

SUNDAY BUSINESS

Trump, Russia and the Palm Beach mansion



Alexandra Clough

“Don’t say Russian.” Those were the words Donald Trump first told me back in May 2008. The topic was the buyer of a Palm Beach mansion owned by Trump. The then-New York real estate developer had just inked a blockbuster deal to sell the oceanfront estate for \$100 million — a record for home sale even in the island’s billionaire playground. The intrigue over the Trump

property sale a dozen years ago surged again this month in the wake of yet another tell-all book about the president. This one by his former personal lawyer, Michael Cohen. Back in 2008, the Palm Beach Post was the first to learn and report that Trump had a contract to sell the former Abe Gosman estate at 515 N. County Road. The property was known as Maison de L’Amitie, or House of Friendship. Sources familiar with the deal told me that the mansion’s buyer was Russian, and there were plans to tear down and subdivide the property. In a telephone interview on May 14, 2008, Trump confirmed the pending sale but told me he didn’t want it



Trump

known that the buyer was Russian. “Don’t say Russian,” Trump said. So the May 15 story about the pending sale referred to the buyer as “foreign.” The sale closed in July 2008 for \$95 million to County Road Property LLC, netting Trump a profit of \$54 million just months before global markets crashed. County Road Property was owned by Russian billionaire Dmitry Rybolovlev, who made his fortune in fertilizer potash. Details of the 2008 Trump interview came to mind following the appearance of Trump’s



Donald Trump bought this mansion at 515 N. County Road in Palm Beach in 2004 and sold it in 2008 for a recorded \$95 million to Russian businessman Dmitry Rybolovlev. It has since been torn down and subdivided into three lots. [PALM BEACH DAILY NEWS FILE PHOTO]

erstwhile attorney, Cohen, on MSNBC’s The Rachel Maddow Show on Sept. 8. In the interview, Cohen talked about his new book,

“Disloyal: A Memoir,” and the sale of Trump’s Palm Beach mansion. Cohen also dished

See CLOUGH, D6

GroovyTek teaches seniors how to use consumer tech



Marc Storch, a trainer with GroovyTek, works with client Kim Pemberton in Denver. The company helps people understand consumer technology. It serves South Florida customers from Jupiter to Fort Lauderdale from its Boca Raton office. [GROOVYTEK]

Teaching service aims to coach client to have ‘epiphany’ moment

Susan Salisbury
Special to Palm Beach Post
USA TODAY NETWORK

Navigating the online world can be difficult, especially for older people who didn’t grow up with technology. Seeking the usual “tech help” can result in a barrage of confusing terms that can be intimidating.

GroovyTek’s founders Matt Munro and Alex Rodas started the company in 2015 with people over 40 in mind after they found their parents needed help with technology. They recognized there was a niche for personalized help to enable people to grasp

technology in relatable, understandable terms and become confident and competent enough to turn their frustrations into fun.

In November the company, headquartered in Denver, expanded to the South Florida market and opened its Boca Raton office. Both in-home and one-on-one phone sessions are available. More than 300 customers have been served from Jupiter to Fort Lauderdale, said Barry Rogers, GroovyTek’s vice president.

“We opened the office here in Boca Raton right before the pandemic,” Rogers said. “We had to morph into a different approach. In-home sessions were not going to work at the peak. We changed

over to phone sessions, where we can remote into someone’s computer or do a Zoom meeting.”

The company is once again doing home visits, with employees wearing masks and gloves and using disinfectants, or customers can opt for service over the phone. Trainers can either remotely access a client’s computer or meet with them on Zoom.

“People over 50, anybody who has not been born and raised with technology, is a good candidate for us to be working with. We get a lot of calls from people in their 60s to late 80s and early 90s. It is pretty amazing to see people who are competent and living independently. They really want to understand and learn,” Rogers said.

With more people working from home, spending more time at home and children learning online from home, the demand for GroovyTek’s services has grown.

“Some customers have businesses out of their homes. They have attached themselves to us as their consultants. We work with them every week,” Rogers said

Assistance can range from teaching the client how to shop online, use email or texts, or master Facebook or an iPhone. It also can go as far as setting up a computer, iPad, smart home system, a Roomba robot vacuum or a remote garage-door opener.

“Our approach is so different. If people have two

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LEGAL CLASSIFIEDS

Job fair set to match workers, employers

Alexandra Clough
Palm Beach Post
USA TODAY NETWORK

A free virtual job fair featuring hundreds of jobs will take place on Wednesday as South Florida retailers, hospitality and tourism companies gear up for the coming tourist and holiday season.

The Sept. 23 job fair will feature employers working with CareerSource Palm Beach County, Broward and Research Coast, said Tom Veenstra, vice president of administration for CareerSource Palm Beach County. The nonprofit helps job seekers and employers.

The fair follows one held on Sept. 16, with 10 Palm Beach County country clubs and private clubs seeking 150 seasonal workers. About 100 job seekers attended the hospitality job fair, Veenstra said.

But the upcoming event is expected to be much larger and will feature hundreds of jobs in Palm Beach, Martin and Broward counties, Veenstra said.

The jobs will be full-time, part-time and seasonal positions.

Despite the coronavirus pandemic, the upcoming winter season is expected to see greater demand for hospitality services.

Many employees need workers between October and Easter, when the winter season brings part-time residents and tourists to the county. The hospitality industry is the county’s largest employer, and demand for hospitality workers is expected to jump during the season, despite the pandemic, Veenstra said.

See FAIR, D3

New companies face tough task overcoming pandemic, recession

Joyce M. Rosenberg
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Julie Campbell had to rethink her new wallpaper business before she could sell her first sheet.

Campbell launched Pasted Paper in February, but soon after, the coronavirus forced the cancellation of the trade shows where she expected to introduce her wallpaper to prospective retail customers. Suddenly, the \$30,000 she’d invested in creating the wallpaper was at risk, dependent on her transforming the

company to sell directly to consumers.

To save Pasted Paper, Campbell learned online selling and marketing — skills not immediately in her wheelhouse.

“I had so much inventory and I needed to sell it. I was forced to figure this out,” Campbell says.

A recession amid a pandemic may seem like the worst time to start a business. Despite millions of loans and grants from federal and state governments, it’s estimated

See RECESSION, D2



After losing their jobs as corporate executives during the pandemic, Amy and Cody Morgan of Cypress, Texas, decided to start a pool servicing company, Pit Stop Pools. [DAVID J. PHILLIP/ASSOCIATED PRESS]

FIND RESIDENCES SECTION INSIDE

Carnival to ditch 18 ships to offset COVID-19 losses

Taylor Dolven
Miami Herald

Carnival Corporation will part with a total of 18 cruise ships in the next few months — 12% of its fleet — as it continues to cut costs while cruising in most of the world remains banned.

The company announced an adjusted third-quarter loss of \$1.7 billion in a financial filing Tuesday, six months after it first announced it was shutting down operations amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The company had previously announced in July it would part with 15 ships. The move to speed up efforts to slim capacity comes as cruises in the U.S., the company's most lucrative market, remain banned by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention until Oct. 1. Most lines serving the U.S. have ceased cruising until at least Oct. 31.

Carnival Fantasy, Carnival Fascination, Carnival Imagination, Carnival Inspiration and Costa Victoria have already been scrapped. In July, Holland America Line and P&O Cruises announced that Amsterdam, Maasdam, Rotterdam, Veendam and Oceanea were leaving the fleets and transferring to undisclosed buyers.

The company is also slowing down the delivery



Carnival Imagination, pictured in 2013, is one of 18 cruise ships Carnival Corp. is scrapping in response to the downturn in business caused by the coronavirus pandemic. [ALEXIA ELEJALDE-RUIZ, TNS]

schedule of its new ships, now expecting only five of the nine ships originally scheduled to be delivered by the end of 2021.

Carnival Corp., the largest cruise company in the world with nine cruise lines, restarted operations of one of its Costa Cruises ships in Italy on Sept. 6. The cruises are only available to

Italian passengers, who are required to undergo rapid COVID-19 antigen tests before boarding.

CEO Arnold Donald participated in a public meeting with Miami-Dade commissioners recently to urge the CDC to allow cruises to restart in the U.S. He said the company was working to develop science-based

protocols to keep passengers and crew safe and to prevent burdening government resources.

"We want no one to experience a greater risk on a cruise ship," he said.

Commissioners did not ask Donald or executives from Royal Caribbean International, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings and

MSC Cruises about how they would prevent outbreaks at sea and avoid complications that left passengers and crew stranded in March and April and overwhelmed the Coast Guard with medical evacuation requests. A spokesperson for the CDC said the agency does not have enough information

to say when it will be safe for cruise ships to resume passenger operations.

At least 24 Carnival Corp. ships have been affected by COVID-19 and at least 80 of the company's passengers and crew have died from the virus, according to a Miami Herald investigation. Carnival Corp., along with its competitors, have struggled to contain outbreaks among crew members on its ships after all passengers were repatriated. In June, Carnival Corp. decided to pull all of its cruise ships out of U.S. waters partly because it disagreed with a requirement from the CDC that crew members remain in individual cabins as much as possible. It has not reported COVID-19 or COVID-like illnesses to the agency since then.

On Tuesday the company said it is seeing bookings for the second half of 2021 toward the higher end of historical ranges. More than half of bookings during the third quarter were new bookings as opposed to future cruise credits from canceled cruises, the company said.

Since it stopped operating in March, Carnival Corp. said it has raised \$12 billion. As of the end of the third quarter on Aug. 31, the company said it had \$8.2 billion of cash and cash equivalents.

FAIR

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The holidays also are coming up, and counties moving into Phase 2 stages have businesses that need workers, Veenstra said. "The tourist season outlook is looking much brighter," he said.

To register for the CareerSource virtual job fair, go to <https://www.careersourcepbc.com/job-seekers/events-calendar> and click on the Sept. 23 event.

Any job seeker needing a computer to register and participate in the event

can go to one of three CareerSource Palm Beach County offices. They are in West Palm Beach, Belle Glade and Delray Beach. Visit www.careersourcepbc.com/ for more information and directions.

Unlike the upcoming fair, the Sept. 16 job fair focused strictly on seasonal jobs for country clubs and private clubs.

In prior years, many private and country clubs hired workers through the H-2B visa program. This program allowed employers to temporarily hire foreign workers to perform non-agricultural labor or services in the United States.

The visa program was particularly in demand prior to the pandemic, due to historic low unemployment rates in Palm Beach County and the difficulty in finding available workers, Veenstra said.

In the 2019-20 season, CareerSource Palm Beach received notices that applications had been filed with the U.S. Department of Labor by 30 area hotels, clubs and resorts for 1,732 H-2B visas positions.

Among them were 80 positions at President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago club on Palm Beach and 14 at the Trump National Golf Club in Jupiter.

But on June 22, Trump

announced the immediate suspension of the program until year's end. He cited the coronavirus pandemic, which caused an avalanche of job losses for U.S. workers.

For this year's upcoming season, some clubs submitted applications for H-2B workers prior to the June proclamation by the president, and some afterward. Thus far, there are 2,377 H-2B visa applications submitted by 35 area hotels, clubs and resorts,

although none can be executed until the expiration of Trump's proclamation.

Veenstra said he hasn't seen any requests by Trump's Palm Beach County properties for H-2B workers this year.

A Mar-a-Lago official couldn't be reached for comment.

Club participating in Sept. 16's virtual job fair were BallenIsles in Palm Beach Gardens; Quail Ridge in Boynton Beach; Mizner Country Club in

suburban Delray Beach; Woodfield Country Club in Boca Raton; Jupiter Hills in Tequesta; Admirals Cove in Jupiter; Ibis Golf & Country Club in West Palm Beach; Hunters Run Country Club in Boynton Beach; Old Marsh Golf Club in Palm Beach Gardens; and The Everglades Club in Palm Beach.

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TECH

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or three sessions with us, they recognize we are genuinely all about them," Rogers said.

Employees have often worked at an Apple store or on Best Buy's Geek Squad before coming to GroovyTek, and must possess not only tech skills but also a desire to help people and work well and patiently with people, Rogers said.

"I recently hired someone with a nursing degree who decided she did not want to go into the medical field. She had an understanding of technology, and her real drive was to help people," Rogers said. "If we are doing an in-home session, we will find out what their needs are, whether they use an iPhone or an Android and expand off that," Rogers said.

When setting up the appointment, GroovyTek employees ask what other technology they use at home, such as a computer or entertainment system and get a feel for the client's computer aptitude. Some are fairly well-versed, while others know very little. Sometimes people aren't even sure what they need, or what to ask, and that's OK.

"We will adapt and be a chameleon to the environment we are going into. A lot of people move into a senior center or a new home. They get a great entertainment system or TV, but don't

have a clue about how to set it up. We also have a program called 'Cutting the Cord,'" Rogers said.

"It's private. You can ask us anything. There are no stupid questions," Rogers said.

People have needed help for issues as basic as cutting and pasting a URL link or purchasing items through a website.

"We will provide whatever services people are looking for. We had a rabbi who wanted help with a Zoom session for a funeral. We set it up and stayed with him," Rogers said.

Richard Sandulli, 80, of Palm Beach Gardens retired from the finance business in New York 22 years ago, and has found GroovyTek's assistance invaluable. He had some computer skills but wanted to improve.

"They are very prompt and very knowledgeable. It is a darn good service," Sandulli said. "People come down here who are 60 years old, even less. It is getting to the point that if you cannot do everything on the machine, you are in trouble.

"Those fellows do a good job. They spend as little or as much time as you need. They are very patient and help you work through everything," Sandulli said.

One customer loved the concept of a smart home but had no idea how to accomplish that. He was assisted in being able to control lights, shades, alarm system, drapes and entertainment system with an iPhone or an Alexa virtual assistant device.

GroovyTek trainers seek to be respectful of people, coming in alongside them to help them learn, not just to fix the problem and run.

"When our trainers are working with seniors, there is an epiphany at one point. A light bulb goes on, and the person understands. It is so empowering for them," Rogers said.

Marketing has been through newspaper and television ads, and word-of-mouth.

The hourly rate is \$150 with price breaks based upon the number of hours purchased or if you purchase a membership. An online membership is \$49 and includes free access to on-demand content and videos on GroovyTek's website and a reduced session rate of \$100 an hour. A \$299 annual membership includes one in-home session and after that a \$100 per hour rate per session, plus one hour of over-the-phone support per month, as well as session notes and free access to members-only content.

GroovyTek's in-home sessions are available in South Florida, the Phoenix and Denver areas, or remotely from anywhere in the world.

Rogers said the company, with a total of 35 to 40 employees working in its three markets, would like to expand to the west coast of Florida, Orlando and Tampa and eventually up the East Coast.

"We are growing organically. We want to make sure we cover and take care of all the areas we are in," Rogers said.

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- Our dedicated educators
- Our tireless non-profit organizations
- Our stalwart government employees and civil servants, and
- All of the hardworking people on the frontlines who are keeping Palm Beach County strong during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you to all.

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