

JR News

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Spring 2022

WORK, HOME AND PLAY

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

Some highlights for the Spring 2022 newsletter include good health, work, play, and new adventures for Summer 2022.

Home/Health:

My health is better than it has been in a while. It's hard to imagine all of the ups and downs over the last 2 years with COVID. It is such a relief to have it in the rear-view mirror rather than constantly being on edge with the unknowns regarding supplies, PCA schedules, and work. It was a tremendous strain, but I am extremely grateful to the selfless dedication of Team JR.



Throughout these 2 years, my team fluctuated between 3 and 6 people weekly due to COVID exposure. For a brief stretch, I was operating with a bare bone team of three folks for all 4 shifts. I will be forever grateful to Kearn, Ian, Brian, Katie, and Gracie. Their parents are also in my debt. They did not force their sons or daughters to give up their part-time jobs knowing what an important role they play in my

independence and overall health. Of course, I cannot leave Erika out of this mix.

She was the glue that kept the pieces together. In all honestly, some days just simply being a quadriplegic was about all I could handle. I would be remised if I did not mention the role of our pets. They give unbridled love and support and are loyal... so long as you keep the water bowl full and the treats coming.



With my health better than it has been in a long time, I can focus more on experiencing life rather than merely living it. In truth, a smaller team is better than a larger one. They are more accountable to one another and are able to maintain their skill at a much higher level. However, it is more demanding on these young people, and when they lose the time to be young, footloose, and unaccountable, it has a draining effect on their motivation. As I continue to age as a Quadriplegic and my needs increase, I will need to find a way to keep the team smaller in numbers (maybe 3 or 4, but not 6) to help ensure the quality, yet the flexibility of the PCAs.

The one challenge in all of this is the cost. We are all feeling inflation at the gas station and grocery store, but out of pocket expenses for healthcare are simply out of hand. Worse, minimum wage will continue to rise here in FL for the next 3 years. I have to stay competitive in order to maintain my team. This may mean some sacrifices with quality-of-life issues in the future. So glad I own my home... I don't think I could afford it today.

PLAY:

The favorite play activity for Erika and I is travel. We had the pleasure of many “once in a lifetime” trips (the Greek Isles, Australia, Hawaii, etc.), and most recently, we spent Christmas 2021 in Puerto Rico. This was our first time to this Caribbean paradise but will not be our last. As an American territory, it has some advantages that some of the other Caribbean islands do not – mainly their compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). That means accessible transportation, roll-in showers, ramps, and access to parks, museums, and other public places. We got very lucky with the prices by booking in 10 months out and using some Marriott points for a few nights of our stay.



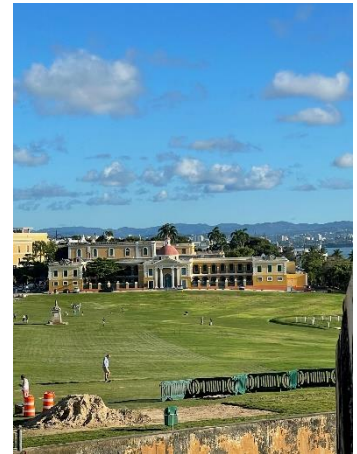
While our property was not a 5 Star or in the Old Town, it was perfect for our needs and taste. The accessible room with a roll-in shower, balcony view of the water, a pool lift, and a beach in rolling distance were just a few of the amenities. In fact, my



favorite spot to read was about 15 yards from the beach (a nice little pathway taking me straight to the sand) with an uninterrupted view of the surf.

Together, Erika and I read 6 books (3 each) in the Caribbean sun. We also had a chance to take in some of the must-see sights in PR. The double rainbow off our balcony one morning was simply a wonder of nature. We were most lucky with the weather – no rain for the duration of our trip! For those of you who are uninitiated to this spectacular island, please watch out for the tree chickens! It is said to be on the menu at most places. They grow big there...





With Mom and Dad getting older, we used spring break as an opportunity to visit with them. Erika, bless her heart, visited both set of parents (on opposite ends of the country) within the same 10-day window. While in California, she was also able to get in a little tennis at the annual BNP Tennis Open. As some of you might recall, last summer we took in the Atlanta Tennis tournament during our tour of the East Coast. While at the tournament, serendipitously, we were included in one of the tennis players social media ads. This time, Erika and her girlfriends were included in the Mardy Fish tennis film. It can be found on Netflix called *Untold: Breaking*

Point. Here, Erika and her girls are shown getting autographs. We were able to clip this picture straight from the movie feed – got to love computers. Who knows what will happen this year at the 2022 Truist Open in Atlanta?



As soon as Rish Park opens for overnight stays, we plan to book a couple long weekends at the beach. The new cottages look fabulous, and it's been a long three years since we have enjoyed the Park. Remember, this is the place where Erika accepted my proposal 17 years ago.

Most excitingly, we are off to South Africa for a 12-day adventure in the bush to see the animals, and hopefully not the bugs. More to come on this story later.

While the FSU football team is still rebuilding, the “Unconquered” spirit continues with the third National Championship by the FSU Women’s Soccer team!

One of the all-time greats of college basketball coaches, “Coach K”, retired at the end of the 2021-22 season. I had the pleasure of being in attendance for the FSU/Duke game January 18, 2022, where the Seminoles won in an overtime victory against the Blue Devils... It was college basketball at its best!

WORK:



My teaching, advocacy, and consulting keeps me terribly busy, but engaged. First, I must highlight State Rep. Persons-Mulicka (R) for her steadfast support of the James Patrick Memorial Program. With her leadership and the support of many others, it was one of those rare pieces of legislation that passed without objection. This is a unique State of Florida work incentive program for persons with disabilities.

While in the capital, I took the time to make the rounds and insure our support for [Rish Park](#). With the Governor's support and the leadership of State Rep. Shoaf (R), State Rep. Allison Tant (D), and State Senator Ausley (D), we were able to get \$6.7 million into the budget. See the article from the [Tallahassee Democrat](#). These dollars are going to help with group cabin upgrades, RV sites, nature trails, and more. We hope to be there sometime this summer.



As an undergrad English major, I did a lot of reading. It is fascinating how some of our great authors' observations apply to life so well. "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm" – Ralph Waldo Emerson. If nothing else, I have enthusiasm for life and equal access.

Speaking of achieving, I was very touched to learn that my “Workforce Inclusion” course received the [2022 AACSB Award](#). This course is about inclusion, equal access, and empowerment. Student feedback over the years has been outstanding. The only problem is that I keep adding to the material and running out of days to teach. Now, I need to work on brevity with high impact. I am starting to map the Fall 2022 schedule and brevity is proving to be illusive.



It was great to get back out on the speaker circuit earlier this year. I provided the keynote presentation to the annual American Board of Vocational Experts Conference in Tampa. The [feedback](#) from these experts affirmed that my message is strong. Again, I need to work on brevity 😊... I ran a little over my 60-minute time limit, but no one looked at their cell phones. These professionals behave better than my students.

We have all seen and heard about the future of transportation – electric vehicles (EV). However, this innovation does not address the needs of PWDs well, and it’s a space I want to [highlight](#) and ensure that PWDs can maintain their independence and employment in this new green world.

Have a great Summer! Erika and I are off to South Africa!