

## Commentary: Fanmail for the wicked and warped

100 of Central Florida's most influential people weigh in on current events. Read their thoughts on the biggest stories of the week and see what they think will make headlines next week.



[María T. Padilla](#), Orlando Latino blog

**LOCKING EYES WITH A LION.** Last week: That Parkland school shooter Nikolas Cruz is getting fan mail is disturbing but not novel. The late cult leader and killer mastermind [Charles Manson](#) received fan mail, as did the late so-called Night Stalker Richard Ramírez, who ultimately married a fan writer. Even serial killer Ted Bundy, who was executed in Florida, was considered “charming.” Face it: Some people are drawn to wicked and warped. That is their dubious privilege. These writers with skewed senses are contacting evil that is safely locked up and behind bars and can do them no harm. Kind of like locking eyes with a lion in a zoo.



[Marci Arthur](#), small business owner/culinary specialist

**DASHED DREAMS AND WHAT-IFS.** Last week: You've seen the viral videos: high-school seniors leaping around the room, overjoyed at discovering that their top-choice college has welcomed them into the ranks of the incoming freshman class. But for every victorious online posting, there are thousands of high school seniors simultaneously rejected from those very same schools. As a result, these teenagers are now dealing with perhaps the most significant disappointment of their lives, awash in rejection letters that have cemented this season as one of dashed dreams and what-ifs. The [University of Florida](#) received 40,849 applications. Of those, 11,741 were admitted for the fall 2018 semester.



[Dick Batchelor](#), president, Dick Batchelor Management Group

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUND ROBBED — AGAIN.** Last week: Before the legislative session, our governor and legislative leaders all loudly proclaimed that affordable housing was a very top priority in light of the large number of Puerto Ricans arriving after the hurricanes. But what did they do? The Sadowski Fund is specifically for building affordable housing for the working poor. Our Legislature, during this housing crisis, once more swept hundreds of millions of dollars out of the fund to be used for other purposes. This is not the first time. Since the inception of the Sadowski fund, the Legislature has taken out over \$2 billion dollars. That's thousands of housing units. Once again, we have failed those in need of affordable housing.



[Gary Cain](#), president, Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida

**PARRAMORE LAND TRUST.** Last week: Bully to the Central Florida Foundation for spearheading a land trust in Parramore. Positive economic development in this long-troubled neighborhood is indeed a double-edged sword, bringing with it soaring land prices that can displace the very low-income residents we need to help. I'm grateful that with the aid of the Parramore land trust, longtime neighborhood residents will be able to stay put and reap the benefits of new educational and employment opportunities.



[Chris Carmody](#), shareholder, GrayRobinson

**SPORTS FUND.** Last week: On Monday, the Orange County Tourist Development Tax Sports Incentive Fund committee held its first meeting. And it proved right away the genius behind Orange County's decision to create this fund — money to help underwrite/recruit/market sports events and nimbleness to move quickly on time sensitive projects. Presented with two such requests due in May, the committee

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agreed to schedule a special meeting on April 9 to review the Central Florida Sports Commission's bids for future WrestleManias and the 2020 [Special Olympics](#). Both of these events would bring huge numbers of visitors and economic impact to our region. And both are expensive to recruit and host. Submitting our bids without the necessary financial backing would likely ensure defeat. Kudos to the chair Kevin Shaughnessy and the other members for acting quickly.

**WHAT BELONGS IN FLORIDA CONSTITUTION? Looking ahead:** Twenty-five proposals remain eligible for placement on the November ballot by the Constitution Revision Commission. On Tuesday, the final committee stop for a proposal will begin the work of drafting, amending and grouping these proposals for final consideration by the CRC. Once on the floor, the proposals must receive at least 22 votes of the 37 members to be sent to the ballot. Should you care? Well, do you care that pregnant pigs are in the constitution? Check Article X, Section 21. School-board term limits, constitutional officers, certificate of need for hospitals, age limits on judges, prohibition of greyhound races and other "fun" issues hang in the balance, some of which clearly belong in the constitution and some of which clearly do not. So, don't ignore it. It's your constitution, after all.



[Rudolph C. Cleare](#), executive vice president, The 'Negro Spiritual' Scholarship Foundation

**GOSPEL GROOVE AT D.C. MARCH. Last week:** While I was attending Orlando's March for Our Lives, Jennifer Hudson was rousing 800,000 rapt Washington marchers with Bob Dylan's anthem "The Times They Are A-Changin'" in gospel style. Everyone who heard her understood clearly the message she brought to the occasion. Two lessons were taught: First, that poets and singers often reveal truths that ring eternal in the words they pass down from age to age. Second, that the spirit of authentic African-American cultural expression is a gift we all must cherish.

**REMEMBER MLK IF YOU SPEAK UP. Looking ahead:** Listening to a segment on NPR's "All Things Considered" in 2016, I jotted down the following unattributed suggestion an interviewee offered to people who pollute the social atmosphere with offensive public speech: "If you have nothing to say, *don't say it.*" We are approaching the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s death anniversary. He changed hearts and minds, helped transform the social order, and burnished the soul of his nation by the utter sagacity and sheer logical force of what he had to say. In his name, I beg of you: If you do have something of worth to say, *please say it.*



[Lee Constantine](#), commissioner, Seminole County

**END RAIDS ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING. Last week:** The biggest failure in this year's Legislature was the dearth of funding for affordable housing. Once again, it kicked the can down the road and swept nearly two-thirds of the funding (\$185 million) dedicated to affordable housing, using it for other purposes. This problem is not going away. In fact, it is becoming exponentially worse with the influx of U.S. citizens from Puerto Rico. As we delay resources, the problem will become more expensive to fix. Local government cannot solve affordable housing alone. The state must formulate a long-term comprehensive plan beginning with ensuring these funds will not be raided again. To do otherwise would be unconscionable.



Earl Crittenden Jr.  
(Courtesy photo)

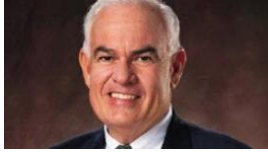
[Earl Crittenden Jr.](#), president of Crittenden Fruit Co. Inc. and chair of one PULSE Foundation

**FOOD TRUCK MANIA. Last week:** Orlando was recently voted third most friendly city for food trucks. I have to admit, geek that I may be, the fascination is lost on me. While I am not a food snob, eating out of a mysterious truck, usually with no place readily to sit, is not at the top of my list of gastronomic pleasures. It's not a shock that cities like Austin, New York and Nashville placed substantially lower in the Food Truck Oscars. They have probably moved on to a new wave of culinary hipness. Orlando is increasingly known as a place of innovation, and I have full faith our creative class is cooking up the next national food craze.

**ORLANDO SHOULD DECIDE ITS OWN GUN LAWS. Looking ahead:** I attended the Orlando Tiger Bay Club's debate on guns to hear state Sens. Dennis Baxley (Ocala) and Linda Stewart (Orlando) politely square off.

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The takeaway was that Floridians' disagreements on gun regulation is insurmountably vast and largely geographically driven. Since that's the case, citizens should demand that the [Florida Legislature](#) allow municipalities to determine their own gun laws. As it stands, Tallahassee, in its sole discretion, determines all statewide gun and ammunition laws. That's been nothing but a recipe for inaction and more mass shootings. The Orlando region should decide its own common-sense regulations on guns, not remote lawmakers.



[Rich Crotty](#), former mayor, Orange County

**EX-MILITARY BASES GREAT PLACES. Last week:** The closing of and re-purposing of military bases has enhanced Central Florida's economy. In the 1970s, McCoy Air Force Base became Orlando International Airport. Today OIA is one of the world's busiest airports, and its Tradeport Drive bustles with business. In the 1990s, the Orlando Naval Training Center made way for Baldwin Park, a model of new urbanism. Now Orlando Sanford Airport is expanding its commercial terminal on property once occupied by the Sanford Naval Air Station, and has engaged architects to determine the nonaviation assets for the best use to enhance economic opportunity.



[Earnest DeLoach](#), lawyer, DeLoach Law LLC

**FROM '88' TO '17' FOR COWBOYS AND PARKLAND. Last week:** There have been numerous poignant memorials and remembrances of those cherished souls lost to the heartless rampage of a shooter at Marjory Stoneman High School. One such homage will take place on opening day of the 2018 NFL season in Dallas. Allen Hurns, a former standout receiver at the [University of Miami](#), and a stalwart during last year's unlikely [Jacksonville Jaguars](#) playoff run, signed a free-agent contract with the [Dallas Cowboys](#). Hurns, a South Florida native, announced that he is changing his jersey number from his familiar "88" to "17" — to commemorate the lives of those who died in the Parkland massacre. The Cowboys just gained a new fan.



[Michelle Y. Ertel](#), consultant and political analyst

**KENNEL CARD ROOM? Last week:** The Seminole County Commission will now get to ask the voters if they want a card room at the Sanford Orlando Kennel Club after Gov. [Rick Scott](#) signed House Bill 1017. The dog track, in Longwood, has pressured city officials for years to allow it to open a card room. Now, with three new Longwood commissioners who have not stated whether or not they'd side with the dog track's request, the Seminole County legislative delegation decided to act and introduce the legislation. Now, rather than the City Commission making the gambling decision, it will be put in the hands of Seminole County voters should the County Commission ever decide to do so.



[John L. Evans Jr.](#), consulting unit chief for a global investment firm; former congressional staffer

**JOYOUS EASTER. Looking ahead:** "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." What a beatitude. A biggie for Christians on this, the all-important weekend. Yet the phrase is commonly misunderstood, in a heartbreaking age of vanishing Sunday School. Meekness is no synonym of wimp. Rather, the author of the timeless profundity intended for an understanding that ego should be foregone. That the natural proclivity for selfishness is to be stamped out, in accord with spiritual grace. The real synonym of the word is humility. Wouldn't it be nice — strike that, divine — if more of that quality appeared in the world? Indeed, the meek I know do seem to inherit something special. Namely, joy. Happy Easter.



[Mark Freid](#), Board President, Holocaust Center

**FLORIDA STARVES THE ARTS. Last week:** Within the nearly \$90 billion state budget, legislators approved a cut of arts and culture funding of 90 percent. For some reason, our legislators dismiss the importance of arts and cultural institutions on the state. Dismiss the fact that many large companies rank culture and quality of life high on their lists of attributes they seek when considering relocating. Dismiss the fact that Florida's arts and culture industry supports nearly 135,000 jobs

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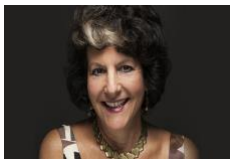
and spurs \$4.6 billion in economic activity. And now dismiss the fact that many organizations will be scrambling to cut jobs, programming and more in an effort just to stay open.



**Rogue Gallart**, president, Central Florida Disability Chamber

**ANNOUNCING ALEXANDER CHARLES ROGUE GALLART. Last week:** With all the current political scandals, angry debates and disagreements in the world, perhaps we should look at life through a child's eyes and take pause. Why you ask? Everything *is*

new, everything *is* a learning experience, everyone *is* a possible friend. You think positively. You can be anything. The world *is* full of possibilities. Your imagination is limitless. And you don't care what other people think. Let's be honest this is the best part of being a kid, isn't it? Last week my amazing partner, April Schauer, gave birth to our beautiful baby boy: Alexander Charles Rogue Gallart. So now, as new parents, we plan on taking lessons from him on what life is all about.



**Flora Maria Garcia**, CEO, United Arts of Central Florida

**DECIMATED ARTS FUNDING. Last week:** Gov. Rick Scott's recently signed budget decimated funding for the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, cutting it by 94 percent — this means that hundreds of approved grant programs by cultural groups around the state will

be funded at 6 percent of what they were originally authorized to receive. Most of these programs were aimed at serving rural and low-income communities and most likely will have to be squelched. For United Arts, it means that grants awarded to teachers in four counties to "buy" arts programs for their schools will be eliminated.

## Looking ahead:



**Glenton Gilzean Jr.**, president/CEO, Urban League of Central Florida

**TAKING CARE OF FIRST RESPONDERS. Last week:** Gov. Rick Scott signed a bill that would allow firefighters, paramedics and law-enforcement officers to obtain mental-health treatment even if they did not sustain a physical injury. Ensuring the mental health of our first responders should always be a nonpartisan issue and remain a priority at all levels of

government. These are the brave men and women who risk their lives to protect the general public and as such. We must ensure that they, in turn, are protected.



**Francisco Gonzalez**, philanthropy director, National Review Institute

**WHO ELSE MIGHT BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE? Last week:** Noor Salman was put on trial for her possible involvement or knowledge of her husband's plans to inflict mass murder at Pulse nightclub. This raises the question of how much responsibility individuals living with mentally unstable or dangerous persons should bear. Killers such as Omar Mateen and the Parkland shooter are primarily responsible for their actions. However, with the amount of knowledge so many people had and reported about the Parkland shooter, we might suppose that others, including local, state and federal authorities, might also be held accountable in the deaths of 17 innocent students and teachers at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School.



**Jane Healy**, former editorial page editor and managing editor, Orlando Sentinel

**A NEW POLITICAL COALITION?**

**Looking ahead:** It was great to see so many young people at the Lake Eola gun-control rally. They have been the most vocal everywhere about more gun restrictions. But what was also striking about that rally was the number of reliably voting older voters there, including seniors. They were a clear force with their presence. It wasn't long ago that most older voters in the Orlando area were in the conservative lane. So this could be the beginning of a new political coalition here, revolving not around age but around gun control. The students may be starting this movement, but they will need voters of all ages to fully carry it out with their activism and, most

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important, their votes.



[Eric Jackson](#), president/CEO, Total Roof Services Corp.

## **GUN CONTROL EVOLVES.**

**Last week:** History gives insight into current issues. My wife asked a question about the evolution of gun control in American. Most national gun legislation was a reaction to the gun-related issues of the time. The National Firearms Act was the first, passed on June 26, 1934. Then in 1938 the Federal Firearms Act was passed. In 1939, The Supreme Court ruled that the National Firearms Act could regulate the sale of “sawed off shotguns” without threat to Second Amendment provisions. The Gun Control Act of 1968 was a direct reaction to the Assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy. All were attempts to address concerns of those times. The Second Amendment survived, and the “ideal of a well-regulated militia” remained intact.



[Ric Keller](#), lawyer, former member of Congress

## **BUT HOW MANY RINGS DID THE GROOM WEAR?**

**Last week:** A Florida woman married a 100-year-old tree to save it from being cut down by her city. Karen Cooper, 60, had a wedding dress, cake, flowers and 50 wedding guests at the outdoor ceremony. She says, “I’m not a whack job.” Karen, I love a “sappy” love story. I know you like the strong silent type. And I’m “rooting” for you. But I give it six months. Why? First, trees never pick up after themselves. Second, the big age gap (40 years). And third, infidelity. The grass (or leaf) is always greener on the other side of the fence.



[J. Matthew Knight](#), M.D., board member, Tiger Bay Club

## **SUNSCREEN IN THE PARK.**

**Last week:** A recent study found that up to 40 percent of cancer deaths are preventable. Smoking is the main culprit, followed by obesity, excessive booze, and too much ultraviolet radiation from the sun. Fortunately, the Sunshine State is getting serious about that last one. In 2017, Florida passed a law allowing children to bring sunscreen to school. This month, [Orlando Health](#) partnered with Seminole County leaders to place free sunscreen dispensers in a half dozen parks and recreational centers. Florida may lead the country in [melanoma](#) and skin cancer, but we’re becoming pioneers in cancer prevention as well.



[Shelley W. Lauten](#), CEO, Central Florida Commission on Homelessness

## **A TALE OF TWO VIEWPOINTS.**

**Last week:** In a recent Orlando Sentinel Spotlight, we learned of two elected officials who share the same party affiliation but have different views on gun control. Congressman Brian Mass was elected with strong [NRA](#) support. Yet after the attack at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, he voted in support of a ban on AR-15 assault rifles. On the other hand, Escambia Commissioner Doug Underhill strongly disagreed with the call for gun limits, and vehemently denounced student leaders for speaking out, calling their actions “pathetic.” I’m all for disagreement. But, Mr. Underhill, let’s attack the issues, and not the people who are not in favor of your particular issue. Please.



Henry Lim of Orlando is an immigration attorney.

(Paige Wilson / Orlando Sentinel)

[Henry Lim](#), immigration attorney

## **GABY ORTIGONI.**

**Last week:** The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Orlando recently announced Gaby Ortigoni as its new president. As a business owner active in the Hispanic market, I find myself excited again about the chamber. Ortigoni brings a relentless work ethic and the leadership qualities to motivate an entire demographic in our region. Minority-owned businesses need organizations such as the HCCMO to help cultivate

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their industries in familiar cultural environments as they assimilate into our society. The entrepreneurial spirit of Hispanics setting up their shops in Orlando makes the HCCMO as important as ever in today's Central Florida economy. Good luck, Gaby.



[A.J. Marsden](#), assistant professor, Beacon College

## WHAT DO ARTS CUTS REVEAL ABOUT CULTURE?

**Last week:** Gov. Rick Scott slashed Florida's grant program for arts and culture by almost 90 percent from \$25 million to a depressing \$2.6 million. This program helps museums, science centers, theaters and other cultural centers bring education, joy and wonder to our communities. Such drastic cuts in funding for the arts should raise concerns. What does this reveal about our culture's values? Do we no longer care about Holocaust memorials or Shakespeare? I hope that the cuts aren't reflective of what we value considering the arts offer our community so much.

## VOTING RIGHTS FOR FELONS.

**Looking ahead:** A federal judge ruled Florida's system for restoring felons' voting rights is unconstitutional and potentially biased. Currently, the Florida constitution automatically revokes the voting rights of convicted felons regardless of the type of crime. A governor can restore this right; however, the process is long and arduous. Individuals with felony convictions must wait a minimum of five years after completing their sentence, including probation, and appeal to a four-person board that includes the governor, who makes the final decision. This process has created a backlog of 10,000 applicants and fewer than 3,000 people have had their voting rights restored since Scott took office. It's time for a change.



[Anna McPherson](#), president, Junior League of Greater Orlando

## DOCTOR'S DAY.

**Last week:** March 30 celebrated National Doctors Day — a day set aside to appreciate physicians for their contributions to their community. [In Florida, however, we continue to face a shortage of physicians.](#) Over the past five years, Florida has increased residency slots by 29 percent; however, we still face work-force shortages. Continuing to examine root causes of physician shortages as well as remaining actively focused on recruiting top talent to Florida for residencies should remain a priority. It's critical to assure that our citizens have access to the depth and breadth of knowledge combined with years of training that makes time with a physician so valuable.

[Michael T. Morley](#), assistant professor, Barry University Law School

**ERRONEOUS RULING ON FELON VOTING RIGHTS.** **Last week:** A federal judge held Florida's process for restoring voting rights to felons is unconstitutional and directed the governor to propose reforms. While the process could be improved, the ruling was legally erroneous on several grounds; the state should vigorously appeal. The governor should also use this as an opportunity to alleviate the perceived need for the ill-considered, sweepingly overbroad proposed constitutional amendment to automatically restore voting rights to nearly all felons. It is both constitutional and prudent to confirm that a felon has truly reformed and intends to follow the law before allowing him to help shape it.

## IN PRAISE OF WINTER GARDEN.

**Looking ahead:** Downtown Winter Garden – the Plant Street area – is one of Orange County's underappreciated treasures. It features a wide range of excited, locally owned, nonchain establishments such as the Attic Door, Pilar's and the Plant Street Market, many of which offer outdoor seating and live entertainment. The splash pad and central gazebo are also extremely inviting public spaces, and Lake Apopka is just a short walk away. Other towns should take heed of Winter Garden's example and facilitate development of their own walkable, diverse downtown areas.

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[Muhammad Musri](#), president, Islamic Society of Central Florida  
**KINSHIP AT PASSOVER.**

**Last week:** Saturday Jews began celebrating Passover; meanwhile, Christians observed Good Friday and are celebrating Easter. Even though Muslims don't celebrate these holidays, they do feel kinship to both communities because Muslims recognize both Moses and Jesus as great prophets and God's messengers. The triumph of Moses and the children of Israel over Pharaoh and his armies is celebrated repeatedly in the Quran, and Muslims observe the day by fasting to thank God. Muslims also believe in the ascension of Jesus, though not the crucifixion or resurrection; therefore, Muslims celebrate Jesus' life. There is more in common than people think. Happy holidays.



[Pamela Nabors](#), president/CEO, CareerSource Central Florida  
**'CONSORTIUM OF COLLABORATION.'**

**Last week:** Has it been 15 years already? The National Entrepreneur Center, or NEC, marks its crystal anniversary in Orlando this year. As the business brainchild of Disney, UCF and Orange County, the NEC began shortly after the turn of the millennium. By bringing together the networking, strategizing and financing resources of 14 local nonprofits, chambers and government-related agencies into one location, the NEC helps new or smaller businesses grow, expand and strengthen. Innovative in its formation and approach to encouraging economic vitality through business success, our "consortium of collaboration" has coached and trained over 100,000 Central Florida companies ... and counting.

## **'ATTRACTION CULTURE.'**

**Looking ahead:** I'll admit to taking the state budget a little more personally this year. This spring, I joined the Community Choir at Central Florida Community Arts. The organization and Josh Vickery, its leader, are inspirational, connecting all facets of the community to performance experiences. There is something for all – instrument lessons, orchestra, programs for special-ability children and seniors with memory challenges, to name just a few. These programs — and arts in general — add immensely to the vibrant "attraction culture" in Orlando, provide learning opportunities, and enrich our community. Moving forward, they need continued support from the state and businesses.



[Cole NeSmith](#), executive director, Creative City Project  
**ARTS AND CULTURE AREN'T A LUXURY.**

**Last week:** Our state's new budget puts Florida at No. 48 compared to other states when it comes to arts funding. More than 400 arts organizations across the state will divide \$2.5 million in funding, or .003 percent of the total state budget of \$88.7 billion. Arts and culture aren't a luxury. They are the backbone of economic development as they serve as one of the primary reasons talented employees choose to live where they live. And why do companies locate their headquarters in one place over another? The available talent pool. We have to stop neglecting the arts. The economic, mental, emotional and spiritual health of our state depends on it.

## **UCF CELEBRATES THE ARTS.**

**Looking ahead:** This coming weekend begins the fourth annual "UCF Celebrates the Arts." Past festivals have featured performances by Hans Zimmer and a concert featuring the music of Philip Glass. This year's festival will feature dozens of performances, including Leonard Bernstein's "MASS: A Theatre Piece for Singers, Players, and Dancers." The highly acclaimed work will involve more than 200 performers from UCF's orchestra, choirs and theater. On April 13, the festival will feature the Flying Horse Big Band with the UCF Symphony Orchestra and several special guests. Both shows are at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. With tickets starting at just \$5, it's a not-to-miss. experience.

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[Brendan O'Connor](#), editor in chief, Bungalower.com

## JAZZING UP NEW BROAD STREET.

**Last week:** A Miami-based developer just bought that big greenspace on New Broad Street in the middle of the Baldwin Park Village Center. The parcel could host a maximum of 80,000 square feet of office space, but it could swapped out for retail or multifamily. Nobody knows for sure. But we do know that the new owner, the same group that owns the lot Orlando Sentinel calls home, is behind some upper-crust mixed-use projects in Midtown Miami. Let's hope if owner does retail it'll bring in a big anchor tenant to help jazz things up on that street.

## WESTERN COLLEGE PARK FOOD HOOD.

**Looking ahead:** There's a gold rush happening right now in western College Park. Big-name local restaurateurs and business leaders are chomping at the bit over pieces of the Dr. Phillips pie at the intersection of Orange Blossom Trail and Princeton. This rush to open an OBT-facing Becky-friendly development would have surprised many, but with the clear success of Grill's just up the street, we all know it can be done. It's too early to start name dropping, but we'll be spilling all the tea on Bungalower.com in the coming weeks about who is lick-it-stick-it-stamping their names on what parcels of this up-and-coming hood.

[Beverly Paulk](#), founding member, Central Florida Foundation and The Orlando Philharmonic

## PLANNED PARENTHOOD.

**Last week:** Young and old, female and male, straight and LGBTQ, wealthy and low income — many people trust Planned Parenthood for affordable, quality reproductive health care. Regardless of the emotional overlay, local Planned Parenthood services are used to capacity and especially needed by young people. Stephanie Kight, the new president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida, is developing additional innovative ways of delivering future services. As Title X family planning and teen education funding are quietly reduced and a large influx of patients from Puerto Rico is added, Planned Parenthood is committed to providing requested health care.

[Matthew Peddie](#), host, WMFE's "Intersection"

## VOTING RIGHTS FOR EX-FELONS.

**Last week:** A federal judge ordered the state of Florida to fix the way it restores voting rights to ex-felons. In February, U.S. District Judge Mark Walker ruled the current system arbitrary and unconstitutional. Michelle Kanter Cohen, counsel for the Fair Elections Legal Network that sued the state over rights restoration, called the decision "a victory for the principal that the right to vote can't be subjected to government officials' gut instincts." But she adds, it doesn't mean that 1.5 million disenfranchised Floridians can automatically register to vote. The governor and clemency board have until April 26 to comply with the ruling.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND MENTAL-HEALTH OVERLAP.

**Looking ahead:** There's a significant overlap between criminal justice and mental-health treatment, and it's not just Florida where, for many people, the jail may be the only place where they get their mental-health treatment. Frankie Berger with the Washington, D.C.-based Treatment Advocacy Center, says the problem began in the 1960s with the "trans-institutionalism of all these people into the jails." Now, she says, "We've reached a critical mass. We don't have any psychiatric beds available, we don't have the community resources, mental-health budgets have been obliterated." That means states are being forced to take the problem more seriously.



[Larry Pino](#), attorney and entrepreneur

**FAREWELL, WAYNE.** **Last week:** Entrepreneurs see form when others see clay. When it came to sculpting, [Wayne Huizenga](#), who passed away last week, was one of the best with a knack for consolidating fragmented industries into sector powerhouses. Initially starting in the sanitation industry, Wayne built Waste Management into a public company



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worth several billion dollars. He then followed with Blockbuster, expanding to 3500 stores within seven years, selling to Viacom for \$8.4 billion before it was later toppled by Netflix. That was followed by AutoNation, today the largest auto retailer in the nation. Others followed. Well done, Mr. Huizenga: along with your four children and 11 grandchildren, we have all benefited from your enterprise.



[Gail Rayos](#), Wragg & Casas Strategic Communications

**BOOK INTO IT. Looking ahead:** As someone who trolls secondhand bookstores for classics and still prefers page turning paper vs. the swipe of my iPad, I couldn't help but pause on this statistic last week: A quarter of American adults haven't read a book — of any kind, not even a few chapters — in the last 12 months, according to the Pew Research Center. The same traits of most non-book readers (over age 50, Hispanics, lesser income) often apply to those who have never visited a public library. Time to address both stats at once: The [Orange County Library System](#) opens summer reading program registration next week (more than 100,000 youngsters took part last year). It also offers year-round "Storytime for Grownups." But best of all for building excitement around reading is the free Orlando Book Festival featuring national best-selling authors at the Orlando Public Library downtown April 21.



[Joanie Schirm](#), GEC founding president; World Cup Orlando 1994 Committee chairman

**FOLLY OF CUTTING ARTS. Last week:** The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reports arts and cultural production accounts for 3.8 percent of the Florida economy. The Legislature and Gov. Rick Scott's signoff of 90 percent reduced funding from nearly \$25 million to \$2.6 million to museums, theaters, science centers and more will take away this positive arts' investment. According to the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, with all things being equal and just accounting for the grants budget during these good economic times, Florida's per capita appropriation would fall to 13 cents per person with our state ranking falling from 10th to 48th. Brought to you by the same people who keep our school teachers' salaries near the bottom ranking.

## MARCH FOR OUR LIVES.

**Looking ahead:** What's next? The grassroots movement for sensible gun-safety laws was sparked by the students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. With a 501c4 nonprofit having received nearly \$5.4 million in donations, the movement will work for law changes like banning assault weapons. They're focused on midterm elections, but they won't endorse candidates. Many other guns-safety organizations may not take that same stance. The debate between state Sens. Dennis Baxley of Ocala and Linda Stewart of Orlando at Tiger Bay Club highlighted the differences of elected officials on banning assault weapons. He against. She for.



[Ed Schons](#), president, Florida High Tech Corridor Council

**TECH SOARS. Last week:** Lots of signs are pointing to Florida's growing tech economy. The Computing Technology Industry Association just released its annual Cyberstates report showing Florida ranked second in Innovation (up from 23rd a year ago), based on a state-by-state per capita analysis of new tech patents awarded. And, Florida ranked fourth in net tech employment with tech-related employment growing by an estimated 12,020 job last year and contributing \$63.5 billion to the state's economy.



[Rick Singh](#), property appraiser, Orange County

**PROGRESS AGAINST INEQUALITY. Last week:** As Property Appraiser, my job is to value property in a fair and equitable manner. Back when Orlando was in the throes of Jim Crow, there was an enormous amount of inequity. To help correct the issue, a group of white civic leaders helped create Washington Shores, a "model negro subdivision" as the Sentinel called it in 1953. I mention this because Gwendolyn Hamm visited my office. Her family owned one of the

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original homes in the community. I was privileged to speak with her to learn more about the community's history. Her story is why I believe so strongly in fairness and equity.

**I PICK SUNSHINE. Looking ahead:** The Florida Legislature recently passed a bill regarding daylight-saving time that was signed into law by Gov. Rick Scott. Not much the state can do on the matter because Congress must approve the change. If we were to move to daylight-saving time year-round, our economy may improve because of the extended daylight. The alternative is that some kids would be forced to catch the school bus in the dark. No movement is likely to happen with this anytime soon, but if I had to choose, I always pick more sunshine than darkness.



**Michael Slaymaker**, professional fundraising executive

**THANK YOU, CARMELLA. Last week:** Carmella Marcella Garcia made an appearance at the annual Babes in Bonnets fundraiser. The fundraiser created by Carmella 20 years ago has generated over two hundred thousand dollars for HIV/AIDS and other LGBT charities. Carmella is a drag legend. She performed in Orlando for over 18 years. Several years ago, Carmella moved to Kentucky to care for her elderly parents. Having her back in Orlando at the fundraiser she created was very special. The event held at the Parliament House raised a record \$32,000 for the Orlando Youth Alliance who supports LGBTQ teenagers and young adults.



**Kannan Srinivasan**, president, Asian American Chamber of Commerce

**LAKE MARY/SANFORD HEALTH CARE HUB. Last week:** All major health systems are seeing the growth in the Lake Mary area and investing in the future. [Florida Hospital](#) has an ER and plans to grow. Orlando Health plans a medical complex and ER on Rinehart Road. HCA has already started building a freestanding ER and plans to open in fall of this year at the prime location in International Parkway Boulevard.

**PRECIOUS PARKING SPOTS. Looking ahead:** Several front-row spots in each section of the parking lot are now marked off with small electronic gates fixed in the center of the spot. App users can access the gates through a free app and can rent the spot causing the gate to lower and allowing the user to take the spot.



**Tony Suarez**, president, Puerto Rican Bar Association of Florida

**GOP WALLS OFF PUERTO RICO. Last week:** Will the national drama led by the president cause a blue wave in Florida? The Orange County Republican Party is attempting to make a big pitch toward the growth of the Puerto Rican community in Central Florida, as it demonstrated during its recent the Lincoln Day Dinner. Locally, it seems the GOP leadership understands the situation, but our wall-building president does not. The only wall being built is the emotional one that separates a natural constituency from the Republican Party.

**MORE PUERTO RICANS TO CENTRAL FLORIDA? Looking ahead:** The 2018 campaign season will start in earnest after the holidays. So does the summer moving season. Will we see an increased number of Puerto Ricans moving to Florida, or has the swell crested? With the voter-registration figures, we will soon learn what effect the demographic changes will mean for Central Florida.



**David D. Swanson**, senior pastor, First Presbyterian Church of Orlando

**EASTER AND HOPE. Looking ahead:** Hope is a wondrous thing in life. It is nearly impossible to live without, and yet in the wake of more school shootings, political and social upheaval, plus threats from beyond our borders, it can feel hard to find. For that reason, the Christian celebration of Easter is a needed reminder. Easter brings the hopeful message that life can be restored, that what is dormant will bloom again, and even that thing we fear the most — death — can be overcome. No matter your circumstance, there's always hope. Happy Easter.

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**Tara Tedrow**, attorney, Lowndes, Drosdick, Doster, Kantor & Reed, P.A.

**LIQUOR LICENSES. Last week:** As of March 23, certain restaurants in downtown Orlando will have a much easier time getting a liquor license. A new law has established a “Downtown Restaurant Area” where restaurants are required to have only 1,800 (instead of 2,500) square feet of serving area and be equipped to serve meals to 80 people at once (instead of 150). While other revenue and license requirements still apply, these relaxed requirements will help enhance the vibrancy of our downtown restaurant industry. A big thanks to Rep. Mike Miller and the city of Orlando for all of their hard work on getting this passed.



**Daryl Tol**, president/CEO, Florida Hospital & Central Florida Region, Adventist Health System

**THE HOWES AND FIRE STATION 11. Last week:** We celebrated with the Howes family the arrival of baby Micah. What started as a drive to the hospital unexpectedly ended sooner at Orlando Fire Department Station 11. Micah was determined and couldn't wait to be born. As the Howes pulled into the station, the entire team rushed to assist and prepared for a delivery. It takes tenacity and courage to act without thinking twice. Thank you to all our first responders for always being there for our community. And, congratulations to the Howes family for Micah's arrival — better known as “Blaze” by the firefighters.

**ARE YOU WILLING TO LISTEN? Looking ahead:** In a fast-paced world, we don't often dedicate enough time to listen to what others are saying. We may simply listen just to reply, and emotions often go unnoticed. We need to show people we care and that we value what they have to say. One of our chaplains recently shared his listening technique, which he calls “full-spectrum listening.” It's his goal to identify a feeling or value behind every story a patient shares with him because only then he has listened to what they need. I invite you to dedicate the time to build deeper relationships and trust by actively listening to others.



**Craig Ustler**, owner/president, Ustler Development Inc.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN PARRAMORE. Last week:** Creative Village and the UCF/Valencia Downtown Campus will positively impact the Parramore community in a variety of ways, including access to education and newly constructed mixed-income apartments. I applaud UCF, Valencia, the Community Foundation, the city of Orlando, Orange County and other stakeholders for looking beyond the boundaries of Creative Village and thinking about long-term affordable housing. This issue is complex and one that our region must address through a comprehensive strategy. Solutions don't come easy, but a land trust is a viable tool to help provide affordable housing in Parramore. To be successful, the trust needs to acquire land from donors, nonprofits and governments, and this effort is worthy of their support.

## Looking ahead:



**Jen Vargas**, Jen Vargas, producer/host, FilmSlam at Enzian Theater

**MEET US AT THE MEZZ. Last week: The Collective**, Central Florida's community of nonprofit and social change makers, celebrated its one-year anniversary. Holding monthly meetings at The Mezz in Downtown Orlando, this forward-thinking group is a who's who of our area's brightest public and private-sector beacons of positivity. The Collective hosts monthly speakers and serves as kind of a support group of sorts for those of us who are working hard to make where we work and live a better place — most days with little to no budget. Are you one of us? Stop by and introduce yourself sometime.

**FLORIDA FILM FESTIVAL. Looking ahead:** The 27th annual Florida Film Festival opens Friday and runs through April 15. Over 180 films, local and worldwide, will screen at this year's fest, representing close to 40 countries. Two of our winning films from last year's FilmSlam made the FFF cut this year: “Blood For Blood,” a documentary short made during a fundraiser for Pulse Orlando, which won our June 2017 #OrlandoUnited program, and “The Jerry Show,” a diabolical must-see during Midnight Shorts, which won our all-horror October 2017 program. Download the app or visit [floridafilmfestival.com](http://floridafilmfestival.com) for more information.

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[Carol Wick](#), equity partner and principal, Convergent Nonprofit Solutions

**POLYESTER BLUES. Last week:** The other day I was looking for a new suit. I need to look polished and professional most days. As I pored through the racks of clothes, I lamented that everything — seriously, everything — was polyester. Where was the wool? That truly polished clean look that breathes well when traveling? I found it, in the men’s department: no polyester suits there. Why can’t women’s clothes and products be useful and have pockets? Apparently I’m not alone in my confusion: Business editor and consultant Heidi Moore was lamenting as well in the Washington Post last week about the problem of female-designed products. No, we don’t want Doritos for women or pink Bic pens. Until then, my hunt for a suit continues.

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