



Above, Sheila Bonomo brought her sons Andrew, Arnold and Victor to her oath of allegiance ceremony, presided over by Jeb Bush. At right, Sheila leads a line dance with some dancers who have brought her much joy. From left to right are Mary Becker, Pat Koning and Sheila's mentor, Lilia Bensonov.

Leading the next dance



Sheila Bonomo's dream comes true at OTOW

It should come as no surprise that this month we feature a resident who is as Irish as they come.

What might surprise you to learn is that our own Wild Irish Rose, Sheila Bonomo, has managed to check off a major item on her ambitious bucket list right here in our relatively innocuous community.

Sheila was born in Cork, Ireland. Most of her family still lives there, but Sheila has always had a sense that she likely would not stay.

Her global meanderings began when she was 16 as a secondary school student. She won a trip to Spain for 10 days. When her parents told her she couldn't go, the travel agency offered to chaperone the trip and she was off to see the world!

Well, a small part of it anyway. In some ways she has never looked back.

Sheila is the youngest of five siblings. She likes to say that, in Ireland, you become either a nurse, a teacher or a nun when you grow up. She did indeed end up in the medical field, but that didn't last.

Sheila and another friend decided on a whim to apply for jobs as flight attendants with a major airline. They were accepted and began their new careers in Ireland before transferring to the Middle East. Her three years in Saudi Arabia were educational. She witnessed first hand the beauty and the



barbarism of a society seemingly stuck in the 14th century.

After a three year stint in London, England, and another in Athens, Greece, Sheila and 100 of her peers transferred to New York City where her life took a romantic turn. It was there she met the man she would marry and start a family with.

During her travels, Sheila became painfully aware of the huge imbalance of global wealth and the plight of the world's poorest children. She and her husband felt compelled to do something tangible about it. They decided to adopt two impoverished children from the same family, and Columbia was one of the few countries without restrictions to hamper their efforts.

Ironically, their family vision landed them more than they bargained for. They were shown three brothers who were living separately and, after some time and soul searching, the couple flew to Bogota, only to return three weeks later as a family of five, complete with all the meaningful chaos.

Despite the steep learning curve, it remains one of her best life decisions.

Now, let's get back to Sheila's bucket list.

When talking about bucket lists, travel is usually number one and Sheila's was no different in that respect. Her list of dream destinations was vast and exotic, probably fueled by her passion for geography. Where Sheila is different from many is that she has visited most of the destinations on her list, thanks in part to her airline job and its travel perks.

Imagine a legendary place – let's say India and the Taj Mahal. Yes, Sheila has checked that one off her list.

What about an African safari in the Serengeti and the wildebeest migration route? Check!

How about the great pyramids at Giza or cruising down the Nile to Alexandria. Check and check!

What about visiting Rome, Athens, the Greek Islands and Capri? You guessed it. Sheila can check them all.

The previous are all dream desti-

nations, but not tremendously taxing or particularly dangerous.

Alright then, what about climbing the legendary Mount Kilimanjaro? Does that sound adventurous enough for you? It took a daunting five days climbing up and three more days down but, check – there's another one off Sheila's bucket list.

What could possibly be left?

How about a casual one-on-one conversation with Prince Philip, of the British monarchy? Check!

Not bad for an Irish girl.

Wherever she traveled, Sheila sampled that culture's dance traditions. Belly dancing in Egypt, Masai tribe dancing in Tansania and Kenya, salsa dancing in Brazil, and bollywood dancing in India.

Then, three years ago, she wandered innocently onto the spacious OTOW dance floor for the first time. Now she teaches and dances three times a week with OTOW Line Dancers, of which she is vice president, and with the Snowbirds Club. She does Salsacize and Zumba class on her other days off.

For Sheila Bonomo, dance is good therapy and she wants to pay it forward to others. You could say that her desire to check dancing off her bucket list is now benefiting many of us.

Go raibh maith agat Sheila!