

JR News

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Spring/Summer 2021
WORK, HOME AND PLAY

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

Home/Health:

First, we hope all is well with you and your families. We are pleased to share that all of us have been vaccinated, including my personal care assistants (PCAs) and my mother-in-law. The first shot was a little hard on me with physical pain for a few days (like a Charlie horse that would never go away) and some very mild flu-like symptoms. The second dose was seamless. Erika and I both carry our vaccine cards on us. One never knows when they might be needed and they might be required for travel.

On a related note, I am pleased to share that team JR has kept me fit as a fiddle. I just cannot cheat mother nature and the aging process. This year, we both will have hit one of those demographic mile stones by checking the 55 and older box. It has been quite an amazing journey. I remember when the doctors told my parents that “...he might get 20 good years.” That was 38 years, and 2 spinal cord injuries, ago.

Later this week, I will be receiving a new power-wheelchair. It has taken 6 months worth of time and energy to get it approved and in my hands. The prices associated with these high-end, mobility devices are simply outrageous. The retail cost for my new chair is \$18k. Fortunately, only \$2700 is out of pocket. These out of pocket expenses are for features that insurance deems as not absolutely necessary for active independent living – imagine that. They interpret mobility needs as those limited to the house and not real-world requirements. This is one of the short-comings of our national healthcare public policy. On a related frustrating note, I can only get a new chair every 5 years. This can be quite annoying because I have had to replace the batteries on my current chair 3 different times, the motors, and the tires all during the past 5 years. It is like maintaining a car. The cost of power-wheelchair batteries are equivalent to high-end cars at \$350 a pop. Not to mention the time and the frustrations with getting stuck in the parking lot (when the batteries just die)- I cannot go to Walmart and get new ones.

PLAY:

In all honesty, my fatigue with the COVID lock-down expired around Thanksgiving 2020. It was probably related to way too much zoom time with classes and not enough consulting, volunteer time, and leisure travel. As a result, we did Thanksgiving with mom and dad in South Florida, Christmas in Naples, New Years in Key West, and boating in Tampa.



Erika boating with Captain JR



JR and Erika waving goodbye to 2020 in Key West



Miniature golf with Mom and Dad

Summer 2021 will be equally as busy. We have San Francisco, Atlanta, Williamsburg, Baltimore, and Savannah all on the schedule. The California trip will be quick, but it will be nice to see Erika’s gradeschool friends, some Culver Military Academy friends, and our nieces and nephews. The tour of the South East will be a 10 day road trip with the primary goal of attending a wedding. Its our hope to go about 5 hours each day and stop in dynamic cities along the way for fun, regional cuisines, and historical activities. Erika is most excited about the Truist Atlanta Open 2021...we have 2 days of tickets. Because of the size of the venue, we will literally be courtside. Maybe we’ll get lucky and see some of the top talent as they get prepared for the US Open in August. We should be back in time to ensure that I am well prepared for this fall semester and face-to-face classes again.

WORK:

Work is going very well. I am pleased to share that FSU is not only a great place to work and learn, but recently moved up the National Rankings within the [US News & World Report](#). A number of our programs broke the top 20 in their field among public research universities. On a related note, FSU and my colleagues chose to

promote me. I will be moving from Teaching Faculty I to Teaching Faculty II. There are no changes to my duties with the promotion, just a very modest pay increase and a longer contract. As a member of what FSU classifies as “Specialized Faculty,” I can earn one more promotion until I reach the top spot in my track. This can be done before I reach retirement age. My reviews from the customers (the students) continue to be very high and my post-semester reviews are consistently higher than both the department and university-wide measures. While I certainly know that I do not roll on water, it feels good to receive positive feedback. I do enjoy reading the students’ comments, even some of the hyperbolic comments. From time to time, some of the students provide very meaningful and actionable suggestions.

Mid-June, I am excited to take a group of students to the Annual [Family Café](#) in Orlando. They will be presenting on *learning and thriving* within the COVID environment while also living with a disability. For most of them, this is their first “professional” conference, and they are super excited about going on a road trip. We present Saturday morning at 11 am on June 12th. This is a prime slot and we should have many attendees joining our session.

Last newsletter, I mentioned my work with [Rish Park](#) (our preferred beach get-away). It’s only 2 hours away and has the right balance with nature, accessibility and a rustic feel. Sadly, it has been closed for 2 ½ years from Hurricane Michael. Working with some colleagues (Friends of Risk Park), we successfully lobbied for and secured \$2 million to help modernize the park and serve as a catalyst for reopening. It is my hope that this infusion of capital might make the long wait worth while. To help with our advocacy, we posted a few articles in the paper

([Tallahassee Democrat](#) and the [Gainesville Sun](#)) and have a petition going to drive change with a [video link](#) to show that Rish Park is functional. Please feel free to sign it. The petition can be found [here](#).

On a different public policy issue, The Florida Association of Centers for Independent Living was very successful in advocating for the [James Patrick Memorial Program](#). This work force incentive program helps offset the high cost of personal care services for individuals with disabilities who need personal care assistance to work. As you know, I rely on my PCAs greatly, and without the James Patrick Program my quality of life would be much lower. Significantly, our bill this year passed in both the House and the Senate without a single “no” vote. I would like to believe [my article in the Tallahassee Democrat](#) helped pave the way to our success. It is amazing what bipartisan support can achieve when our elected officials work together. It is important to give Senator Aaron Bean (R) a shoutout, because without his leadership, the program may have lost its sustainability and capacity to incentivise PWDs to work.

Community:

Erika and I remain immensely grateful to both the Tallahassee and FSU community. Every year, the students plan the “Big Event.” It is a multi-university day of



volunteerism in which hundreds of students make a difference in the community. We feel very lucky to have been a part of their Big Event for many years. This year, 2021, we had a team of girls from the [Perishing Angels](#) group who dedicate their time to

make a difference in our lives. The Perishing Angels are a co-ed Drill team passionate about service for others. With their discipline and military precision, they outworked any previous group we have had. We painted the trim on the house, planted trees, and pulled weeds. During the pizza lunch we had an opportunity to get to know one another. We sent the Perishing Angels home with a few extra boxes of pizza.

My friend and colleague, Blake Dowling (CEO of Aegis Business Technologies), was most kind in [his January 2021 article](#) by including me and my book “Now What?” within the piece. Should you or your company ever need some cyber-security coaching/solutions, I recommend Blake and [Aegis](#) to anyone.

I continue to bowl with team JR, but have not managed to beat my high score of 170. Bowling continues to be a great way to do some team-building, group schedule planning, and good old-fashioned fun. Until we talk again, be safe and be well!



JR Summer 2021