



DISTRICT 2 GAZETTE

VOLUME 4 • ISSUE 1 • JANUARY 2021



**In Loving Memory of
Susan Wilcox**

**Commissioner Ortiz Elected 98th
Florida League of Cities President**

**OPD Alternate Mental Health
Response Pilot Program**

**Business Spotlight:
High Tide Harry's**

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Dear Neighbors,

As one of the most challenging years in recent history came to a close, we collectively contemplated what truly matters: family, community, and helping keep our neighbors safe.

I am eternally grateful for everyone in the district 2 family, for being able to form part of a community that unifies and helps one another even in the most unprecedented and trying times.

Although the year 2021 brings about a promise of new beginnings, we must also remember the outstanding work left to do.

While placing the onus on public officials of following through on their promises is essential to making substantive changes, empowering constituents through resident involvement and education cannot be overstated.

This year, we will continue to focus on providing the tools and resources to help empower each individual and ultimately, each community, to be fully aware of the issues affecting them directly and understanding what they can do to shift the paradigm.

Building Stronger Cities: Organizing, Empowering, Delivering is an initiative I am bringing forth as Florida League of Cities President which emphasizes enlisting local support to protect Home Rule. This power of governance gives your city the flexibility to craft laws specifically to the unique needs of residents like you.

Home Rule is important because it means that decisions for your city are made by the people who love it enough to call it home.

Our Government Academy series is also gearing up and we will soon provide a full agenda for our spring and fall programs. Government Academy is a free 12-week long program dedicated to teaching the public about how the government works for you. Topics range from sustainability, to county, city, state and federal government and everything in between.

I welcome this new year with open arms and am looking forward to continuing our hard work, commitment and sense of community.

Yours respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. Ortiz", with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

MEET THE TEAM

**WE'RE BACK AND
STRONGER THAN EVER!**



Tony Ortiz

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Megan Shaver

Commissioner's Aide
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ON THE SPOT

We're so excited to introduce our new Digital Media and Marketing Manager, Estefania Ospina!

Estefania is a University of Florida alum who worked in book publishing in New York City for most of her professional career prior to joining the district 2 family.

Welcome aboard!



We want to welcome South Avionics Training Center to our District 2 family as well! A special thanks to Laudi Campo and Jonathan Ibarra for taking the office on a tour of the only NCATT certified school in Orlando/Kissimmee!



98TH FLORIDA LEAGUE OF CITIES PRESIDENT

On August 14, 2020, The Florida League of Cities announced its election of officers for the 2020-2021 term and named Commissioner Tony Ortiz as its president. Commissioner Ortiz will serve a one-year term. The Florida League of Cities provides members with tailored advocacy tools and training programs designed specifically for municipal officials.

During his inaugural address, Commissioner Ortiz announced his presidential priority for the year, Building Stronger Cities: Organizing, Empowering, & Delivering. “Knowledge is not just power. Knowledge changes paths, creates vision and opportunities, transcends limitations, saves lives and promotes integrity. Knowledge is the foundation with which, as the new president of the Florida League of Cities, I intend to pave the way for our state to Build Stronger Cities,” said Ortiz.

The Building Stronger Cities initiative will include engaging workshops, videos, a dedicated website for residents, printable and digital materials available in multiple languages and more.

The Florida League of Cities' priorities for the 2020-2021 term:

Sales Tax Fairness

The Florida League of Cities SUPPORTS legislation to update Florida's sales and use tax laws that apply to online/e-commerce sales from out-of-state retailers. Changes are needed to ensure in-state retailers are treated equitably and that the Florida sales and use tax law is equally enforced.

Short-Term Rentals

The Florida League of Cities SUPPORTS legislation providing for a collaboration between the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation and cities to ensure that short-term rental properties abide by state and local regulations, are properly licensed and insured, and comply with state and local taxation requirements as well as industry-accepted safety practices.

Affordable Housing

The Florida League of Cities SUPPORTS legislation that requires all monies from the Sadowski State and Local Housing Trust Funds be used only for Florida's affordable housing programs.

Annexation

The Florida League of Cities SUPPORTS legislation that facilitates the municipal annexation of unincorporated areas while protecting private property rights and respecting municipal boundaries.

Discharges to Surface Waters

The Florida League of Cities SUPPORTS legislation that establishes reasonable timeframes for utilities to eliminate, to the extent possible in compliance with regulatory requirements and with specified exceptions, discharges to surface waters unless a utility demonstrates it is not environmentally, technically or economically feasible.

ORLANDO NEWS

United Arts of Central Florida Supporting the Dr. Phillips Center's Front Yard Festival

The City of Orlando will fund United Arts of Central Florida, which will award grants to subsidize nonprofit organizations' use of the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts' Front Yard Festival outdoor event venue.

This grant program allows Central Florida cultural nonprofits to have financial assistance necessary to cover costs associated with using the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts' Front Yard Festival outdoor venue space to present arts and cultural programming.

One Person, One Tree Funding Agreement

Through the 2018 Green Works Community Action Plan, Council adopted a goal to increase Orlando's tree canopy coverage from 25% to 40% by 2040. To achieve this goal, approximately 250,000 would need to be planted in the City of Orlando over the next 15 years (primarily on private property).

To partially achieve this objective, the City will continue with One Person, One Tree - a campaign that encourages every Orlando resident to take the individual action of planting a tree.



Bloomberg American Cities Climate Challenge Grant Extension

The American Cities Climate Challenge (ACCC) is an unprecedented opportunity for 25 cities to significantly deepen and accelerate their efforts to tackle climate change and promote a sustainable future for their residents.

As ACCC winners, Orlando and 24 other cities have been accepted into a two-year acceleration program with powerful new resources and access to cutting-edge support to help them meet – or beat – their near-term carbon reduction goals focused on building, energy supply, and transportation. The purpose of the grant agreement extension is to allow for the City of Orlando to benefit from the technical assistance and support for an additional 6 months, until the end of June 2021.

DISTRICT NEWS

Demetree Park History

Located at The Dovers near the Orlando Executive Airport, Demetree Park was developed in 1988 as a community park. The 24.6-acre park encompasses three lakes linked by a system of walks and boardwalks. The boardwalk winds through a wooded area offering a natural environment for walking, bird watching, and resting. In the wake of the 2004 Atlantic hurricane season, the city of Orlando lost approximately 10,00 trees.

The community united to rebuild amid the destruction planting 2,500 trees a year until all were restored. Commissioner Tony Ortiz visited the tree he planted at Demetree Park over a decade ago and saw how vibrant and strong it was, just like the community that revitalized it.

Gateway's New Executive Director

In October 2020, the Board of Directors of The Gateway Orlando District announced that Lourdes Mola had been named Executive Director.

Lourdes is an experienced leader, a national award-winning bilingual professional with a proven track record in leading business development efforts, creating multicultural strategies, communications and public relations.

Lourdes will work diligently with the leaders of the district to revitalize the beauty and economic vitality of the Semoran Corridor.



IN LOVING MEMORY OF SUSAN WILCOX

On Monday, January 4, 2021 Susan Wilcox passed away surrounded by family and friends.

Our hearts and deepest condolences go out to Susan's family in this most difficult time. On that tragic Monday, we lost not only an integral member of our community, but a cherished and beloved friend. Susan worked tirelessly to shape the direction and branding of the Semoran Corridor as the organization's Board President and also worked with clients to develop marketing plans to increase sales and lead generation opportunities.

Susan also served on the local PTA board of Liberty Middle School where she was the Beautification Chair and devoted her time as co-leader of the school's Green Team, working to educate children on how to impact the environment in a positive way. Her two major initiatives involve reducing plastic bags and promoting reusable water bottles in the schools.

We will miss her dearly and will keep her family in our prayers.



OPD ALTERNATE MENTAL HEALTH RESPONSE PILOT PROGRAM

During the first city council meeting of December 2020, Orlando city commissioners approved a one-year pilot plan to send mental health counselors to certain nonviolent police calls. Under the plan, two teams of Aspire Health Partners' mental health clinicians and case managers would be dispatched in lieu of armed police to calls about suicidal people or individuals experiencing problems potentially related to mental illness.

OPD received more than 3,700 such calls in 2019 – about 10 a day, on average.

Orlando Police Chief Orlando Rolón said officers will still respond when calls involve someone with a weapon or who is threatening violence. However, calls related to mental illness often don't involve violent people and, at times, an armed officer's presence can unintentionally escalate the situation.

“ I believe this pilot has the potential to moving us closer to having the appropriate response to our community's need. ”

The hope, Rolón said, is that the one-year test program will reduce the chance of escalation and the number of arrests while also connecting people to the help they need. If successful, the program could expand to other types of calls that don't require law enforcement intervention, he said.

“I believe this pilot has the potential to moving us closer to having the appropriate response to our community's need,” said Commissioner Bakari Burns, who noted the Orange County Jail is the county's largest mental health provider. “We do not need to criminalize mental illness.”

Mayor Buddy Dyer said one of the goals for the upcoming budget is to “refocus funding on our police department and expand our efforts to create racial equity.”

Orlando's one-year pilot will begin operating in February.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: HIGH TIDE HARRY'S

We sat down with Brennan Heretick who is credited with saving his father's restaurant, High Tide Harry's, during the coronavirus pandemic through a social media post about his father's story which went viral.

Can you elaborate on the history of the restaurant?

After years of opening and running multiple national restaurants, we wanted to settle down in one area, and we fell in love with Orlando. It is close to family and we saw it was in desperate need of a quality seafood restaurant.

HTH is a family owned and operated restaurant. Many of the recipes and dishes have been formed from all our travels and passed down directly from Harry's family.

We originally opened at 436 and 50 fifteen years ago, and have been at our current location, 4645 S. Semoran for 10 years. This year we are celebrating our 26th year of service.



High Tide Harry's is such a staple in the community. Sadly, many restaurants all down South Semoran have closed, some within just a few months of opening even prior to the pandemic; but Harry's always stayed strong throughout. What do you think has contributed most to its ongoing success all these years?

It's been terrible to see so many small businesses going under during these times, with us struggling after being here for 25 years, it really puts it in perspective what others are going through.

We've been very fortunate to have a great local following and some very loyal customers that come to dine with us multiple times a week. I also contribute our success to our staff. We've got a great team that truly cares and works very hard for us. Harry also takes a lot of pride in the product we serve, our distributors probably hate us for it, but he will send it back if it's not perfect.



He also enjoys passing along any savings we get on to our guests, and I have always put a lot of emphasis on our service and the experience we provide, and people notice these things.

What prompted you to take to social media after the restaurant took such a hard hit in March because of the pandemic? Did you expect the response that ensued?

When we first applied for the PPP loan, our bank didn't submit our application in time and we missed the deadline. We stayed open for curbside service and tried to give as many of our employees as many hours as we possibly could, all while losing money on a daily basis.

When we were able to reopen for dining-in, it just wasn't the same. It killed me to see so many empty tables when I know how hard my dad has worked to make his dream come true.

After 8 months of major losses, I just decided to share the raw data and reality that we were facing because we have 70 staff members whose families rely on us to stay open.



I had no idea how amazing the response would be. We've been featured on several local news outlets, the national news, and now the Gazette!

We're just truly blessed and thankful for everyone and we hope to continue to spread the word to others to support your favorite small businesses, because as my dad mentioned, "they are the backbone of America."

What has surprised you the most after the outpouring from the community?

It wasn't a surprise to me to see the love and support, we have an amazing local community and have made many lifelong friends from the restaurant, we know no strangers at High Tide Harry's. The surprising part was the day after I made the post, we had the most profitable four-day stretch in our company's 25 year history.



We also were asked to appear on national news, Fox and Friends, and we had people reaching out to us from all over the country after they saw the story wanting to buy gift cards and merchandise and we're actually working on creating a Shopify store now to be able to do that.

COMMUNITY CENTERS' PROGRAMS

Engelwood Neighborhood Center

Adult/Senior Activities

Fitness Classes:

Mondays 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. – Lower Body Class

Tuesdays 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. – Upper Body Class

Wednesdays 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. – Core & Cardio Class

Thursdays 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. – Full Body Class

Saturdays 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. – Extreme Full Body Class

Cost: \$15/class or \$65/Monthly – Unlimited Classes

Seniors Program: Program coordinated through Seniors First, Inc., for adults ages 55 and older Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 12 p.m. Register through Seniors First, Inc.

Adult English Classes: English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes are offered Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. following the Orange County Public School calendar. No classes are available in the summer. Please contact 407.482.6304 to register and for more information.

*Registration can be completed at Colonial ACE 6100 Oleander Dr. Orlando, FL 32807

Dover Shores Neighborhood Center

Adult/Senior Activities

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Classes offered Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. following the Orange County Public School calendar. No classes are available in the summer. Please contact Winter Park Tech at 407.482.6304 for additional information

Zumba Toning: The workout is exactly like the regular Zumba class, but puts extra emphasis on toning and sculpting to define those muscles!

Monday, Wednesday 7-9 p.m. and Saturday 9-10 a.m.

Cost: \$6 per class

GOVERNMENT ACADEMY

In 2014, Commissioner Tony Ortiz established the District 2 Government Academy, a program designed to empower his constituents with a fundamental knowledge about government infrastructure and its inner workings. Topics discussed during the program are taught by experts in their respective fields and include a range of subjects including federal, state, city, county, and municipal government.

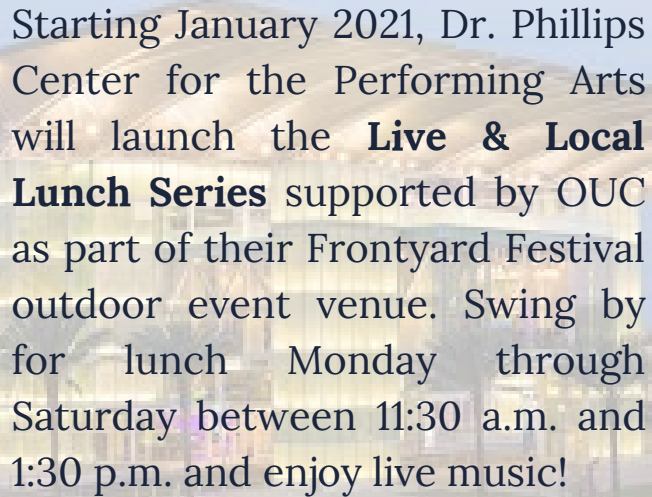
The goal in providing this free service to the public is to give constituents the chance to learn about the judicial system, Orange County Property Appraiser/Tax Collector, the public school system, City of Orlando Housing, economic development, and sustainability. Classes are held twice a year in English and Spanish for 12 weeks each on Tuesdays from 6-8 p.m. The English-language program will start in March, and the Spanish-language program will begin in August.



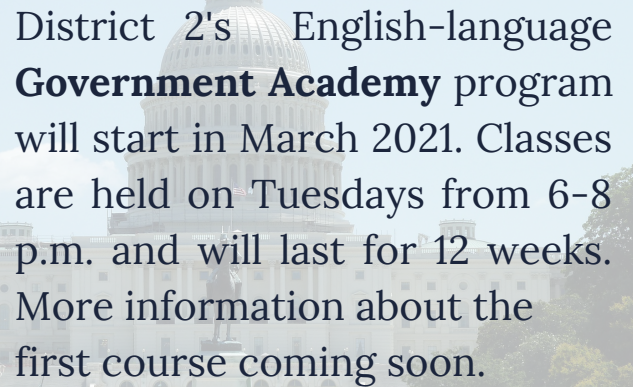
Upon program completion, every participant that has attended all classes will receive a certificate and join us for a graduation ceremony.

We invite every constituent to join our program and form part of the 600+ residents who have taken part in this exciting project!

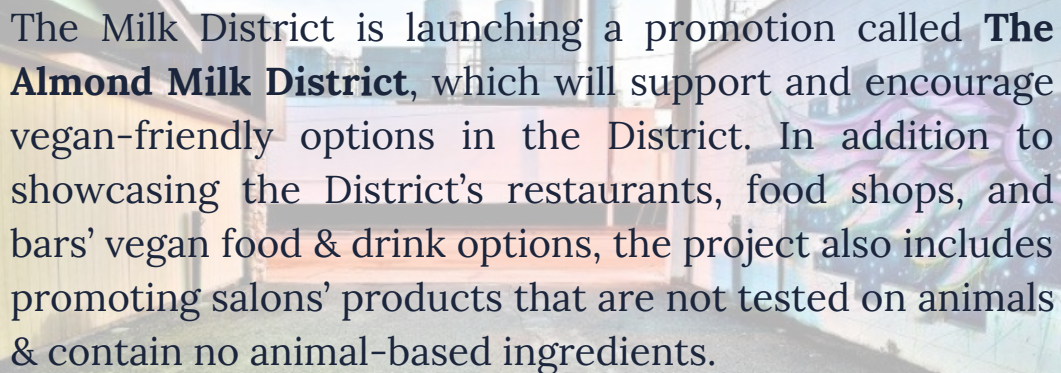
UPCOMING EVENTS



Starting January 2021, Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts will launch the **Live & Local Lunch Series** supported by OUC as part of their Frontyard Festival outdoor event venue. Swing by for lunch Monday through Saturday between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. and enjoy live music!



District 2's English-language **Government Academy** program will start in March 2021. Classes are held on Tuesdays from 6-8 p.m. and will last for 12 weeks. More information about the first course coming soon.



The Milk District is launching a promotion called **The Almond Milk District**, which will support and encourage vegan-friendly options in the District. In addition to showcasing the District's restaurants, food shops, and bars' vegan food & drink options, the project also includes promoting salons' products that are not tested on animals & contain no animal-based ingredients.



Gateway's Women Who Lead is a signature program by Gateway Orlando to develop and strengthen Women leaders in our community. Sessions are designed by Women with areas of interest to advance in their current positions and improve their lives. The group meets monthly on the First Friday starting on January 8th.