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Fashion Designers Runway Showcase Comes To Lake Square Mall



of the latest designer pieces for swimwear, urban street wear, and formal and casual wear for men and women Saturday, December 10, 2022.

The 11th Annual Fashion Designers Runway Showcase, a three-day fashion experience held in Leesburg, Florida, placed the city into a new orbit- the world of fashion. Produced by Bella Faire Event Productions and hosted by Lake Square Mall, the unique fashion event included a Meet n Greet, an industry mixer, on Thursday, December 8th, The Boutique Fashion Showcase, Friday, December 9, and the Masquerade Ball, a Red Carpet affair Saturday, December 10.

The Masquerade Ball, said Ms. Vonda Parker, owner of Bella Faire Event Productions, "was a huge success! One that will go down in fashion world history as one of the most creative fashion

runway showcases in Central Florida."

Masquerade Ball hosts were International Super Runway Diva Shay, Zelda Field Polk, Jessica Karen, and Captain Scott Mack really engaged the attendees and enhanced the fashion experience where the professional models "really put it down, moving swiftly from one outfit to another," said Mrs. Vonda.

Also to be noted is that the actual runway is a bowling lane at Lake Square Mall which was transformed into a runway, and according to Mrs. Vonda, the transformation was historical. The whole fashion event was impressive for Mrs. Vonda. "It was the uniqueness that designers brought to the event, showcasing their creative arts and bringing awareness to each designer and to each model on the runway."

The fashion event brought awareness and will benefit the VMAX for One Community, Inc.'s Youth Creative Arts Program, which teaches the art of fashion to youth and adults up to 30 years old. The program is the brainchild of Max, the founder of the program and Vonda, his wife, the co-founder. The creative arts fashion program is sponsored and housed at Lake Square Mall 10401 US HWY 441 in Leesburg, Florida.

Designers included Niece Caguas; Jasmine Flower, Sharon Daniel, Yvonne Krystman, A. R. Crown, Vanessa Henderson, and Gordy Jimenez. PX Photography and Classic Frame Films performed the photography.

BY LOUIS C. WARD
LEESBURG - A diverse and exquisite group of 22 professional male and female models illuminated the runway when they flaunted some

Orange County Library System Kicks Off 100 Year Celebration



ORLANDO – In 2023, Orange County Library System turns 100 years old. To celebrate, the library will hold a 100 Year Celebration, with events taking place at library branches all year long, beginning with a kickoff at the Orlando Public Library on January 7. The kickoff will feature a rededication of the library to the community, live music and a virtual reality tour of the original Albertson Public Library, as well as storytimes, refreshments and activities throughout the day.

Orange County Library System traces its roots to the donation of more than 12,000 books from the collection of Captain Charles Albertson, a retired police inspector from New York who spent winters in Orlando. Albertson contributed his book collection to the city on the condition that a permanent library be built to house it, and

the city complied. Additional materials were provided by the Sorosis of Orlando Women's Club and the City of Orlando.

On November 8, 1923, the Albertson Public Library, located at the corner of Central Boulevard and Rosalind Avenue, opened its doors for the first time. That single library, with its collection of approximately 20,000 books, evolved to eventually become today's Orange County Library System. The library is now made up of 15 locations, with new branches planned for Lake Nona and Horizon West. It circulates more than 3 million items per year.

The public is invited to join the library in its 100 Year Celebration. Every location will host events throughout the year, and the library is focused on several special events that will bring nationally known speakers to Orlando, including

author and Top Chef contestant Kwame Onwuachi in February. Additional author events and speakers will be announced in 2023.

As part of the centennial celebration, a new commemorative logo has been created to be featured on library materials and on limited edition merchandise for sale at the Orlando Public Library's Gifts & Greetings shop. Visit the OCLS Youtube page to view the logo reveal video.

For more information about the 100 Year Celebration, visit ocls.info/100.
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Mailbox Money Community Foundation: Giving Randomly And Intentionally



Group of volunteers at a recent neighborhood Mailbox Money Community Foundation random act of kindness event

BY TRISH MARSHALL, GUEST WRITER TO THE TIMES
WINTER SPRINGS - 'Tis the season to be jolly! One of the key messages of Christmas is giving and one Central Florida based organization has taken the concept to the highest height. The organization is called Mailbox Money Community Foundation and its members

A group of about 50 volunteers, on behalf of Mailbox Money, recently showed up at a Winter Springs neighborhood, singing Christmas carols, dancing, and handing out \$8,000 in unwrapped Christmas gifts.

"Hey, look at all of the happy givers," said Veneita Knight, one of the volunteers/engagers at the recent event. She recorded several videos of the event and posted them on Facebook.

The mission of the foundation is accomplished by a team – founder, board members and members also known as engagers who donate \$10.47 each month to make the year-round giving happen. It's a huge network of people from 18 states within in the United States.

"We are just regular people, not funded by big corporations but by people who care about making the world better...people who believe in a kinder, gentler world," said Founder Joe Ferrer, in a recent interview. "We believe there's a place for this type of giving. People are watching and want to be a part."

He said sometimes people don't give to causes because they believe

what they have is not enough, but "we believe in micro-philanthropy in which people give small amounts of money (\$1-\$25) rather than larger amounts to support a cause or person."

He started the foundation with that belief and a couple of dozen years of experience as a financial advisor. "Being in the top 5% of financial advisors worldwide, people would often ask the key to my success, and I would tell them - giving. When I started giving faithfully, is when my career took off."

The vision, over the years, got bigger and bigger and now the vision is to become global, Ferrer said.

"We believe in a world where everyone can be a giver by participating in organized micro-philanthropy thereby creating a happier, more generous, kind and united society."

Ferrer, born in New York but raised in Seminole County (Lake Howell High School graduate), is a former Notre Dame football player who also played football professionally in Canada. He is joined on his board by: Braxton Skinner, Stephanie Skinner, Debi Gold; Minerva Ferrer, Matthew

Chase and Paula Keyes.

His passion about giving oozed out during the interview, talking about the process in taking on events like the one in the Winter Springs neighborhood (which is typical for the organization four to five times per year) and the countless stories he gets from people who either gave something or received something.

One mother at the neighborhood "surprise" said she had wanted to get her daughter a Play-Doh set for her birthday several weeks ago. "On that day she just happened to get the biggest Play-Doh set out there!" Recently, Ferrer and a small group of engagers went to a restaurant and decided to give \$500 a piece to the dishwasher, the hostess and the shortest waitress working at the time.

"We're doubling down on kindness, making kindness cool – with money behind it."

In the past three years, the team has raised \$70,000, starting from nothing. Ferrer said.

To learn more about the foundation, visit the website: www.globalmailboxmoney.com

Holiday Vendor Extravaganza

BY LOUIS C. WARD
LEESBURG - Venetian Center in Leesburg looked like a sophisticated vendors Jamboree when more than 65 vendors, selling all kinds of products and hundreds of and people - possible buyers, took over the grand ballroom of the recently built community building at 1 Dozier Circle in Leesburg, Florida, Saturday, December 2, 2022 from 12 to 4 pm.

The actual event was a Holiday Vendor Extravaganza sponsored by Wealthy Entrepreneurs, Inc., a business venture created by Sonja and Nate Sanders.

Holiday Vendor Extravaganza, started in 2021 "to bring a variety of entrepreneurs together to empower people to enhance generational innovations, skills and knowledge while lifting up the next generation," stated Mrs. Sanders.

A variety of products were available, including clothes, jewelry, cigars, essential oils and teas, Greek paraphernalia, food, baby bundles and more.

"I was impressed with all the amazing vendors who came out to showcase their talents and the overwhelming support of the community," said Mrs. Sanders.

Hosted twice a year during the summer and the holidays, the next Holiday Vendor Extravaganza is scheduled for July 6, 2023, and according to Mrs. Sonja, "vendors are excited and ready to be a part of the next event -Summertime Vendor JAMBoree."

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