

JR News

Spring/Summer 2017

WORK, HOME, AND PLAY

Homeownership, New Job, and Things of Interest.



JR HARDING

With the High School and College graduations occurring all over the country, please indulge me a moment while I do some self-advertisement. Rather than giving cash, perhaps consider one or both of the JR Books: [Now What?](#) Or [ADA](#)

[Adventure](#). They both offer some life lessons, because God knows life is not fair, but worth living every minute of it.



JR HARDING
WITH ANNE SARRISIAN

Home/Health

Hurricane season 2016 carried into early 2017. As you recall, Labor Day weekend 2016 was a little rough on the Harding's, we had to vacate the property for 6 days because of a power outage. We were lucky because we already had reservations in Orlando for the FSU v. Ole Miss Game. While the long Labor Day weekend was fun, it showed some vulnerabilities. As a result, at some point, I need to invest in a quality generator to run the basics. This need was reaffirmed in January when a



3rd tree down
in 4 months.

severe tropical storm came through Tallahassee, once again we encountered some tree damage. The back left corner of the yard is bare. What's another \$1,000 to remove trees?

But all is not doom and gloom. In March of 2017, Erika and I achieved a landmark goal. We managed to pay the house off! It is very cool to receive an official letter stating that you have fulfilled your mortgage obligations through a “*lien release*” letter. It’s even cooler to see it officially stamped at the courthouse for all to see. Our humble little home is not much, but it is now ours and it works well for us!



Because retirement will cost me extra due to my disability needs, We plan to use some of our new capital to add a few extra dollars to our retirement accounts. On a related note, we did pay the house insurance a little early this year to lock in last year's rates rather than seeing them go up because of the two claims we had to file.

For the past two years, I have been sharing my ups and downs with health issues related to aging as a quadriplegic. In the Fall of 2016, I reported that the surgeon wanted to cut on me to fix a stage 3 decubitus ulcer. I decided not to have surgery. To date, the surgeon has been impressed by the wound-care skills of my PCA team. It is healing, but very, very slowly. Please keep your fingers crossed and your positive thoughts flowing.

Work

I have officially completed two semesters at Florida State! It’s great to be a faculty member, but I have found teaching to be harder than people think. It takes about three hours of prep time for every hour of instruction. Exam day is never easy because the students want their results yesterday! Because I teach a 4000 level course my tests cannot be all true/false and multiple choice, there must be some short answer/essay questions as well; which slows down the grading process significantly. I find that making the students articulate the application of knowledge to be a more effective measuring stick, rather than simply rote memory questions. I have also found that creating a scoring rubric improves my objectivity and consistency across the different answers.

I was very touched by the end of the semester because many students went out of their way to thank me. Some had even indicated this was the best class ever. The following comment tells it all: *“Thank you for being such a passionate professor and caring about your students so much! You made the subject a lot more fun to learn 😊”* My overall class reviews was a 4.2 versus the university average of a 4.15. I had one student who didn’t care for the course, but you can’t please everybody.

This semester was more than just teaching, I have also made some progress on the idea of a University of Choice for students with disabilities. The Neurodiversity Community called DifferentBrains.com, run by Dr. Hackie Reitman did a [Skype interview](#) with me about my special charge at FSU. The goal is easy to articulate, but getting there will prove to be much harder. I have exceptional leadership supporting me, but because of the issue of privacy, self-disclosure, and fear of stigma reaching the 2,600 students with disabilities is challenging. It is clear that the ADA and the IDEA have had a tremendous impact on post-secondary education. When I first went to college I was the only one with a significant disability on campus. Today there are nearly 2.5 million students with disabilities matriculating throughout the country. In Florida, we have about 300,000 out of the nearly 3 million students attending our community colleges, state colleges, and universities.



My advocacy continues to have a modest impact on our public policy. Some of the success this past year include helping to curbe the [ADA drive-by lawsuits](#), promoting the use of technology for persons with disabilities, and Rish Park.

Thanks to my good friends Chief Perry and Officer Rhodes with the FSU Law Enforcement and the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows, we were able to once again establish the [scholarship program](#) for needy families with disabilities to enjoy Rish Park. The scholarship is for 3 nights and 4 days for a family of 4. This marks the fifth year of this partnership. Another exciting piece of news, it looks like the Florida Legislature will give the park \$804,000 for capital improvements. These dollars combined with the last 10 years marks nearly \$10 million worth of improved infrastructure at the park. However, I still want/need my miniature golf, universal courts, accessible nature trails, and more family cabins. All of the marketing that has been going on has made the limited family cabins very hard to get. In fact, this year, another family beat me to booking for the Fourth of July weekend.

This Spring, I finished my fourth year as a grant reviewer/subject matter expert for [The Christopher Reeves Foundation](#). Twice a year, we review hundreds of Quality of Life Grants in which individuals, not-for-profits, universities, and others submit very cool ideas for funding consideration. I have literally reviewed about 500 grants during the past 4 years, it is a great way to give back.

The National Association of Counties chose to run a little piece about [gas station access](#), which we enjoy here in Leon County. Some of you may recall that back in October 2013 the Leon County commission created the nation's most accessible gas station ordinance in the country. Moreover, after surviving a very contentious 2014 Legislative battle with the petroleum industry, the state legislature affirmed the home rule and empowered other counties in the state to exceed minimum

standards. Just the other day, thanks to some advocacy by some Canadian buddies, I was interviewed by a Senior Government Official from Canada to possibly replicate our accessible refueling ordinance.

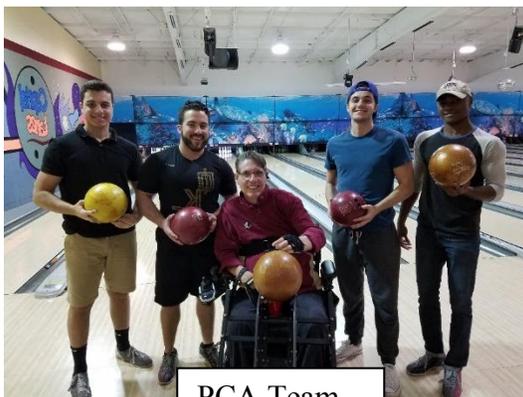
With or without a disability, we all have driving stories, some good and some bad. My good friend, Mike Collins, a regular writer for the International Disability Magazine, *New Mobility*, did a little piece called [Best Day of Driving](#). This article was a collection of good and bad experiences and he chose to share my Fourth of July journey and the fuel pump going out. Everything that could have gone wrong did, but the community came through with flying colors and saved the holiday weekend.

Just this month, the Tallahassee Magazine honored me by writing a piece regarding my work at FSU called [Building an Inclusive University](#). I love the picture with the Unconquered Statue, but now the pressure is really on to make a difference. I hope this means job security. I will be presenting on behalf of FSU at the annual Family Café in Orlando and at the [Trailblazing 2017 Conference](#) in Ft. Lauderdale.

On a serious note, I had the privilege and challenge to serve on the Panel for the “National Health Care Decision Day Event” at FSU’s College of Medicine. The experience was emotionally draining, but I believe it is important public service. This video link takes you to the [Patty Batten Ted Talk \(2014\)](#), it served as the foundation for the discussion. In short, we all need to be prepared because the only 2 guarantees in life are death and taxes.

Play

As always, in this section, I try and highlight some fun things and interesting resources. Bowling is one of my year-round activities and I took Team JR out for a



little fun and team building., without my quality PCA’s there would be no work or fun. On this day, I was able to get the high score, twice! These young men took it well. The Ikan bowler has served me well. I first picked it up in 2004 and have put in 100 or so games over the years. I still have not been able to break my highest score of 179, but consistently average about 135.

Some of you may have heard about the new Wheelchair Man. He is the latest superhero to be added to the comic book literature. Talk about making the mainstream. The creator of this new superhero is Mohammad Sayed. He is an Afghanistan-born, now Boston resident, with a disability. You can read more about the Wheelchair Man at www.rimpower.org.



A few other areas of interest include greater beach access at [Panama City](#), [DeLorean style truck](#) modifications for a quadriplegic (of course they omitted the price), and a new super cool [resort and spa](#) just for spinal cord injured individuals (maybe Erika and I need to go back to Australia)!

Another cool invention is the new [GlassOuse](#), it is an assistive device that allows those with severe mobility impairments to manipulate computers, phones, TVs, and anything else that is connected to the internet through head movements.

It's been a while since I've been to Miami and I hope that I can work the schedule out during Spring Break 2018 to take Erika down to the annual Miami Open Tennis Tournament. While in Miami, I will make a concentrated effort to call upon a dear old friend, Mr. Micky Wolfson. I met him about 20 years ago while serving on the Board of Regions. He donated a lifetime collection of over 180,000 cool things to FIU and created the [Wolfsonian Museum](#). They are committed to the persuasive power of art and design to explore what it means to be modern. I would encourage anyone who is in the Miami area to put the Wolfsonian on their must-see locations.

Until we talk again, may all of you be well. Thanks for all of the love and support.

JR