

JR News

JR News

Spring 2026

Work. Home. Play. Without Barriers.

Life is precious... Remember to make the most of each day.

PLAY: Erika and I had an exciting and active Winter '25 and Spring '26. We had the pleasure of joining my parents for a 7-day Caribbean cruise over Christmas. With Mom and Dad aging quickly (turning 85) and still ambulatory, it is important that we make the most of our time together memorable. Our ports of call included the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Antigua, and St. Maarten.

I must admit that in the chaos of the morning packing, my personal care assistants and I accidentally left my suitcase of clothes at home. As a result, I boarded the cruise ship for 7 days with only one pair of underwear, one pair of jeans, and two T-shirts. It was not the best start. My father kindly offered to share some of his underwear and shirts, but I couldn't bring myself to wear them; he mentioned he always packs a few extras because of his military experience.

We ended up washing clothes every night in the one available washing machine and buying more “gift store” clothing than I would have liked or would ever need.

Fortunately, on our third day, we docked in Puerto Rico, where we quickly rushed to Marshall’s to buy more clothes. We also encountered a little hiccup with my power wheelchair; the batteries decided to die. Thankfully, Puerto Rico was a one-stop shopping environment. Unfortunately, wheelchair batteries are quite expensive, costing \$600 for a pair. I am most grateful to the cruise ship engineers for swapping out the batteries. I'm also thankful that I decided to bring my manual wheelchair with me. This way, I was at least able to get around during our shopping bonanza and be mobile on the ship while the batteries were being replaced all day.

Amber Cove, located in the Dominican Republic, was quite enjoyable and offered accessible transportation. We spent the afternoon interacting with the Spider Monkeys, and it was rather hilarious when one of the little monkeys decided to pee on one of the young girls in our group. She let out a loud squeal, startling the group.



Because she happened to be right in front of me, I had a front row seat to the monkey urine dribbling down the side of her head. The poor thing will definitely need some mental health counseling and may never go to a petting zoo again in her life.



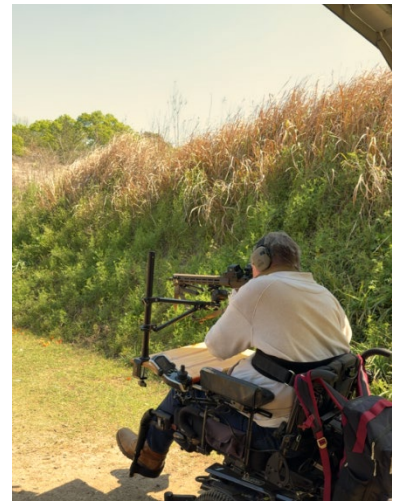
The wheelchair van transportation vendor in Antigua attempted to change our private tour into a group tour, which we refused. It is always disappointing when people try to take advantage of those who have limited

options. Nothing annoys me more than encountering the “disability tax.” Getting our refund was extremely challenging, but we got it. Instead of the island tour, we went window shopping in the port city.

Thankfully, St. Maarten was a refreshing change from Antigua. Our travel guide, the vehicle, and the tour were all exceptional. Exploring this island was fascinating. because it is governed by both the Dutch and the French, each having its own respective side. Their peaceful cohabitation could be a lesson for the whole world now! We were even teased by our guide for forgetting our passports when crossing the border on the island. At first, it was not funny.

Thanks to my former PCA, who is training to be an Army helicopter pilot, I have been getting in some practice at the gun range.

Toward the end of the afternoon, I got carried away a little with the trigger mechanism and, after firing half a dozen shots in seconds, snapped my rigging mechanism off the wheelchair. I hope we can get it fixed soon because I still need more practice before I can go hunting or shoot competitively. The goal is to get out “in the sticks” by Thanksgiving or Christmas. If not this year, certainly by next year. Here is a [link](#) to the action.



I have also been practicing aggressively with my new miniature golf equipment. I even had the opportunity to take it onto “a real putting green” and get a feel for what golfers go through – both the emotional highs and the lows. Please enjoy these two different versions of my practice shots (one [indoors](#) and the other on the [actual putting green](#)).



To make Erika's 60th birthday memorable, we decided to take an extended weekend trip during the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday to Mexico, specifically Puerto de Playa. We first explored this forgotten area a few years ago with a high school classmate and were impressed by the area's accessibility, transportation options, vibrant culture, and delicious food. Although the weather was not ideal, with a low of 55 degrees and high temperatures in the low 70s, it was in the 30s back in Tallahassee.

As we wrap up the fun section, I must give a shoutout to Dr. Eileen Wolkstein and her husband, Lenny, for making the time during her trip to Florida to see me. It had been nearly 30 years since I last broke bread with her up in New York City. Sometimes a meal on the side of the freeway at a *Cracker Barrel* is just what the doctor ordered.



I also need to give a little shout-out to my friend's father, who has always wanted to make music. With the assistance of AI, he put a little jingle together called "*Tallahassee's Home to Me*". I enjoyed it, and it captured some of the sights and sounds of my hometown. Hope you do too. Here is the [link](#).

Home/Health:



Our pets play an important role in our lives. This is Precious – the little beast is a little too adorable! She made the cover of the kitty puzzle that Erika and her mother assembled. With Spring here, she brings all her trophies home daily.

I am pleased to share that the “boo-boo” on my knee is finally making progress after 2.5 years. A few of my PCAs tried to push me to go to the

wound care clinic, but getting to my knee would be such an arduous process (getting my pants on and off, and the time commitment). I held my ground and said we just need to keep the pressure off it. I don’t need some overeducated MD “hacking” at the necrotic tissue and lecturing me on what I already know.

Good news often comes with bad news. Recently, the center of my heel opened up due to excessive pressure. I mean, really? It’s not like I stand on it. My heels rest gently on the footplate of my wheelchair, yet somehow pressure still builds.

Reluctantly, I decided to visit one of those “Good Feet” stores. In my opinion, their products are more of a scam, but thousands of people believe they make a difference.

So, I'm giving it a try. After a lengthy discussion with the sales lady, they offered me a 60-day trial to see if their patented inserts would help.

At first, the salesperson was resistant to my request, but after I expressed my concerns—emphasizing that I couldn't immediately tell how the inserts felt and didn't want to walk away without giving them a fair chance—they agreed to my terms. I'll keep you updated on my experience.

The PCA recruitment process is currently in full swing. For the past 30 days, we have had two PCAs on every shift. This arrangement allows them to learn from an experienced peer, demonstrate their commitment, and assess how quickly they are mastering my routine and medical needs. I hope I do not lose any progress with my knee or foot during this transition—it's tough being the "guinea pig".

I want to commend Erika for being flexible and accommodating with the extra help in the house three times a day. To be quite honest, this recruiting class is not up to my usual standards. I will need to coach them closely, especially since four of my current team members are graduating. As my mother likes to say, "It is what it is," and we will have to make do.

Soon, I will begin the process of replacing my power wheelchair. This is the same chair that broke down during my cruise and has already had the motors and tires replaced. Insurance has strict policies and will only consider a new chair every five years. Sometimes, I wish I could lease the latest model, like my neighbor with the new BMW! Or at least try out different features before committing 100%.

A new power wheelchair with adjustable legs, high-low capability, and a joystick controller costs around \$20,000, while some models can go as high as \$60,000. That's not just the price of a car; it's more like the price of a luxury vehicle! Additionally, it typically takes about 90 days for the chair to arrive, followed by another 30 to 60 days to fine-tune its various features to meet my specific needs.

Work:

The 2026 Spring semester began on a positive note with the opening of FSU's new College of Business, named after Herbert Wertheim. Dr. Wertheim, a billionaire residing in South Florida, chose to invest in FSU because it is one of the fastest-growing and highest-ranked public colleges in the country.



For those who would like to see the full property, click [here](#). I am excited to be a part of the journey that is the College of Business.

I received a notification that I had been recommended for the Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award. This marks the fifth time in ten years that I have been nominated. This year, the competition was tough with many great candidates, especially among the accounting and finance faculty. Although I didn't win the award, it's incredibly gratifying to know that one or more students took the time to recognize my efforts and passion for teaching. There will be another opportunity next year, and I just need to keep improving my skills.

Part of enhancing my curriculum, teaching methods, and classroom activities involves conducting a post-semester debrief with my students to gather their insights on what worked well and what didn't. Thankfully, this semester wrapped up just as strongly as it began. I received positive feedback and encouragement to continue my teaching approach, and many students mentioned that they genuinely enjoyed coming to my class.

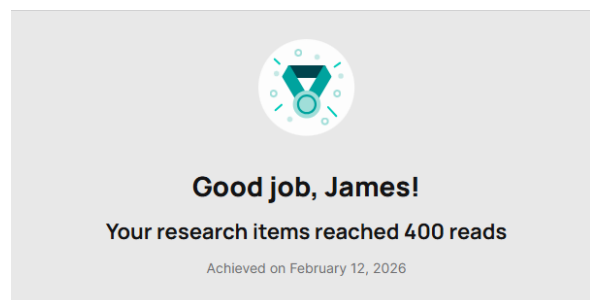
"To be honest, I did not want to take your class, but I am so glad I did. I learned much about PWDs and how I now view the world and access that I had no idea about, and thank you for pushing us so hard."

I was also blessed with strong faculty peer review scores (2.87 out of 3) for the academic year! It is always empowering to receive strong peer reviews like this.

To show my appreciation to my students, I shared a short piece I recently wrote about my motivation, purpose, and inspiration. It's called "[Find a Reason to Get Out of Bed](#)." With luck, this essay may be included in a book of essays being produced by a fellow leader with a disability. I will keep you posted.

The whole world watched America return to the moon. What some of you may have missed was that a young, paralyzed woman from Germany had a chance to experience zero gravity. To read more, click [here](#).

Thanks to online and searchable academic journals, some of my research on living and thriving with a disability in a post-secondary environment has been read and cited by others. It's exciting to receive email notifications like this, indicating that people are engaging with my work. While I don't consider myself a great scholar, it's still enjoyable to get published in a peer-reviewed article every now and then.



This year, I continued my work with the Christopher Reeve Foundation as a grant reviewer. I evaluated 20 project ideas, with funding requests ranging from \$18,000 to \$100,000.

Each proposal aimed to promote recreation, technology, independence, and self-sufficiency for individuals with spinal cord injuries and other disabilities.

One of the highlights of my semester was collaborating with engineering students from FSU. Together, we worked on enhancing my putt-putt game as part of their capstone project, and it was truly enjoyable.



Thanks to their assistance, my game was transformed from a makeshift duct tape solution to a Velcro strap system that is easy to transport, put on, and take off. I not only made a 15-foot putt on a real golf course (as shown in this [video](#)), but I also successfully sank a 10-foot putt during the students' Capstone Presentation, which added a bit of pressure and drama.

I was doing a little advocacy and got too cheeky with a news reporter, even though I provided him with standards and other legal justifications. He ended up using a clickbait headline: "[Black Eye for the Tallahassee Airport.](#)" However, two years is an excessively long time for the only elevator to be out of service. I don't believe I have anything to apologize for.

On another note, I want to thank my friends at Arts4All and Max for helping the Wheelchair Highwaymen have their pictures featured at the [Tallahassee Museum](#).

This year, I didn't get involved in legislative issues. However, in Spring 2027, I plan to revisit a few important topics, including Rish Park, the James Patrick Memorial Workforce Incentive Program, and spousal property tax issues.

As we conclude this edition of the Spring 2026 JR News, Erika and I wish everyone a fabulous summer! This year, we will be celebrating our 20th anniversary, and we plan to take another trip across the pond to explore, experience new adventures, and most importantly, to make new memories.

If you have a moment, I would love to hear from you. Please share your stories, updates, or dramas—I'm eager to catch up!

JR

P.S. If anyone needs a good summer read or just some motivation, my books are always available.

