

# Dr. Genell Ferrell

Celebration, Florida



White Dog Photography

## *Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Dr. Genell Ferrell:*

Originally from Indiana, Dr. Genell Ferrell, Owner of White Dog Photography, moved to Celebration from Alabama in December 2015. She spent the previous 20 years working as a Creative Arts professor at various colleges throughout the South. Along the way, she gradually got more serious about her photography hobby. About a month after they moved to Florida, Ferrell's husband encouraged her to turn her hobby into a business.

"I first got into photography in the early 90s - back in the film days," Ferrell said with a laugh. "The transition into the digital world was amazing. No longer did you have to worry about getting the shot right the first time you took it. Before we moved to Florida, I took some photography classes on the weekends and began to take pictures for family and friends. I never really considered photography as a possible

profession until after we moved."

Ferrell described the transition from steady job, set hours, health insurance and paychecks to self employed and a lot of unknowns as, "definitely a scary step". Nevertheless, it was one she was ready to take.

"Of our four kids, we only had two left in the house," she said. "I wasn't driving them all over the place to different sporting events, so I had more free time to focus on building the business. Along the way, I did support myself by teaching a couple courses as an adjunct professor at Valencia College."

Ferrell continued, "In the beginning, building the business from the ground up without any connections was tough. We didn't know anyone here. Also, I didn't have a lot of startup funds for advertising. I had to rely on getting out there and, in some cases, giving away free sessions. I also started working with the Celebration Foundation and got involved with the Boys and Girls Club and a local Rotary Club. It took about a year before I started to get consistent business. After that, word-of-mouth kicked in and, by November 2016, people were using me for holiday photo shoots and referring their friends and family."

Ferrell who, in addition to working as a photographer, also works with schools as a special needs educational consultant, authored a children's book and developed a curriculum for the Green Hand Project, loves working with people. She also enjoys the flexibility that comes with self-employment.

"It's extremely fun and rewarding to be out working with little ones, families and seniors," she said. "Other than writing, I've never felt, until

now, like I've been able to tap into my creative side. Photography allows me to do that. It's fun to try new ideas and then work on the editing part.

I get to do what I love and my hours are flexible."

Looking ahead, Ferrell isn't as focused on growth as she is with maintaining the current size of her business. She wants to continue doing weddings once or twice a month and would like to do more commercial work. She recently did a product line for a new sports clothing company and enjoyed the whole creative process. She looks forward to doing more of these type of jobs in the future.

What advice does Ferrell have for aspiring entrepreneurs? "If you need the money to live on, you need savings or a backup system before you jump in," she said. "Do not be afraid to network and follow any kind of lead no matter how small at the time. A small lead might take you somewhere huge. Also, if you hit dead ends, don't let them stop you. If you're working hard and doing what you need to do, you will find open doors. Lastly, we all have an opportunity to recreate ourselves. I started off as a kindergarten teacher and then transitioned to an administrator and then to a professor, then a mom of four and now I'm a photographer. Never be afraid to reinvent yourself. You have to create the life you want."

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