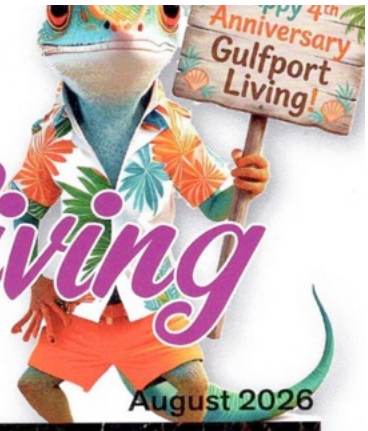
An exclusive magazine serving the Gulfport community

Gulfport Living



August 2026



Gulfport:
The Village We Keep Choosing

POWERED BY BVM

Gulfport: The Village We Keep Choosing

A Village Pulls Together

Submitted by EMMA MUJICA | Photography by LEIGH CLIFTON



When Gulfport Living Magazine launched its inaugural issue in 2022, our family had the honor of being chosen for the cover. We shared stories of how a Jersey culinary artist do-gooder and a feisty Puerto Rican nature lover met on a farm in Texas, fell in love over bountiful gardens, co-created chicken coops, and farm-to-table dinners, and eventually found ourselves building a life in this quirky little coastal town.

Back then, we described Gulfport as "the best of every place we've ever lived." Four years later, we still mean it.

Life has unfolded in ways we never could have predicted. Some dreams have taken root. Others have shapeshifted entirely. And some of the deepest lessons have come through experiences we never would've chosen.

The biggest change to our family arrived on May 28, 2024. Our son, Howell Gracen ("Howie"), was born after a traumatic delivery. It was a near-death experience for him, and one that forever changed us. Nothing prepares you for watching your child fight for life before you've even had the chance to know them. Against steep odds, he made a miraculous recovery and brought us closer together as a couple.

Howell recently celebrated his second birthday and, living up to his name, he is well. How well? He's healthy, precocious, and convinced that life is meant to be lived to the fullest, loudest volume. Passionate like the rest of us, he makes his presence known with his untamed curiosity and undeniable surfer-dude features. His lung capacity has us wondering if he might become a singer one day, but his love language already seems to be tools. I've often predicted he'll help Zyon build our family homestead village someday.

Raising four children in four completely different stages of life is as real as it gets. We're rooted in resilience and perfused with patience.

Some days we're flowing in beautiful harmony. Others are a constant pivot between snack meltdowns, backseat bickering, routine reminders, emotional check-ins, and spontaneous family circles to reconnect after the inevitable breakdown. Our plates are brimming in the most meaningful ways.

Our oldest, Rhiannon, graduated from County Prep in New Jersey with a focus on culinary arts and is headed to FSU to study nutrition. Archer is entering middle school at Our Savior Lutheran, navigating that liminal space between childhood and independence with her brazen, theatrical spirit. Marisol's in third grade, bringing her sensitive, quirky inquisitiveness to everything she does. And Howell keeps us on our toes in ways only a two-year-old can. It's a whole 'tude.

If Gulfport once taught us what community looked like, Howie's arrival showed us what community feels like.

Friends brought meals. Neighbors pitched in. The children, pup, and yard were all tended to. People prayed, encouraged us, and simply showed up. During one of the most vulnerable seasons of our lives, this village reminded us why we chose it.

And somehow, Gulfport continues to delight us.

Our Gulfport grannies devotedly attend our daughters' performances and take our son on strolls through the Food Forest. Neighbors invite the girls to dine downtown, and the Gulfport Rec Center staff have become like extended family, caring for Marisol every summer.

There is an unmistakable magic here.

It's the kind of place where strangers become friends instantaneously. Ordinary Tuesday evenings at the Taphouse become danceable celebrations, and events at WonderWorks inspire art and friendships that feel like they'll last a lifetime. Where the Mayor herself tidies up Tomlinson Park after MCing Fourth of July potato sack races and participating in the water balloon toss, and half the town shows up on William's Pier for the sunrise in awe, as if waiting for a child to be born.

Amazingly, Zyon and I have grown professionally alongside the community we love.

Thanks to our trusted neighbors, Zyon ranks among top REALTORS® in the state and in Gulfport. We've recently joined forces to streamline his services. Zyon serves as CEO and Chief Happiness Officer, while I serve as the COOL (Chief Operating Officer Lady) of our Easy Living Real Estate Team. Together, we're excited to support real



Sisters Archer (rt) and Marisol (lft) hang out in their favorite backyard oak tree.



TELL US
WHY YOU *LOVE*
THIS MAGAZINE!

www.bestversionmedia.com/feedback



BVM
BEST VERSION MEDIA







> If Gulfport once taught us what community looked like, Howie's arrival showed us what community feels like.

estate clients with ease.

Zyon is a visionary: gifted at connecting with people, listening intentionally, and helping families discover what "home" can truly mean. My background in operations management complements his strengths. We've learned that buying or selling a home is rarely just a transaction. It's about building a real relationship with your agent, to your dream home, and within your neighborhood.

Those same values continue shaping our family's long-term vision.

When readers first met us, we shared our dream of Wellsprings Village, a movement centered around cultivating food as a community and creating meaningful relationships across generations.

That dream hasn't disappeared; it's matured.

Today, we're calling the next chapter "The Sanctuary."

We've learned that every village begins by creating spaces where people safely gather, and we're dreaming of a large, indoor events space in Gulfport that welcomes expressive arts, conscious movement, and community for families.

This summer, that vision came to life during our first Creative Movement Summer Camp in the heart of Gulfport. Children spent their days dancing, making music, practicing mindfulness, and exploring the rhythm of their hearts.

Watching children dance freely and wholeheartedly reminded us of something we adults often forget: healing begins where people feel safe enough to express themselves and let their inner child play.

Our hope is for The Sanctuary to become a home for intentional movement, collaborative music, and meaningful community experiences for all ages. It's one small step toward a much bigger dream: a family homestead village where multiple generations can live, celebrate, and support one another.

The truth is, villages aren't built by construction crews. They're built one relationship at a time.

Looking back at our original Gulfport Living feature, it's funny how we've changed while so much has stayed the same.

I've continued teaching Spanish lessons at SunFlower Private School, a role that keeps my heart connected to my inner child and to the next generation. More recently, after healing from Crohn's Colitis, I became a Certified Spiritual Life Coach, guiding others as they navigate their own healing journeys. Whether through movement, language, consulting or coaching, my work is to remember my innate wholeness and inspire others to do the same.

Our daughters are growing into remarkable young women, voracious readers who express themselves easily. Our dog Winnie still melts into our arms like a well-loved teddy bear. We continue to host community gatherings, visit Florida's springs, and tend our food forest. We're creating beauty in and around our home and often nourishing neighbors with tropical fruits, warm soups, and fresh bread.

Most of all, our marriage has become a haven amidst the beautiful bustle of family life.

Perhaps that's what Gulfport has been teaching us all along: home isn't simply where we live, it's where we've grown and where we're known. It's where people celebrate together and share what they've got to give. It's where children see that kindness matters, love wins, and creativity belongs to everyone.

As we look toward the future, our dreams remain true: to continue helping families find homes they love, to keep creating spaces where people belong, and to raise our family in a community that values authenticity and generosity. We hope to keep building, alongside all of you, the kind of village that reminds us what's possible when neighbors become chosen family.

Four years after the original cover story, one thing hasn't changed: we still choose Gulfport, because somehow, this extraordinary little town keeps choosing us right back.







