EDITION 4 | WINTER 2026

MetroWest Thrive

A COMMUNITY PUBLICATION



Unwrap what's inside: 40 years and 40 stories, a Holly Jolly Trolley hunt for MetroWest's brightest entrance, simple tips to protect your holidays, *and more.*



40 Voices: 40 Years

Where we've been, who we are, and where we're going, in the words of the people who make MetroWest home.

Every neighborhood starts with a promise. MetroWest's was simple: a place where people could live, work, and play. On February 17, 1986, the MetroWest Master Association was founded to keep that promise. That same year, MetroWest Elementary opened its doors, and in 1987 the MetroWest Golf Club clubhouse opened beside the fairways.

Forty years later, that promise is home to nearly 28,000 neighbors and more than 500 businesses.

A Long Way Home

No one in MetroWest has traveled farther than the four bronze horses above the fountain at Veranda Park. The originals are among the most storied sculptures in the world. They stood over the Hippodrome of Constantinople, were carried to Venice in 1204 to crown St. Mark's Basilica, were taken to Paris by Napoleon in 1797, and came home to Venice in 1815.

MetroWest's Quattro Cavalli were cast by the Valese Artistic Foundry, authorized by the Italian government to reproduce the ancient horses. After centuries of journeys, they landed here, standing watch over a community still writing its own story. As Wesley and Durrell Hambley put it, *"Seeing them gives us the familiar feeling that we are home."*

40 Voices

A community isn't its fountains or its fairways. It's its people. So for our 40th, we asked them: longtime neighbors and new arrivals, business owners, educators, officers, and friends. We asked what MetroWest has meant, what it means today, and what they wish for the next 40 years. Here are a few of their answers.

THEN – *Where We've Been*

"MetroWest has been my home for 37 years and I have no plans on leaving. This community has brought me friends, a sense of belonging and purpose."

Stina D'Uva,
MWMA Vice President | 37 years

"I used to walk through MetroWest with my husband and we would say to each other, we will have to win the lottery to own a house here one day."

Wesley & Durrell Hambley, now in their dream home in the center of MetroWest

NOW – *Who We Are*

"The moments that stand out most are the quiet ones, like a neighbor reaching out to offer a helping hand or the way the community rallies during the holidays."

Gena Gray, Mommy Wants A Break

"Everybody plays their role, and every single role is important."

Nicole Wilson, kitten rescue foster,
Fairway Cove

"It takes a village, and all villagers, to keep the village safe."

Officer Brian Faer,
MetroWest Public Service

NEXT – *Where We're Going*

"Alcorn McBride and MetroWest both started in 1986. Here's to 40 more years of building, growing, and enjoying a place that feels like a community, not an industrial park."

Loren Barrows, Alcorn McBride

"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."

Laura Lerma, 2 Good Realty,
Veranda Park | since 1998

Full Circle

The horses traveled for centuries before they found a home in MetroWest. Many of us did too, from across town, across the country, and across the world. And what we found here was the same thing: a place that feels like home, and neighbors who make it that way.

Here's to the next 40 years, and to every voice still to come.

Hear All 40 Voices

Scan below to read every story or visit metrowestcommunity.com, and share your own wish for MetroWest's next 40 years.

Winning the MetroWest Lottery

How one couple went from admiring MetroWest to calling it home, with a warm welcome from a neighbor along the way.



Long before they had a MetroWest address, Wesley and Durrell Hambley had a MetroWest dream. For 12 years they lived nearby, close enough to admire the tree-lined streets, the well-kept landscaping, and a feeling that was peaceful and a little bit special.

"I remember us thinking that we would have to win the lottery to live here one day," Wesley says. Five years ago, that dream came true.

A Sweet Welcome

Their first drive into Stonebridge Lakes Enclave as homeowners, with all three fur babies along for the ride, felt completely surreal. Not long after, neighbor Monica El-Rassy, then HOA president, welcomed them with a homemade dessert.

"It immediately made us feel that we had moved into a caring community where neighbors look out for one another," Wesley says. Today Monica is a dear friend, and the two serve side by side on the HOA board, Wesley as president and Monica as vice president.

Tails Wagging

Reese and Rilo have been regulars at D Pets since the day it opened, and the family still remembers Ricki, their late grey pup, who made that first drive home. *"Our dogs enjoy going there so much that they run right inside without hesitation,"* Wesley says.

What Home Looks Like

Mature trees, beautiful landscaping, great local businesses, friendly neighbors, and, of course, the horse statues. *"Seeing them gives us the familiar feeling that we are home,"* Wesley says.

His message for anyone just moving in: *"MetroWest is much more than a beautiful place to live. It is a true community."* Some people wait their whole lives for a lucky ticket. The Hambleys found theirs right here.

New Neighbor, Same MetroWest Pride

He's only called MetroWest home since March, but Adopt-a-Street volunteer Nick Kotok is already helping keep Hiawassee Road looking its best.

Work brought Nick Kotok to Orlando this spring, and he found an apartment in MetroWest that he loved. It didn't take him long to find a way to give back.

Nick was already volunteering with Keep Orlando Beautiful when he learned about its Adopt-a-Street program: volunteers choose a street to look after, and the program provides the supplies. He picked one he knew well. *"I really like to walk along Hiawassee Road,"* he says. About once a month, he spends two to three hours clearing litter from the sidewalks and roadside.

A Wave and a Thank-You

The work is quiet, but it doesn't go unnoticed. *"It is also really nice when people walking or driving by say thank you for cleaning,"* Nick says. During one shift, a MetroWest Public Safety officer stopped by with water, extra bags, and some encouragement.

Green Spaces and Good Walks

"I love how green MetroWest is," Nick says. *"The golf courses make you feel like you live in the countryside."* The landscaping, he adds, is *"always so beautiful and well-kept, which makes it a very relaxing place to live and walk around."*

Forty Years, and Still Welcoming

His advice for the next new neighbor: *"It is a very welcoming and beautiful community. It is a wonderful place to get outside, enjoy the green spaces, and easily get involved."*

So the next time you spot a volunteer with a trash picker on Hiawassee, give Nick a wave. And if he inspires you, Keep Orlando Beautiful's Adopt-a-Street program is always welcoming new volunteers.



Rain or Shine, MetroWest Shows Up

The rain came down, the neighbors came out, and MetroWest went home with an award.

If you were at National Night Out on Tuesday, October 6, you probably went home a little damp. You probably also went home smiling.

The rain showed up early and stuck around for most of the evening. It didn't matter. Neighbors grabbed umbrellas and rain jackets, partners kept their tents up, and the turnout stayed strong all night long. That's MetroWest for you.

A Win for the Whole Community

The biggest moment of the night came as a surprise. MetroWest was named the Community Organization Winner of the 2026 National Night Out Theme Contest for this year's theme, "Creepin' Out Crime: Neighbors as Force Multipliers," and the plaque was presented right there at the event.

The idea behind the theme is simple. When neighbors, public safety, local businesses, and community partners work together, each one makes the others stronger. On a soggy Tuesday night, MetroWest proved it.

Quite the Guest List

Captain Capece and the Orlando Police Department came out in force, joined by the SWAT team, local commissioners, representatives from UCF, and many of our community partners and vendors. The costumed crew brought the fun, too: Knightro, McGruff the Crime Dog, and Scruff all joined the party, rain and all.

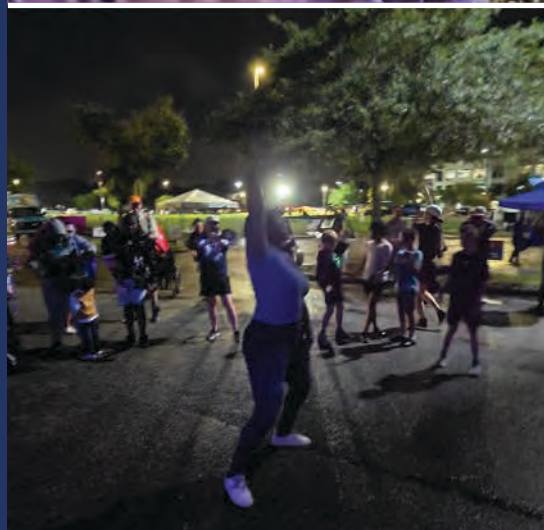
Thank You, MetroWest

Nights like this happen because people show up for each other. Thank you to the MetroWest Public Safety Department and the MWMA team for the creativity and planning behind the evening, to our partners and vendors who braved the weather, and to every neighbor who came out in the rain to be part of it. Here's to next year, hopefully with a little more sunshine.











Out There for Us

From the first day of school to the holiday lights, MetroWest's Public Service Officers have been looking out for all of us.

If you've waved to a Public Service Officer at your child's bus stop, or spotted a Public Service vehicle beside a stalled car on MetroWest Boulevard, you've already met one of MetroWest's hardest-working teams.

Help Is Usually Close By

Helping stranded drivers is one of the team's most common calls. In September, when a driver ran out of gas near Metropolis Way, Officer Cameron Price moved her car out of traffic, Officer Monique Shepherd arrived with a gas can, and Officer Price drove her to fill up. In October, Officer Oriam Gonzalez put the program's new jump-start equipment to work on South Hiawassee Road, and on a rainy afternoon, Officer Michael Lastimosa got a resident's car running and followed him all the way home.

What's Brewin' with Public Safety?

This fall, the team launched a new coffee-and-conversation series. After a first cup with the MWMA Board on October 22, Public Safety Director Derwin Bradley and Public Service Manager Jeremy Konvalinka are taking What's Brewin' on the road to HOA and COA leaders and apartment communities across MetroWest. Pull up a chair, meet the team, learn about the Public Safety Hub and current initiatives, and bring your questions and ideas.

RSVP to gm@mwmaorlando.com.

Neighbors First

Officers sat down with neighbors at Stonebridge Reserve, Stonebridge Lakes, and Hawksnest, and at Da Vinci Academy's Trunk or Treat, Officers Francis Lenn and Price even went home with a participation award. In a single month this fall, the team also helped complete more than 100 small fixes, from lighting to upkeep.

See You This Holiday Season

Look for officers at gatherings this season, including the Holly Jolly Trolley on December 11. As the program's motto says, safety grows where community is strong. Next time you see a Public Service Officer, say hello.

Upcoming What's Brewin' dates

- **Tuesday, November 10**
  HOA leaders, MWMA Office, 2145 Metrocenter Blvd #110
- **Wednesday, November 18**
  COA leaders, Stonebridge Commons Clubhouse, 6302 Ducados Pointe
- **Thursday, December 10**
  Apartment communities, Millennium Apartments Clubhouse, 6900 Piazza Grande Ave



Merry, Bright, and Safe

A few easy habits from the MetroWest Public Safety Department keep the season about family, food, and fun.



From Thanksgiving tables to the New Year's countdown, these are some of the happiest (and busiest) weeks of the year in MetroWest. Doorsteps fill up with deliveries, parking lots with shoppers, and calendars with gatherings. A handful of simple habits go a long way.

Bring the Boxes In

Track deliveries and bring them inside promptly. For big-ticket gifts, use a package locker, store pickup, or signature confirmation. A friendly neighbor who grabs your boxes might be the best gift of all.

Lock It, Hide It, Keep It

Lock your car, roll the windows all the way up, and keep bags and electronics out of sight. At the shopping center, stay alert while loading up and move purchases to the trunk before your next stop.

Home for the Holidays (or Away)

Traveling? Lock every door, set your cameras, put lights on timers, and pause your mail. Decorating?

Check light strands for frayed cords, don't overload outlets, and keep a real tree well watered.

Celebrate Smart

Plan your ride home before the first toast, keep little ones in sight at crowded events, and never leave a drink unattended.

If It Sounds Too Urgent, Pause

Watch for texts about packages that "can't be delivered," anyone demanding gift cards, and callers threatening fines or shutoffs. Check directly with the company at a number you know is real.

The best safety tool in MetroWest has always been each other. Check in on neighbors who live alone, and if you see something, say something.

Keep These Numbers Handy

Emergency: 911

Orlando Police Department (non-emergency):
(321) 235-5300

Orange County Sheriff's Office (non-emergency):
(407) 836-4357

Florida Attorney General Fraud Hotline:
1-866-966-7226

Holiday Safety Checklist

- ☑ Lock your home and vehicles
- ☑ Bring deliveries in promptly
- ☑ Keep valuables out of sight
- ☑ Verify charities before giving
- ☑ Think twice about unexpected texts, calls, and emails
- ☑ Never pay with gift cards under pressure
- ☑ Plan your ride home
- ☑ Stay alert in parking lots
- ☑ Report anything suspicious
- ☑ Look out for your neighbors





The Ultimate Cave: Nine Years of Fresh Cuts and Familiar Faces

A family-run barbershop in Veranda Park has become one of MetroWest's longest-standing neighborhood hangouts.

Walk into The Ultimate Cave and you might forget you came for a haircut. There's a pool table, video games, and a fresh cup of coffee waiting, plus a family that has been part of MetroWest's daily rhythm since 2017.

Diego Bastos was there from the beginning, and in 2021 his family took over the shop. *"We worked to bring more of our own identity into the shop while respecting what had already been built,"* Diego says, from an improved space to an expanded menu of services.

Fathers, Sons, and Longtime Regulars

Many clients have been coming since the early days, and some chairs now serve two generations of the same family. *"Over the years, many of our clients have become great friends,"* *Diego says.*

More Than a Haircut

Precision cuts and beard care are the draw, but the relaxed, family-friendly space keeps people lingering. *"We want our clients to enjoy their time here, relax, have a conversation, and feel like they are among friends."*

A Family Business, Near and Far

Today Diego is serving in the U.S. Army, and he stays closely involved from a distance alongside his family and the team back home. *"We look forward to being part of MetroWest for many more years,"* he says.

The Ultimate Cave Barbershop
6965 Piazza Grande Ave., Unit 106, Veranda Park

(407) 630-6149
theultimatecavebarber.com
@theultimatecave

Mon to Thu 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. | Fri 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. | Sat 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



A MetroWest Favorite, One Shrimp at a Time

Free cornbread, hand-peeled shrimp, and a whole lot of heart have kept Stonington's Fried Shrimp going strong on Kirkman Road for 16 years.



When Stonington's first opened, owner Nicola knew the fried shrimp would be a grand slam. So for the first five years, just about everyone who walked in got a free sample, plus a slice of hot honey cornbread. *"Let them taste it,"* Nicola says, *"and I knew we'd hook them."* It worked. Cornbread is now the number-one side.

It Started With a Craving

In 2004, Nicola kept asking where to find really great fried shrimp. The answer was to build it. The shrimp are hand-peeled every day, lightly breaded, and cooked to order. *"It's about complementing the shrimp, not covering it up,"* she says.

Someone Took a Chance

In 2010, Stonington's moved to Kirkman Road, where the landlord believed in an independent restaurant when many centers only wanted chains. When neighbors kept ordering the same thing, Nicola trimmed the menu and renamed the place Stonington's Fried Shrimp.

The Welcome Is Part of the Recipe

General manager Latoria has been with Stonington's for 14 years, and three team members call MetroWest home. First visit? Try the $13.95 lunch special: fried shrimp, cornbread, mac and cheese, and a drink.

"A restaurant is more than just the food," Nicola says. *"It's the people, the relationships, and the community around you."* So grab a neighbor, head to Kirkman Road, and save room for the cornbread.

Stonington's Fried Shrimp

2316 S. Kirkman Road,
Orlando, FL 32811

Mon to Thu 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Fri and Sat 11:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.
Sun noon to 8 p.m.

friedshrimp.co | @1friedshrimp



All Aboard the Holly Jolly Trolley!

Santa is making a special stop in MetroWest this year, and he's bringing a few friends.

This holiday season, MetroWest is celebrating 40 years of community the most festive way we know how: by lighting up the neighborhood.

On Friday, December 11, the Holly Jolly Trolley hits the streets. The MWMA Board and Management Team will be joined by Santa and the Grinch for an evening of holiday cheer, traveling from stop to stop to visit and judge the decorated entrances of participating communities and businesses across MetroWest.

Light Up Your Entrance

Residential communities and businesses are invited to deck the halls *(and the gates, signs, and palm trees)* and register for the 40th Anniversary holiday judging. Whether your style is classic white lights, a full-blown winter wonderland, or something only Florida could pull off, the trolley wants to see it.

Registration closes November 30. Once the list is set, the route will be built around every registered entrance, and each participant will receive an estimated judging window so they know about when Santa and the trolley will roll by.

Scan to register your entrance.

Watch for the Trolley

From 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. on December 11, keep an eye out for the trolley as it makes its way through MetroWest. Spot it? Give a wave! Just a heads-up: no trolley rides are offered. The Holly Jolly Trolley is the official MWMA holiday judging team.

And the Winners Are...

Three entrances will take home bragging rights for the season: ***Santa's Favorite Stop***, ***the Whoville Holiday Excellence Award***, and ***the Grinch-Approved Holiday Spirit Award***. Winners will be announced to the MetroWest community on December 14.

Here's to 40 Years

For four decades, MetroWest has been a place where neighbors look out for each other. This December, we're celebrating that with a little extra sparkle. Light it up, MetroWest. Santa is checking his list.

TOP 3
★ ★ ★ ★ ★
CONDOMINIUM COMMUNITIES

A Little Extra Sparkle for The Azur.

Congratulations to The Azur at MetroWest Condominium, recognized by BusinessRate as one of the **Top 3 Condominium Communities in MetroWest for 2026**. The honor is based on Google reviews, which means it comes straight from the people who know The Azur best: its residents. Nice work, neighbors!

MetroWest
MASTER ASSOCIATION

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