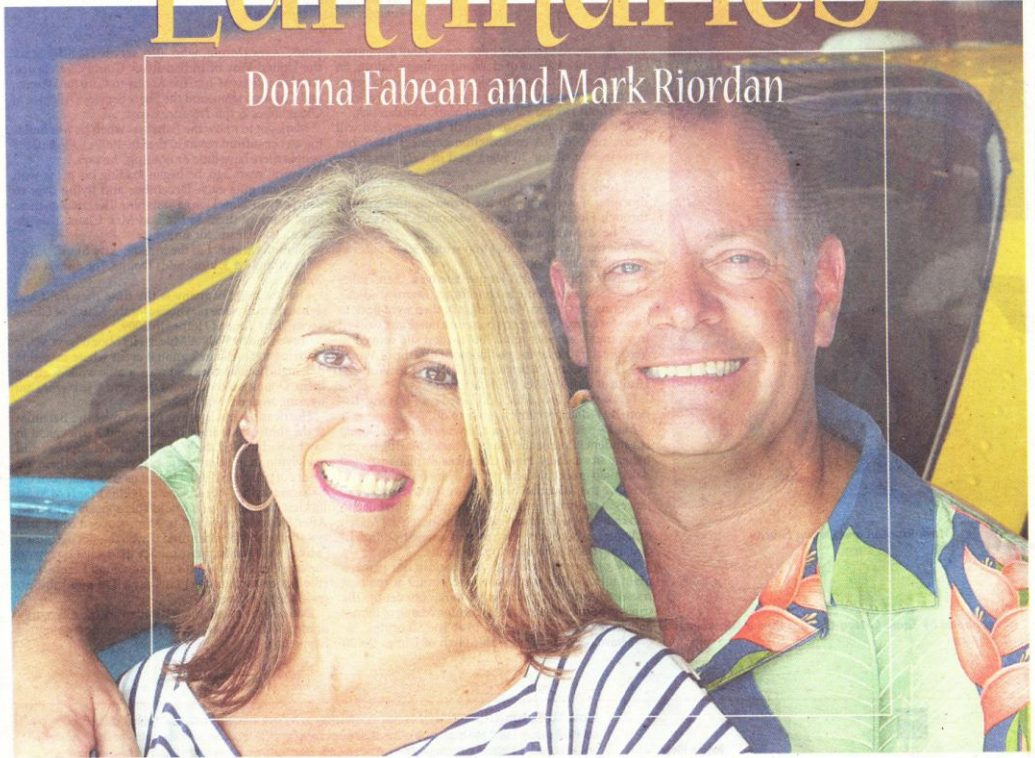


Luminaries

Donna Fabean and Mark Riordan



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Mark Riordan and Donna Fabean

Cover photos by Tania Ortega-Cowan: Donna Fabean and Mark Riordan

Cover Story

Passion for nursing and flying leads to helping others

By Tania Ortega-Cowan
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A perfect recipe of humor, a sense of adventure, the qualities of class and professionalism, an authentic compassion for people and a genuine desire to share wealth - these elements are what makes both Donna Fabean and Mark Riordan tick.

The couple met two and a half years ago and will marry next May. A construction engineer, Mark has lived in Florida for 30 years, and in Vero Beach for two.

"I took a sailboat from Virginia one cold winter morning. I was going to the Bahamas and coming through Florida, and I loved it so much I decided to stay," he says with a smile.

"We were born both in Ohio within 30 minutes of each other," says Donna.

"My mother wouldn't let me date back then," jokes Mark. "She wanted me to concentrate on my studies."

Donna grew up in West Virginia, then went back to Ohio for college, where she became a nurse and worked in women's services until 2007, when she moved to Vero Beach to take the position of Director of Women's Health Care, Pediatrics and Partners in Women's Health at Indian River Medical Center.

"I absolutely love what I do," she says. "It is my passion. It is what I became a nurse to do."

Mark's passion for the past 20 years is flying. Donna is a student pilot. At the center of their colorful, breezy hangar sits a shiny Piper Cherokee airplane painted Bahamian green, blue and yellow. Have no doubt: these two love the Bahamas! Their ability to travel great distances at the drop of a hat, along with their love of fun and charity benefits many people, including the March of Dimes, where they have started a new tradition of donating Bahamian trips to raise funds.

"We offer up a flight over and back in our plane, a night in an oceanfront resort and dinner at the best restaurant you'll ever eat at," says Mark, confidently. The trip will be auctioned at the upcoming March of Dimes Signature Chef event on Nov. 14 at The Moorings.

"I have been involved with March of Dimes for 20 years," says Donna, who also serves Healthy Start, the United Way of Indian River County, SafeSpace, Sunshine Rotary Club, the Access to Care for Women and Children team, and the Share Services Alliance of Okeechobee & the Treasure Coast.

Mark got to know the Bahamas when he was building an oceanfront resort in the late 1990s. "Most of the people there have little or nothing," he says.

Several years ago, he began loading his plane with Christmas gifts each December and flying over to deliver them. Now Donna joins him. The children there must think of them as Mr. and Mrs. Claus. They do make a good team, for sure.

"She's the brains. I'm the muscle," says Mark.

"Anything I ask him," adds Donna, "he always says, 'Yes!'"

One example of many is the time they built and donated an airplane playhouse for the March of Dimes Teeny, Tiny Tour of Homes in 2009.

"I even had to Walk A Mile in Her Shoes!" says Mark, referring to SafeSpace's annual event where men don red, high-heeled shoes and walk a mile while wearing them. Donna is a co-chair for the event. "This year I am wearing wedges," Mark jokes.

Hurricane Irene had just passed over the Bahamas at the time of our story deadline, and Mark called to say he had loaded the plane with relief supplies and was flying in as soon as he had clearance. There are plenty of people in need. He sent us an e-mail from the Bahamas saying: "My nick name is Ellie Mae (LMA) for luckiest man alive," says Mark. This appears to be true!

After dropping relief funds, Mark stopped in an area not affected by the storm and played the slot machines. "I hit the jackpot for more money than what I spent on the supplies," he says. "It's all about good karma. Like (the fictional character) Earl says, 'Do good things, good things happen!'"

Donna Fabean and Mark Riordan are most certainly doing good things, and good things are most definitely happening.