

Oh, Central Florida, “How We Love Thee”

By Don Long, Lake Nona Regional Chamber of Commerce



It seems proper as Valentine's Day arrives to express our affections for the exciting region we call home. There is much to appreciate ranging from our welcoming diverse citizenry to our stupendous variety of local destinations that bring abundant joy and recreation to local residents and visitors from around the globe. No wonder WalletHub chose Central Florida as the 2021 second most fun area in the United States to visit and live. This supports **Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer's** sentiments, *“I love that our community is a vibrant, compassionate place to live; I am proud to be an Orlando resident and Mayor of our wonderful city.”*

Why not be in love with Central Florida when it brings an environment with a more than 90% high school graduation rate. This is more than 5% above the national average according to the Florida Department of Education. On the municipal district level, **Orlando District 1** (including Lake Nona) **Commissioner Jim Gray** expressed one of his reasons for loving Central Florida, *“I love that all of our Lake Nona schools are A rated.”* These A rated schools start the chain of helping to build strong family ties. A substantial portion of the region's high school gradu-

ates choose to remain near home when they seek higher education taking advantage of Central Florida's 35 upper-level educational opportunities that include universities, community colleges and technical schools. Add to that 99.6% of the region enjoys connections to high-speed digital communications as reported by BroadbandNow.com and the stage is set for a growing productive workforce building a bright future.

Now the fun reasons to love Central Florida. Let us start with more than 300 recreational destinations ranging from trails and nature parks to the numerous lake and river areas. For those seeking more active pass times the region's tourist destinations bring enjoyment for the entire family. Though too many to list here, readers should research opportunities they have missed that will include destinations both old and new to find an attraction they have never or not recently visited. The opportunities for family fun right here in Central Florida abound.

Want to explore the world gastronomically? Try the internet to find a gastronomic destination in Central Florida. Orange County alone offers more than 5,000 culinary destinations where one can

select from specialized fast foods or recipes from around the world. The variety is hugely impressive and enviable to most other regions. Central Florida also vaunts at least 10 Michelin Star culinary destinations according to Yelp.

For me as the leader of Lake Nona Regional Chamber of Commerce I should also recognize the opportunities presented in the region by our supportive government officials, community investors and civic organizations. Central Florida is fortunate with local governments, who choose to work together to promote and protect our community. **Orange County District 4 Commissioner, Maribel Gomez-Cordero** supports this by saying, *“I am proud to have Lake Nona in my District, as it is known as a community of and for the future.”* Lake Nona is one of the fastest growing communities in the country according to several local media outlets. Add to this the numerous commercial interests and volunteer organizations that invest in their communities and one finds a melting pot of progressive ideas and support for the citizenry.

“Roses are red, and violets are blue.”
Central Florida, we love you. **L**

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