

OPINION

Central Florida 100

Our panel of 100 influential leaders discusses the most important issues affecting you.

To read responses from more Central Florida 100 participants, go to OrlandoSentinel.com/cf100

THE TOP STORIES LAST WEEK

TOUGH CUSTOMERS
Andrae Bailey, founder/president, Charge Everything. Emeril's Orlando, located at Universal CityWalk, has announced that it will close its doors on July 7 after 19 years of operation. This is another example to our community of the tremendously competitive environment for restaurants and hotels in Central Florida. Even though our region entertains more than 61 million visitors per year, restaurants and hotels must compete for every customer and must work hard to build and retain a clientele. So when we see restaurants of this caliber closing for good, it reminds us how important it is to support those establishments we enjoy.

CELEBRATE CHILDREN
Gary Cain, president, Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida. More than 1,000 community leaders gathered to support the mission of Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida on Friday. Being a two-class community begins with the realization that today's children are tomorrow's adults. If we don't invest in our youth, particularly disadvantaged children without access to quality after-school care, enrichment programs and strong role models, then we'll reap what we sow. The community support I witnessed gives me great hope for the future of our region.

RING TO THE RESCUE
Earl Crittenden Jr., president, ONEPulse Foundation. Ever arrive home and discover your expected Amazon delivery is not by your front door — or anywhere else for that matter? If so, notorious porch pirates may have struck. Now, there's hope on the horizon. The Orlando City Council recently allowed the front doorbell/video technology company Ring to work with police to access about 10,000 Orlando users' videos that can work to solve package thefts. One homeowner's Ring system recently sent an instant notification to him that there was activity by his front door. The Ring device recorded video that led to the arrest of the perpetrators, who had also hit other homes.

STROLLING GATORS
Ernest DeLoach, lawyer, DeLoach Law LLC. There seems to be a terrible misconception about minority students who choose to attend predominantly white institutions of higher education. Whatever the reason for the decision, it should never be an abandonment of minority students' cultural traditions and celebrations of heritage. It's no surprise, then, that graduating African-American students at University of Florida commencement exercises opted to invoke short "strolls" evocative of historically black fraternities and societies. What was surprising and disappointing was a UF faculty member's decision to physically remove those students from the stage. It was a poor display of appreciation for diversity and sullies a special moment for those students who chose a moment of individuality as members of the non-homogenous Gator Nation.

PULSE MEMORIAL
Tom Dyer, attorney, founder of Watermark. The second anniversary of the Pulse mass shooting is

hunger. The Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive brought in 71 million pounds of food last year and is likely to do the same this year. All you do is leave a bag of nonperishable food items by your mailbox, and your letter carrier grabs it for you. These items will be donated to local food banks and will serve the needy.

THIS IS AMERICA
T.J. Legacy-Cole, political organizer/community activist. "I'm calling the police!" White people call the police on law-abiding African-Americans for the same reason Carolyn Bryant Donham accused Emmett Till, a 14-year-old black boy, of whistling at her in 1955, which subsequently led to his murder. They call because they can. The latest internet viral video trend isn't new at all. This is America. White people in this country subconsciously understand that at any point they can hide their prejudice behind the blue line of police agencies — because, historically speaking, law enforcement wasn't created in this country to protect African-Americans. Policy-makers need to create stricter laws, and enforce them, to punish those who make false claims against African-Americans during calls to 911.

SKILLS OVER COLLEGE
Kathleen Oropeza, co-founder, FundEducationNow.org. It's graduation season and the question of the hour is "where are you going?" Meaning college, of course. For most of their K-12 careers, students are told that everyone must go to college, earn at least a bachelor's degree and a stack of debt. All the while, lucrative skilled labor has been regularly ignored, creating a serious skills shortage. As a result, salaries for those jobs are climbing with corporations offering signing bonuses and benefits to lure smart students. We should honor graduates who choose skills over college and thank them for having a plan as they walk debt-free into a promising sustainable career.

YO-YO MA ON RESUMES
Beverly Paulk, founding member, Central Florida Foundation and The Orlando Philharmonic. The Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra ended its successful 25th season with a long-anticipated and sold-out performance Tuesday evening. Cellist Yo-Yo Ma and violinist Colin Jacobsen were perfectly matched and backed by the ever-wonderful Philharmonic. The visual impact of the Philharmonic women in colorful evening gowns and the men in tails added to the gorgeous music. For the perfect ending, 10 high school cellists and about 60 students on violins and violas lined the theater for the experience of their lives. Their resumes now include having played with the world-famous Yo-Yo Ma.

THE NEW TIGER
Larry Pino, attorney and entrepreneur. Seeing Tiger Woods' smiling face Thursday morning lightly sparring with Phil Mickelson on the Ponte Vedra links, it occurred to me that redemption does not hide from those who seek it. For Tiger, with a history well-known — maybe too well known — in Central Florida, it was a return to the game he had mastered years ago, even though surgeries and ibuprofen eased the pain. And even more so, it appears to have been a

LOOKING AHEAD THIS WEEK

FINAL STATE OF THE COUNTY
Chris Carmody, shareholder, GrayRobinson. On Friday afternoon, Mayor Teresa Jacobs will give her final State of the County address. The location is fitting — Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. Since her days as an Orange County commissioner, Jacobs has been an ardent supporter of this building and what it could mean to our community. It was she, as a commissioner, who pushed for the ranking of venues in the original deal to ensure that DPAC was not left behind. And it was under her term as mayor that the venues deal was reopened to allow for the completion of DPAC along with the upgraded Citrus Bowl. Our community has seen a lot in the past eight years, and I would encourage you to attend and hear about the successes and challenges ahead.

ROLLING HILLS VICTORY
Lee Constantine, commissioner, Seminole County. The ongoing saga of the Rolling Hills golf course took a positive twist as the citizens of the area voted to pay for cleaning up the course's contamination. This cleared the way for Seminole County to buy the property for a public park. Good for the citizens who stepped up to the plate, unlike property owners who used the angst of the residents to increase their sales price. The bigger picture now is the future redevelopment of many community courses in the area. A mutually beneficial strategy must be designed for each situation. Those who have purchased homes in these communities deserve their investment protected.

PRESCRIPTION SAVINGS
Jeff Hayward, president and CEO, Heart of Florida United Way. Families and individuals should be able to afford life-saving prescription medications to live healthier and happier lives. Through our partnership with FamilyWize, one of the longest-running prescription-savings programs in the country, we were able to help families in Central Florida save \$15 million dollars in prescription medications. FamilyWize is free, has no eligibility requirements and gives everyone access to its medications at an affordable cost. Both the insured and uninsured can save a considerable amount of dollars at the pharmacy and stay healthy.

TALKING TO NEIGHBORS, STRANGERS
Eric Jackson, president/CEO, Total Roof Services Corp. Almost weekly someone tells me that they read my comments in this Central Florida 100 segment. People politely stop me in stores, offices and even on the street. They tell me when they agree with or understand what I wrote, and they definitely tell me when they disagree with my thoughts. I suspect that other 100 members have similar stories and experiences. These are the very conversations with neighbors and strangers alike that can lower the barriers to dialogue that lead to vibrant communities. I want to again to commend the Orlando Sentinel for creating this forum.

THE IRAN WEDGE IN FLORIDA
Ric Keller, lawyer, former member of Congress. President Trump's decision to pull out of the Iran deal may have implications in Florida's Senate race between Rick Scott and Bill Nelson. Nelson supported the controversial Iran deal. Trump, Scott and Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu strongly opposed the Iran deal. Indeed, the most influential Jewish political organizations, such as AIPAC, support Trump's decision based upon Iran's perceived threat to our strongly loyal Israel. Florida's Jewish voters went for Hillary Clinton over Trump by a whopping 68 percent to 28 percent margin. This is a wedge issue. The most recent Florida Atlantic University poll has Scott now leading Nelson by four points.

FASTING, PRAYERS DURING RAMADAN
Muhammad Musri, president, Islamic Society of Central Florida. Ramadan begins Wednesday, and 1.8 billion Muslims across the world will be focusing for a month on fasting and prayers to improve their health, behavior and consciousness of God. Just like in Judaism and Christianity, fasting is a time of introspection, compassion and spirituality. It helps us experience hunger, which is afflicting thousands of children and adults in Central Florida. While fasting, we are encouraged to give in charity to alleviate hunger and poverty, so Muslims are donating Ramadan food boxes to needy families across Central Florida. Mosques throughout the area will serve free dinners every evening to all people.

WE'RE LOSING OUR WEIRD
Brendan O'Connor, editor in chief, Bungalowlover.com. As Orlando's cool interior becomes ever-greened and slicked-up, we're running the risk of losing what attracted people to live downtown in the first place: affordability and funk. Ivanhoe Village will soon be dwarfed by three massive developments. South Eola is a series of towers jammed between Lake Eola and the State Road 408, and Parramore is being called "western downtown" as it houses entertainment complexes, arenas and weekly parades of purple-bleeding soccer fans. How do we "keep it real" while simultaneously scaling up to live more dense, sustainable lives in urban cores? That's the rub.

MOTHER'S DAY WITHOUT MOM
María T. Padilla, Orlando Latino blog. Two Hurricane Maria evacuee children will spend Mother's Day without their mother, María Santiago-Burgos, who was slain in a Kissimmee motel, allegedly by a boyfriend. Evacuees temporarily housed in motels live a precarious existence, enduring high stress and many hardships as they seek to stabilize their lives. Each day they demonstrate grace and God-centeredness. They who have nothing have offered this visitor loving hospitality — coffee, flan, a bouquet in a hospital water jug — while sharing intensely personal stories. It is humbling. Please find it in your heart to help pay funeral expenses via a GoFundMe account established by the Episcopal Office of Latino Assistance.

