

PIVOT

TED^xOcala
x = independently organized TED event

November 8, 2025
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

College of Central Florida
Fine Arts Auditorium

In every journey—personal, professional, or societal—there comes a moment when the path ahead demands a change in direction. A decision. A transformation. A pivot. Our theme this year, "Pivot," invites us to explore the power of turning points. These are the moments when we shift our perspective, reimagine our purpose, and courageously adapt to new realities. Whether sparked by challenge, innovation, failure, or opportunity, a pivot is never just a change, it's a choice to grow. At TEDxOcala 2025, we'll hear from thinkers, creators, and changemakers who've embraced the art of the pivot—those who dared to shift course and discovered something extraordinary on the other side. Together, we'll explore how pivots can disrupt industries, heal communities, ignite movements, and transform lives. Because sometimes, the most powerful step forward begins with a turn.

www.TEDxOcala.com

“Sometimes life doesn’t give you a road map,
it gives you a pivot point.”

-Dr. Manal Fakhoury



Welcome to TEDxOcala 2025 — “Pivot”

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 11th Annual TEDxOcala! We are so thrilled to have you with us as we gather once again to celebrate ideas worth spreading. Each year, TEDxOcala brings together a community of curious minds — thinkers, doers, creators, and dreamers — united by the belief that ideas have the power to change lives, communities, and the world.

This year’s theme, “Pivot,” invites us to explore the turning points that shape our journeys — those moments when life calls for courage, creativity, and a change in direction. To pivot is not to abandon our path, but to realign it; not to quit, but to evolve. It’s the art of responding with intention to life’s unexpected invitations to grow.

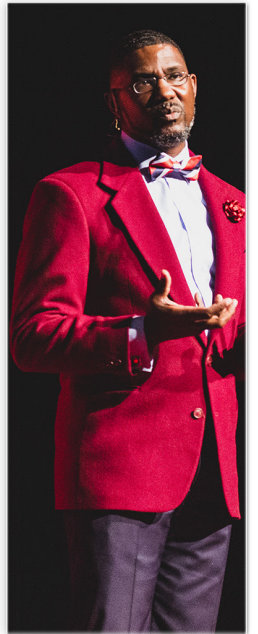
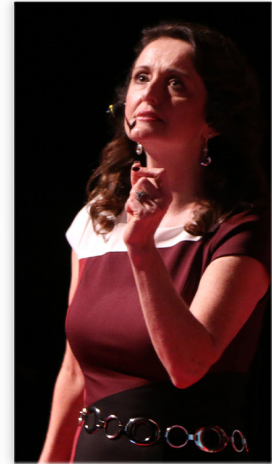


TED began in 1984 as a conference bringing together Technology, Entertainment, and Design — three fields that collectively shape our future. Today, it’s a global movement devoted to sharing ideas that inspire action, foster connection, and ignite innovation. TEDx events, like ours, are independently organized under a free license from TED, designed to amplify local voices and spark meaningful dialogue within our own communities. At TEDxOcala, we are proud to stand among thousands of TEDx events around the world, each one driven by volunteers and guided by a shared mission: to spread ideas that matter. Today, you’ll hear from speakers who have faced the unexpected and found strength in change. You’ll witness stories of resilience, reinvention, and revelation — each a reminder that the power to pivot lies within us all.

Thank you for joining us on this journey of ideas, connection, and transformation. Whether this is your first TEDx experience or your eleventh, we hope today inspires.

With gratitude and excitement,

Manal Fakhoury
Dr. Manal Fakhoury
Licensee and Curator, TEDxOcala



“The art of life lies in a constant readjustment to
our surroundings.”

- *Kakuzō Okakura*

SCHEDULE

Welcome & Opening Remarks
Audience Engagement
TED Opening Video
Welcome Emcees

Session 1: The Inner Pivot — Shifting Within

Speaker - John Berry
Speaker - Melanie Klein
Speaker - Dennis Gonzalez
Speaker - Ibrahim Awad

Networking Break

Session 2: The Personal Pivot — Redefining Growth & Identity

Speaker - Chad Carden
Speaker - Madinah Wilson-Anton
Speaker - Allen Simmons
Speaker - Ike Anderson

Lunch and Idea Exchange

Session 3: The Collective Pivot — Healing and Leading in Community

Speaker - Matt Parr
Speaker - Yasmine Shahwan
Speaker - Mitchel Roth
Speaker - DeLon Canterbury

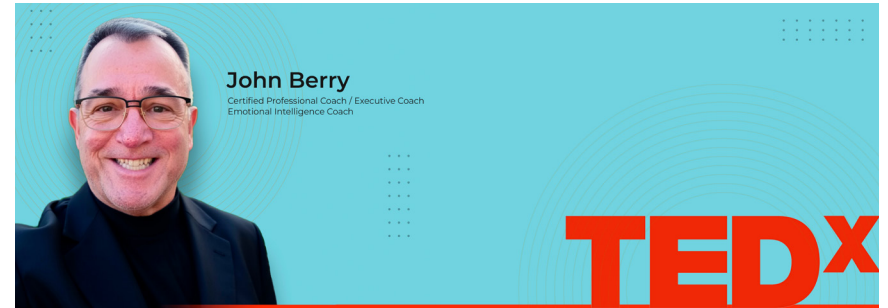
Networking Break

Session 4: The Strategic Pivot — Reinventing the Future

Speaker - Jeanne Lowrey
Speaker - Richard Corey
Speaker - Poornima Srinivasan
Speaker - Lee Pepper

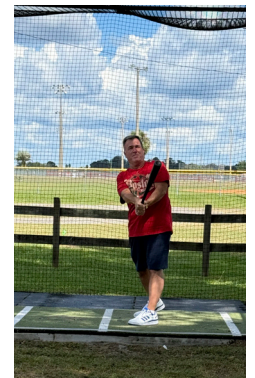
Closing Remarks and Group Photo

TEDxOcala Historical Speaker Video



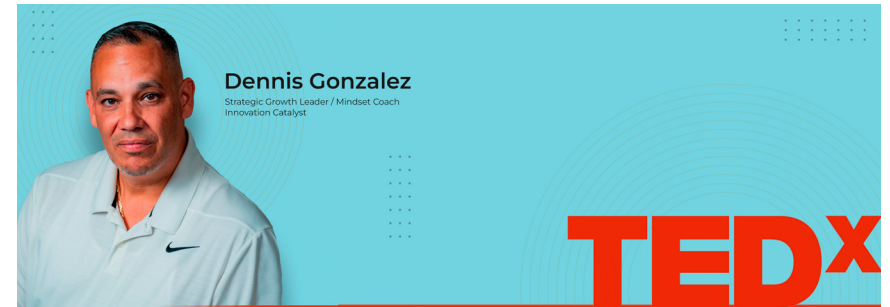
John Berry is a Certified Professional Coach specializing in Executive Coaching, Emotional Intelligence, and Wellness. As the founder of Imminent Change Coaching, he helps C-suite leaders, healthcare executives, higher education executives, and government officials master advanced communication, leadership presence, and team engagement. John is known for his ability to decode perception, elevate emotional intelligence, and guide leaders to drive performance, profitability, and retention through transformative relationships and trust-based leadership.

TEDxOcala Speakers



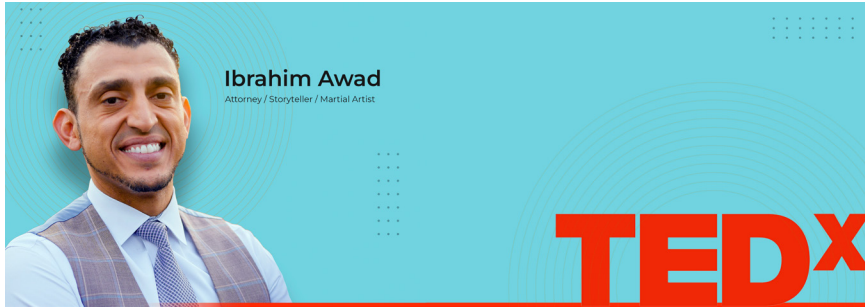


Melanie Klein is an award-winning author, professor, and transformational success coach with over two decades of experience helping people pivot from surviving to thriving. Combining research, mindfulness training and embodiment practices, she expertly guides individuals and organizations in transforming their relationship with challenge and creating success on their own terms. She has curated and/or contributed to over 10+ books that empower others to make the radical pivot from resisting disruption to using it as a catalyst for growth.

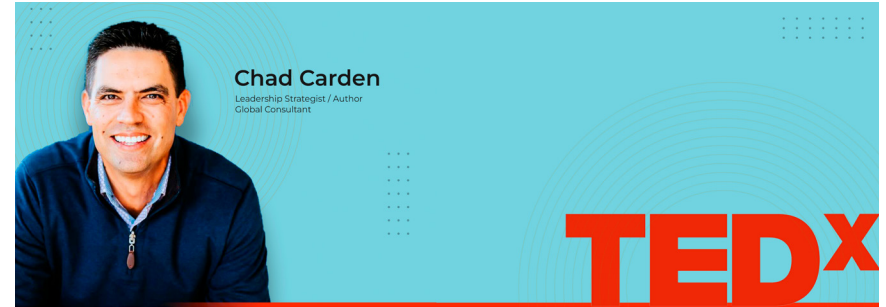


Dennis Gonzalez is a seasoned entrepreneur and the founder of Loco Graphics, a thriving design and print company he launched from his garage in 2013. Born in Puerto Rico and raised between the island and New Jersey, Dennis brings a rich cultural perspective to his work, relationships, and community. His business journey began humbly with a 24-inch plotter that took 30 minutes to cut a single word. Today, Loco Graphics operates out of a 10,000 sq. ft. facility equipped with three state-of-the-art printers, serving clients with creativity, speed, and precision. With over a decade in the graphics industry and 11 years as a BNI member, Dennis has built more than a business he's built a reputation for resilience, authenticity, and local impact. In his TEDx talk, he explores how pivoting our assumptions especially the negative ones can shift our mindset and unlock our potential. Outside of work, Dennis finds joy in restoring old school BMX bikes and spending quality time with his three daughters and his wife of 25 years, who continue to inspire and support his journey.

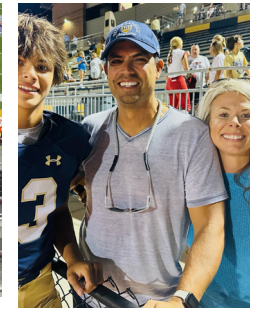




Ibrahim Awad is a Palestinian-American attorney, martial artist, and nonprofit founder. He is the founder of The Awad Law Firm and has recovered over \$60 million in personal injury verdicts and settlements. Known as the “Karate Attorney,” he integrates discipline and storytelling into his practice. Ibrahim is also the co-founder of Palistory, a nonprofit that preserves Palestinian stories through film and media.



Chad Carden is the Founder of The Carden Group and The Designed Leader, with over two decades of experience studying human behavior, leadership, and workplace dynamics. Mentored by the legendary Zig Ziglar, Chad is passionate about helping organizations build thriving cultures where people communicate effectively, collaborate powerfully, and achieve exceptional results. He has partnered with Fortune 500 companies and startups across 40+ countries, guiding leaders to rethink how they connect with their teams and drive sustainable success. Recognized by USA Today as a “Top Coach Making a Difference” and by Entrepreneur Magazine as a “Top Entrepreneur Changing the World,” Chad’s impact spans industries and continents. An accomplished author of *Winning The Money Game* and *P.E.P.P.*, Chad equips leaders with practical tools for growth and transformation. Whether on stage, in boardrooms, or through his coaching, he continues to inspire people to think differently, lead boldly, and create workplaces where both employees and results thrive.





Madinah Wilson-Anton brings her unique perspective as a Black woman with vitiligo to the stage and leaves audiences of all backgrounds laughing. She became a rising star in the Delaware political scene in 2020 when she was the first Muslim elected to the State House of Representatives at the age of 26. She has performed as a stand-up comedian for audiences across the United States.

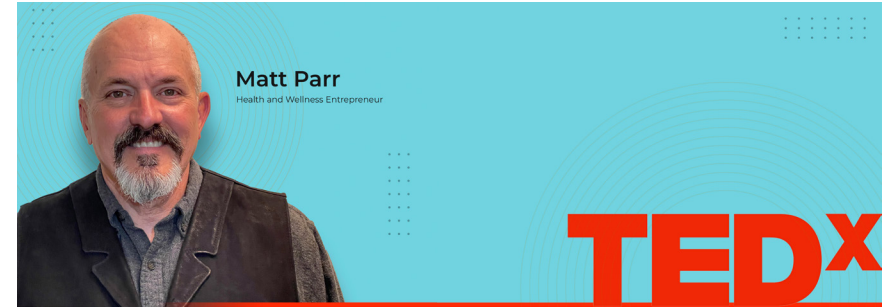


Dr. Allen H. Simmons II is an educator, author, and community leader dedicated to empowering others. He serves as Vice President of Education and Partnerships at Junior Achievement of New Jersey, collaborating with K–12 school districts statewide. Dr. Simmons is also the Founder of Beth-El Academy and an adjunct professor of sociology at Saint Peter's University. A U.S. Navy veteran, Dr. Simmons holds a B.A. in Political Science and Sociology from the University of South Carolina, an M.P.A., and a Doctorate in Education from Saint Peter's University. He also serves as National Director of Education for the Sounds of Praise International Fellowship Ministries. A passionate organizer, speaker, and social activist, Dr. Simmons is the author of "The Sticky Bottom and Living Just Above Broke: How America Neglects Its Most Valuable Resource." He is currently working on his second book. In his free time, he enjoys reading, playing piano, traveling, and spending time with his three children—Isaiah, Elijah, and Naomi.





Ike Anderson is a global speaker, author, and intuitive guide who helps individuals pivot toward purpose and authenticity. Named a 2024 Traveler of the Year by National Geographic Explorer, he's journeyed to over 100 countries with his family and founded The Unmasking Effect, a transformational framework blending ancestral wisdom, modern psychology, and entrepreneurship to help others live with intention and alignment.



Julie Duncan has thrived in Ocala for 14 years, working, building businesses and raising two girls. She takes pride in her profession that is based around creating experiences for people within the events and entertainment sphere. She is a proud Toastmaster and enjoys the art of communication. Knowing that life is not perfect, she is a proponent of how important it is to communicate needs for the good of society.





Yasmine Shahwan is a marketing strategist, real estate agent, and community builder who believes transformation happens when people feel truly seen. With a background in brand storytelling and a heart for connection, she uses her work to bridge gaps between people and purpose, ideas and action, vision and reality. Whether she's creating campaigns, hosting retreats, or selling homes, her mission is the same: to build spaces where growth, healing, and belonging can flourish.



Professor of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Sam Houston State University. With a PhD in history from the University of California, Santa Barbara, he is one of the only historians tenured in a criminology department in the U.S. He has written more than 25 books, including foreign translations. Roth has been recognized for his prison gang research and training by the National Gang Research Center in Chicago. His most recent books include *Murder by Mail: A Global History of the Letter Bomb*; *Man With the Killer Smile: The Life and Crimes of a Serial Mass Murderer*; and *Power on the Inside: A Global History of Prison Gangs*. He has been featured on the History Channel, HULU, Dateline, CNN, FOC, Al Jazeera, PBS and other media outlets.



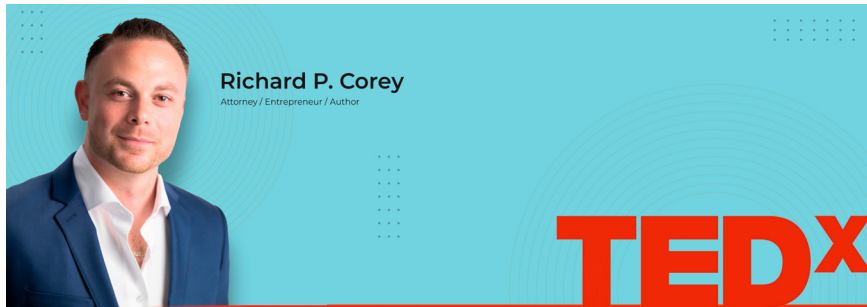


GeriatRx is a pharmacist-led medication management company that focuses on helping overwhelmed caregivers stop their loved ones from being overmedicated using genetic-drug screening, deprescribing, and health cost savings strategies. We specialize in developing medication action plans for patients of all ages, but with a specialty in Geriatric care. Unlike your traditional pharmacist, we develop a three-month strategy to address overmedicated patients using a holistic and evidence-based approach in accordance with your prescriber so that there are no gaps in communication of care. Founder of the Deprescribing Accelerator, DeLon envisions all pharmacists and senior care providers as Deprescribing Advocates and coaches professionals how to integrate, leverage, and monetize Deprescribing into clinical practice! The Deprescribing Accelerator trains passionate nurses, pharmacists, and prescribers on how they can serve our overmedicated seniors by increasing your revenue's practice with referrals and a value-based, sustainable care model within your business.



Jeanne Lowrey is a Career Mentor, Strategy Architect, and HR Leader who knows firsthand the power of the pivot. Known as the #CaffeinatedRecruiter, she's built her career helping others find direction, take bold leaps, and grow through uncertainty. From reinventing her own path to leading inclusive talent strategies in retail, manufacturing and supply chain industries, Jeanne blends strategy with heart—and always brings the energy. Today, she's here to share how reinvention isn't just possible—it's powerful.

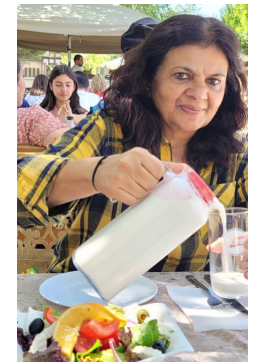
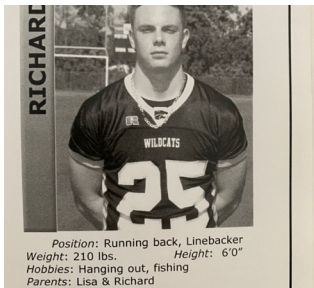


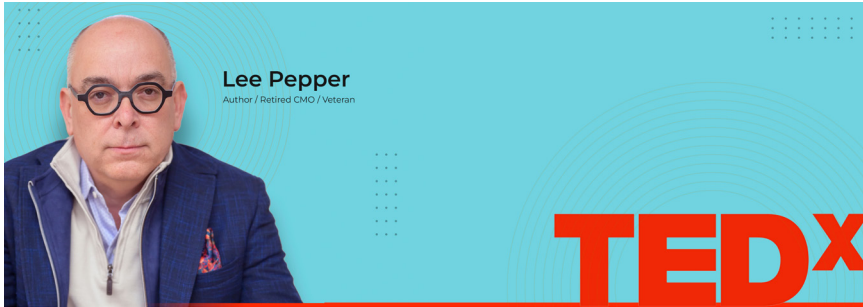


Richard P. Corey is a practicing attorney, serial entrepreneur, producer, published author, philanthropist and speaker with a career spanning law, business, media, and innovation. As founder of a premier litigation and complex corporate transactional law firm in Fort Lauderdale, he has over a decade of experience representing major corporations, public figures, professional athletes, and entrepreneurs nationwide—earning repeated recognition as a Super Lawyers Rising Star since 2016. Beyond the courtroom, Richard has brokered tens of millions in deals across music, mergers and acquisitions, tech, and real estate, and holds multiple United States/ International patents and trademarks. A former music executive and UCF Business Competition finalist in 2009, Richard graduated cum laude from Nova Southeastern Law School in 2012. He's been featured in top tier publications such as Entrepreneur Magazine, USA Today, and Success, and published his book The Blueprint in 2013. In 2025, he will be spotlighted in the upcoming docuseries Legacy Makers. He is the host of Enterprise Unleashed: Business, Law, and Innovation, and a committed philanthropist and community leader.



As a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) with several years of experience in financial systems and reporting, Poornima has built a deep appreciation for the impact of emerging technologies on our professional and personal lives. Among other projects, she is currently working on a start-up that leverages blockchain technology to create a digital marketplace. She firmly believes that many of the emerging trends, and blockchain in particular, will have a democratizing impact on society.





Lee is the author of *Never Outmatched*. He has leveraged his service in the United States Army and his experience as a staff member on Ross Perot's Presidential Campaigns into building great teams that solve technology challenges and grow market share. During his tenure as Chief Marketing Officer at Foundations Recovery Network, the company grew shareholder value 60X culminating in its acquisition for \$350 million. Lee also built the marketing teams for SpecialtyCare and Meadows Behavioral Healthcare. He resides in Tennessee where he writes and consults on marketing, leadership and innovation.

"Life's most powerful moments often begin at the pivot, when we choose courage over comfort."

- **Brené Brown** (*paraphrased*)









TEDxOcala Team



Manal Fakhoury
Organizer/Curator



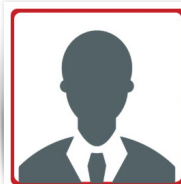
Wajdy Hussain
Web Developer & Graphic
Designer



Simone Campbell
Speaker Coach
Coordinator



Rasha Elmallah
Sponsor Fulfillment



Mario Ciere
CF Liaison



Leda Pérez
Speaker Coach
Coordinator



Trina Bowden
Audience Engagement



Laurel Lapane
Student Relations



Diane Irwin
Support



TeSha Jackson
Support



Xochi Jacques Smith
Photography



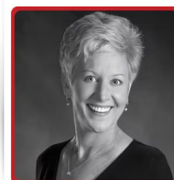
Kim Martsolf
Student Relations



Maria Roman
Support



Aysia Byrnes
Support



Lisa Reilly
Stage Manager



Yeralin Feliciano
Support

Speaker Coaches



Katie Nall



Michael Annen



Robert Wood



Cher Kretz



Lisa Reilly



Barbara Fitos



Colette Smith



Marc Cordon



Manal Fakhoury



Tiffany Edith



Julie Duncan



Daniel Gentry



Thomas Puketza



Tanya Gasciagone



Aakeem Bennett

Emcees



Laura Duksta



Cher Kretz



Tania Bartolini



Jessi Miller

*Saving the world,
one graphic design at a time.*

Jessi is an experienced visual communicator with over 25 years experience in the roles of Creative Director, Art Director, Designer and Fine Artist. Her career has spanned advertising agencies and publications as well as branding design for a host of individual clients. Jessi has won over 30 ADDY and FMA awards in all of these facets of visual communication and has left a trail of happy clients and high quality work.

Jessi graduated from the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale with a degree in Advertising Design, after which she spent a decade in South Florida doing advertising agency work. She then shifted into publication/magazine work, relishing the storytelling aspect as well as the ability to promote people and companies who are doing great things.

In addition to her design and fine art work, Jessi strongly believes in contributing to community and giving back to the world. She is always active in the arts and as a champion for world peace. Currently she sits on the Executive Committee for Ollin Women International and is the Board President for the Magnolia Art Xchange, among many other volunteer efforts.



2017



2018



2019



2020



2021



2022



2023



2024



TED's curation approach

TED's mission is to discover and spread ideas that spark imagination, embrace possibility and catalyze impact. At a time of growing divide, we invite a broad range of speakers to our events to share ideas and to seek deeper understanding. We believe that it's possible to learn something from speakers even when disagreeing with aspects of their work or beliefs, and we are committed to being a place where people with differing viewpoints can come together and participate in meaningful conversations. We will always welcome people from every discipline and culture who seek both a deeper understanding of the world and connection with others. We recognize that not everyone will agree with all of our curation decisions, which are based on our guidelines. Two important core principles guiding TED's curation are:

Inclusion

Ideas are for everyone. They can't be fenced off by borders, whether of geography, religion, politics or culture. And no single origin, race, gender, identity or class can claim preferential ownership over them. TED is committed to a global mindset. We seek to source ideas from everywhere and to make them widely and freely accessible. Powerful ideas, expressed and distributed with care, can bring different groups together and create a shared vision of a future worth pursuing.

Debate

Our content isn't the final word on anything. Skeptics are welcome, and may play a key role in improving an idea or revealing its flaws. Others may find that conversation after a talk is the best path to clarity or figuring out what to do with it. We strive to provide a neutral, open space for vigorous discussion and debate both online and face to face. The tone should, of course, stay respectful. Bigotry and hate speech have no place on our platform. But constructive conversations can be a powerful antidote to division.

About TEDx, In the spirit of ideas worth spreading, TED has created a program called TEDx. TEDx is a program of local, self-organized events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience. Our event is called TEDxOcala, where x = independently organized TED event. At our TEDxOcala event, TED Talks, video, and live speakers will combine to spark deep discussion and connection in a small group. The TED Conference provides general guidance for the TEDx program, but individual TEDx events, including ours, are self-organized.

About TED

TED is a nonprofit devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks (18 minutes or less). TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment and Design converged, and today covers almost all topics — from science to business to global issues — in more than 100 languages. Meanwhile, independently run TEDx events help share ideas in communities around the world. TED speakers have included Bill Gates, Jane Goodall, Elizabeth Gilbert, Sir Richard Branson, Benoit Mandelbrot, Philippe Starck, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Isabel Allende and former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Two major TED events are held each year: The TED Conference takes place every spring in Long Beach, California (along with a parallel conference, TEDActive, in Palm Springs), and TEDGlobal is held each summer in Edinburgh, Scotland.

TED's media initiatives include TED.com, where new TEDTalks are posted daily; the new TED Conversations, enabling broad conversations among TED fans; and the Open Translation Project, which provides subtitles and interactive transcripts as well as the ability for any TEDTalk to be translated by volunteers worldwide.

TED has established the annual TED Prize, awarded to a leader with a fresh, bold vision for sparking global change; TEDx, which offers individuals or groups a way to host local, self-organized events around the world; and the TED Fellows program, helping world-changing innovators from around the globe to become part of the TED community and, with its help, amplify the impact of their remarkable projects and activities.

For information about TED's upcoming conferences, visit www.ted.com/registration
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**Dr. Srisha Rao
&
Dr. Suhil Duskur**

BRONZE SPONSORS



Our Partners



“You don’t have to have it all figured out to move forward—sometimes you just have to pivot.”

- **Unknown**

Special Thanks

- Wajdy Hussain - Graphic Designer & Web Developer
- Marion County Public Schools and Teachers
- Toastmasters International
- Lamar Advertising
- MANHATTAN Gyros & Subs
- Dale Toney - Belleview High School
- Donald Ray - Marion Technical College
- Jennifer Hunt Murty
- Patrick Deshaw
- Amy Keel - Got Schwag
- Laurel Lapane - Student Services Coordinator
- Kim Martsolf - Assistant Principal - Marion Technical College (MTC)
- Lisa Reilly - Stage Manager
- Simone Campbell - Back of House Manager
- Rachel Cote - CF Liaison
- Robbie Bisbee - Biztech
- Clarencina Green - Meals by Cina and Tina
- Bert Smith - Music
- Woody Oralus - Backstage Video
- Dreams In Hiding: Fin Rose Aborizk - Typewriter Poet

Student Testimonials

““To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity.”

- *Nelson Mandela*

WEST PORT HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR ★★★★★★

This event will offer a multitude of new perspectives, and the benefit of observing outstanding public speakers. I watch TED talk or TED-ed when I get ready every morning. I have learned so much from them and would love to learn even more from watching them in person. I would love to use this opportunity to absorb the lessons in person and meet others who are also as invested in ted talks the way that I am. I should receive this scholarship seat, because of how badly I want it. This event as I said before offers so many chances for new beneficial experiences. I am reliable, and those who know me know that when I commit to anything I follow it through. I am the most dependable person I know, and if you select me, I will be there. I am incredibly enthusiastic about the potential of attending this ted talk. If chosen nothing could stop me from going but I am not going for the perks, I want to go to learn and observe the ted talks.

WEST PORT HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR ★★★★★★

Due to my growing fascination in various topics, I believe that my attendance to this event would not only grow my knowledge, but also broaden my interests as a student. Allowing me to further explore current topics and issues will allow me to explore solutions to these problems. Therefore, making me a well-rounded and educated student of modern-day society in the states. Along with that I am currently enrolled in an AP seminar, and I am learning about new topics that would also benefit me for research-based presentations in that class. Thank you.

WEST PORT HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR ★★★★★★

I think this event is a wonderful opportunity for listening to the perspectives and thoughts of professional speakers. Among the list of Ted Talks for this year, there are a lot of personal empowerment topics involved with the speaker's own stories. These kinds of talks are important to hear as the ability to grow and develop your own knowledge, emotional intelligence, and understanding of other perspectives is irreplaceable. I should receive this scholarship seat because I am extremely driven to learn and expand my knowledge and I know that these Ted talks are an invaluable opportunity to do so. For me, the power of broadening my perspectives and hearing the stories and views of others is key to my growth as a person.

WEST PORT HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR ★★★★★★

Since I started high school, I have watched TED talk videos in the classroom. The universal lessons that each of these ted talks taught fueled my obsession with TEDx. It was always a passing thought whenever I would have the opportunity to attend one of these events. After hearing about the event happening in Ocala in passing conversation with a teacher at my school, I was ecstatic that our school was offered a chance to be seated at this event. The speaker would be able to shape minds, and, in turn, we would be able to pass this knowledge onto others. I would be grateful to be seated at this event.

WEST PORT HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR ★★★★★★

As I grow older the more my mind wanders in search for any inspiration that will give me a passion and new understanding, I did not know about myself. As I envelop on this journey of self-discovery, Ted talks have become my best friend. I would be so grateful to be able to attend the new upcoming event being held in Ocala. The inspiration that Ted talks give me comes from the individuals that show their journey they went through to discover their passion or a challenging event they faced that led them to discover their passion.

ACCELERATION ACADEMY ★★★★★★

This event is an opportunity that I was lucky enough to be invited to. I gave up entirely in school, but now at my new school, I am trying my best this time. I now realize education is one of the most important things to have and any help given to me would be very appreciated. Thank you very much!

VANGUARD HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR ★★★★★★

I would like to attend this TED showcase because I think this is a great opportunity to branch out. TED videos have always been interesting and being present at this event would be a huge honor. This is a rare event, and I would hate to miss out on it. I feel like I can learn many things by attending.

FOREST HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR ★★★★★★

I attended TEDx last year and loved it! I look forward to the ideas that will be presented this year. In previous years, I've left with new insight and a different perspective on things. I believe I can provide the speakers with exceptional feedback that will help them in their future endeavors. Being able to attend this year will give me the knowledge I need about public speakers and hopefully be the next speaker in the future.

MARION TECHNICAL COLLEGE JUNIOR ★★★★★★

I would love to attend this event because as an individual I would like to see and hear people talking about their lives and their ideas on Power. I am an open-minded person so I would love to hear everyone out and eventually use the knowledge I have gathered from this event and apply it to my own life.



Exercise your mind

PIVOT

Mindset
Opportunity
Growth
Resilience
Change

Breakthrough
Momentum
Flexibility
Transform
Pivot

Courage
Innovation
Agility
Adapt
TEDxOcala

Z N J E T N O Y Q X E W S B Z W D F V S Y N Y A
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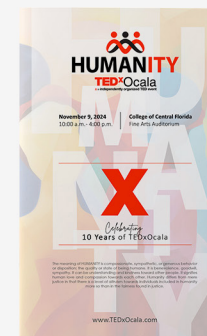
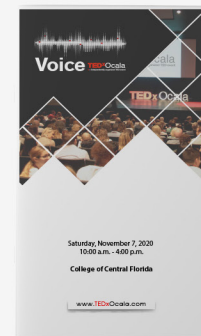
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- *Barack Obama*

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PIVOT

TEDxOcala
x = independently organized TED event

November 8, 2025

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

College of Central Florida

Fine Arts Auditorium

In every journey—personal, professional, or societal—there comes a moment when the path ahead demands a change in direction. A decision. A transformation. A pivot. Our theme this year, "Pivot," invites us to explore the power of turning points. These are the moments when we shift our perspective, reimagine our purpose, and courageously adapt to new realities. Whether sparked by challenge, innovation, failure, or opportunity, a pivot is never just a change, it's a choice to grow. At TEDxOcala 2025, we'll hear from thinkers, creators, and changemakers who've embraced the art of the pivot—those who dared to shift course and discovered something extraordinary on the other side. Together, we'll explore how pivots can disrupt industries, heal communities, ignite movements, and transform lives. Because sometimes, the most powerful step forward begins with a turn.

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