  
West Palm Beach*



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**SPOTLIGHT COMING IN OCTOBER**

# SARASOTA

**Florida Trend shines the spotlight on Sarasota**

**OCTOBER ISSUE**  
AD SPACE DEADLINE: AUG 10  
MATERIALS DUE: AUG 17

*ENDORSED BY THE:*  
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**Florida Trend**  
CUSTOM CONTENT

# The Power of Nature

Two Ph.D. chemists with a mission to find better mental health treatments launch a psychedelic-powered biotech company.

By Nancy Dahlberg

## *The Entrepreneurs*

**Chris Witowski**, Co-founder/CEO, 34

**Jackie von Salm**, Co-founder/Chief Scientific Officer, 33

Company: **Psilera**, Tampa

## *The Back Story*

Jackie von Salm and Chris Witowski gave up six-figure salaries with stock options to launch Psilera, a Tampa-based biotechnology company specializing in developing psychedelic-inspired compounds and drug delivery systems for treating mental health disorders.

Both entrepreneurs were born and raised in the Tampa Bay area. Von Salm went to the University of South Florida on a full scholarship. From her undergraduate years through her Ph.D. in chemistry in 2016, she researched the use of natural products in drug development. Her projects explored potential treatments for malaria from fungal and bacterial sources and marine organisms — like corals, sea sponges and algae — for a wide range of diseases.

Witowski earned an undergraduate degree in chemistry at Florida State University before joining the Ph.D. program at USF, where the two met while working in the lab of professor Bill Baker, an internationally-renowned chemist who led expeditions to Antarctica looking for natural compounds by diving under the sea ice. When Witowski graduated in 2015, natural products were having a resurgence, particularly cannabis. He was employee No. 5 at AltMed (now part of a public company) focused on cannabis.

## Hitting Home

For both, the mission of drug discovery is personal — von Salm's father was diagnosed with dementia and Witowski's brother struggles with depression. During von Salm's post-doctorate work, she switched her focus to neurological drug discovery for brain health. Witowski also introduced his grandmother, suffering from cancer, to psychedelics. "I would certainly say between that and cannabis, it has helped her live a more comfortable, happy, fulfilled life in the last couple of years."

In 2017, von Salm reconnected with Witowski, who brought her on at AltMed. "It was a great opportunity to use our natural products background but then get more acclimated to the business world," Witowski says.

When the pair began to explore striking out on their own two years later, von Salm reached out to her uncle, a longtime pharmaceutical executive, who connected them with an organization that works with young ventures. In one eight-hour uninterrupted day in August 2019, they hashed out a vision and mission for what would become Psilera. "That was definitely a catalyst that had us take the jump," von Salm says. "Both of us had six-figure jobs, equity in the company and that sort of thing, and we said, 'OK, we're going to take a whole year of no salaries and put all our money into our company. Let's do this.'"

By then the stigma around some psychedelic compounds, including psilocybin and psilocin, known as magic mushrooms, was fading. "We knew that we would be perfect for the field. We had learned a lot in (the field of) cannabis of what not to do, to be honest, and we really didn't want a lot of these compounds to just be thrown out to the world with a lot of anecdotal evidence, without any research behind them," von Salm says.





*“Ultimately, helping the millions of patients who are suffering with mental health is really the end goal. We know that good science will lead to good outcomes. And right now we’re focusing on the science, and the outcomes will come.”*

— Chris Witowski

## The Tech

Witowski and von Salm also “have a large portion” of their business focused on technology and optimizing the compounds, “and we can do this all virtually before we actually put them in animals and humans,” says Witowski. That’s due to advances in computational chemistry, which uses computer modeling and health data to simulate how the compounds work.

## Strategy

Taking a drug to market is a long journey. Psilera focuses on the early-stage science to achieve validation and then will leverage partnerships to take products to market, Witowski says. Psilera raised \$2.5 million in venture capital in 2021. [Ti](#)

## Their Products

The co-founders wanted to bring a new model to the market that was more accessible to patients. “A lot of current psychedelic models have you in a room blindfolded for six hours with a therapist. It costs thousands of dollars, insurance doesn’t cover it, and you have a lot of people who have so much anxiety or PTSD that they don’t want to be in a room with a stranger for six hours blindfolded,” von Salm says.

Psilera’s initial product under development is a micro-dose dimethyltryptamine patch for social anxiety disorder. “We are utilizing that mechanism of action but reducing some of the off-target effects, including hallucinations,” Witowski says. The compound, they say, doesn’t seem to form a tolerance in patients, and there’s also not as high of an abuse potential with a patch. The data, both say, back up their claims. They are starting pre-clinical trials with the patch and aim to launch a first phase safety trial soon.

In addition, Psilera is creating compounds to target conditions like depression, anxiety and alcohol or nicotine addiction. The company recently announced that one of its developmental compounds was able to produce anti-depressant effects in mice without causing hallucinations — “a pretty big step and something that we’ve hypothesized all along,” Witowski says.

Psilera is able to do research on such sensitive substances because of its affiliation with USF, which has special clearance from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency to conduct research on DMT, psilocybin and psilocin (the active ingredients naturally found in ayahuasca tea and magic mushrooms). The team of seven full-time employees is bolstered by about a dozen advisers and board members who help navigate the regulatory environment.

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Vanessa Pearl,  
UF swimmer



# Doretha Edgecomb

(Former teacher, principal and school district administrator; former member of the Hillsborough County School Board, Tampa; age 78)

I grew up in Tampa in the Jim Crow era, so I lived in a very segregated world. Even as children, we understood that. Our schoolbooks were hand-me-downs from the white schools. Back then, you got a book and there was a page in the front where everybody who used that book would write their name. By the time we got them, there was no space to write your name.

Even though there were three generations of educators in my family, it was actually my eighth-grade English teacher who inspired me to become a teacher. Her name was Mrs. Henri Fred, and she was just the epitome of poise. She was no-nonsense, but you could tell she cared about us. She was always well dressed, and I wanted to be just like her in every way.

George (Edgecomb) and I started dating in high school. We went to the prom together. He played baseball. He was president of the student body. He was very popular and smart. I was in the band, and we were both in the honor society. After high school, I went to Talladega College (in Alabama) because I got a scholarship, and he went to Clark College in Atlanta. He was going to become a pharmacist, but he saw what was happening in Atlanta, which was one of those cities where there were many civil rights protests,

and that's when he decided to become a lawyer.

Being a principal was the hardest job I ever had, but it was the most rewarding.

Alabama in the 1960s was a very ugly and hateful place. My friends and I were traveling to Talladega by bus, and we stopped at a bus depot in Alabama to wait for another bus. It was September,

and it felt cold to us Floridians, so we walked inside, thinking we could wait for the bus. We were immediately called the n-word and were told to go outside. That was the first time that I really encountered in-your-face racism. That was the first time I realized how hateful the world could be just because of the color of my skin. I was 17.

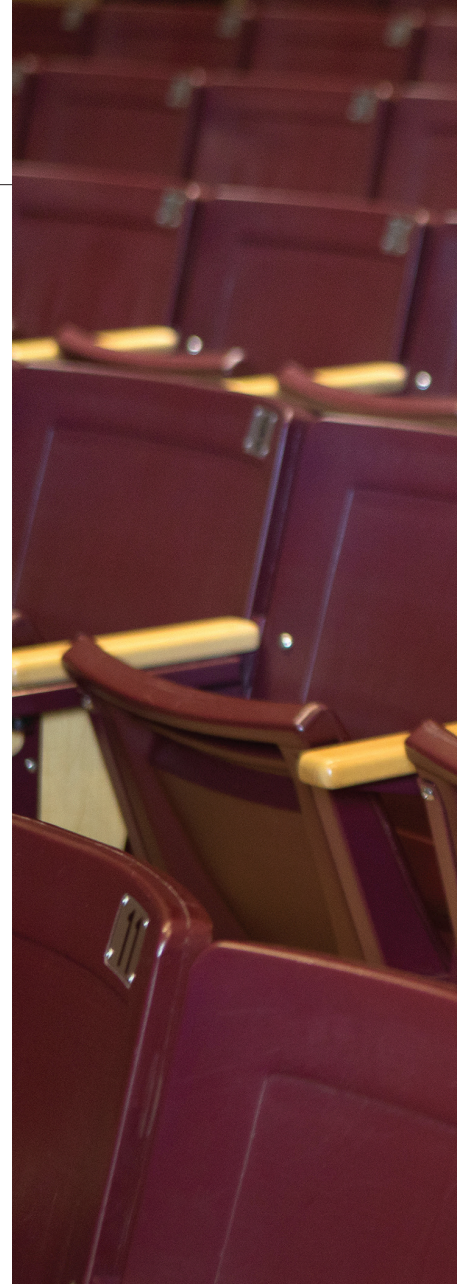
During the time I was in Talladega, the laws were changed. Public facilities were to be

integrated, and so one of the students tested it. He went and sat on the white side of the bus depot, and he was brutally beaten. Martin Luther King Jr. came to Talladega to speak. We were in awe of him. He was powerful in his words. He was inspiring and encouraging and motivating. He made us want to push to change the world. We decided to protest. And when we did, there were the typical police dogs, water hoses and name calling.

Being a good teacher is really not just about the intellectual things that you're teaching them. It's also about caring about the students as individuals.

I remember my parents calling just before the march, and they said that they didn't want me to participate for fear that I would be hurt. Very obediently, I said, 'yes ma'am' and 'yes sir,' then hung up the phone and got in the line. This was our opportunity to say, 'no more.'

My husband became the first African-American assistant state attorney in Tampa and headed the felony division. It was during that time — 1973 — that Gov. Reubin Askew tapped him to become the first African-American county court judge in Hillsborough. I got my master's degree, and he got that judgeship the same year, and then a couple years later he was diagnosed with leukemia.







**The things that they call change** really don't advance education. Education has become too political, too partial. I don't think when the decisions are made it's about the kids anymore. It's more about the adults, and what they want. It's about their political point of view, and that doesn't advance education.

**My husband was good friends** with H. Lee Moffitt. They were both on the board of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Tampa, and they developed a pretty close relationship. It was after George's death — and Moffitt had two other friends who also died of cancer — that Moffitt really pushed for a cancer hospital. The only place that George could have gone to get treatment was in

Texas. There wasn't anywhere to get the treatment in Florida.

**Watching the Today show** is part of my daily routine. I saw an interview that Hoda Kotb and Maria Shriver did with Oprah last October about friendship, and it really touched me. I was so inspired by it that the same day I saw it I sent e-mails to my friends asking them to tell me a little bit about what it means to be a friend and what true friendship means to them. My goal is to take all of that information and write a book about friendship.

**I was 31 years old** when my husband died. There were times, of course, that I didn't want to get up and do what I had to do, but I had a 5-year-old, and I had a job, so I pushed myself. I left

the grief at the doorstep of my house, and when I walked into my workplace, I concentrated on work. When I went home, I had to be a mom to my daughter. I had to find a way to help her grow up without a father. I prayed a lot, had the support of my friends and did the best I could.

**Even now**, when I hear 'We Shall Overcome,' I still get goosebumps.

**Our daughter was young** when he passed, so her memories are vague, but seeing that the courthouse in Tampa was named after him helped her build a sense of who her dad was. Sometimes, I can drive by the George Edgecomb Courthouse and not give it a second thought, and other times I pass by and the tears flow. [FI](#)

# Office Market Adjustments

Employers are making modifications as back-to-the-office ramps up.

Jeffrey Gordon is senior managing director at JLL. He says he's seeing the most demand for office space in Miami-Dade. He told FLORIDA TREND how JLL is managing the growth of the hybrid office and what his outlook is for the next year.



Jeffrey Gordon



Brickell (left) is Miami's most dense neighborhood and was once known as downtown's Millionaire's Row. Today, it's regarded as the city's financial and international business center. Wynwood (below) is heavily marketed as an arts and culture hub.

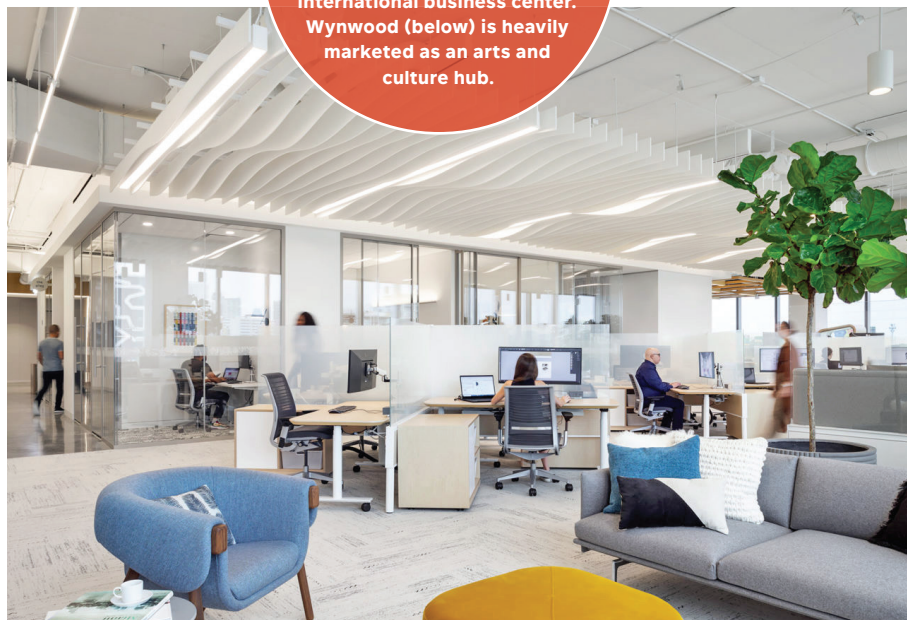
► **Demand:** "We are seeing the most demand for office space mainly in the markets of Brickell and Wynwood. Many tech companies that are looking to grow and expand into the South Florida market have a strong focus on Wynwood because there is new office product available and distributed types of products such as low-rise buildings and warehouse conversions. Meanwhile, we are seeing more financial and professional services firms lean toward Brickell, Miami's financial district. One of

the drivers attracting these firms to Brickell's premier office market is the live-work-play setting it offers, as lifestyle remains an important factor for many of the professionals relocating to South Florida today."

► **Return to Office:** "We are seeing more companies coming back to the office in some capacity. Many companies that thrive on collaboration are finding that the office still plays a major role in their current and future operations. You have some large companies making modifications to their office spaces as they plan for their futures and some businesses are returning to the workplace adopting a hybrid model."

► **Outlook:** "Class A office space is in high demand across South Florida, with building owners creating new and inviting spaces for new-to-market companies or relocations. We continue to see a flight to the highest quality assets in the market, which have been performing very well and will continue to perform very well this year."

— By Nancy Dahlberg





## Honing in on Health Care

Developer Chad Henderson finds a healthy niche.



Chad Henderson

Chad Henderson is founder and CEO of Pensacola-based Catalyst CRE, a commercial developer of health care properties throughout the U.S.

Over the past decade, the 42-year-old Pensacola native and Florida State University graduate has emerged as one of Northwest Florida's leading real estate entrepreneurs.

Among Catalyst's recent accomplishments are a new inpatient rehabilitation hospital in Greeley, Colo., and a \$1.5-billion joint venture with Washington, D.C.-based National Real Estate Advisors

that will focus on health care real estate investments.

While expanding the company's nationwide health care portfolio, which covers 30 states, Henderson also is a developer and a principal investor in East Garden Street, an \$80-million project that includes a nine-story hotel, restaurants and a 250-unit apartment complex in downtown Pensacola.

Henderson attributes much of Catalyst's success to close partnerships with its investors. "What we've done is we've found a low-cost capital partner that can go up and down the risk profile, and that makes



# Rising Tide of Investments

Integra Investments' purchase in September of Sea Isle Marina, one of the venues for the annual Miami boat show, highlights the wave of consolidation lifting marina values in Florida and nationally.

Marina sales to deep-pocket investors have been increasing, buoyed in part by a boom in boat sales and also by a 2019 decision by the IRS to treat boat slip and storage fees as rental income. That increased the attractiveness of marinas as an investment. In February, the nation's second-largest marina owner, Centerbridge Partners' Suntex Marinas, agreed to acquire the nation's third-largest owner, Westrec Marinas, for \$400 million. Both have marinas throughout Florida.

The new investors, with capital that individual marina owners often lacked, have been adding amenities and income generators. Integra will be "strategically deploying millions in capital investments" to turn Sea Isle and its 222 wet slips into a high-performing asset and "true boating destination" to be known as Venetian Marina & Yacht Club, says Victor Ballestas, principal of Integra Investments. "With increased boat sales and a limited supply of storage facilities, value-add marinas are a growing asset class for opportunistic real estate investment," he says. "There is continued demand for waterfront developments, making marina and upland development a prime asset class, especially given that the sector is poised for favorable cap rates." — *By Mike Vogel*



■ *"There is continued demand for waterfront developments, making marina and upland development a prime asset class, especially given that the sector is poised for favorable cap rates."*

— *Victor Ballestas, principal of Integra Investments*

us really well positioned to either buy existing buildings and redevelop them or go and develop new ground-up health care-oriented buildings," says Henderson.

The outlook for Northwest Florida commercial real estate, according to Henderson:

► **Growth:** "Northwest Florida is on a path to immense growth. There are a lot of good things coming this way, but we have had our fair share of challenges and headwinds with supply chain procurement and inflation. It's been very difficult for the construction environment to navigate that."

► **Alternative Investing:** "Typically, when you're in an inflationary environment, real estate is a great

place to be. With the equities market kind of frothy these days, there's a lot more attention on alternative investing in the housing, industrial and hospitality sectors, along with more secular investing in life sciences and health care."

► **Capital Inflow:** "Overall,

there is a lot of capital out there looking for places to invest, and Northwest Florida is certainly one of those places. Northwest Florida has been discovered and currently is seeing an historic inflow of those capital investment dollars."

— *By Carlton Proctor*

**Physicians Regional Pine Ridge was acquired by partners Catalyst Healthcare Real Estate and National Real Estate Advisors.**





When complete, Lakeland Central Park will be more than 5 million square feet of industrial space. The first phase opens late 2022.

## Proximity, Proximity, Proximity

Polk County's warehouse market benefits from its location.

Polk County's industrial sector accounts for nearly 80 million square feet of warehouse space, says Gary M. Ralston, managing director of SVN Saunders Ralston Dantzer Real Estate in Lakeland.

Ralston says the demand for that space — with less than 5% vacancy — should remain strong, thanks to the county's location between the Orlando and Tampa Bay markets, as well as Polk's proximity to I-4 and overall growth. Polk's population, for example, increased 20% from 2010 to 2020, and the research firm Esri forecasts the 725,046 population will grow 15% faster than Florida's overall growth over the next five years.

"Industrial and warehouse real estate in proximity to I-4 has enjoyed very strong demand," Ralston says. "There are almost 22 million people within five hours of Lakeland and I-4. This is the

strongest distribution metric in the state. Polk has three times as many employees in transportation and warehousing as the national average."

Meanwhile, demand for Polk's 14 million square feet of office space is still recovering from the pandemic.

"We are continuing to see negative absorption and negative rent growth," he says. "There

are several large office users who converted to work-from-home due to COVID and are still struggling to implement a return to office. We believe that perhaps 20% to 25% of office workers will not return to the office and will continue to work remotely. This is especially true of call centers. Over time, we expect that the effect on office demand will result in shorter-term leases and more space that has a somewhat co-working environment."

— By Art Levy



Gary M. Ralston

## High Hopes

The Southwest Florida market is strong and expected to get stronger.

Scott Cietek, director of the commercial division at Sarasota's Michael Saunders & Co, says inflation and rising interest rates are a concern, but he remains optimistic that the forces driving Southwest Florida's commercial real estate market will continue to grow.

"I am still bullish," he says.

Cietek says industrial/warehouse space is in high demand — especially with businesses looking to stockpile more inventory and transportation companies establishing last-mile distribution centers — but the retail sector is growing, too, right along with a rise in residential construction.

"The old adage that retail follows rooftops is so true," he says. "Retailers are trying to create market share before the markets are filled with families."

Also, with more people returning to work at an office rather than working remotely, Cietek expects office demand will rise this year in an already crowded market.

"Believe it or not," he says, "office vacancy is sitting below 5% in Manatee, Sarasota and Charlotte counties and just 7% in Tampa/St. Petersburg, which is incredible considering two years ago we never thought anyone would ever go back to the office." — By Art Levy



Despite concerns over inflation and rising interest rates, Scott Cietek anticipates continued growth of Southwest Florida's commercial real estate market.

## Commercial Real Estate

► **Marriott Vacations Worldwide** has topped out its 300,000-sq.-ft., nine-story headquarters, the largest commercial office building under construction in Orlando, which it plans to open in 2023. The timeshare giant (which employs 1,500 locally) will be the anchor tenant within the City Center of O-Town West, the \$1 billion-plus project being developed near Disney by Orlando-based Unicorp. The O-Town West development will include restaurants, a day care, a gym and a market. The Marriott Vacations building will be certified by Fitwel (a healthy building certification system created in partnership with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and operated by the Center for Active Design) and will feature collaborative work and meeting space, indoor and outdoor dining areas, a fitness center, live green walls, natural light and more.



► **Electronic Arts**, the video game maker that employs about 1,000 in Central Florida, completed its move from Maitland to Orlando's Creative Village on the west side of downtown. The company's new 175,940-sq.-ft. building — the second new office building erected in Orlando since 2020 — is just a two-minute walk from UCF's downtown campus, which houses the university's graduate video game design school. As of March, about 50% of its employees were working at the new campus.

► **Tavistock** is constructing two new office buildings at the Lake Nona Town Center — a 68,390-sq.-ft., five-story building with ground floor retail and four upper levels of boutique class A office space that's scheduled to open this summer and an eight-story, 278,917-sq.-ft. class A office building that's slated to open in early 2023. Other projects in Tavistock's pipeline include Simcom Aviation Training's global headquarters and training facility, which will be complete this year; One Performance Plaza, a 152,784-sq.-ft. medical office tower across from Lake Nona's Medical City that will open later this year; and a 205-room Aloft Hotel north of S.R. 417 on Lake Nona Boulevard that will open in 2023.



**Simcom's world headquarters is under construction on the Nemours Parkway.**

# Office Observations

Local companies are leading the way in heading back to the office.

Two years after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are signs of growing confidence in Central Florida's commercial real estate market as businesses continue to bring employees back to the office and resume more normal operations. While there remains a record amount of available office space on the market, asking rates in Orlando are up 4.5% over the previous year and rents (ranging from \$25 to \$27 per square foot) are the highest in the city's history. John Gilbert, managing director for JLL's



“Downtown Orlando’s office market is very busy right now, where we’re seeing a lot of leasing activity.”

— John Gilbert, managing director, JLL’s Orlando office

Orlando office, provided some observations about Central Florida’s office market:

► **Local vs. National:**

“What’s interesting about the Central Florida office market post-pandemic is that many local firms and businesses have already made their return to the office with most local companies being back in the office for about 18 months now. It is the large global or national Fortune 500 companies headquartered out of Orlando that are taking a more conservative approach to returning to an office setting.”

► **Downtown:**

“Downtown Orlando’s office market is very busy right now, where we’re seeing a lot of leasing activity. We are seeing an increase in new office requirements

from companies looking to upgrade their office space and building. We’re also seeing landlords make significant investments in upgrading their office properties, particularly the common areas and project amenities in order to attract these new office users.”

► **Amenities:**

“When tenants are touring for office space, they are looking at buildings where their employees will enjoy coming to work. The office properties that are more heavily amenitized with cafes or restaurants, fitness centers, outdoor spaces and other unique amenities are generating more tenant interest because companies want an environment where their employees will be excited to work.” — By Amy Keller

# LEADING ORLANDO'S FUTURE

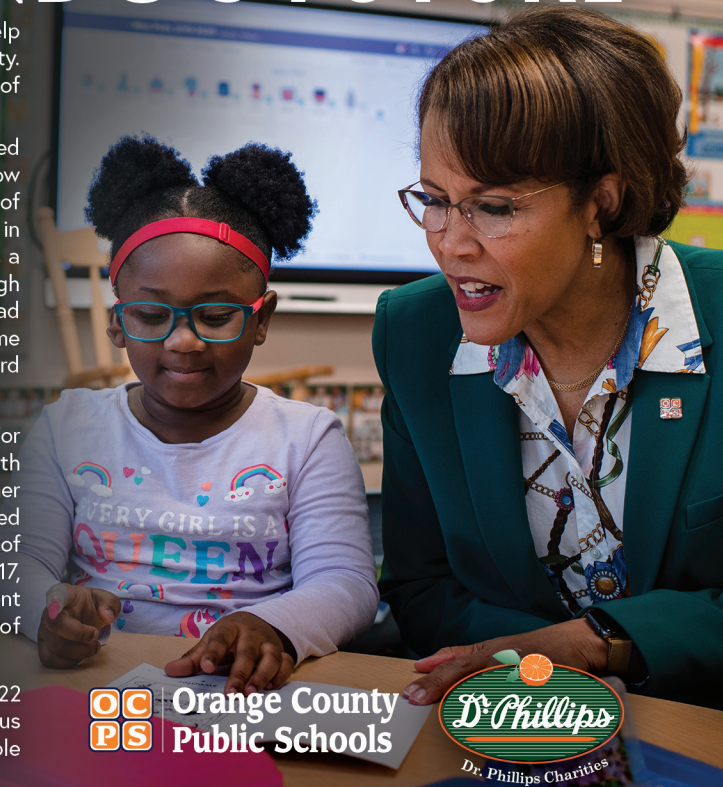
The Phillips Family believed education was not only the best way to "help others help themselves" but also the cornerstone for a strong community. Today, Dr. Phillips Charities continues to view education as a bedrock of Central Florida's future.



Since 1958, Dr. Phillips Charities has supported Orange County Public Schools ("OCPS"). Now the 4th largest school district in the State of Florida, OCPS has grown not only in size but in stature. As an "A" rated school district, it has a 97.9% graduation rate from its traditional high schools. OCPS was awarded the 2014 Broad Prize for Urban Education and is a two-time winner of both the Governor's Sterling Award and the Florida Sustained Excellence Award.

Strong schools must have strong leadership. For 30 years, Dr. Barbara Jenkins has led OCPS with dedication to its students' needs. During her years as Superintendent, she has been named Superintendent of the Year by the State of Florida and several other organizations. In 2017, Dr. Jenkins received a presidential appointment as a Director of the National Board of Educational Sciences.

Dr. Phillips Charities is proud to award OCPS and Dr. Jenkins with the 2022 Dr. Phillips Leadership Award (including \$250,000) for their continuous community leadership, strong financial stewardship, and sustainable educational programs that make a difference in the lives of children.







Northeast Florida is positioning itself as a transportation and logistics hub.

## Closer to the Consumer

Supply chains are moving closer to buyers as employers reassess office needs.

Population growth in Northeast Florida and changes in consumer-spending habits have led to a healthy industrial real estate market, says Christian Harden, managing partner at NAI Hallmark.

Supply chains began migrating closer to the consumer years ago, but an increase in online sales during the pandemic has propelled industrial real estate, investment sales and industrial leasing “off the charts,” he says.

“Ten years ago, Amazon had a couple of regional locations,” says Harden. “Now you probably have four or five in every major metropolitan market in Florida.”



Christian Harden

Though the market is growing throughout the state, Northeast Florida is probably the fastest growing, Harden says, because of efforts to position the region as a transportation and logistics hub.

As other parts of the country are experiencing supply chain issues, JaxPort is lobbying to divert container cargo traffic to its port. A harbor-deepening project, scheduled for completion this month, will further increase the amount of consumer goods coming into the region. In the next few years, as the port increases its cargo intake, the demand for warehouses and distribution centers will only increase, Harden says.

Not only will major online retailers need space for distribution centers, but the retailer’s suppliers will also need warehouse space to move their products to the distribution centers faster.

In addition to rerouting established supply chains, the pandemic has also changed office space needs for businesses, but it will be years before we know exactly how, he says. “Office leases tend to be for five to 10 years, so I think businesses will probably deal with it when their leases come up for renewal.”

Some companies that have vacated spaces during the pandemic have been able to sublease to many small businesses moving to Jacksonville from colder climates, like New York, Wisconsin and Illinois, Harden says. “They don’t want to wait nine months to design, get a permit and construct a space, so they’ll take a sublease space that offers quick access to market.” — By Laura Hampton [FI](#)

### ► Biggest Commercial Real Estate Firms in Florida

| Company             | Licensed Florida Brokers | Florida Offices | Square Footage Leased in 2021 | Square Footage Sold in 2021 | Senior Florida Executive               |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Marcus & Millichap  | 250                      | 5               | 0                             | 20,000,000                  | Ryan Nee                               |
| Colliers*           | 207                      | 11              | N/A                           | N/A                         | Ryan Kratz                             |
| CBRE                | 188                      | 9               | 153,100,000                   | 33,000,000                  | Tripp Gulliford                        |
| Cushman & Wakefield | 143                      | 7               | 23,680,000                    | 33,360,000                  | Wanda Riley; Larry Richey              |
| JLL                 | 105                      | 9               | 127,000,000                   | 21,700,000                  | Mike Ellis; Gary Godsey; LaShawn Bates |
| Coldwell Banker*    | 79                       | 34              | N/A                           | N/A                         | Michael Mangrum                        |
| Avison Young        | 47                       | 6               | 7,699,742                     | 91,515,572                  | Randy Buddemeyer                       |
| Savills             | 26                       | 2               | 3,453,187                     | 381,250                     | Michael E. Griffin                     |

Information from individual firms. \*Coldwell Banker and Colliers did not share square footage leased or sold in 2021 by press time. Colliers shared that it had 2,213 total transactions and \$5.2 billion in transaction volume in 2021.



Miami Worldcenter announced a \$5-million public art program to display museum-quality works at the mixed-use complex to attract art-loving locals and tourists. The first public artwork is a mural painted by Overtown artist Nina Chanel Abney.

round of funding led by PeakSpan. ▶ Miami-based trucking solutions company **SmartHop** raised \$30 million in a financing round led by Sozo Ventures. SmartHop has raised \$46 million to scale its tech-for-trucking tools aimed at helping independent trucking businesses and solo drivers increase their revenue. ▶ Seattle startup **Solo** has expanded into Miami, bringing its digital platform to help gig workers increase their take-home pay and cut down on administrative headaches.

#### EDUCATION

▶ **Florida International University's Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management** launched an online bachelor's in global sustainable tourism.

#### PHILANTHROPY

▶ A \$6.75-million donation to **Habitat for Humanity Miami** — its largest financial gift to date — from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott will allow the non-profit to expand its affordable housing work. Scott also donated \$4.8 million toward a new facility for the **Boys & Girls Clubs of Miami-Dade**.

#### HEALTH CARE

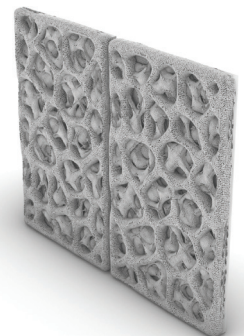
▶ Mount Sinai Medical Center revealed plans for a \$250-million cancer center, with funding coming from Norman and Irma Braman. The 250,000-sq.-ft. **Irma and Norman Braman Cancer Center** is planned to open in Miami Beach in

#### TECHNOLOGY

▶ **Amazon** is adding 9,000 square feet of offices in a WeWork building in Coral Gables. The company is hiring 60 employees in Miami, bringing the total to 160. ▶ Startup accelerator **Techstars** is partnering with J.P. Morgan, which will invest more than \$80 million to support more than 400 companies led by diverse founders in nine U.S. cities, including Miami. ▶ Miami-based **Yuga Labs**, owner of the three

biggest non-fungible token (NFT) brands on the market, including the Bored Ape Yacht Club, raised \$450 million in a seed round led by a16z crypto, Andreessen Horowitz's crypto fund. It is now valued at \$4 billion. In March, Yuga Labs acquired popular NFT brands CryptoPunks and Meebits. ▶ A Miami fintech startup called **Finally**, which helps small businesses automate their accounting and finance functions, secured more than \$95 million in a

**Miami-based Addition Company is creating a system for 3-D printing "living" seawalls, mimicking coral reefs and mangroves. Besides protecting shorelines, the seawalls can improve water quality, says founder Anya Freeman. The seawalls also are produced cheaper and faster than other solutions to sea-level rise, she says.**



early 2025. MSMC recently hired **Dr. Steven Hockwald**, formerly of Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in Buffalo, N.Y., as the new director of its cancer center.

## AVIATION

▶ American Airlines is adding 600 people to its workforce at **Miami International Airport**.

## MANUFACTURING

▶ **Skretting**, a Norwegian manufacturer and supplier of fish feed to land-based aquaculture companies, plans a feed facility in South Miami-Dade close to Atlantic Saphire, one of its largest customers.

## REAL ESTATE

▶ **Marsh**, the insurance unit of New York-based Marsh McLennan and one of the world's largest insurance and risk management companies, signed a lease for 25,000 square feet at 830 Brickell, joining dozens of financial firms relocating or expanding in Miami.

▶ Mast Capital launched sales of the 80-story **Cipriani Residences Miami** condo in the Brickell Financial District. The developer acquired the 2.8-acre site at 1420 S. Miami Ave. in December for \$103 million. Prices start at \$1.1 million. Estimated completion is late 2025.

▶ Developers Fortune International Group and Chateau Group plan to build a 62-story twin-tower luxury condo project in Sunny Isles called **St. Regis Residences**. Construction is expected to begin in early 2023.

▶ Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava declared a **housing affordability crisis** and launched an emergency rental assistance program with an additional \$13.4 million in federal funds, for a total of \$39.2 million of available assistance. The goal: To help struggling tenants amid a surge in rent increases. Also, residential landlords in Miami-Dade now must give tenants at least 60 days' notice of rent hikes of 5% or more. Meanwhile, Miami declared a public emergency over



**Starwood Capital Group** partnered with Miami-based **Mast Capital** to launch sales for an oceanfront condo in Miami Beach to be called **Perigon**, with 82 units starting at \$3 million. The developers acquired the units in the **La Costa** condo at 5333 Collins Ave. and plan to demolish the 15-story building.

the housing crisis, allowing the city to hire engineers and architects for affordable housing projects faster under no-bid contracts.

## BANKING

▶ Stuart-based Seacoast Banking Corp. of Florida is buying Miami-based **Apollo Bancshares**, parent company of one of South Florida's largest community banks, Apollo Bank, in a deal that's expected to increase its deposits in the tri-county region to approximately

\$2.7 billion. Apollo Bank Chairman and CEO **Eddy Arriola** will serve as Seacoast's Miami-Dade market executive.

▶ City National Bank of Florida partnered with non-profit Branches to launch a business development program for minority-led companies: **SPARK for Entrepreneurial Equity**. The yearlong training and mentorship program for black or minority women business owners in Miami-Dade County will also provide access to \$35,000 in grants.



## SPOTLIGHT

### Tech Boost

To boost diversity and inclusion in Miami-Dade's tech sector, JPMorgan Chase, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Miami Foundation and social impact venture studio **aire ventures** launched **Tech Equity Miami**, which aims to invest at least

\$100 million over five years in projects that advance internet connectivity, educational programs, resources for small businesses and tech employment opportunities for residents. JPMorgan Chase will contribute \$10 million, part of the company's \$30-billion racial equity commitment.

The goals for the five-year initiative include bringing internet access to 100,000 Miami-Dade County students currently lacking at-home broadband; helping 25,000 underrepresented students and workers find tech opportunities; providing at least 1,000 micro-businesses with digital transformation training and technology solutions; and providing digital exposure and literacy for 50,000 families from underserved communities. Progress will be tracked and be accessible to the public.



Virtual model of a vessel created by Digital Twin Marine.

## INNOVATION

### Digital Twins

**Nicky Bruger** and her husband **Tom** worked side-by-side in the pandemic from their Fort Lauderdale home — she in construction management and he as a ship surveyor, akin to a home inspector for ships. One day, he saw her using a digital model of a job site to plan work. “He was like, ‘Why don’t we do that for ships?’ ”



Using 360-degree cameras and Lidar laser-scanning cameras, their company, **Digital Twin Marine**, creates a detailed, virtual model of a vessel — a digital twin. Ship owners use it, including a VR version, to more efficiently plan dry dock work or conduct marketing or training.

The couple, studying for University of Florida MBAs, came in second in a UF business plan competition. FPL’s 35

Mules program, which provides mentoring to early-stage startups, including a \$100,000 grant, accepted them. “Having all their help and resources has been just fantastic,” says Nicky.

The 2-year-old company has made digital twins of commercial ships over 100 feet and a couple of superyachts as it works toward profitability. Long-term goal: To have offices near major global ports.

## EDUCATION

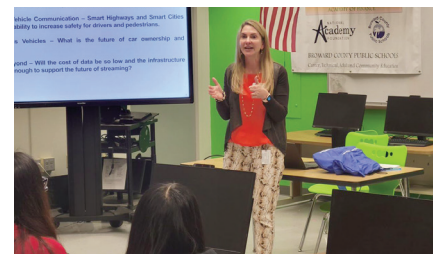
► **Indian River State College** used \$10 million from an anonymous donor to establish a charter high school in Indiantown. It will open in a temporary location in August with 75 ninth-graders. ► Development firm CRG plans to renovate a former printing plant in Miramar into a campus for for-profit **Chamberlain University** and administrative offices for Chamberlain parent Adtalem Global Education’s **Ross University School of Medicine**, **American University for the Caribbean School of Medicine** and the **Medical Education Readiness Program**.

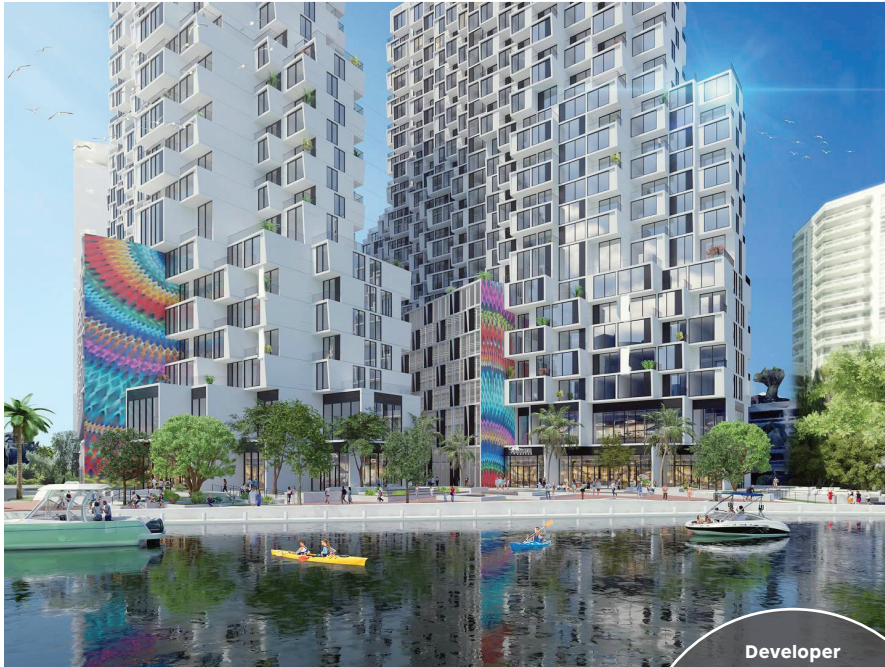
## REAL ESTATE

► New York-based Related Cos., owner of the Hilton West Palm Beach, told local tourism authorities it may build a **second hotel at the Palm Beach County convention center**. ► PulteGroup plans to redevelop the **Sherwood Park golf course** in Delray Beach into a single-family home development. ► Kolter Homes began golf course construction and land development for the 682-acre, 900-home **Astor Creek Country Club** opening in 2023 in Port St. Lucie. It will be Kolter’s first golf course development done from the ground up. ► Development firm Key International and Wexford Real Estate Investors sold the 10-story, 171-room **AC Hotel by Marriott**

## Sponsored Content

Students across **Broward County Public Schools** got a jump-start on exploring careers in the region’s technology sector thanks to **TechGateway Day**, which provides opportunities for industry leaders to visit schools and raise awareness about high-demand, high-paying jobs. The event is a partnership between BCPS and the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance, Broward County’s official economic development partnership, and included speakers from Microsoft, LanInfoTech, SiriusXM, Maersk Tech and Greyson Technologies. TechGateway is an asset map and website highlighting the many tech companies in South Florida: [TechGateway.org](http://TechGateway.org)





**Developer**  
Asi Cymbal  
received approval to  
build **Raintree Riverwalk  
Residences**, a mixed-  
use, two-tower, 677-unit  
apartment project on  
the south bank of the  
New River in Fort  
Lauderdale.

**Fort Lauderdale Beach** to Dynamic City Capital for \$74.3 million. Dynamic, which has offices in Utah and California, has two Clearwater Beach hotels, a Residence Inn and a SpringHill Suites, in its portfolio. ▶ Miami-based Related Group launched sales

for its oceanfront, 21-story, 119-unit **Casamar**, its second luxury condo project in Pompano Beach. Units start at \$1.8 million. It follows Related's sold-out Solemar development. ▶ **Boca West Country Club** is building a 96,000-sq.-ft.

aquatics center with five pools, including a four-lane lap pool. ▶ California-based Brickstar Capital paid seller Chart Organization, a New York real estate company represented by Colliers, \$12.65 million for **Spanish River Plaza**, a 4.5-acre, 56,034-sq.-ft. retail and office center at South Federal Highway and Northeast Spanish River Boulevard in Boca Raton.

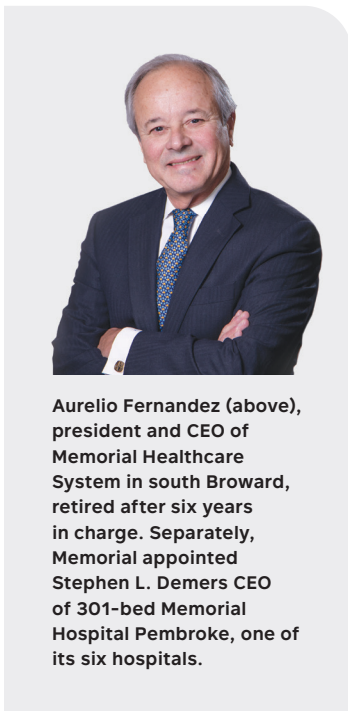
**RETAIL**

▶ Owner Yoram Izhuk contracted to sell the **Festival Flea Market**, a longtime bargain-hunting site in Pompano Beach, to Atlanta-based IDI Logistics. IDI plans to replace it with a warehouse. Izhuk says terms of the deal include giving tenants a couple of years to make plans with some potentially relocating

to other properties he owns in South Florida. ▶ Delray Beach-based **Ed Morse Automotive Group** acquired four dealerships and a parts center in Iowa from Kreiger Motor, taking Morse to 31 dealerships and 63 franchises. ▶ **PopStroke's** plans for a facility in Delray Beach include two Tiger Woods-designed 18-hole putting courses along with a restaurant and outdoor play areas. PopStroke has sites in Port St. Lucie, Orlando, Sarasota and Fort Myers, with future locations coming in late 2022 in Wesley Chapel, to serve the Tampa market, and cities in Texas and Arizona.

**TRANSPORTATION**

▶ The state transportation department will fund a \$12.95-million design study of a **people-mover transit shuttle** connection between Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, cruise terminals at Port Everglades and the county convention center and private passenger rail service Brightline. Projected cost of building the project is \$600 million with completion of the first phase years away.



**Aurelio Fernandez** (above), president and CEO of Memorial Healthcare System in south Broward, retired after six years in charge. Separately, Memorial appointed **Stephen L. Demers** CEO of 301-bed Memorial Hospital Pembroke, one of its six hospitals.



Private passenger rail company Brightline helped unveil **BrightBike**, a 150-bike rental program in West Palm Beach. The program is part of its Brightline+ services that offer public and private means to go to and from stations. **FI**

**SPOTLIGHT**

## About Time

In 1924, First National Bank attached a four-sided, ornate clock to the outside of its downtown St. Petersburg building at the corner of Fifth Street and Central Avenue.

The clock would go on to outlast the bank, which was gone by 1930 due to the Great Depression. The clock even outlasted the building. In 1977, when the red brick structure was razed, the clock was salvaged, converted into a pedestal clock and installed at the same intersection. "The history of St.

Petersburg business and banking, especially during the spectacular growth of the 1920s, is an important story to tell," says Rui Farias, executive director of the St. Petersburg Museum of History. "The clock was probably saved to honor its history."

Today, the clock's own history is repeating itself.

When the block where the clock stood since the 1970s was leveled to make way for the Residences of 400 Central — a 46-story condominium tower being developed by Red Apple Real Estate of New York — the clock was salvaged again and is now in the care of Tampa's Boyd Clocks, which will repair and restore it. Red Apple plans to feature the clock when the condo tower opens by 2025.

"We look at this clock and see reflections of the charm and character of downtown St. Pete's wonderful sidewalks and avenues," says John Catsimatidis Sr., founder of Red Apple Real Estate. "We are making sure to bring in experts with vast experience so this clock can stand again in a special place beside the future tower."

The 1920s-era clock, now being restored, will become part of the Residences of 400 Central in 2025.



Designed by Miami firm Architectonica, 400 Central is planned for 301 condos, office space and restaurants. The 46-story tower will be the tallest building on Florida's west coast.



## CONSTRUCTION

▶ **E.M. Scott General Contractor**, a 95-year-old, family-run construction business, is closing. The firm did much of its construction work in downtown Tampa and nearby Davis Islands.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

▶ The **Elevate Aerospace & Logistics Incubator** has opened at Lakeland Linder International Airport. The facility offers support to entrepreneurs starting aviation businesses.

## HEALTH CARE

▶ **Stryker**, a Michigan medical device maker, plans to cut 88 jobs at its Lakeland office. It plans to close the Lakeland facility next year. ▶ **George Makhoul** is the new COO of **HCA Florida St. Petersburg Hospital**. Makhoul was most recently vice president of operations at HCA Florida Brandon Hospital. ▶ Construction is underway on a \$71-million behavioral health center at **Sarasota Memorial Hospital**. ▶ **Tampa General Hospital** performed its 1,500th adult heart transplant earlier this year. Its first heart transplant was performed in 1985. Meanwhile, the hospital's \$53-million central energy plant, which will make sure the 1,041-bed hospital doesn't lose power during

a major storm or other event, has opened. ▶ Atlanta-based **nfant Labs**, a medical device and digital health company focusing on premature babies, will open an office in Pasco County, where it plans to hire 10 production technicians.

## HOSPITALITY

▶ Tampa philanthropist **Kiran Patel** has sold his **Wyndham Grand Clearwater Beach hotel** for \$170 million to JEMB Realty, a New York investment firm. Patel will keep a partial stake in the 5-year-old waterfront resort. ▶ Pasco County raised its **tourist tax** from 4% to 5%. The tax generated \$3.6 million last year.

## INSURANCE

▶ Insurance rating firm Demotech has withdrawn the financial stability rating it had issued for Tampa-based **Lighthouse Property Insurance** citing the company's reduced capitalization after losses from Hurricane Ida. The withdrawal also follows a Lighthouse decision to stop writing policies in Florida. By the end of 2021, the property insurance carrier had 13,200 policies in Florida.

## PHILANTHROPY

▶ **Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas and West Pasco Counties** got an \$11-million share of MacKenzie Scott's \$436-million



Dick Corbett, president and CEO of the **Concorde Companies**, a Tampa-based real estate investment firm, has donated \$25 million to the **Tampa Museum of Art** to support the museum's expansion plans. The gift, the largest in the museum's history, will help the museum boost its overall space from 69,000 square feet to 120,000 square feet, and expand its exhibition and collections space from 14,800 square feet to 43,000 square feet.

donation to Habitat for Humanity International. **Habitat for Humanity of Hillsborough County** got \$7.5 million.

## REAL ESTATE

▶ North Carolina-based **Crescent Communities** plans to build **Novel Beach Park**, a 289-unit rental community in Tampa's Westshore neighborhood. Construction is underway and is expected to be completed by fall 2023. ▶ **Midtown East**, a 16-story, 400,000-sq.-ft. office building, will be part of the Midtown Tampa mixed-use development. Construction, expected to start by the end of this year, should be completed by 2024.

## TECHNOLOGY

▶ **Avanade**, which provides cloud and technology services to companies including Microsoft, will open an engineering hub in Tampa, where it plans to hire 500. The company, which employs 56,000 in 26 countries, opened an engineering hub earlier this year in Toronto. ▶ Tech company **Fast**, an online payment company, has shut down, despite raising more than \$122 million from investors last year. The startup, which originated in San Francisco, moved to Tampa in 2021 and employed 350. ▶ **Branch**, a Minnesota-based financial services company that makes a payment app, will open an office in Tampa, where it plans to hire up to 30. It'll be the company's first office outside of Minneapolis. Companies including Uber Freight, Jimmy John's and Domino's use Branch's app to pay employees. 

Saint Leo University has opened a \$20-million, 59,500-sq.-ft. wellness center on its Pasco County campus. The facility includes fitness equipment, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a campus ministry, a cafe and space for counseling and health services.





More than 5,500 athletes and coaches will participate in 19 sports at the 2022 Special Olympics USA Games June 5-12 in Orlando. Disney is hosting the games, offering its 220-acre ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex for the event.

#### FINANCE

► Jacksonville-based **VyStar Credit Union** is expanding into Brevard County with the opening of a branch in Titusville and another in Suntree, located between Rockledge and Melbourne. The credit union has made a heavy push into Central Florida over the past couple of years, opening branches in downtown Orlando, Sanford, Oviedo, Mount Dora and Winter Garden. It's planning for a location in Lake Mary.

#### INSURANCE

► Daytona Beach-based **Brown & Brown** completed its acquisition of **Orchid Underwriters Agency**, a Vero Beach underwriter of catastrophe-exposed property and high-net worth personal lines, and **CrossCover Insurance Services**, a Texas-based

underwriter of middle-market commercial properties.

#### DEVELOPMENT

► **Brent Bartholomew** was named Orlando area president of **M/I Homes**, succeeding **David Byrnes**, who retired in March. Bartholomew has more than 16 years of experience in home building and was most recently division president at David Weekley Homes. ► **Protea Capital Partners**, a California-based developer and owner of senior living facilities, has opened a \$25-million-plus assisted living and memory care facility called **Sunscape Daytona Beach** along North Williamson Boulevard. **Solvere Living**, the operations division of St. Petersburg-based **Solutions Advisors Group**, is operating the 85-unit (100-bed) rental community, which features resort-style

**Heather Bigard (below), provost and executive vice president of Lake-Sumter State College was named the next president of the school, becoming the first woman to hold the position. She replaces Stan Sidor, who retired.**



amenities such as a movie theater, fitness center, dining, a salon and a bistro/coffee bar. Pricing starts at \$4,179 a month.

#### HEALTH CARE

► **Walmart Health** is entering the Central Florida market with a health center in Sanford, adjacent to its super center. The clinic will provide a range of services, including primary and urgent care, labs, X-ray and diagnostics, behavioral health and counseling, as well as dental care, optical care, hearing services seven days a week. ► **AdventHealth** named **Dr. Steven Smith** chief scientific officer for the system. Smith will continue to lead research for AdventHealth's Central Florida division and lead AdventHealth's partnership with Moffitt Cancer Center. In other news, the hospital system began distributing more than \$1.7 million in community impact grants to eight Central Florida non-profits to address homelessness, access to mental health services and other regional health challenges.

#### HIGHER EDUCATION

► Philanthropists Cici and Hyatt Brown pledged \$25 million to **Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University** — the single largest gift in the school's history — to help the university create a business makerspace focused on high-paying jobs for Floridians and build on the success of Embry-Riddle's 5-year-old research park in Daytona Beach. ► **Stetson University** in DeLand has increased employees' pay by a dollar-per-hour to provide relief from inflation and rising gas prices and is giving employees an across-the-board raise of \$1,800. If that increase doesn't bring employees' pay to at least \$15-an-hour, the university will boost it to that level.



### PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

▶ **Grant Thornton**, an audit, tax and advisory firm, opened its second facility in Orlando. The “center of excellence” houses 80 employees and enhances the firm’s growing national indirect tax practice, which encompasses sales/use tax, property tax, business licenses and other taxes beyond corporate taxes.

### TECHNOLOGY

▶ **Astronics Test Systems** — which does testing for a range of products, including military aircraft, heart monitors and commuter trains — is moving its headquarters from Irvine, Calif., to Orlando to be closer to many of its customers. The company plans to add 60 employees to its Orlando staff of 125 over the next two years. The company will invest \$13 million over the next decade in a 70,000-sq.-ft. facility

in Central Florida Research Park.

▶ **CACI International**, a manufacturer of laser communications technology for national security and commercial space missions and a provider of photonic design services, is opening a 13,000-sq.-ft. manufacturing facility in Central Florida Research Park. ▶ **SoarTech**, a Michigan-based artificial intelligence company that builds systems for defense, government and commercial applications, is doubling its square footage and will add 26 jobs over the next three years to its staff of 49 in Orlando.

### TRANSPORTATION

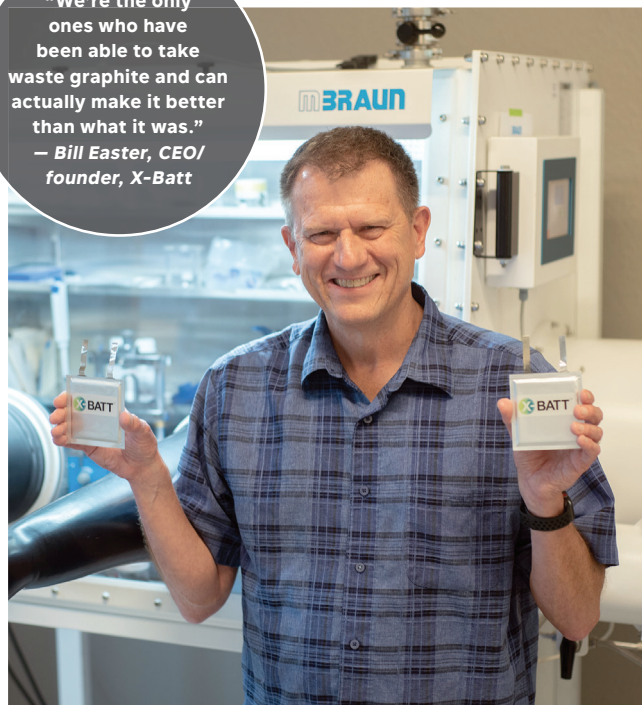
▶ **Beep**, the 3-year-old self-driving shuttle operator based in Lake Nona, received \$25 million in funding, led by ABS Capital, with participation from Intel Capital, Blue Lagoon Capital, TDF Ventures and Hidden Creek Management.



**SurePods**, a maker of prefabricated bathrooms, expanded the size of its Orange County facility to 120,000 square feet and plans to add 60 jobs.

The company has tested its technology on more than 20 public roads nationwide over the last two years. ▶ UK-based TUI Airways, which used to fly into Orlando Sanford International Airport, is now flying into **Melbourne Orlando International Airport** and will bring about 150,000 British visitors to the Space Coast each year.

“We’re the only ones who have been able to take waste graphite and can actually make it better than what it was.”  
— **Bill Easter, CEO/founder, X-Batt**




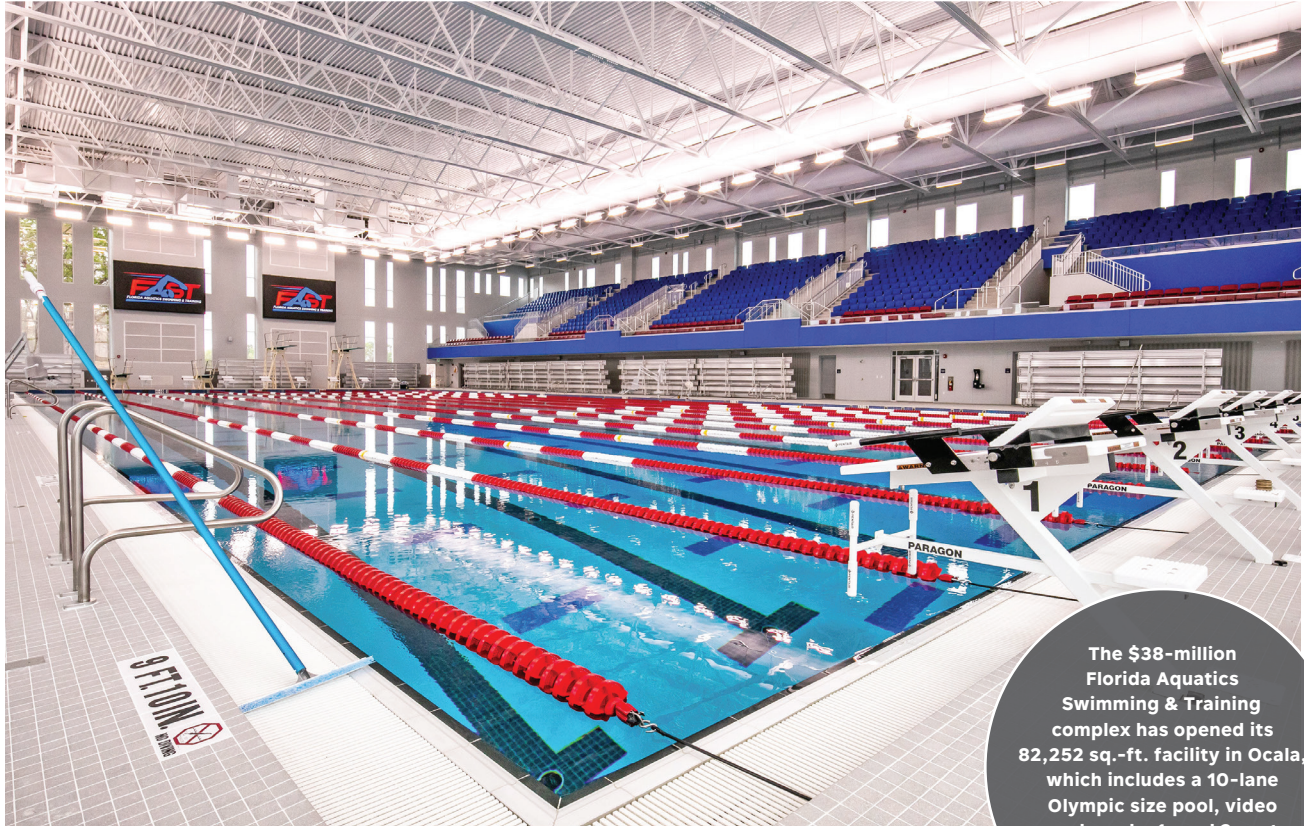
### INNOVATION

## Battery Breakthrough

Lithium-ion batteries are a common power source for everything from laptops to cell phones and increasingly cars — but at the end of their useful lives, 95% of them end up landfills. Looking to change that, Oviedo-based **X-Batt** has found a way to recycle graphite from spent lithium-ion batteries to create new batteries. What’s more, the graphite they recycle performs better than it worked in the original batteries.

**Bill Easter**, CEO and founder of X-Batt (and parent companies X-Mat and Semplastics), says the company’s technology arose from Department of Energy-funded work it did turning coal into battery materials with its proprietary resin-based system. “It was very successful. We surprised ourselves and said, well, recycled graphite is better than coal — coal has all these impurities,” says Easter, who previously worked in microelectronics at AT&T and Bell Labs.

Recycling graphite from lithium-ion batteries is also cheaper than starting from scratch. “I like to call it not only environmentally sustainable, but economically sustainable,” says Easter, who predicts the technology is about two years away from commercialization. Other companies, he notes, are working on recycling the other critical metals in lithium-ion batteries, such as cobalt, nickel and manganese — “so we’ll be part of ecosystem, but no one else is able to do the graphite right now economically,” Easter says. 



The \$38-million Florida Aquatics Swimming & Training complex has opened its 82,252 sq.-ft. facility in Ocala, which includes a 10-lane Olympic size pool, video scoreboards, 1- and 3-meter diving boards and 2,000 spectator seats.

#### EDUCATION

► The **University of North Florida** has received \$700,000 from CSX for its Diversity in Business Program and for the Mark K. Wallace CSX Transportation & Logistics Endowed Scholarship.



**Carlton DeVoight (left), Flagler Health+ senior executive vice president/ chief administrative officer and general counsel, will serve as the organization's interim leader after President and CEO Jason Barrett announced plans to step down to pursue other professional opportunities.**

#### HEALTH CARE

► In the last three years, the **Partnership for Mental Health** has invested \$2.4 million in 49 local organizations that provide access to mental health services and promote mental health awareness. An initiative of the Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund at the Community Foundation for Northeast Florida and Baptist Health, the partnership issued 60 grants ranging from \$1,200 to \$160,000. ► Baptist Health and Wolfson Children's Hospital are collaborating with Crisis Text Line to provide **24/7 mental health support** to adults, teens and children. With the program, individuals who are facing mental health struggles connect to a crisis counselor by texting LIFE to 741741.

#### HOSPITALITY

► Key International, the development parent company of

Embassy Suites, has purchased the **Ocean Grove RV Resort** in St. Augustine for \$15.1 million. The 18-acre property, which has 208 RV spots, will continue to operate as a campground.

#### NON-PROFITS

► Four St. Augustine non-profits have received \$2.9 million from the **Florida Department of State African American Cultural and Historical Grants** program. The money will be used for construction and restoration projects at the Lincolville Museum and Cultural Center, Fort Mose Historic State Park, Zion Missionary Baptist Church and the St. Augustine Beach Hotel and Beachfront, which was placed on the Na-

tional Register of Historic Places in January. ▶ **Florida Blue** has donated \$1.4 million to **LIFT Jax**, a non-profit focused on eradicating generational poverty, and to **Goodwill Industries of North Florida**. The money will be used to create a neighborhood market in Jacksonville's Eastside.

## REAL ESTATE

▶ Trimark Properties has purchased the first six floors of the historic **John F. Seagle Building** in Gainesville. Trimark is exploring potential uses for the former Dixie Hotel/Hotel Kelley building, including some combination of retail, restaurant or residential spaces. Floors seven through 11 are privately owned condos. ▶ The Marion County Commission has approved a large development on C.R. 318 at I-75, which will include five warehouses. The **Sunny Oaks Regional Activity Center** will include 427 acres of warehouse space, three acres for a fire station, five acres for a water treatment plant and 28 acres of commercial space. ▶ A 5,530-sq.-ft., six-bedroom, 4½-bath Ocala home has sold for 74.6 ethereum, or \$999,999, the first **cryptocurrency home** sale in Ocala.

## RETAIL

▶ Jacksonville-based RV retailer **Travelcamp RV** plans to expand throughout the Southeast with stores slated for Orange Park, Fort Pierce and Clermont in Florida as well as in Greenville,



## INNOVATION

### Sweet Success

Last summer, Ocala native **Bryce Ballard** challenged himself to find a way to prevent freezer burn.

After several attempts, the UF graduate created the **Ice Cream Guard**, a thin layer of silicon with a honeycomb design that consumers can put on top of ice cream to create a seal. With the product, water refreezes on top of the guard instead of on the ice cream preventing freezer burn.

Since finishing the prototype, Ballard has obtained a provisional patent and manufactured 100 ice cream guards, so he could test market the product. After distributing them to friends and family, he placed the rest on Amazon.

"Once I started putting marketing videos out there, they sold out on Amazon pretty quickly," Ballard says.

Encouraged, Ballard created a pre-order process through Indiegogo, a crowdfunding platform, where he reached his goal of \$2,500.

He is in the process of filing the utility patent, which prohibits others from making, using or selling the invention without authorization. Though the process costs thousands of dollars, Ballard is optimistic. He set out to create a product for home kitchens but has also received calls from restaurants.

"I've only been at this for a few months, but I feel encouraged that there might be a market for it," he says.

N.C., and Rock Hill, S.C. The new stores are scheduled to open between April 2022 and early 2023. ▶ **Crumb Cookies** plans to open a third gourmet cookie bakery and ice cream shop in southwest Jacksonville.

## TECHNOLOGY

▶ Former Adecco executive

**Rich Thompson** has launched **Podium X**, a technology platform for current and former student athletes. The LinkedIn-type service assists athletes in their job search by emphasizing the athletic resume and soft skills honed by participating in high-level athletics.

## TRANSPORTATION

▶ **Breeze Airways** now has non-stop flights to seven major cities from **Jacksonville International Airport**: Las Vegas; Columbus, Ohio; Hartford, Conn.; New Orleans; Providence, R.I.; Norfolk and Richmond, Va. ▶ **Elite Airways** has added a weekly flight to Portland, Maine, from the **Northeast Florida Regional Airport** in St. Augustine. The airline currently provides twice a week service to Newark, N.J., out of the airport. **FI**



**Santa Fe College** has opened its **Blount Hall** on the Gainesville campus. The 87,366-sq.-ft., three-story building includes classrooms, lab suites, business incubation spaces and student support services



Organizers of the 10th annual Pensacon, a three-day comic book and pop culture convention held in Pensacola featuring some 100 celebrities and 30 entertainment programs, say the event attracted nearly 35,000 guests. Pensacon spokesman Julio Diaz says the event also produced more than 2,000 local hotel room night stays by guests, vendors, agents, celebrities and staff.

## INNOVATION

*James Arruda's EEG device sends optical pulse signals to a patient's eyes then measures brain activity responses.*



## Early Alzheimer's Detection

University of West Florida psychology professor **James Arruda** is playing a key role in the development of a device that could become an important breakthrough in the early detection of Alzheimer's disease.

Arruda recently signed a consulting and licensing agreement with California-based Biopac Systems, to collaborate on the development of an electroencephalographic testing device, or EEG.

"This innovative work being conducted by Dr. Arruda may have a major impact on the ability to diagnose Alzheimer's earlier and more easily," says Biopac CEO Frazer Findlay. Arruda says the EEG device uses a series of brief optical pulse signals to a

patient's eyes. The device then measures brain activity responses and, based on those responses, is capable of detecting the early neuropathological changes associated with Alzheimer's dementia.

"The early detection of Alzheimer's dementia may allow current and future treatments to mitigate or even reverse the neurobehavioral effects of the disease, if caught early enough," says Arruda.

Arruda, an Alzheimer's disease researcher for more than a decade, says he envisions Biopac's EEG test becoming a routine, annual cognitive test for patients over age 60.

Biopac is in the process of applying for a U.S. patent, and Arruda says the company expects to submit the application for approval later this year. More research and development will be needed before the device could seek federal approval for clinical use.

## AVIATION

▶ **ST Engineering's** aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul facility at Pensacola International Airport has crossed the 200-employee threshold at its first hangar, which was completed in 2018. The number marks the halfway point for ST Engineering to reach 400 jobs as part of an incentives deal. A second hangar is under construction as part of a \$210-million project to expand the facility into four hangars and office space that, when complete, city officials say will employ at least 1,725 aviation workers by 2028.

## CONSTRUCTION

▶ The much-delayed **Washington Square** hotel project in downtown Tallahassee has been given a two-year extension by city commissioners. The project's original completion deadline was March 2022, but so far construction on the hotel's superstructure has yet to take place. In granting the extension to developer Ken McDermott, city commissioners

mandated the developer must provide proof of financing to the city by Sept. 1 and that construction will begin by the same date. ▶ Gulf Breeze-based **Innisfree Hotels** is building another hotel on Pensacola Beach, marking the third large hotel development announced in recent months by the company. The 215-room, \$85-million project will be located on the site of the former Clarion Suites Resort. The new hotel brand has yet to be named, but the project will include energy-efficient mechanical systems, LED lighting and local products, says Innisfree spokeswoman Brittney Barnett.

## HOUSING

▶ The Bay County city of Callaway, hit hard by Hurricane Michael in 2018, has approved **two development orders** that will bring hundreds of new homes to the community just east of Panama City. The Category 5 storm damaged or destroyed thousands of homes in the area and caused billions of dollars of damage to nearby Tyndall Air Force Base. **Ed Cook**,

Callaway city manager, says developers have already started construction on the 276-unit Callaway Bayou Townhomes and on the initial phase of the 341 single-family homes in the Alexandra Park subdivision. ▶ **St. Joe Co.** has begun development of a large-scale, multi-phase housing development in the Ward Creek Community in Bay County. St. Joe's plans call for development of 1,600 total properties, split between single-family homes and townhomes. St. Joe spokesman Mike Kerrigan says 714 home sites are already under construction.

## HOSPITALITY

▶ The 111-room **Hilton Garden Inn** on Miramar Beach in south Walton County has been sold to Chatham Lodging Trust of West Palm Beach for \$31 million. ▶ The six-story, 100-room **Best Western Fort Walton Beachfront** hotel has been sold to a South Carolina buyer for \$23.6 million, the seller's listing brokers Marcus & Millichap announced.



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# Play to Pay

Now free to sign endorsement deals, college athletes are finding the road to early riches is not what it seems.

By Mike Vogel

**Gator swimmer Vanessa Pearl positioned herself** last summer in the starting block of financial opportunity. Beginning in July, collegiate athletes in Florida could for the first time profit from their fame. Seizing the moment, the junior marine science major reached out for endorsement deals to brands she felt shared her values on sustainability and other issues. “I was ready,” she says.

Pearl plunged into a new industry whose first year has been marked by paydays large and small, and a raft of startups looking to capitalize on taking a slice of the endorsement proceeds paid to collegiate athletes — where they can earn money modeling, hosting podcasts, attaching themselves to a sports camp, touting a brand on social media, signing autographs or making personal appearances.

“It’s kind of like the wild, wild West right now,” says McKenzie Milton, a Florida State University quarterback, who would be wealthy indeed if he had a nickel for every time someone made that analogy.

The new era was ushered in by a unanimous U.S. Supreme Court in 2021 against the NCAA over its rules on the tangentially related issue of limits on education-related compensation for student athletes. Florida’s Legislature just the year



Despite being early to the endorsement game, University of Florida swimmer Vanessa Pearl, like most Florida college athletes, has had only small endorsement deals amounting to less than \$1,000.





McKenzie Milton, above, a quarterback at UCF and later FSU, and University of Miami quarterback D'Eriq King, right, founded Dreamfield Sports, which connects businesses with athletes for endorsement deals. "More than anything else, we wanted to be an advocate" for student athletes, Milton says.



before had voted to allow athletes to be compensated for use of their name, image and likeness (NIL) rights and scheduled the law to take effect July 1, 2021. Between the Supreme Court decision and the new laws being adopted in Florida and other states, the NCAA caved on its prohibitions, keeping in place only its ban on recruiting inducements — pay-for-play — and pay-for-performance. Florida's 11,317 Division I, II and III athletes — and a half-million athletes nationally — could begin cashing in. Just like their counterparts in the pros, they would get a check from a business — or a free meal or merchandise or a car — and be responsible for the taxes on it.

A large number of athletes nationally showed no interest. Others did well, at least initially. At the stroke of midnight July 1, the day the law went into effect, University of Miami quarterback D'Eriq King, a hot commodity, signed deals with Tampa-based College Hunks Hauling Junk and Murphy Auto Group. The pay wasn't announced, but the businesses were able to claim being the first to sign a college athlete. Later in Tallahassee, Milton, who had been a star quarterback at the University of Central Florida before transferring to FSU, signed a deal with Miller's Ale House at a news conference with then state education commissioner Richard Corcoran and state Rep. Chip LaMarca, who sponsored the bill making endorsements legal.

Both athletes built on that promising start. King and Milton joined with veteran businesspeople to become co-founders of Dreamfield Sports, a platform for connecting businesses and athletes. "More than anything else, we wanted to be an advocate" for student athletes, Milton says. "The day and age is changing in college sports." Mil-

**Of 5,000 transactions tracked by content and compliance platform INFLCR, the average was \$1,335; the median, just \$63.**

ton missed two seasons at UCF recovering from a catastrophic knee injury before transferring to FSU. He won the 2021 Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award and Atlantic Coast Conference Brian Piccolo Award as the conference's most courageous football player. At age 24, he says, he had his first true introduction to the business world, including personal income taxes.

On the field, however, both men's fortunes took a turn. King was injured and was out after September. Milton started just four of the Seminoles 12 games, and the team had a losing record. Observers of the industry say both men would be worth more in endorsement deals if their seasons had gone the other way. Milton says of his compensation, "It hasn't been life-changing money."

Media and fan attention naturally focuses on big deals — cars for quarterbacks, for instance — in the major revenue-producing sports. Football players at Florida State, UF, UCF and Miami, for example, can opt-in to a custom jersey program from sports merchandising company Fanatics through OneTeam Partners, a group licensing firm.

Unfortunately for Pearl, the UF swimmer, the businesses she targeted weren't



**The University of Florida had 400 endorsement deals from July 1, 2021-April 2022, averaging \$652.**

as ready for the new era as she was. How to value her name was a puzzle; Pearl accomplished much as a swimmer but has no national title. The Instagram equivalent of cold calling proved hard. She got, for her efforts, one small deal, some nibbles and nothing else. “I quickly realized it is very hard to do on your own,” she says.

For most athletes, the payday has turned out to be a restaurant meal, some merchandise or something of equivalent value. Media site Athletic Director U, using data from content and compliance platform INFLCR (pronounced *influencer*) reported that in the first six months of the new era, of 5,000 transactions tracked, the average was \$1,335, but that’s skewed by a small number of big-dollar deals. The median transaction was \$63.

One twist of the new era is that an athlete’s standing as a social influencer on TikTok, Instagram and other social media is a determining factor in landing endorsement deals — more so in many cases than the prominence of their college or sport. “The first question we get from brands is, how many Instagram followers do they have?” says Corey Staniscia, a former aide to legislation sponsor LaMarca and now Dreamfield’s external affairs director.

The influencer economy opens the financial door for athletes who don’t play on network TV on Saturdays. “Our conception of what is a revenue-generating sport is changing,” says Malik Jackson, an attorney with Smith Hulsey & Busey in Jacksonville. At Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, the first big deal was offered not to football players but to its more than 200 women athletes. The NHL’s Florida Panthers, working through Dreamfield, paid the women athletes to attend games and engage with fans on social media. The arrangement led to substantial free media attention in August — not a month when hockey teams make the sports news lead — as the first pro sports team to do a deal with college athletes. Panthers chief strategy officer Sam Doerr says the Panthers wanted to reach new audiences and have made an investment in time and resources overall and plan to continue.

**Recruiting tool**

Speculation abounds on what the new era will do to college athletics. The consensus is that high



University of Miami basketball star Isaiah Wong, after leading the team to this year’s Elite Eight, threatened to transfer unless his name, image, likeness (NIL) compensation increased. Incoming transfer Nijel Pack from Kansas State, in a deal with billionaire John Ruiz (see The Booster page 56), got \$800,000 over two years and a car.

photo: Imagn

**Nationally ...**

**Top Sports**

(by total compensation)

| Sport                    | % of Total Endorsements |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Football                 | 51.1%                   |
| Women’s Basketball       | 17.8                    |
| Men’s Basketball         | 15.0                    |
| Women’s Volleyball       | 2.4                     |
| Women’s Swimming/ Diving | 1.9                     |
| Others                   | 11.8                    |

**Top Activities**

(by total compensation)

| Endorsement Deal | % of Total Endorsements |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| Posting Content  | 35.7%                   |
| Autographs       | 17.7                    |
| Licensing Rights | 13.1                    |
| Creating Content | 10.7                    |
| Other            | 22.8                    |

**Compensation Per Athlete**

| Level of Play | Compensation |
|---------------|--------------|
| Division I    | \$594        |
| Division II   | 53           |
| Division III  | 35           |

Footnote: Total name, image and likeness compensation divided by total student-athletes with at least one deal.

**Share: Men vs. Women**

| Level of Play | Men   | Women |
|---------------|-------|-------|
| Division I    | 72.6% | 27.4% |
| Division II   | 66.3  | 33.7  |
| Division III  | 72.3  | 27.7  |

Source: Opendorse



school students now will factor potential endorsement money into where they commit — along with traditional considerations like who's winning the facilities arms race and TV exposure. "It becomes a recruiting tool," says sports business attorney Ed Schauder, a securities and corporate attorney at Nason, Yeager, Gerson, Harris & Fumero in Palm Beach Gardens. Sports news site the Athletic reported that an unidentified high school junior snagged a deal that will pay him up to \$8 million over the course of his college career.

In September, Florida State lost the nation's top overall recruit, cornerback Travis Hunter of Collins Hill, Ga., to Jackson State in Mississippi, prompting unverified yet persistent rumors that Hunter was getting a more than \$1 million endorsement deal from New York-based Barstool Sports, for whom Jackson State head coach Deion Sanders is a content creator. Florida State defensive back Jarvis Brownlee, reportedly unhappy about how one deal turned out, transferred to Louisville after sitting out spring practice. There's theorizing aplenty about whether traditional football powers that play in small college towns will find stronger competition for recruits from colleges in major media markets.

Player advocates respond: So what? "If you're a university and you need to get better at it, get better at it. This

**The Florida Panthers signed FAU's more than 200 female athletes in an endorsement deal through Dreamfield. The NHL team paid the women to attend games and engage with fans on social media.**

is the free marketplace. It's a good thing for the athletes," says Michael Elkins, a Fort Lauderdale labor and employment attorney. Given the risk of career-ending injuries and given that only a fraction of athletes make the pros or Olympics, it's only fair, the argument goes, that college players make money while they can. "You want to strike while the iron is hot," says attorney Jackson.

UF's Pearl medically retired this year after enduring more than a decade of severe sinus problems from swimming. The 22-year-old has found new opportunity outside the pool in one of the new players in the new industry, a national marketing platform called MarketPryce, co-founded

by UF alum Jason Bergman. Athletes pay a membership, starting at \$8 per month, and then choose which brands to sign with and promote on social media. She chose Silk & Sonder, a monthly wellness planner and subscription journal service, Gaelle Organic and motivational product company Go Heart. That company pays athletes to devise a slogan for a hat — Pearl's was "Be Kind" — and promote it on video and on social media. The company puts 30% of the profit into the influencer's charity of choice. In Pearl's case, that's an animal rescue group she volunteered for in high school in her Texas hometown.

"It is so much easier to work through MarketPryce than having to go out on my own to find a business," says Pearl, who has made less than \$1,000 from her endorsements. "I kind of got excited again. As an athlete, this is all very new."

Because compensation can't be tied to performance or playing at a particular school, a company can't ask for its money back if the athlete transfers, gets injured or benched. And, "you've got to realize you're signing contracts with kids," says Michael Elkins, a Fort Lauderdale labor, employment and sports law attorney. "These are students, 18 to 22," he says. "As kids will do sometimes, they do dumb things."



photo: Krystal O. Radlinski

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# Student Endorsers

From football players to gymnasts, athletes across Florida are cashing in.



► **Tyler Van Dyke** is coming off a breakout year on the field and in the finances. The University of Miami quarterback won ACC Rookie of the Year and ranked in the top 15 nationally for yards per completion, passing efficiency and passing yards per game. Off the field, he signed with Topps, Campus Mogul and others. LifeWallet, founded by Miami businessman and attorney John Ruiz, also signed a \$50,000 deal with him. Ruiz has showered money on Miami athletes and is suing to force the state to allow high school athletes to monetize their value, too. Van Dyke's a presence on Instagram and Twitter, where you can find him retweeting Florida Concierge Medicine & Wellness tweets and touting an IV fluid rehydration center — he has a coupon for you — in Hollywood.

**UF gymnast Trinity Thomas is a top prospect for NIL (name, image and likeness) endorsements. Her Instagram page has a link to her agent.**

► **Trinity Thomas'** Instagram profile sums her up perfectly: UF gymnast and recent graduate, four-time U.S. national team member, and in a sign of how college athletes can now monetize themselves, the words "NIL inquiries" and a link to her agent. Observers of the NIL field place Thomas near the top of the list of the most valuable college athletes in Florida when it comes to name, image and likeness rights. An applied physiology and kinesiology major from York, Pa., she was this year's individual NCAA champion in the all-around, floor and bars, and posted the second-best total score ever in an NCAA final. Her reported deals include Honey Stinger energy snacks, IT firm Milner Technologies (which split \$10,000 among four women athletes) and NoCap Sports. She was one of the first six nationally to receive money under an H&R Block program to provide \$1 million to female college athletes.



► The highest ranked Florida athlete on digital media company On3's most valuable NIL athletes is a high school basketball player: **Hansel Emmanuel**. Ranked at No. 6, Emmanuel trails behind only the likes of the offspring of LeBron James and Shaquille O'Neal. Born in the Dominican Republic and raised in a poor neighborhood, he lost his left arm at age 6 when a wall collapsed and trapped him for two hours, necessitating the amputation. Videos of him playing basketball attracted wide attention, and he moved in 2021 to Life Christian Academy in Orlando. "God always has a purpose. I am living his mission," he once told the *Orlando Sentinel*. Florida doesn't allow high school athletes to profit from their name, image and likeness — it's being challenged in court — so Emmanuel will have to wait for college. He has a scholarship offer from Memphis. With 1.4 million Instagram followers and 2.5 million on TikTok, On3 pegs his NIL valuation at \$1.3 million. His Instagram bio is three lines: His name, the sport he plays, and his agent's Instagram handle. His agent says he's not doing interviews.



**Hansel Emmanuel already has an NIL value of \$1.3 million, and he has yet to play a college game.**



► As the quarterback of a state flagship university, **Anthony Richardson** is the kind of athlete everyone expects to profit the most in the era of college athletes being able to monetize their fame. His Fort Lauderdale lawyer Darren Heitner says the UF signal caller wants to make a limited amount of six- and seven-figure deals rather than a plethora of smaller ones. Publicly reported to date: A deal with Gainesville Dodge got him a 2021 Dodge Durango or similar vehicle with the ability to change it out through 2023, according to ActionNetwork.com. He also participates in Outback Steakhouse's TeamMATES program, in which Outback donates meals to military families and players host give-back nights to raise money for their charities of choice.



► UF gymnast **Leah Clapper** created a board game, Balance Palace, “to help more gymnasts find the fun.” She’s also had a deal with frozen yogurt bar company Yasso and has her own food and wellness blog. The 2021 SEC Scholar-Athlete of the Year graduated summa cum laude in August and is now pursuing a master’s in the College of Journalism and Communications while continuing her gymnastic and NIL career. She’s been nominated for awards at the INFLCR NIL Summit.

► For his first NIL foray, FSU offensive lineman and Notre Dame transfer **Dillan Gibbons** started a GoFundMe page to bring Timothy Donovan and his family to last year’s season opener in Tallahassee. Disabled since birth, Donovan met Gibbons outside the Notre Dame stadium. They formed a connection that endured after Gibbons became a Seminole. Gibbons’ campaign raised \$55,184 and received donated hotel rooms, restaurant meals and gear for the Donovans. Surplus funds went to Donovan’s medical expenses. GoFundMe signed Gibbons as its first sponsored athlete, and he launched a non-profit to help other athletes replicate what he’s done. “There’s not very much glory in my position,” Gibbons told ESPN. “We usually get attention when we do something wrong. It was amazing the way it took off.”



**FSU football player Dillan Gibbons formed a connection with Timothy Donovan. He started a GoFundMe page that raised more than \$55,000 for Timothy and his family.**

# Cashing In

A slew of businesses hopes to score with college endorsements.



**“A lot of what we do is help athletes understand and unlock” their rights, “We talk a lot about exclusivity and perpetuity.”**

— Andrew Donovan,  
vice president of  
collegiate partnerships,  
Altius Sports Partners

The new field of endorsements for college athletes is replete with agents and attorneys as well as platforms that connect businesses and athletes, collectives that funnel alum money to team members, NFT plays and compliance consultants who do everything from keeping tabs on athlete deals to helping them understand 1099s and filing taxes. “It’s a crowded space,” says **Andrew Donovan**, vice president of collegiate partnerships at Altius Sports Partners, a consulting and education firm. “Everyone’s trying to get in at the beginning.” UM is an Altius customer.

## FLORIDA PLAYERS ...

### Clearinghouse

**Kristi Dosh** of Amelia Island foresaw a new era in which college athletes could market their name, image and likeness. Two years ago, she set out to transform herself into a national go-to expert on the field. It was her second transformation. In the first, she used blogging and social media to take herself from corporate attorney — she’s a UF law grad — to a sports business expert. She wrote for *Forbes* online and for others. She became an ESPN sports business reporter and authored a book, *Saturday Millionaires: How Winning Football Builds Winning Colleges*. She speaks on personal branding, business development and female leadership. She also authors romance novels.

Dosh has taught a course on name, image, likeness at UF’s journalism college, will teach another in the sports management program and runs a website, [BusinessofCollegeSports.com](http://BusinessofCollegeSports.com), where she pools all that’s going on in the field. Want a list of college-athlete car deals? She has it.

The site has become a critical reference for all interested in the field.



## FLORIDA PLAYERS ...

### The Lawyer

While still an undergrad at UF, **Darren Heitner** in 2005 created the Sports Agent Blog. He worked for a time as an agent but eventually decided being the go-to lawyer on sports law was his desire. He's a national authority and advocate for athlete rights and contributed to the drafting of Florida's then ground-breaking name, image and likeness law that allows college athletes to earn compensation for their fame. The Fort Lauderdale attorney serves as an adviser or board member for startups in the NIL industry. His client list has included some of the biggest NIL college athletes, including UF quarterback Anthony Richardson and incoming University of Miami basketball guards Haley and Hanna Cavinder — the Cavinder twins. His advice to college athletes: "I always recommend quality over quantity and never sell yourself short."



"I remain very bullish as a whole. I never believed athletes should have their rights stripped when literally every other American has the right."

— Darren Heitner



Jason Bergman

MarketPryce Florida helps student athletes see what kind of endorsement prospects await. Jason Bergman and Shehryar Khan founded the company last year. "The goal of what we're doing at MarketPryce Florida," says Bergman, "is to make the University of Florida a recruiting powerhouse."



Shehryar Khan

### The Collective

Florida law bans colleges from paying athletes or "causing compensation" to go to them. Recruits, however, want to hear about the prospects for monetizing their name, image and likeness rights. The solution: Universities can point the students to collectives, new off-campus entities that steer financial opportunity to a particular college's athletes. "The goal of what we're doing at MarketPryce Florida is to make the University of Florida a recruiting powerhouse," says MarketPryce Florida collective co-founder **Jason Bergman**. "We want (UF) to be the best school when it comes to NIL."

The collective is a non-profit subsidiary of the for-profit MarketPryce, a national marketplace where athletes can find businesses offering deals and learn what they must do in return — social media shout-outs, mostly. Co-founded in 2021 by Bergman and **Shehryar Khan** with an investor group populated by Gator alums, it has done more than 6,000 athlete deals nationally with Walmart and others. Athletes pay monthly — starting at \$8 a month — to participate; agents start at \$99 a month.

The collective, in contrast, is funded by donors who are promised that 100% of their money goes to athletes. Because athletes are supposed to provide value for money they receive, the collective sends them to promote an area business, which is chosen in a raffle. It's kind of a community service play. One winner: The Gainesville location of ice pop chain Hyppo. "It was really cool to see so many athletes posting about the Hyppo and people commenting on how much they love our shop," says Drue Jaquish, the store's general manager.

As of April, the collective had nearly 100 of UF's 600 athletes signed up. It's seeking 501c3 status that would allow it to get employer matches from donors' employers.

Collectives announced to support athletes at other Florida institutions include Gator Collective (UF), Mission Control (UCF), Warpath and Rising Spear (FSU), Bring Back the U (UM) and Inside the Cage (FIU).



## FLORIDA PLAYERS ...



**Peter Schoenthal's Athliance helps schools keep track of athlete endorsements, a compliance requirement.**

### The Software Startup

Athletes sign endorsement deals with a hodgepodge of businesses from multinational brands to the local pizza shop. Colleges are supposed to track them all. Helping colleges meet their compliance duties, Fort Lauderdale lawyer and entrepreneur Peter Schoenthal saw opportunity. He founded Orlando-based Athliance two years ago. Its software and consulting services enable athletes to disclose their deals to their colleges, comply with tax filing requirements and, via a partnership with Financial IQ, take financial literacy education, which Florida law mandates colleges provide to athletes. "Athletes right now have so much on their plates," Schoenthal says. The colleges are Athliance's customers — \$15,000 annually — but the company also has partnered with collectives and marketing platforms. Revenue generating but not yet profitable, Athliance recently raised \$2.75 million to fund growth. Advisers include Hall of Fame quarterback Dan Marino. In Florida, Athliance contracts with Nova Southeastern University, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and Rollins College.

### The Booster

John Ruiz wants to lavish money on Miami area athletes. As of February, according to college endorsement deal authority Kristi Dosh, who's been tracking Ruiz's work, he had signed 54 UM and FIU football, baseball, volleyball, swimming and golf players to \$1.5 million in name, image and likeness deals. Canes quarterback Tyler Van Dyke got a \$50,000 deal as did linebacker Gil Frierson. The lowest paid football player was a running back making \$30,000.

"(John) is giving the Hurricanes the opportunity to compete with Alabama and LSU," agent Drew Rosenhaus said on canesreport.com, according to the *Miami Herald*. "This will help (new coach) Mario Cristobal get the best players and keep them out of the transfer portal."

Ruiz got his undergraduate degree at UM and his law degree at Nova Southeastern University. As a trial lawyer, he's amassed a long list of successful class-action cases, mass torts and settlements. He also owns boat company Cigarette Racing Team. But he became a billionaire thanks to data analytics. His MSP Recovery, which health care organizations use to maximize financial recoveries from Medicare, Medicaid and other payers, is worth billions. The athletes that he signs are hired to promote LifeWallet, an app that locates and organizes medical records, allowing first responders and health care practitioners access to a patient's health history.

Ruiz has sued the Florida High School Athletic Association, the NCAA and others, arguing policies against high school NIL deals run afoul of state anti-trust and freedom-to-contract law. A win would open Florida high school players to endorsement income.



**Billionaire John Ruiz has signed 54 University of Miami and FIU athletes to endorsement deals worth \$1.5 million.**

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## THE RULES

### Evolving Regulations

Florida wasn't the first state to pass legislation allowing college athletes to make money by selling their name, image and likeness rights — California was — but Florida's law took effect first. The state was joined by Alabama and others unwilling to wait for the NCAA to liberalize its rules. Now, however, the early movers are having second thoughts.

Under Florida's groundbreaking law, college athletes were allowed to be paid for use of their name, image and likeness. Their colleges couldn't "unduly" restrict them from hiring an agent or attorney to secure endorsement income. Nor could colleges cut an athlete's grant-in-aid because they earn NIL money. Athletes are required to disclose their deals to their colleges, and colleges must provide financial literacy and life skills workshops to athletes. Additionally, colleges and specified people and entities associated with them can't compensate or cause compensation to be directed to an athlete or prospect.

The NCAA, after Florida acted, settled for a laissez-faire approach that prohibits pay-for-play and recruiting inducements. The NCAA wanted Congress to set the NIL rules nationally, but Congress hasn't.

Now, states like Florida are seen as having a more restrictive law than other states that never passed one and just go with the NCAA policy. Alabama this year repealed its law rather than fall behind in the NIL competition. Florida lawmakers this year considered amending the state law but took no action. 



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# Bank Shot

An injury during his college basketball days put Brian Lamb on a path to the Board of Governors.

By Amy Keller

## Brian Lamb, 45

**TITLE:** Head of Northeast U.S. middle market banking, JPMorgan Chase

**EDUCATION:** Bachelor's and MBA, University of South Florida; graduate of the Stonier Graduate Banking School at the University of Pennsylvania

**FAMILY:** Wife, Paulette, three children, and one sister, Rolanda Walton, who works for Florida Blue.

**LEGACY:** When Lamb's father, Eugene Lamb Jr., was home from college in the summer of 1967, he worked as a brick mason helper at Tallahassee Community College to help support his family. Forty-three years later, he was named chairman of the college's board. "We have been laying bricks in the state of Florida for a very long time, and we will continue to do that as long as we can," Brian Lamb said.

"If I could give any advice to these student athletes, it is to be willing to listen and learn. That will help them make sound financial decisions."

**A Florida native,** Brian Lamb grew up in Midway — a "little place" with no stoplights that's halfway between Tallahassee and Quincy in Gadsden County. His parents still live in same the house where Lamb and his sister grew up, and they instilled in him, he says, the importance of education and giving back to the community. His mother, Deloris, worked for the Department of Corrections, rising from probation officer to administrator. His father, Eugene Lamb Jr., taught school and coached basketball in Gadsden County's public schools.





During his senior year at Florida A&M University Developmental Research High School in Tallahassee in 1994, Lamb's team won the state championship, with Lamb averaging 30 points a game. He got offers from several big names — including Stanford, Fordham and George Washington University — but the 6-foot-2 point guard chose to stay in state, going to University of South Florida on a full athletic scholarship. He got off to a stellar start as a USF Bull, earning all-conference honors as a freshman and serving as team captain for several years. He considers it “one

of the best decisions” of his life.

Off the court, Lamb studied accounting. He got the idea for his major after one of the college basketball coaches recruiting him was picked up in a Bentley. “I'd never seen a Bentley in person. I said to the coach, ‘Man, this is my dream car,’ and he looked at me and said, ‘Brian, this isn't my car — it's my accountant's.’ Accounting seemed much more interesting at that point,” he says with a chuckle.

But like many other young men playing college ball, the dreams of a big-league career beckoned.

Then late in his junior year of college, he tore the rotator cuff in his right shoulder — his shooting arm. The tear was surgically repaired, and Lamb was able to return to the court but couldn't play at the same level. It was life-changing, he says.

“Not playing in the NBA is not something that I would define as adversity, but injuring yourself and at some point seeing your dreams flash before your eyes, feeling like you can't accomplish or be the best version of yourself — now that is hard, and that's hard to recover from, and it's difficult at a very young age,” Lamb recalls. “How do you respond to that level of adversity that you haven't seen before? That really was a defining moment for me.”

Lamb says he realized he had a choice. He could either wallow in the loss — or he could “channel that energy, that anger, that frustration, that wide range of emotion into effectively being an uncapped level of energy toward something else,” he says.

After graduating USF, Lamb landed his first job as a meter reader at TECO, Tampa Bay's municipal utility. He rose up the company's financial ranks, becoming director of financial services at age 27. It was there he struck up a strong connection with TECO's then-CEO, John Ramil, a mentor and fellow USF alum to whom he still talks regularly. In 2004, a discount brokerage called Home Discovery Real Estate Services recruited Lamb to serve as their CFO. He left after two years to join Fifth Third Bank as CFO of the Tampa market. He ended up becoming president of Fifth Third's North Florida region before moving into a variety of leadership roles at the bank's headquarters in Cincinnati.

Today, Lamb lives and works in Manhattan for JPMorgan Chase, the nation's largest bank. He recently wrapped up a two-year stint there as the company's first ever head of diversity, equity and inclusion — a role in which he's helped invest \$18 billion of a five-year, \$30-billion racial equity commitment by the bank aimed at closing the wealth gap among black, Hispanic and Latino communities.

Despite his geographic moves, Lamb has remained active in Florida. When he joined Fifth Third's C-suite in Cincinnati in 2016, he continued to serve on USF's board of trustees. He stepped down from the board in 2019, when Gov. Ron DeSantis appointed him to the Florida Board of Governors, the 17-member board that oversees the State University System of Florida. He says he'll continue to travel here regularly from the Big Apple to fulfill his term as chair through 2023.


While Lamb says it's still too early to know how modern college athletics will be shaped with athletes' new ability to capitalize on their names, images and likenesses, he sees it as a golden opportunity for them to learn important life lessons, just as his experiences as a student athlete shaped his future path.

“I'm happy to see that student athletes are able to re-



**Lamb earned all-conference honors as a freshman at USF. A torn rotator cuff during his junior year ended his hopes of playing in the NBA.**

alize some of that value to help position them for the future. Not everyone's going to play professional sports, and so if there's anything that can get them off to a great start when they're done with sports or help them make better financial decisions while they're in college, I think it's a great opportunity,” he says.

“I'm sure we need to have some balance around that. If I could give any advice to these student athletes, it is to be willing to listen and learn. That will help them make sound financial decisions. It's a big responsibility to have to consider contractual obligations, managing money, going to college, playing sports. When you aggregate all of that, it's a lot for a student athlete — so my advice would be to make sure they're willing to listen and learn from people they can trust and people at the university and otherwise that can help them make good, sound financial decisions. If they do that, and do it well, I think name, image, likeness could be wildly successful.” 

# Turnover *at the* Top

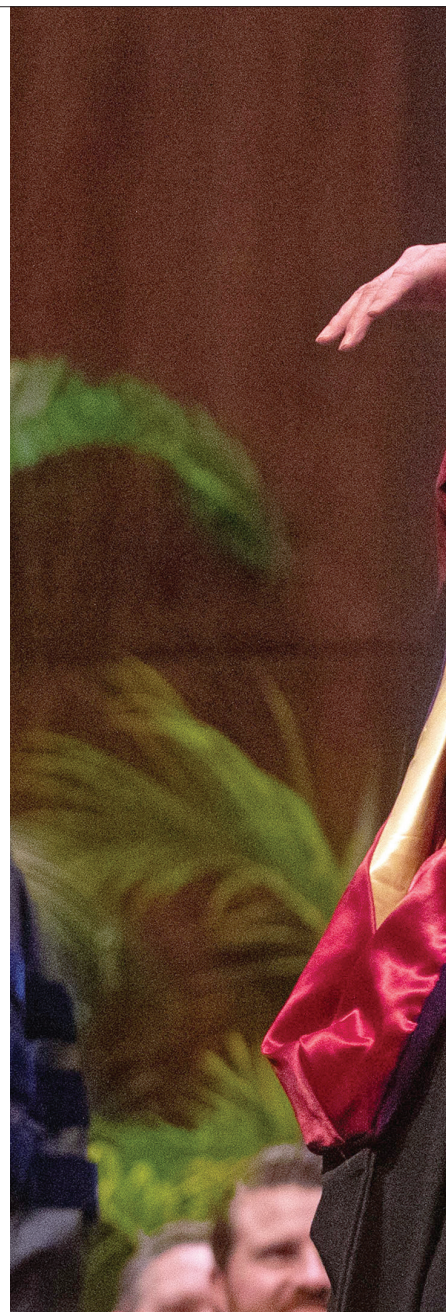
University presidents are staying in the job less than half as long as they used to. At Florida's public institutions, retirements, stress and the occasional controversy have contributed to the churn.

By Amy Keller

**Four or five decades ago**, most university presidents stayed for the long haul, and it wasn't unusual for a president to serve more than 10 to 20 years. These days, the average length of stay is about six years at public institutions and seven years at private universities — and the exodus appears to have sped up since COVID.

“Many of the ones that we work with on a regular basis were looking toward a longer horizon to stay as president, and since COVID, quite a few have decided that they have done enough and it's time for someone else to come in as president,” says Jan Greenwood, co-founder of Greenwood/Asher & Associates, a higher education executive search firm headquartered in Miramar Beach. “If you've looked around the country, including in Florida, of course, you would see a number are stepping down earlier than those presidents thought they'd planned to, but they're doing it because of their own need to shift emphasis at this point in their career.”

At Florida's 12 public universities, eight presidencies have changed or will be changing hands in less than three years. Steve Currall, former president of the University of South Florida,





cited the pandemic as one of several issues that strained his health and led to his decision to exit after just two years on the job. Greenwood, whose firm recruited Currall leading to his hiring in 2019, notes that it's generally difficult for a new president to succeed following on the heels of long-tenured, successful presidents, such as Judy Genshaft, who led USF for 19 years. "The University of Florida has been able to beat the odds at this — but usually that next president is

very short-term, usually no more than three years," Greenwood says, referring to former UF President Bernie Machen's 11-year term which was followed by now departing President Kent Fuchs, now in his eighth year.

Currently, searches for new presidents are underway at four of Florida public universities — including Florida's flagship school, the University of Florida — and three other state schools have new presidents with less than a year at the helm.

**Former FSU President John Thrasher, left, greets his replacement, Richard McCullough, who took over last August. Thrasher spent nearly seven years at the helm.**

## A Shift from Top-Down Management



Jan Greenwood's Greenwood/Asher & Associates search firm has assisted in the search and selection of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University President P. Barry Butler, former USF President Steve Currall, outgoing UF President Kent Fuchs and numerous other university presidents around the country.

*In a recent interview with FLORIDA TREND, Greenwood talked about presidential skill sets, the importance of executive coaching and how demographic changes are impacting the search for talent.*

### ► Skill Sets

Leadership/vision and management skills are just as important as they used to be, Greenwood says, but resource development (including fundraising and lobbying) has become much more prominent, and that, in turn, has impacted management styles. "As presidents have had to be out more working with the legislators, working with donors, etc., what's become important is that in the management area, they're able to hire smart, delegate and hold people accountable. To contrast it with the early '80s, a lot of those presidents who were leaving office at that time (were) very much top down — they made all the decisions, and the people who reported to them didn't necessarily have the experience of running their own operation. Now, that's very different and part of the reason being because of the external work," she says. There's also a bigger emphasis today on diversity, equity and inclusion. "In the 1980s, that was not front and center, and neither was crisis management. So those are two areas that have become very dominant."

**As university presidents have become more involved with fundraising and lobbying, delegating has become more important.**

### ► Candidate Pool

"At this point, you've got over 92% of presidents and provosts in their 60s and 70s — so if your presidents and provosts (who are your two main groups of candidates for presidencies) are in retirement mode, then you look at the deans. You do see some deans getting the presidencies. One of the most noteworthy was the dean of engineering at Carnegie Mellon, who became the chancellor of the University of California, San Diego. More recently, you have at Auburn, the dean of engineering becoming the president of Auburn. So you're seeing the deans (especially if a person is a dean at a major research university) looked at more and more as possibilities for a presidency. It's definitely impacting the market."

### ► Coaching

"Onboarding has become a very big issue over the past five to 10 years," says Greenwood, and many boards are including executive coaching in presidential employment contracts to improve the odds of success for new presidents. "Sometimes the candidates request it rather than the board — but we are seeing it come up more from one or the other in presidential contracts. It makes a difference, especially if you're doing it as a person who is coming into a position because then it's not viewed as remedial; it's viewed as something that's constructive to help you be successful, which is a big plus."

## Secret Searches

In March, a new Florida law took effect that will keep the names and other "personal identifying information" of applicants in college presidential searches secret until the search's final stages. Supporters of the change believe it will improve the pool of candidates applying for the leadership positions because they won't have to worry about retaliation from current employers. Critics say it could diminish involvement of students and faculty in the process.



## ► New Hires



### Rhea Law / USF

When Will Weatherford, chair of USF's board of trustees, asked Tampa Bay attorney Rhea Law to take the reins of USF as interim president last summer, he did so on one condition — that she wouldn't apply for the permanent position. Three months later, he regretted that request, realizing that Law had an "uncanny ability" to lead the institution and a true passion for the job. Not long after, he urged her to apply for the permanent position. She topped the competition and was confirmed by the Florida Board of Governors as USF's eighth president in March. Law is a fifth-generation Floridian and former CEO and chair of the Florida law firm Fowler White Boggs, which merged with Buchanan

Ingersoll & Rooney in 2014. Law has deep ties to USF and the Tampa Bay community, having served on USF's inaugural board of trustees and having led key economic development groups in the region, including the Tampa Hillsborough Economic Development Corp. and the Tampa Bay Partnership. Law earned her bachelor's degree from USF in 1977 and received her law degree from Stetson University in 1979. Her goals for USF include breaking into the top 25 in the rankings of public universities by *U.S. News & World Report* (USF is currently 46) and gaining entry into the Association of American Universities, an invitation-only group of leading research institutions.

### Richard McCullough / FSU

Richard McCullough is coming up on a full year in August at the helm of Florida State University. Prior to taking the job, he was vice provost for research and a professor of materials science at Harvard University, where he worked for nine years. Before that, he spent 22 years at Carnegie Mellon University, where he rose from assistant professor to vice president for research. McCullough, FSU's 16th president, succeeded John Thrasher, 78, who held the post since 2014. Thrasher, a former state lawmaker and attorney, has returned to the Southern Group. At McCullough's official investiture ceremony in February, he talked about growing up poor in Texas and very nearly dropping out of community college. He stuck with it and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the University of Texas/Dallas and a master's and doctorate in chemistry



from Johns Hopkins University. "College was my only way out," he told the crowd. "Without the affordable education provided to me by the public higher education system of the state of Texas, I would not have been able to attend college and would not be standing in front of you today."

photo: Bill Lax/FSU



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## Patricia Okker / New College of Florida

Last July, Patricia Okker was named president of New College of Florida, the first woman in the school's history to serve in the position. She succeeded Donal O'Shea, who retired after nine years. Okker, a New Jersey native with three degrees in English language and literature, previously spent 31 years at the University of Missouri, beginning as a faculty member in the English department and moving up to a variety of leadership roles, including four years as dean of the University of Missouri's College of Arts and Sciences. Okker also is a competitive athlete who has set world records in powerlifting and ran the Boston Marathon nine times.

Among her top priorities will be growing New College's enrollment. The school had 633 undergrads and 27 graduate students as of fall 2021 and has been under pressure from state lawmakers for several years to increase its headcount. The school's board of trustees updated its goals to include increasing enrollment to 750 students by 2025-26 and raising four-year graduation rates from 56% to 67% for the 2022-2026 student cohort. Okker has made it clear she will not sacrifice the small school's unique mission. "Our purpose is not to produce the largest number of graduates, but rather to nurture those innovators with the biggest impact. To achieve that kind of innovation, we remain committed to a different level of learning. We understand the conditions that make deep learning possible," she said during her inauguration in February.

photo: Daniel Wagner / New College of Florida

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## Alexander Cartwright / UCF

Alexander Cartwright was selected as UCF's sixth president in March 2020, just as the pandemic was shutting down the state and interrupting the customary process of new university presidents introducing themselves around Florida. But Cartwright has made up for lost time since with



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an agenda that emphasizes the institution's ambitions in research, rankings and on advancing the regional and state talent pipeline.

An internationally recognized researcher and scholar in the area of optical sensors, Cartwright came to UCF from the University of Missouri, where he served as chancellor. A native of the Bahamas who started at a community college before going on to the University of Iowa — working on a hog farm to put himself through school — Cartwright pursued engineering when one of his bosses suggested it, noting Cartwright was good at working with his hands. That background gives Cartwright a natural perspective in leading an institution where about one-quarter of its graduates are the first in their families to go to college.

Cartwright's efforts received a major boost in April, when the university announced a partnership with the Helios Foundation to launch the UCF Downtown Scholars Initiative to create new pathways to UCF for economically disadvantaged students from targeted high schools. The \$3.25-million initiative will provide coaches who will work one-on-one with students in a summer bridge program that will ease the transition to college with the goal of increasing the first-year retention rate. The initiative follows 2021's history-making gift of \$40 million from philanthropists MacKenzie Scott and Dan Jewett to support social mobility by increasing the university's academic services and graduation rate.

## ► Who's Leaving



### Kent Fuchs / UF

The University of Florida recently set up a 15-member search committee to find a replacement for Kent Fuchs, who announced in January that this would be his last year. Fuchs, 67, president since 2015, noted in his video announcement that he had achieved three commitments he made in 2014 to UF's board of trustees and the Board of Governors — to make UF a top 10 public university (it's No. 5), that he'd launch and complete a \$3-billion fundraising campaign and that UF would not increase tuition during his tenure. "Those promises were made and those promises we kept," he said. While Fuchs' departure plans were known by UF's Board of Trustees since last August, his public announcement came following a series of controversies — including one over the university barring political science professors from testifying against the state (a decision the school later walked back) in a voting rights lawsuit and questions over the university's hiring of Florida Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo as a tenured faculty member. The *Tampa Bay Times* has called the circumstances surrounding Fuchs' departure as "either a master class in bad timing or another example of politics intruding on university operations."

### Mark Rosenberg / FIU

Florida International University has kicked off its search for a new president with the hiring of R. William Funk and Associates, a Texas search firm. Kenneth Jessell, FIU's chief financial officer has been serving as interim president since January, when former FIU President Mark Rosenberg, 72, abruptly resigned.



He was named president in 2009. Rosenberg first said he was retiring for health reasons and because of his wife's deteriorating health. He later said he had unintentionally created an emotional (but not physical) entanglement that had "caused discomfort for a valued employee." An investigative report by the Miami law firm Isicoff Ragatz concluded that Rosenberg "acted in a manner that was unprofessional and that he crossed the appropriate boundaries." The search committee expects to have initial pool of candidates established this month with hopes the new president will be in place by the fall semester.



### Michael Martin / FGCU

Michael Martin, president of Florida Gulf Coast University since 2017, will step down from his post at the end of the year. Under Martin's leadership, the Fort Myers-based university has set records for enrollment (as of last fall, FGCU had 15,971 students), grown the school's degree offerings and launched a successful fundraising campaign. Blake Gable, chair of FGCU's board of trustees, says the search committee was "well positioned" to begin vetting applicants and the board plans to present its candidate to the Florida Board of Governors in November.

## David Szymanski / UNF

Last September, David Szymanski, president of University of North Florida since 2018, stepped down from his position to lead UNF MedNexus, an initiative aimed at growing the region's health care workforce. Pamela Chally, who has been with UNF for nearly three decades, is interim president until a permanent successor to Szymanski is found. Chally previously was interim provost and vice president of academic affairs as well as a dean and professor of nursing at the Brooks College of Health. The UNF Board of Trustees is scheduled to present its selection to the Florida Board of Governors for confirmation this month. Under Szymanski's leadership, UNF boosted its four-year graduation rates 14%, increased retention rates to 81% and raised nearly \$50 million, which bumped the school's endowment to nearly \$148 million. [F](#)



## State University System Provosts

| Rank | Institution                      | Main Campus  | Enrollment | Provost             |
|------|----------------------------------|--------------|------------|---------------------|
| 1    | University of Central Florida    | Orlando      | 70,406     | Michael D. Johnson  |
| 2    | University of Florida            | Gainesville  | 61,112     | Joe Glover          |
| 3    | Florida International University | Miami        | 49,693     | Elizabeth Bejar*    |
| 4    | University of South Florida      | Tampa        | 48,010     | Ralph C. Wilcox     |
| 5    | Florida State University         | Tallahassee  | 45,493     | James J. Clark      |
| 6    | Florida Atlantic University      | Boca Raton   | 28,761     | Bret Danilowicz     |
| 7    | University of North Florida      | Jacksonville | 16,690     | Karen Patterson     |
| 8    | Florida Gulf Coast University    | Fort Myers   | 15,971     | Mark Rieger         |
| 9    | University of West Florida       | Pensacola    | 13,265     | George B. Ellenberg |
| 10   | Florida A&M University           | Tallahassee  | 9,220      | Maurice Edington    |
| 11   | Florida Polytechnic University   | Lakeland     | 1,562      | Terry Parker        |
| 12   | New College of Florida           | Sarasota     | 659        | Suzanne Sherman     |

\*Interim  
Ranked by fall 2021 enrollment. Source: individual schools



## Florida Ever After

When you move to a state with a fairy tale castle at its center, a certain amount of magical thinking comes with the territory. Fresh out of journalism school in Arizona, I came to Florida because I wanted to be a storyteller, and no place had — and still has — better stories to be told.

I had no illusions about what I was getting into. The breathtaking natural beauty of Florida, the vibrant blend of people and cultures, and the seemingly endless possibilities can be offset by deeply rooted challenges and the staggeringly destructive power of wind and water. If you want drama, it's here in abundance.

Florida stories always have the possibility of a plot twist, even my own — such as finding myself in a role I never would have imagined at FLORIDA TREND, a magazine I have loved almost as long as I have been a Floridian.

FLORIDA TREND first captured my attention with the January 1993 cover, and anyone working in government or the media in Tallahassee at the time will know the exact image: frequent opponents Gov. Lawton Chiles and top business lobbyist Jon Shebel lying side-by-side in the proverbial political bed. No one could believe the self-proclaimed “he-coon” of Florida politics or the combative ex-Marine-turned-business stalwart had agreed to that pose for a story on the Legislature's attempt at health care reform. FLORIDA TREND had that kind of touch.

Over career stops as a reporter and editorial writer at the *Tampa Tribune*, as the Associated Press correspondent in Tampa, and as a member of the University of South Florida's communications team, I've found FLORIDA TREND's thoughtful, comprehensive coverage the best way to get the full picture of this giant kaleidoscope of a state. It still is.

In many ways, Florida is a much better place than it was decades ago, but its story is more complex than ever. It's astounding how many crises I covered as a young journalist still persist: Health care access and equity; tort and insurance reform; and our inability to balance the demands of a surging population against the fragility of the environment, to name a few. Our state leaders don't have a shortage of resources, just collectively short attention spans when it comes to resolving some of Florida's most difficult problems.

I place great hope in Florida's innovators and entrepreneurs eager to take on these challenges. I joined USF in the darkest days of the 2008 global financial collapse, exiting the pervasive gloom of the Great Recession for the sunny optimism that manifests itself whenever knowledgeable, idealistic and technologically savvy people gather in one spot. Florida's economy is diversifying — a hedge against the booms and busts of old — and is well

positioned to benefit in a global economy driven by new ideas.

Increasingly, I hear Florida's business leaders express a widening definition of “business friendly” to include investing in creating healthy, inclusive communities with ladders of opportunity. They know you can't sustain a rapidly rising economy — currently the equivalent of the 15th largest in the world — on a frayed social fabric and amid a deteriorating natural environment. Quality of life matters; moving vans can leave just as easily as they arrived.

I can't wait to explore these and other issues from this new vantage point. I'm incredibly fortunate to be welcomed into this tight-knit team led by Publisher David Denor, a group whose creativity and commitment to excellence knows no bounds. As a FLORIDA TREND fan, I find it very cool to now share a wall with Art Director Gary Bernloehr, the mastermind of the iconic political bedfellows cover that won me over as a loyal reader. To a person, the only thing bigger than my new co-workers' talents and professionalism is the size of their hearts.

Mark Howard, FLORIDA TREND's editor for the past 25 years and the instigator of the aforementioned plot twist, is a tough act to follow. I first met Mark in 2005, a time when I was a working mom juggling an unpredictable wire service job and a toddler — barely keeping it together most days and some days not at all. As fate would have it, we didn't have another conversation for the next 16 years.

Then last summer, Mark invited me to lunch and shared his retirement plans, wanting to know what I'd been up to. That long overdue reconnection set in motion the process that led to this extraordinary opportunity. I'll tell this story the rest of my days for two reasons: First, it's just one of many examples of what a rare and wonderful person Mark is; his character and integrity are reflected in the pages of this magazine, which he shaped for more than a third of its existence. Second, every working parent needs to know that even on those days you think you're unraveling, there are people who see how capable you are — whether you believe it yourself or not.

After all, it's Florida — a place where unexpected things happen and where you can write your own story with some hard work, a little luck and good people beside you. I'm thrilled to start this new chapter having learned a few things along the way.

It turns out the fairy tale castle in the center of the state is somewhat deceiving. There are no glass slippers here, just some very big shoes to fill.

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