

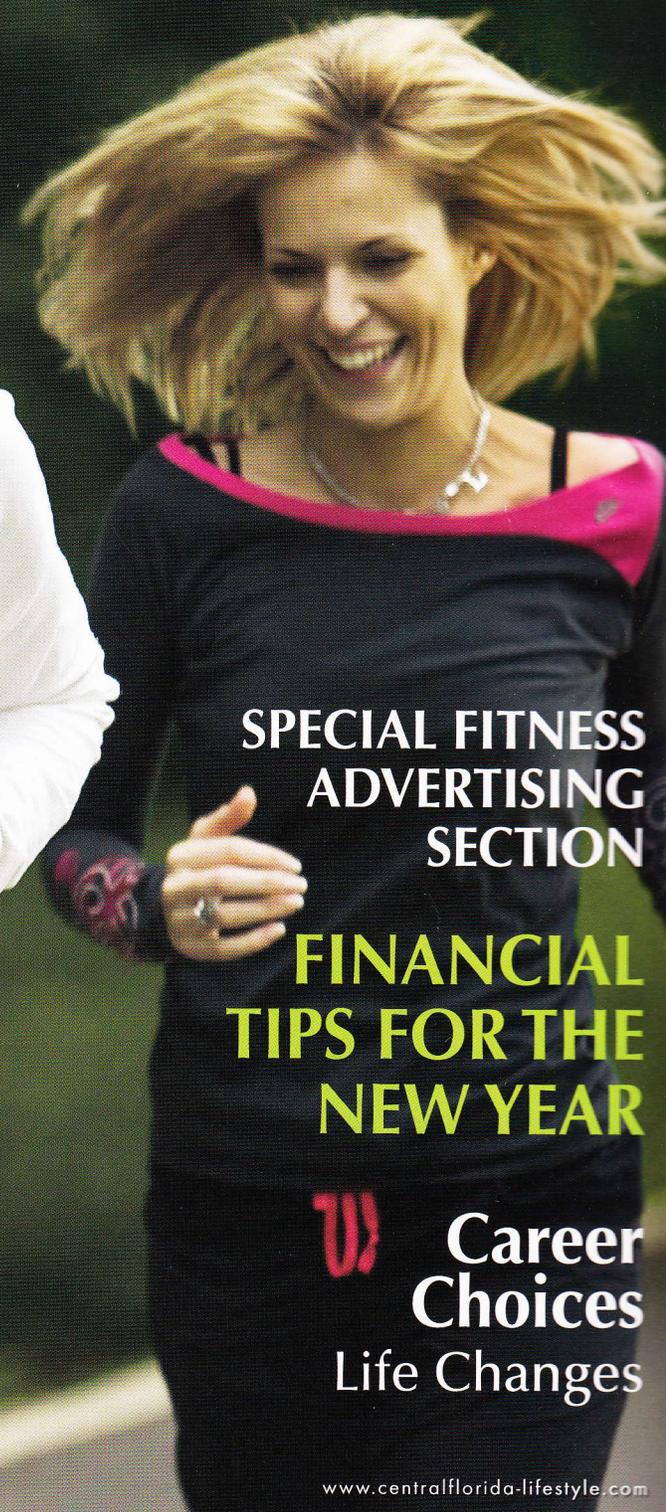
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Avalon Park · East Orlando

Central Florida's premier community magazine



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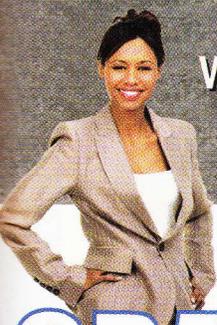
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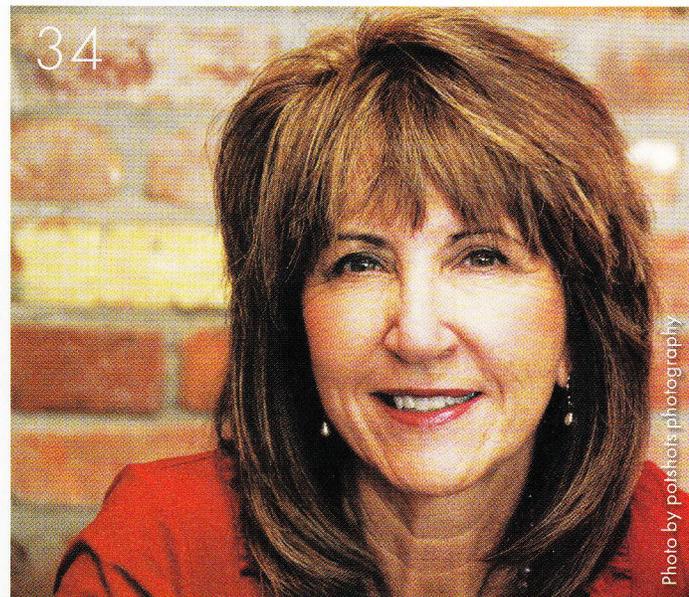
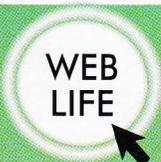


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# MAKING the BAND

By Matt Bendell

East Orlando's **Wildlife with Jungle Brass** band wants to make sure that everyone in their audience leaves happy.

Providing a true entertainment experience can be difficult, but for one East Orlando group, it's part of their blood. Wildlife, a versatile classic rock band made up of family members joined ranks with Jungle Brass, a rock band with horns several years ago. Together, they formed the musical group Wildlife with Jungle Brass, and, for them, performing is more than just a mere hobby. It's a passion. For the past three years, they have played in venues across East Orlando.

A tight-knit group, Wildlife with Jungle Brass consists of nine people. **Ted Skolits** (drums) is the bandleader and handles most of the bookings. His sons, **Ted Skolits, Jr.** (vocals and guitar) and **Kevin** (bass and percussion), play in the group. Friends **Ted Esler** (bass and trombone) his wife **Annette** (saxophone) and their son **David** (piano) also perform with the band. Other band members include **Brian Keene** (lead and rhythm guitar), **Willard Stevenback** (trumpet/flugelhorn) and **Keith Walls** (trombone).

Building a fan base and organizing performances can often be a challenge, but for Wildlife with Jungle Brass, bookings have been steady over the past year and a half. "There are so many local bands that just don't get gigs because they have no one to organize it," says Skolits, Jr. "We're thankful to have my dad to facilitate for us."

With all members working full time, they agree that finding the time to practice can be a struggle, but somehow they make time. Wildlife with Jungle Brass is also versatile when adjusting to various venues. "We specialize in a variety of entertainment settings, including large venues like conventions, music festivals and



The Wildlife with Jungle Brass band has nine local East Orlando members who perform everything from disco to current rock 'n' roll hits.

weddings," says Skolits. "Smaller venues such as country clubs, night clubs and private parties are also common gigs." Skolits says they usually have two bookings per month, and, ideally, they like to rehearse during the weeks in between.

Performing at non-profit events is something Wildlife with Jungle Brass also enjoys. "We determine this on a case by case basis," says Skolits. "We have performed at East Orlando's Relay for Life and at various Avalon Park community events."

All of the band members are multi-talented and can play various instruments. Practicing and keeping up with a current playlist is also essential, so even with their busy schedules, they are careful to use their time wisely. "We practice on Mondays and always make efficient use of our time," says Skolits, Jr. "Out of our three-hour weekly practice, we usually only have about 10 minutes of downtime,

so we always accomplish a lot."

The band members adapt to various situations and pride themselves on providing a rounded entertainment experience for any audience. "Communication and presentation is key," says Skolits. "Our goal is to have fun. That's why we do this."

"We specialize in rock 'n' roll, disco and classic rock with brass, music from the '70s to the '90s. We also can perform a list of current hit tunes quite easily," says Walls. "Due to the wide age range of the band members, we are very flexible in providing music for all ages."

Bandaraoke is a term that the group coined a few years ago, describing how they allow local musicians to join in on stage and jam to their favorite songs. "It's kind of like karaoke, but with a band," says Esler. Whether it's singing, guitar, keyboard or brass, anyone can participate if the band knows in advance. ■



Learn more about Wildlife with Jungle Brass band on our Web site at [www.CentralFlorida-Lifestyle.com](http://www.CentralFlorida-Lifestyle.com)



# The Inspiration of EDUCATION

By Matt Bendell | Photo by potshots photography

After a lifelong career in education, **Joanna Hayes** is proud to participate in the rewarding profession of teaching.

Originally from England, Joanna Hayes has spent her adult life living and teaching exceptional students in Florida.

Ever since she was a child, **Joanna Hayes** of **Avalon Park** knew she wanted to be a teacher. “I’d line up my stuffed animals and teach them when I was little,” says Hayes. “I used to love to play school with my friends, and, naturally, I was the teacher.” For someone like Hayes who also loves working with children, becoming a teacher seemed like a natural fit.

Hayes says she became involved in education because she loved school as a student, and she has accomplished a great deal during her 33-year career in Florida schools. After 31 years of teaching in Broward County, Hayes moved with her husband to be nearer to their two married children **Ryan** and **Courtney** and grandchildren **Jack** and **Luke** as well as Hayes’ mother, who is 90. They settled in Avalon Park in 2006 because they enjoyed the small town atmosphere.

Hayes has been teaching in Orange County at Blankner Elementary School for two and a half years and is currently working with gifted students. Beginning her teaching career in general education for fourth and fifth graders, she went on to get her master’s in specific learning disabilities (SLD) from Florida Atlantic University. After graduating, she taught a resource

SLD class for a few years and served as an exceptional student education specialist and an intermediate specialist.

But Hayes is a teacher who likes to learn. Through the years, she also got her gifted teaching endorsement and an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement. She has been teaching gifted education for more than 20 years and helped pilot a program for highly gifted students. Although not currently in use, the program provided an environment for hands-on learning specific to students’ different learning styles.

Among her many accomplishments, Hayes has been the recipient of numerous teaching awards and various grants. Most recently, she was the recipient of the EXCEL Award from the Foundation for Excellence in Education, which recognized her for her motivation of high achievers in her classroom.

When asked about her motivation and drive, Hayes says she is inspired daily by the exceptional students she teaches. “They inspire me to challenge them, en-

gage them and facilitate their learning,” she says. “I am constantly inspired by their desire to learn.”

She says one of the high points during her years of teaching is when students come back to see her or send her e-mails. “When they remember ‘life in Mrs. Hayes’ class, it makes me feel proud that I was one of their favorite teachers, one of the teachers who believed in them or one of their teachers they will never forget.”

Outside the classroom, Hayes is involved with a number of community volunteer organizations, including the Orlando Frontier Civitans who participate in community events each week. Most recently, Hayes and other club members adopted underprivileged children and committed to buying gifts for them during the holidays. On occasion, she cooks for the Ronald McDonald House as well.

Whether teaching, continuing her own education, volunteering or enjoying time with her family, Hayes always actively strives to take part in making our community a better place to live. ■



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