

MetroWest *Thrive*

A COMMUNITY PUBLICATION



Lights On, MetroWest!

National Night Out returns October 6.

Booms, Beats, and Giving Back

*Fireworks, food trucks, and \$10,000
for local schools.*

Ready, Set, Learn

*A family guide to starting the school
year strong.*

**Plus, 40 Years Stories, Business
Spotlights, and more!**





MetroWest Elementary and Westpointe Elementary each received \$5,000 during the celebration

Booms, Beats, and a Birthday to Remember

MetroWest's reimagined summer tradition debuts with fireworks, food trucks, and \$10,000 for two neighborhood schools.

MetroWest threw itself a birthday party this summer, and the whole neighborhood came.

On Friday, July 3, residents, families, and businesses filled the lawn at MetroWest Golf Club for the inaugural Booms & Beats, a free evening celebrating MetroWest's 40th anniversary and America's 250th Independence Day. The community's eighth annual summer celebration, reimagined from the longtime MusicWORKS tradition, brought live music from Plant Street Pops, a lineup of local food trucks, and a custom fireworks finale by PyroShows lighting up the sky above the greens.

The heart of the night came on stage: two \$5,000 checks presented by the MetroWest Master Association, one to MetroWest Elementary School and one to Westpointe Elementary School. The \$10,000 gift placed students, teachers, and families at the center of the anniversary celebration.

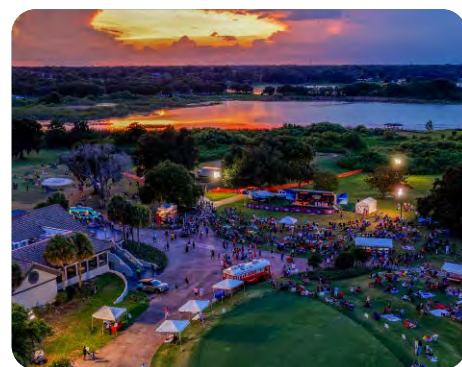
"Booms & Beats captured everything that makes MetroWest special: a thriving community coming together

to celebrate, and giving back to the neighbors and schools that make it home," said Julie Sanchez, General Manager of the MetroWest Master Association. *"We are grateful to our sponsors, community partners, volunteers and staff who made it all possible."*

Event operations were coordinated with the City of Orlando, and shuttle service and traffic support kept guests moving safely throughout the evening.

Booms & Beats anchors a 40th anniversary year that continues through 2026 with special events, resident spotlights, school partnerships, and anniversary programming. Home to nearly 28,000 residents and more than 500 businesses, MetroWest remains one of Central Florida's most established master-planned communities. On one July night, it looked exactly like what it is: a place where neighbors thrive together.

Visit metrowestcommunity.com for upcoming events and community news.



BY THE NUMBERS

40 years
of MetroWest

250 years
of America

\$10,000
to Local Schools

8th Annual
Summer Celebration

28,000
Neighbors

500+
Local Businesses



A Neighborhood Worth Believing In

Laura Lerma on More Than 25 Years of MetroWest, Resilience, and the People Who Make a Community

The first time Laura Lerma saw MetroWest, she was on roller skates.

It was 1998. Newly arrived in the United States, she came to know her new home on inline skates, stopping into Play It Again Sports to trade and repair them, then gliding for hours past the tree-lined streets behind MetroWest Elementary, the walking paths, and the iconic MetroWest fountains.

What she remembers most is how welcoming it felt. *"It had that same sense of pride, beauty, and quality of life as Celebration, but without feeling exclusive or closed off. It felt open, welcoming, and connected."* For a young woman new to the country, it was a first impression of what an American community could be. It never left her.

More than 25 years later, Laura is a real estate broker with 2 Good Realty, her office in Veranda Park. She raised her daughters here. Marina found her home in gymnastics at one of Florida's top Olympic-level gyms, and Isabella in dance just off Conroy Road. Both grew up alongside friends from MetroWest Elementary all the way through high school. *"Seeing my daughters grow up in this community, surrounded by familiar faces and local friends, has been wonderful."*

She has helped countless families put down roots here too. As an economist and real estate broker, Laura has watched markets change over the years, but she has always looked beyond the headlines and focused on the fundamentals. The numbers have consistently reinforced her belief in MetroWest as a community that creates value for homeowners, renters, investors, and families alike. She has spent countless hours driving prospective buyers down Apopka-Vineland Road, past the golf courses, lakes, and mature landscaping, so they could see what she saw: a community worth investing in.

That belief has been tested, and it has held. Like communities everywhere, MetroWest has had seasons that asked more of the people who call it home. Laura met them the way she meets everything: by showing up. *"What motivated me to stay was not simply a business opportunity. It was the people."* What she carries from those years is not the difficulty but the resilience, a community that keeps adapting, strengthening, and moving forward.

Her own bet on the neighborhood tells the same story. When she signed her lease in Veranda Park, some of the surrounding spaces were still empty, and a few people questioned the decision. She believed in the long-term vision anyway. Today, with Veranda Park thriving, she is grateful she planted her future here.

Ask about the community's most under-appreciated asset and she doesn't hesitate: Valencia College's West Campus, which she has watched grow into an essential resource for thousands of students, her own daughters among them. *"We take it for granted, but it is amazing what we have right here."*

Her two words for MetroWest: diversity and resilience. And when she thinks about what makes it special, she thinks of people like Veronica Rodriguez, who started more than twenty years ago as an entry-level assistant in the Serenata community and today serves as Property Manager for The Hamptons at MetroWest. *"To me, Veronica represents the best of MetroWest. Communities are not defined by buildings or roads. They are defined by people who care about others, believe in their neighbors, and dedicate themselves to helping their community succeed."*

Forty years in, Laura's note is pure optimism: *"If we keep investing in people, supporting one another, and believing in the future, the next 40 years of MetroWest will be even brighter than the first 40."*



Feel the **BURN,** MetroWest

MetroWest's newest fitness community brings 45-minute workouts, free childwatch, and a whole lot of heart to Hiawassee Road.

MetroWest has always been a neighborhood with heart. Families stroll the tree-lined paths, professionals fill the promenade, and kids race across the parks and golf course. It's a place that feels active, connected, and alive. This spring, it gained a fitness experience to match.

Burn Boot Camp MetroWest opened at **2425A S. Hiawassee Road** in April and celebrated its Grand Opening in June with a packed house of new neighbors. The fourth Burn Boot Camp in the greater Orlando area, it is owned and operated by local franchise partners Kelly Braun and Colin Dixon, who wasted no time investing in their new home: they signed on as sponsors of Booms & Beats, MetroWest's 40th anniversary summer celebration, in their very first months.

"With its diverse, family-focused population and its commitment to active living, this community is ready," Colin says. "It's more than a workout. It's a movement."



What can first-timers expect? Burn's signature 45-minute camps are designed for every fitness level, with expert trainers, strength and conditioning circuits, a joint-protecting floating floor, and complimentary childwatch so parents can train while the kids play.

*"It's more than a workout.
It's a movement."*

— Colin Dixon, co-owner

Even the MetroWest Public Service team got in on the action. Officer Erik Barragan joined the Grand Opening workout himself, connecting with Colin, local vendors, and new members between sets.

burn boot camp®

Burn Boot Camp MetroWest
2425A S. Hiawassee Road

- 45-minute camps for all fitness levels
- Complimentary childwatch

Learn more, see camp schedules, or book a first visit at burnbootcamp.com/locations/metrowest-fl





When Mommy Wants a Break

*Gena built the mom community she needed.
Now she's inviting every MetroWest mother to join it.*

Gena is a mom of three, a business owner, and, like every mother in MetroWest, someone who occasionally needs a minute. A few years ago she noticed something about her community: moms were everywhere, but real connection was hard to find.

So she built it. Mommy Wants A Break began as a way to give mothers time for themselves, and it quickly became something bigger. *"I wasn't just building something for other moms,"* Gena says. *"I was building something I needed too."*

Along the way she discovered the break was only half the story. Many mothers, she found, had quietly forgotten who they are outside the carpool line and the to-do list. She remembers one mom who felt truly

seen after her first uninterrupted adult conversation in weeks. *"It's not only about time away. It's about connection during that time too."*

This summer, Gena launched her boldest idea yet: The Orlando Bad Moms Club. Don't let the name fool you. It's for the mom who realizes she's allowed to have fun, who wants real friendships, who wants to laugh until she cries, try new things, and reconnect with the person she was before life became one giant to-do list.

In a community celebrating 40 years of neighbors helping neighbors, Gena's version might be the simplest: moms helping moms remember themselves.

Find her at linktr.ee/mommywantsabreak or orlandobadmomsclub.com

*"I wasn't
just building
something for
other moms.
I was building
something
I needed too."*

— Gena, founder, Mommy Wants A Break

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From L-R: Cameron Price, Monique Shepherd, Francis Lenn, Oriam González.
Not pictured: Erik Barragan, Michael Lastimosa.

The People Behind the Service

Six officers, one summer, and a community that knows them by name.

Forty years in, what makes MetroWest feel like home isn't just the fountains or the fairways. It's the relationships that bring neighbors together and the people who help strengthen those connections every day.

Throughout the community, MetroWest's Public Service Officers serve as ambassadors, helping residents, businesses, schools, and community associations stay connected and informed. Whether attending school activities, neighborhood pool parties, farmers markets, community events, Business Alliance meetings, or semi-annual Community Association Manager meetings, the team is focused on building relationships that strengthen MetroWest.

The officers also participate in new manager introductions, helping welcome community leaders and connect them with valuable resources and partnerships from the start. They regularly distribute MetroWest Welcome Packets in English, Spanish, and Portuguese to new residents, businesses, and

managers, ensuring everyone has access to important community information and services.

Of course, they are also there when assistance is needed. This summer, officers helped stranded motorists, coordinated traffic around disabled vehicles, assisted residents following property damage incidents, and provided support during unexpected situations. While these moments may seem small, they reflect a larger commitment to being visible, approachable, and available to those who live, work, and visit MetroWest.

Community service in MetroWest is about more than responding to problems. It's about building trust, supporting local organizations, fostering partnerships, and creating meaningful connections throughout the community. Through visibility, service, and engagement, MetroWest's Public Service Officers help strengthen the pride and sense of belonging that make MetroWest a place people are proud to call home.

To connect with the Public Service Team, call (407) 473-2021, or email serviceofcr@mwmaorlando.com




Lights On, MetroWest

National Night Out returns Tuesday, October 6

Join neighbors, local businesses, and MetroWest Public Safety alongside Orlando Police and Fire. Free, family-friendly, and a great way to connect.

Tuesday, October 6 | 5:30-8:30 PM
2101 Park Center Drive, Orlando, FL 32835

FREE SHREDDING
courtesy of



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Ready, Set, Learn: A MetroWest Family Guide to the School Year

School is back in session. Here's how MetroWest families can start strong and stay strong all year long.



The crossing guards are back, the car line has found its rhythm, and somewhere in your kitchen a brand-new lunch box is already missing its lid. These first few weeks set the tone for the whole school year. Here's how to start strong, whichever school your child calls home.

The Best School Supply Is Free

Here's one item that never makes the supply list: a library card. An Orange County Library System card is free and unlocks thousands of books, eBooks, audiobooks, homework help, tutoring, and family programs. September is National Library Card Sign-Up Month, so there is no better time. OCPS students get a head start: a Virtual Library Card is built right into LaunchPad, the district's one-login portal for the digital tools students use every day.

Twenty Minutes That Change Everything

If you do just one new thing this school year, make it this: read together for twenty minutes a day. One chapter at bedtime, a picture book after dinner, the sports page over Saturday pancakes. That small daily habit builds vocabulary, strengthens comprehension, and does more for a young reader than almost anything else. Twenty minutes. Every day. Watch what happens.

The Little Things Are the Big Things

Every August, school Lost & Found bins fill up fast, so label everything: water bottles, lunch boxes, jackets, backpacks. Then take five minutes to make sure your emergency contacts, dismissal instructions, and transportation plans are current with your school. Bus questions? OCPS's Find My Bus tool (ocps.net) shows routes and stops, and your school's front office can help with the rest.

Two Schools, One Community

MetroWest has two neighborhood elementary schools, and both are worth getting to know.

At MetroWest Elementary, home of the Orcas, early birds can join Westly's Mile, a before-school walking and running club, and families needing afternoon coverage have the Dramatic Education After School Program. New uniform polos are just \$10.99 this year; supply lists and details are at metrowestes.ocps.net.

Down the road, A-rated Westpointe Elementary (go Dolphins!) offers Extended Day care through Champions, adult ESOL classes for parents and neighbors, and keeps families connected through the ParentSquare app. Learn more at westpointees.ocps.net.

And the best-kept secret of both campuses? They want you there. Through OCPS's ADDitions School Volunteers program, parents, grandparents, and neighbors can help in classrooms, media centers, book fairs, and field trips. Local businesses can open doors for students through Partners in Education.

Here's to a Great Year

Whether it's been smooth sailing or you're still hunting that lunch box lid, the recipe for a great year is simple: read together, stay connected, and lean on your neighborhood schools. They're two of the best reasons to call MetroWest home.

Dates to Circle This Fall (OCPS 2026–2027)

Monday, September 7
Labor Day holiday

Friday, October 9
End of first marking period

Monday, October 12
Teacher workday / student holiday

November 23–27
Thanksgiving break

December 21–January 1
Winter break

Full calendar: ocps.net