

Member Spotlight

Michelle DuVall-Rubin

By Carolyn Taylor



Befitting her love of all things Italian, Michelle and I lunched at an outside sidewalk table for our chat on a warm 80 degree day in mid-December. She and husband Ted eat there often and she's no stranger to the staff. She's right at home with the friendly, affable culture - having been to Italy many times, with good working Italian vocabulary.

The essence of Michelle is that of a confident, straightforward gal...her life, a mix of choice and chance. After a short time in West Point where she was to be born, the family moved to Alma, Michigan where Michelle and her younger brother grew up. Alma I'm told, is known as Scotland, USA, a 7,000 person town in the center of the state with the largest population in the county, so I guess it's fair to characterize her as coming from a background of solid, mid-western values.

Our conversation quickly transported us to her adult years because her youth was "a million years ago and who cares about that anyway?" Her work and interest in animals is life-long. She attended Michigan State and then transferred to Otterbein College where she studied equine science. Over the years, she has made a home for a myriad of animals including horses, pot belly pigs, parrots, finches, dog and cats. With the average snowfall in Michigan ranging from 150 to 300 inches a year, she decided to transfer to the University of Florida where she studied microbiology and animal science and met Ted, who also studied microbiology and was to become her husband a few years later.

In 1987, she moved to LA with a girlfriend and worked for a while with a concert promoter before opening her own exotic bird store. Five years later and right before Hurricane Andrew, she moved to Port St. Lucie and then on to Fort Lauderdale, close to where her college beau Ted was living in Hollywood and began dating again. While in South Florida, she began working as a "destination service manager", booking escorted tours and corporate packages-a job that led her to Club Med N. America.

She and Ted married in 1997 and a job opportunity for him brought them to Central Florida shortly thereafter. Ted soon started his own software company that he runs today, a Google-inspired concept of flex hours and employee support that encourages productivity and teamwork. Meanwhile, Michelle became a sommelier and worked selling wines to restaurants, wine shops and the like. Six years ago, Michelle stopped working and her charitable work began. When she heard the plight of the county shelter trying to raise money for fans to cool the living quarters of the dogs and cats, she sprang into action through T.E.A.R.S. (Together Every Animal Receives Support) with her Seminole County Animal Services *Sit, Stay, Sip...and Save a Life* event. Now the VP, they will again host their 3rd annual fundraiser on Friday, March 7th. (If you are an animal lover like she and would like to help, let her know and she'll keep you posted.) Partnering with PETCO to allow in-store housing, cat adoptions have increased 30%. She aspires to see SCAS be a no-kill shelter.

Michelle found the Heathrow Women's Club on the internet! She is active in the Ways and Means and Charitable Endeavors committees. When she noticed that the club wasn't doing any direct "hands on" work with the women that we support, she rounded up professionals and members to start a *Day of Beauty* at SafeHouse. She had the idea to start the monthly birthday celebrations at the Boys and Girls Club and invites our ladies to help her. Michelle is an idea person that makes things happen.

A variety of life experience serves to create the well-rounded individual we are privileged to know and have in our club. As she learns French and continues to enjoy trips abroad, she dreams of retiring in Menton, France, a sleepy little town within driving distance to the Alps, Monte Carlo and Nice. Sounds awesome, Michelle. Since achievement is written in Michelle's genetic code, I'm pretty certain it's her destiny. ~