

## LOCAL FACES

BY RONA GINDIN

Three Orlando-natives—a Disney animal specialist, a love ambassador and a man passionate about presidents—share their local insights.



### Donna Dowless

**The former Vice President of Ticketmaster is now a woman who wears many hats: contemporary artist who specializes in mixed media, chairwoman of the Downtown Arts District ([orlandoslice.com](http://orlandoslice.com)) and Orlando's official "Ambassador of Love."**

Mayor Buddy Dyer appointed you Orlando's Ambassador of Love. What does that mean? "It's my responsibility to bring the community together through arts and culture. I engage locals and visitors in conversation and tell them what others are up to and about places to enjoy Orlando's arts. I attend meetings with the city council, the downtown development board, the economic development council, business and real estate executives, arts educators and event programmers, and I attend workshops and community events such as concerts and art gallery openings."

So, as an expert in the local arts and culture scene, what shouldn't visitors miss?

"Check out CityArts Factory ([cityartsfactory.com](http://cityartsfactory.com)). It has more than 12 galleries, so sometimes 100 artists are showing at one time. Or, head to the Gallery at Avalon Island ([galleryatavalonisland.com](http://galleryatavalonisland.com)), which hosts monthly exhibitions in Orlando's oldest commercial building. Visitors should also see the new Amway Center ([amwaycenter.com](http://amwaycenter.com)), which has a \$1 million art collection featuring the works of more than 20 artists, including me."

Any advice for aspiring artists?

"Follow your heart. As Andy Warhol once shared with me, 'If you are an artist in your heart, so be it.'"

### Anne Savage, Ph.D.

**As a Conservation Director at Walt Disney World Resort, Dr. Savage creates programs that keep animals safe in the theme parks as well as in their native environments, and develops programs to educate guests on how they can help the wild things in their own neighborhoods.**

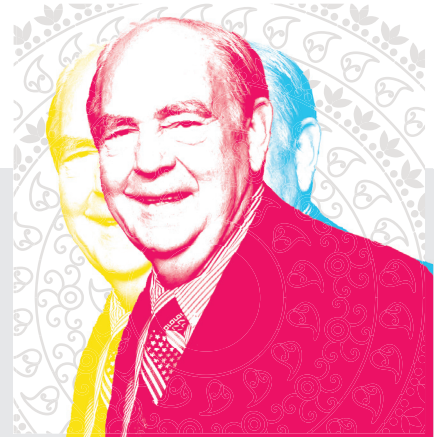
What does a conservation director do?

"I get to study animals such as elephants and cotton-top tamarins both here at Walt Disney World and around the world, trying to figure out how to save them from extinction. For example, in Columbia, I helped write a book about how to save tamarins, which is now used in rural secondary schools."

How would GO readers get to see your work?

"Visit Rafiki's Planet Watch, an education-oriented area of Disney's Animal Kingdom where visitors can see experts examining, treating and even performing surgery on all sorts of different animals. Visitors might learn how to find out which animals are pregnant, or play "match the feces with the species," a fun game where you can learn what each animal leaves behind."

Really interested visitors can even have dinner with you at the Animal Kingdom Lodge's Dine with an Animal Specialist program, right? "Up to 12 guests enjoy a four-course meal at Sanaa restaurant ([disneyworld.disney.go.com](http://disneyworld.disney.go.com)) with an animal specialist like me while overlooking the hotel's savannah. The conversation is fairly organic—it might be about how we take care of animals at the Lodge or how we train each species of animal to respond to a different sound."



### John Zweifel

**Zweifel runs the Presidents Hall of Fame, which is packed with original presidential paraphernalia. The centerpiece is an authentic 1-inch-to-1-foot scale model of the White House that is updated so regularly that it's accurate down to the very last extension cord.**

Where does your passion for all things presidential come from?

"I was a child during World War II, when everyone was so patriotic, and I just never changed. I'm doing this strictly to preserve history and make it available for people to experience."

After getting rebuffed for years, you're now welcome at the White House. How did that happen?

"The White House kept telling me I wasn't allowed to make this replica. You should see the many letters I have from the White House telling me, 'Don't write to us again.' I was persistent and now we're free to visit and just do it. We keep the older rooms, which are modules, and sometimes display those in Washington and elsewhere. Nancy Reagan cries when she sees the rooms that are decorated as they were during her husband's presidency because they bring back memories."

And what's next for you?

"I'm trying to buy land next to our Clermont museum so we can keep adding to the building. Ninety percent of what I have to display is in the support building where visitors can't see it. And I have so many ideas. We are only on Act 1."