

Spotlight On: Don Long

Get to know this **Lake Nona Regional Chamber of Commerce** leader and his vision for supporting smart business growth within the fast-developing community.

By Kaitlyn Fusco

Don Long, a retired U.S. Marine and former Public Affairs Chief of the Marine Corps at The Pentagon, became the first president/CEO of the Lake Nona Regional Chamber of Commerce. His mission is to provide support and resources for local business owners as the area continues to grow.

“The **Lake Nona** region is rapidly growing, and my goal is to keep up with it by providing each business, small or large, with opportunity, progress and support,” Long says. “We provide opportunities for members, we give tools and resources to help them progress, and then we provide support to continue their growth.”

The chamber was created in 2013 and was run by volunteers until Long was hired. His first initiative was to create a strategic business plan, which included the addition of a business development manager, who also happened to be his wife.

“The board of directors actually made that decision and motioned to hire my wife **Madelyn**, who served in the military with me

and had 17 years of experience with the Saint Cloud Chamber of Commerce,” Long says. “Since her start, our membership has more than doubled to almost 400 businesses.”

Madelyn is responsible for membership and daily operations and says working with her husband is easy. She says he “understands the needs of businesses and organizations, is always available to meet or answer a call. He is at every event and has the connections to help them receive whatever they need to succeed.”

The chamber hosts monthly events, such as breakfasts, luncheons and special lectures from prominent government officials and other community leaders.

“It’s more than just networking, it’s about being involved and making sure the community is a place you and your business can grow,” Long says.

Long continues to incorporate what he learned in the military to his duty as the chamber’s president and CEO.

“The Marines teach you a goal without a plan is still just a dream,

so I still live life that way,” he says. “Integrity is always the most important leadership trait in the Marine Corps, so I still do my best to exercise integrity every day.”

Before joining the chamber, Long served 27 years in the Marine Corps, where he primarily served as a combat correspondent as a print, broadcast and photojournalist, and achieved the highest ranking of Master Gunnery Sergeant. After he retired from the military, he graduated with honors in business management from the University of Phoenix. He then served as the chair and interim president of the St. Cloud Chamber of Commerce after more than 10 years with the organization.

Today, Long enjoys his own yacht brokerage business and likes to spend time on the water skiing, cruising or fishing; spending time with Madelyn, their daughter and her family; and making unique cocktails for himself and his wife.

You can learn more about the Lake Nona Regional Chamber of Commerce and how to become a member at lakenonacc.org. **L**



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