



Partners in Prevention

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Partner Spotlight – Lisa Onopa

With 20 years of experience working with third parties in the sponsorship, tenanting, and marketing industry, Lisa Onopa is currently Director, O.P. Account Management for Walt Disney Parks and Resorts U.S. Lisa and her team manage relationships with retailers and food and beverage companies that operate or will be operating a business at Disney Springs, a multi-million-dollar expansion to the former Downtown Disney at Walt Disney World Resort.



Lisa Onopa

Q: Can you tell us about your background and education?

A: I graduated from Indiana University's Kelley School of Business with a degree in Accounting.

Q: Can you tell us how you got your start at The Walt Disney Company and about the various roles you have had there?

A: After working for Deloitte in Chicago at the start of my career, I took a role with Disney and relocated to Orlando in 1996. I've been with Disney ever since. I was fortunate that in my early roles with Disney, I supported our alliance/sponsorship organization and really found a passion for working with outside companies to form mutually beneficial alliances. When I transitioned out of accounting and took a role at Epcot, I was fortunate enough to meet Leslie and the FLASH team. From there, *StormStruck* was born. I worked in the sponsorship world until I transitioned to a new role supporting the opening of Disneytown at Shanghai Disneyland Resort. From there, I was asked to join the team that was managing new tenant relationships for the opening of Disney Springs here in Orlando. I've been in that role ever since, working with third-party tenants across the Walt Disney World Resort.

Q: Your involvement with *StormStruck: A Tale of Two Homes* was crucial to its' success. Can you share some memories about it?

A: Once we knew we wanted to work with FLASH to bring this project to life, the focus was on finding the right partners to join the project. We had many discussions with Leslie and the team about who was right for this and who wasn't. We learned quickly that if one possible partnership wasn't working out, we couldn't force it to happen and should move on. That kept us all from

making what would have turned out to be big mistakes for the project's overall success. Realizing when to walk away was a key learning for all of us and really ensured that the project was able to become a reality.

I also remember very clearly the first *National Weather Person of the Year* award that FLASH presented to Jim Cantore. Attending that with my husband and being part of the formal presentation to Jim was a fun memory for me, coming from a family of Weather Channel lovers. I was also honored to be able to recognize the critical partners from *StormStruck* at an event as part of the National Disaster Resilience Conference held at WDW at the time. To see *StormStruck* from its infancy through its opening and beyond was a real joy and a great accomplishment for FLASH and WDW.

Q: From your time partnering with FLASH, what do you think are the driving forces advancing the cause of resilience today?

A: Unfortunately, I think the growing frequency of these natural disasters is one of the driving forces illuminating the need to do more. FLASH is well-positioned to be the expert that consumers and media rely on for information and insights on what can be done to be prepared and be a key advocate for stronger building codes and general advancement in the industry. Leslie and the entire FLASH team's ability to bring together key players in the cause to drive change and create awareness is impressive.

Q: Reflecting on what you have learned throughout your career, what is the most important message you want to leave our readers with?

A: Do something that makes you happy and brings purpose to your life. If you aren't doing that, make a change. I think this year really forced us to think about what's important in our individual lives, and I hope we don't lose sight of that as things go back to normal.

Q: What are your plans post-retirement?

A: My husband, Chris, and I are looking forward to putting time into charitable causes in a way that we haven't been able to while working. Our church does an amazing job of making a difference in the local community in various ways so that we will be spending a good chunk of time focused on those efforts. We also have very ambitious travel plans when the international markets open up to visit all the countries we have on our list. Finally, spending more time with our family and friends and getting more involved in their lives