

# JR News

Summer 2019

## WORK, HOME AND PLAY

*Good Fortune, Patience, & Getting back in the game of life are the themes for this Edition*

### Home/Health:

I am pleased to share that my health has been good since the surgery in Summer 2018! To be honest it has been quite enjoyable not to have to do wound care or extra activities to stay healthy. The timing of good health could not be more ideal because I am recruiting and training new PCA's once again. I am no longer scaring potential candidates off due to unsightly wounds. After 2 ½ years, it was with a heavy heart, that I said thank you to Alex for exceptional care and good friendship-I lost him to graduation and his next steps in life. We were fortunate to enjoy the Greek Isles Cruise and many other adventures together!



Alex and JR on his retirement day

After three hurricanes in a row (2016, 2017, and 2018), climate change has certainly hit North Florida. Normally Tallahassee is the place everyone comes to hide during storms, but this is no longer the case. As you recall, Erika and I lost 18 trees during Hurricane Michael and the Mexico Beach area was literally wiped off the map. During the January 2019 Tropical Storm, we lost one of our last remaining trees. In all four cases, we lost power for days. Cleaning up after these storms is simply getting expensive and it frustrates me because I have no other choices, but to pay for labor. Also, because finding safe places to stay during storms is very challenging with



19<sup>th</sup> Tree down only 3 left and their time is coming

only 1% of hotels rooms equipped with roll-in showers. Therefore, we chose to install a Generac generator to avoid the hustle and bustle of emergency evacuation, and most importantly maintain the HVAC. Oh well, it is only money. Just the other day, both the newspaper and the TV stations ran pieces on the challenges that wheelchair bound persons were still facing with regards to the lack of accessible housing nine months post hurricane Michael. As a result, the generator seems like a wise investment.



New generator for house



FSU Big Event volunteers

We are most grateful for the annual FSU Big Event. With the help of ten volunteers we were able to get 18 trees replanted, the residual debris removed, and even some much overdue gardening done all in one afternoon late Spring. The Big Event enables hundreds of college students to volunteer throughout the community and provide thousands of much needed community service hours all at the same time. Tree planting made them hungry and Pizza Hut happy with the

bill!

### **Work:**

My primary job at Florida State University is going very well. Having my life tied to semesters makes each week and month pass at break-neck speed. Everyday there is an assignment, grading, lecture, or something else to prepare for. As I finish my third full year as a faculty member, I am still amazed by all the different things that are happening on campus all at the same time. I am pleased to share that as I start my fourth year at FSU, I will be moving from my position as an Instructional Specialist with the Office of the Provost to a new full-time position as a member of the College of Business, Management Department faculty. This is great news but will require some increases in my teaching load and a reduction in some of my service activities. I find that I have been working harder than I ever have, but I love every minute of it. I will be building a new course for the Fall called “Workforce Inclusion for Persons with Disabilities” and it will be offered to a broader cohort of students within the College, not just the Management Department. The key will be

to maintain engagement and gradable assignments, but not to overwhelm myself in terms of timely student feedback-this will be a work-in-progress.

In my spare time, I have continued my role as a grant reviewer for the **International Toyota Mobility Unlimited Challenge**, the Christopher Reeves Foundation, and re-engaging my consulting activities. Balancing all these diverse endeavors keeps me on my toes and perhaps working more than Erika would like.

☺ The Mobility Challenge for Toyota was really cool because the finalists are being invited to attend the 2020 Paralympics in Tokyo. And, during the Paralympics, the world will get a glimpse at how mobility for persons with spinal cord injuries is changing with smart technology, AI, controlled center of gravity, and related navigational controls for power assisted devices. Such innovations may prevent people from running over people, hitting walls, getting pressure sores, and finding their way around town all at the same time.

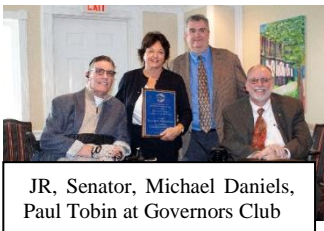
Presenting at professional conferences is always one of my favorite “HAM activities” and the Southwest International Rehab event in South Florida was most enjoyable. The slide found within the picture captures how far we still have to go for full inclusion in the workforce. The participation rate difference is nearly 40% between those with disabilities and those without. Our unemployment rate is currently 8.9% as opposed to 3.3%.



IARP conference January 2019

Over the weekend of June 6-9, 2019, I will be presenting at the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Family Café Conference. This event brings approximately 10k persons with disabilities under one roof at the sometime. It is quite the circus with lines for elevators, not

everyone getting ADA rooms, and the hotel staff struggling to keep up with all of us. Every Spring brings the state legislature to town and FFAST chose to recognize Senator Passidomo as the leader of the year for her support of Assistive Technology (AT).



JR, Senator, Michael Daniels, Paul Tobin at Governors Club

I am beginning to ponder ideas for the 2020 legislative session because it will correspond with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ADA. I need to think of some meaningful legacy items for some of the members to champion. As we all know, timing is everything and I need to maximize this opportunity to make a difference! I would welcome any ideas from any of my world travelers and or seasoned advocates with disabilities. What do we need to strengthen or change? What should we introduce? And, what might be a system's change that could have the biggest impact to recognize the past 30 years or to celebrate the next 30 years?

In May I presented at the Fair Housing Symposium to a group of about 50



JR talking to participants at Symposium

building professionals in West Palm Beach, Florida. With Erika's help I planned and executed an accessibility scavenger hunt during the training. Because there were so many barriers at the hotel, it was

a perfect activity- one they all enjoyed. The barriers created some very teachable experiences for these architects, contractors, and inspectors. The scavenger hunt was unlike any other continuing education experience they have ever had and my evaluations were excellent.

### **PLAY:**

Erika and I decided to enjoy Christmas 2018 in Naples. We do always enjoy this historic Beach Club. It is a 4-generation owned family business. Sadly, it is being sold-off under the guise of progress, but change comes to everywhere-even old Florida. We hope to get down there once maybe two more times before change occurs!



Christmas in Naples 2018

My University of Choice Initiative created a partnership with campus recreation and



Goal Ball demonstration at FSU

together we hosted a Goal Ball demonstration for the community. For those who are unfamiliar with Goal Ball, it is a unique Paralympic sport that includes people with and without disabilities. It is a little like bowling and dodge ball combined. The challenge is to do it without being able to see. The participants must hear the ball coming and block it. The participants can hear the ball because it has a bell in it. Because of the success of the event, it is our hope to host another demonstration/competition during Disability Employment and Awareness Month in October 2019.

Being in the Sunshine State, watersport activities are important.

Now that I no longer have a hole in my backside; it was a real pleasure to get back in the water and scuba dive once again. This picture is on my way to the backyard pool for practice. Truth be



Jose taking JR scuba diving

told I was out of practice and did panic a little bit, but thanks to my trusted dive companion Dr. Gabriel Gabrielle, I was able to recover my wits quickly.

A day on the water is always fun and using this new boat design by Bird Dog Boating makes getting off-and-on a lot easier! It is our hope to have a few of these boats



Trying the new accessible boat

spread across Florida to enable PWD's to fish and take eco-tours with greater ease. While the sun was not out for our day, it was still a great time to be on the St. Marks's Bay.

Many art experts are well aware of the famous Florida Highwaymen who specialized in vibrant landscape portraits of Florida. To this end, here comes the



**Wheelchair Highwaymen!** On **March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019** in Gainesville, we had our first showing. In truth, I had no idea what to expect, but about 200 people showed up for an evening of music, wine, and art. Incredibly we sold 50 pictures in 3 hours. Here is a copy of our flyer, a link to some of the action, and for anyone needing office or home artwork please look at our website and consider purchasing a piece! It is our goal to use proceeds to support the PWD community as it relates to outdoor access.

Microsoft had the most dynamic and inclusive Superbowl Commercial of 2019 and some said it was the best: **We all Win.** While travelling in Atlanta during Super Bowl week, I had the pleasure of running into Franco Harris of the Pittsburgh Steelers (The Immaculate Catch) of Super Bowl LIII.



From left: Calvin (PCA) JR (middle) and Franco Harris (right)

As the Summer season arrives, Erika and I look forward to the amusement parks in Orlando over the fourth of July (Hoping it is not 100 degrees). It is time for me to ride the roller coasters again and get another picture before I get too old. To the right is a photo of me riding the Kraken back in 2003 at SeaWorld. (first on the left, middle row).



JR (far left, middle) riding the Kraken at SeaWorld in 2003

In August we will be heading to Hawaii for our big trip of the summer. In the meantime, we hope that all is well with each if you. May your Summers be filled with family, fun, and making memories!

JR and Erika