



presents



# UNMASKING AUTISM GALA

*We're on the move!*

to benefit

Florida Elks Children's Therapy Services



Scan me 

SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 2024

HILTON ST. PETERSBURG BAYFRONT  
333 1ST STREET SE • ST. PETERSBURG, FL 33701



Welcome to the Fourth Annual Unmasking Autism Gala — We're on the Move!

When we started the Unmasking Autism Gala, we had no idea how successful it would be and how much interest it would create to raise acceptance and treatment for those with autism spectrum disorder. This is truly an honor. Thank you! With us all working together, we can help to make a difference in the lives of children with autism spectrum disorder and to help them overcome some of the challenges they and their families face daily.

On March 1, 2024, Florida Elks Children's Therapy Services celebrated its 25th anniversary. Just as the motto in the early FECTS logo stated, "Rolling with the Times", when the Florida Elks Children's Hospital closed the Florida Elks Children's Therapy Services began.



Florida Elks Children's Therapy Services has 32 occupational and physical therapists throughout the state who offer in-home therapy to Florida children in need. These services are provided in the patient's home without regard to the family's ability to pay for such services. Our therapists are currently treating more than 600 children per week and more than 60% of their patients are within the spectrum. Early detection with early intervention is the key to helping these children reach their full potential, which is different for each child.

We want to thank each of you for joining us to raise awareness and acceptance of autism spectrum disorder within our communities. We all have family members or friends whose lives have been touched by a child within the spectrum. Together, we are working to help them face and overcome the challenges caused by autism. We can improve the lives of these children by providing them with much-needed therapy.

As you leave this evening, know that your support and donations will make a difference in a child's life! I hope everyone has a wonderful time, and we will see you next year for the Unmasking Autism Gala hosted by Florida Elks Charities.

Sincerely,

Dan Masi  
Development Director  
Florida State Elks Association



## Program

Cocktail Reception  
sponsored by

Unmasking Autism Gala Committee  
Mr. and Mrs. Brian Artze

Music by *Chris Garner*

Wine Host and Sponsor  
Dr. Kunal V. Amin

**Silent Auction Opens**

**Welcome**

Dan Masi  
Development Director  
Florida State Elks Association

**Invocation**

Russ Smith, Vice President At Large

**Emcee - Wendy Ryan**

ABC Action News Ch 28

Colleen Gallant  
FECTS Director

**Dinner**

Humanitarian Award Recipient  
Dr. Fadi Saba

Guest Speaker  
Reynoldo (Rey) Garcia IV

**Live Auction**

Blake Kennedy

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— Dr. Kunal Amin



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Concierge medicine in the St. Petersburg market is fairly new. Our patients had a growing need to spend more time with Dr. Amin during their appointments, requested more healthy screening visits, and wanted same-day or next-day appointments with 24/7 access via phone or a Smartphone App. This level of care and service is available to our AminVIP members.

### *What is Concierge Medicine?*

Concierge medicine, also known as boutique or retainer medicine, is a form of medical practice where patients pay an annual fee or retainer to their doctor in exchange for personalized, proactive, and comprehensive medical care.

Concierge doctors typically limit the number of patients they see, which allows them to spend more time with each patient, offer same-day or next-day appointments, and provide more personalized care.

### *Meet Dr. Kunal Amin*

We are proud to welcome you to AMIN VIP, where Dr. Amin is committed to providing the highest level of personalized care to each and every patient. Board certified with the American Board of Family Medicine and a board member of the Saint Anthony's Hospital Foundation, Dr. Amin has established himself as one of the top primary care physicians in the Tampa Bay Area.

Dr. Amin has achieved outstanding results as a primary care physician, ranking as the top producer for his organization in South Pinellas County, and placing among the top five primary care physicians in terms of production out of a pool of nearly 175 doctors in the Tampa Bay Area.

In addition to attending Wabash College where he was a member of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, Dr. Amin completed his basic science training at the Medical University of the Americas on the island of Nevis, and his clinical training at various hospitals in Chicago. He started practicing just nine days after completing a

three-year Family Medicine residency program at the Fort Wayne Medical Education Program in 2012, determined to build a successful practice. As your advocate, Dr. Amin will strive to provide you with the best care for you and your family, drawing on his close relationships with a large network of physicians and other ancillary services should you need a referral.

Born in Anderson, Indiana, Dr. Amin comes from a family of physicians, including his grandfather, a general practitioner in India and Kenya, and his father, an oncologist who immigrated to America. Dr. Amin takes great pride in the fact that there has been a "Dr. Amin" in healthcare for over 75 years. In his spare time, Dr. Amin enjoys golfing, tennis, attending sporting events, and traveling the world. Recent travels include Morocco, Scotland, Ireland, India, Japan, and Egypt.

Whether you're in need of medical care or travel recommendations, Dr. Amin is the one to turn to. At AMIN VIP, you can expect personalized care from a doctor who is committed to your health and well-being.



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## Reynaldo Garcia, IV

Special Guest



Reynaldo Garcia IV was born Feb. 10, 1996, in San Antonio, Texas, and he was diagnosed with autism when he was in kindergarten. Because of the difficulties from the disorder, as well as a need for a change in atmosphere to help with growth, he ended up living with his grandparents in St. Petersburg, Florida. They got him in the right schools with the right programs, and from there, things began to look up.

Despite being on the spectrum, Rey has accomplished a lot that many others wouldn't expect someone with the disorder to achieve, such as graduating from college; touring 25 states with a song and dance troupe, called Re-Creation, for three years; acting in significant roles in three professional theatre productions; serving as a teacher assistant for Theatre Exceptional, where he helps teach theatre to adults with special needs; and holding a steady job at Publix. Next, he will be on contract with the Lexington Children's Theatre in Kentucky, where he will continue his career as an actor and as a teacher.

He would love to thank his grandparents for all their love and support. He would also love to thank his Uncle Danny and Aunt Casey for not only their love and support but their tireless work in helping to spread awareness for autism.







# SPEEDREAM

— FOUNDATION —

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## Dr. Fadi Saba

### 2024 Unmasking Autism Gala Humanitarian Award Recipient

Dr. Fadi Saba was born in Lebanon. He attended American University of Beirut and received his MD degree in 1993 and completed his Residency at Good Samaritan Hospital, John Hopkins System, Baltimore, MD in 1996. Dr Saba moved to Florida and founded Professional Health Care of Pinellas (PHC) in 1997 in St Petersburg.

Over the last 27 years, PHC has grown from a small office to seven outpatient locations, presence in dozens of long-term care facilities and nursing homes, and area hospitals. He serves on and has served on the board of some of those hospitals and facilities, including serving as Chief of Staff. Dr. Saba serves as the medical director of several long-term care facilities in the area. Not only a caring physician, Dr. Saba is also a teacher, leader, researcher, expert, and entrepreneur.

While his calling may be medicine, Dr. Saba's passion is his family –parents, sisters, nieces and nephews, wife and three wonderful children, and of course his in-laws! He also enjoys serving his church, cooking, gardening, and travel.

Dr. Saba cares deeply about the community, including those affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Personally seeing how effective access to therapy can be for children with ASD drives Dr. Saba to support and stand strongly behind the mission of Florida Elks Children's Therapy Services.





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# Wendy Ryan

WFTS News Anchor

**An Emmy award winning journalist, Wendy Ryan joined ABC Action News in April of 2003, as the evening anchor and continues to anchor the 6pm, 7pm and 11pm broadcasts.**

When the pandemic hit in 2020, Wendy launched her Mental Health franchise, where she goes in-depth on the resources available in Florida and how social media is impacting our children. She continually focuses on the causes of suicide and the many organizations trying to combat the stigma of talking about our mental well-being.

Before that, Wendy focused on restaurant inspections in her Emmy nominated franchise known as “Dirty Dining.” Many stories have been featured on Good Morning America, 20/20, Jimmy Kimmel Live, and Last Week Tonight with John Oliver on HBO. She did countless investigations on food safety inspections through Florida's Division of Hotels and Restaurants, Department of Agriculture and the CDC.

For over a decade, Wendy has been part of the Emmy award winning 'Taking Action Against Domestic Violence' campaign and Prime-time Special.

Over the last 20-years in the bay area, Wendy also covered major hurricanes including live continuous coverage during Hurricanes Charlie, Francis, Ivan, Jean, Irma, Ian and most recently Hurricane Idalia.

She's also covered other major local events including: 2004 Tampa Bay Rays in the World Series, 2008 Tampa Bay Lightning in the Stanley Cup Championship, 2012 Republican National Convention and several years of live coverage of the Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon.

During her career, Wendy spent almost 10 years in Los Angeles, California. She worked as an anchor/reporter for KWHY-TV, The Business Channel, covering the financial markets and interviewing top CEO's from around the country. She then moved to Miami to launch her own national show with NFN, Net Financial News. Wendy also worked for a national cable network focusing on international issues and covering the Middle East peace process.

Wendy was the main evening anchor for WICS-TV in Springfield, Illinois, where she met her now husband, Jerome, live on the air. They also welcomed a daughter, Raquel, in 2010.

She was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio and graduated Cum Laude from the University of Arizona. Wendy has been profiled in 'Broadcasting and Cable Magazine' after her personal story with MRSA was documented and went viral on Facebook, as it was happening. In addition, her career has been profiled in Creative Loafing Magazine and Tampa Bay Parenting Magazine.

Wendy also volunteers with several non-profit organizations and emcees countless events including the FARA Energy Ball, raising money for Freidrich's Ataxia Research Alliance, American Cancer Society's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer, St. Jude's Hospital Gala, Humane Society Fundraiser, Hope Villages of America's Faces of Domestic Violence, CASA-Community Action Stops Abuse, The Haven of Tampa Bay, Salvation Army, Lowery Park Zoo, Make a Wish Foundation, The Spring of Tampa Bay, Tampa Bay Ray's 'Family Fun Day', Florida Hospital Gala, American Cancer Society's Walk, Abilities Foundation, St. Claver's School Fundraiser, Trinity School for Children Fundraiser, Hands Across the Bay's Dancing with the Stars Event, & the FL Strawberry Festival's Fundraiser and Fashion Show.





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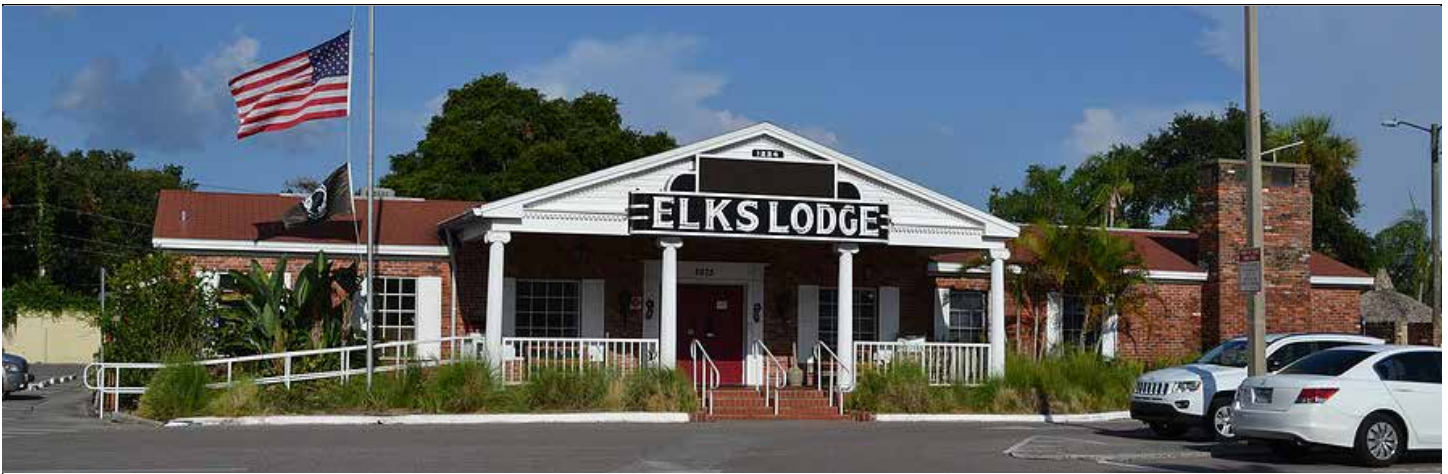


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The Florida State Elks Association has a long history of providing rehabilitation services to Florida children in need. It has been our heritage since 1933 and has been the one constant that has bound our association together for nearly 90 years.

In April 1933, the Harry-Anna Home for Crippled Children was dedicated. In the late 1960s, the Harry-Anna Hospital took on the status of a special pediatric orthopedic hospital and became known as the Florida Elks Harry-Anna Crippled Children's Hospital.

The 1970s brought many changes to the hospital, and many state and federal assistance programs came into existence. In 1977, a new hospital was built. The new facility was a modern, sprawling, one-story Spanish villa of 60,000 square feet. The cost of this beautiful facility was \$2,146,000 and it was raised entirely by the generous Elks of Florida, and there was not one penny of debt on the first day of patient care.

As care for orthopedic patients evolved, the hospital patient count fell as well. During the midyear convention of 1998, the Florida State Elks Association Board of Directors voted to make a major change in the way it delivered health care services to Florida children. After

65 years of providing health care services to thousands of children in a hospital setting, the board of directors, after a great deal of deliberation, made the decision to close the hospital early in 1999.

On March 1, 1999, a new program — Florida Elks Children's Therapy Services — began. The program was modeled after the California-Hawaii Elks Association's mobile therapy program and offered in-home physical and occupational therapy for children in need. Therapists throughout the state were hired. We started with 14 therapists and vans, and we are now up to 32 therapists and vans on the road.

Additionally, we have 35 contract therapists working with us. We are currently treating nearly 600 children per week. Compare that to the 30 children we were treating when the hospital closed in 1999.

As our program evolved, it became apparent that the needs of the children were not only physical in nature but neurological as well, so our therapists take a neurodevelopmental approach when treating a child on the spectrum.

In a clinical setting, a child is treated based on diagnosis and what Medicaid will pay. At Florida Elk Children's Therapy Services, our therapists provide the treatment that will give the child the tools needed to reach their greatest potential. We answer to our members and board of directors rather than to a government agency, and we treat patients based on need, not numbers.

The services received by patients who meet eligibility requirements are provided at no cost to the families. The program does not receive financial assistance from any government agency. Instead, it receives funding from the

Harry-Anna Investment Fund Inc., Elks lodges, Florida Elks Ladies organizations, the Elks National Foundation, and, more importantly, from generous public donations.

Florida Elks Children's Therapy Services is so important as we continue to help the children in Florida who would ordinarily not have access to high-quality therapy in their homes. We are grateful to have 25 occupational therapists and seven physical therapists working for us.

On behalf of all of us at Florida Elks Children's Therapy Services, thank you for your incredible support.



Margie A. Schulz

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"FECTS has been a true success for our daughter. We've seen tremendous progress over the years and continue to see more each and every week. We will forever be grateful to Florida Elks Children's Therapy Services."

-Mr. & Mrs. Robertson



LEARN MORE  
[www.ElksTherapy.com](http://www.ElksTherapy.com)

# In Memoriam



Raymond "Ray" Ott was a member of St. Petersburg Elks Lodge #1224 until his passing, April 30, 2021. He loved being an Elk and what the Elks represented. The Unmasking Autism Gala, which benefits the Florida Elks Children's Therapy Services (FECTS), was a favorite of his. FECTS provides in-home physical and occupational therapy to Florida children in need of such services, at no cost to the families. The gala is something Ott wanted to support each year. Until his passing, he was a Gold Sponsor, and he left a memorial trust to continue his donation each year for the gala.

Ott joined the Air Force as a young man, where he served and specialized as an avionics ground support superintendent until his honorable discharge in 1973. After his military service, he transitioned into his work as a test conductor and later as a field technician for Honeywell in several divisions until his retirement in 1993.

He was also a member of the American Legion Post #273.

As a longtime fellow Elk and friend, Ray Ott will always be remembered as a faithful supporter of the Unmasking Autism Gala.

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*Thank you for all you do and congratulations to the Florida Elks Charities Unmasking Autism Gala!*

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Past State President,  
Susan "Suzi" Simonelli



Past First Gentleman  
Augustus "Joey" Simonelli, III, PER





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## Featured Artist

### AL BLACK



We are honored to have Mr. AL Black, one of the 26 original Florida Highwaymen artists, return this year by popular demand as a featured guest to the Unmasking Autism Gala! He will be doing another original painting during the gala, which he will donate to be auctioned at the end of the evening, with all proceeds going to the Unmasking Autism Gala. Last year's winning bid was \$10,000 from Susan King. If you are not lucky enough to be the winning bidder, Mr. Black will have other paintings for sale at the end of the gala. He is a great supporter of the gala, and we are happy to have him back! His paintings range in price from \$600 to more than \$10,000.

The following biography of Al Black comes from [floridahighwaymenartist.com/al-black](http://floridahighwaymenartist.com/al-black) and was written by Matt Samuel, spokesperson for the Florida Highwaymen. Al "Blood" Black is one of the most elusive Highwaymen artists: almost no biographical data is publicly available about him, including his date and place of birth. In his early years of painting, he seldom gave interviews, although he was well known for his productive sales techniques, and he is known to speak prolifically when promoting his work. It is possible that he painted additions to some of Alfred Hair's work and sold paintings for some of the other Highwaymen artists while he learned to paint through observation. Black has claimed several times that he taught himself to paint by fixing work in his possession that became smudged during transport for sale. Al Black paintings are characterized by the inclusion of sea birds in his Florida coastal landscapes. Al commonly includes three white birds flying through crisp blue skies in his work. He says the birds are representative of the Holy Trinity. Black sometimes adds a fourth bird that lags to special paintings, which he claims signifies himself. Each of the Al Black paintings have a serene and peaceful feeling and showcase the natural beauty of undeveloped Florida without the angst or jarring colors that some

Highwaymen art contains. Al Black began his career as an artist with the standard Highwaymen tools, producing his early work on Upson board with oil paints and crown molding frames. Al is the most experimental of the Highwaymen in terms of media and has at times utilized acrylic paints, produced wall murals in oil and painted on canvas.



## Thank You!

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### **FSEA Sponsored Scholarships**

#### **Hope Scholarship**

The mission of the Florida State Elks Association HOPE Scholarship is to provide financial support for the educational needs of Florida high school seniors without which they would not be able to achieve their educational goals. The scholarship targets students who demonstrated leadership through participation in school activities, community service and citizenship. Consideration is given to those students who have shouldered extra responsibility such as working throughout their high school careers to help provide support of siblings or family.

#### **Van Duren Memorial Scholarship**

This scholarship fund is a program of the Florida Elks Youth Camp and the Florida State Elks Association. The fund provides scholarships in amounts up to \$5,000 per year to graduating high school/homeschooled seniors who are planning to attend college and to students currently enrolled in an accredited American college, university or community college.

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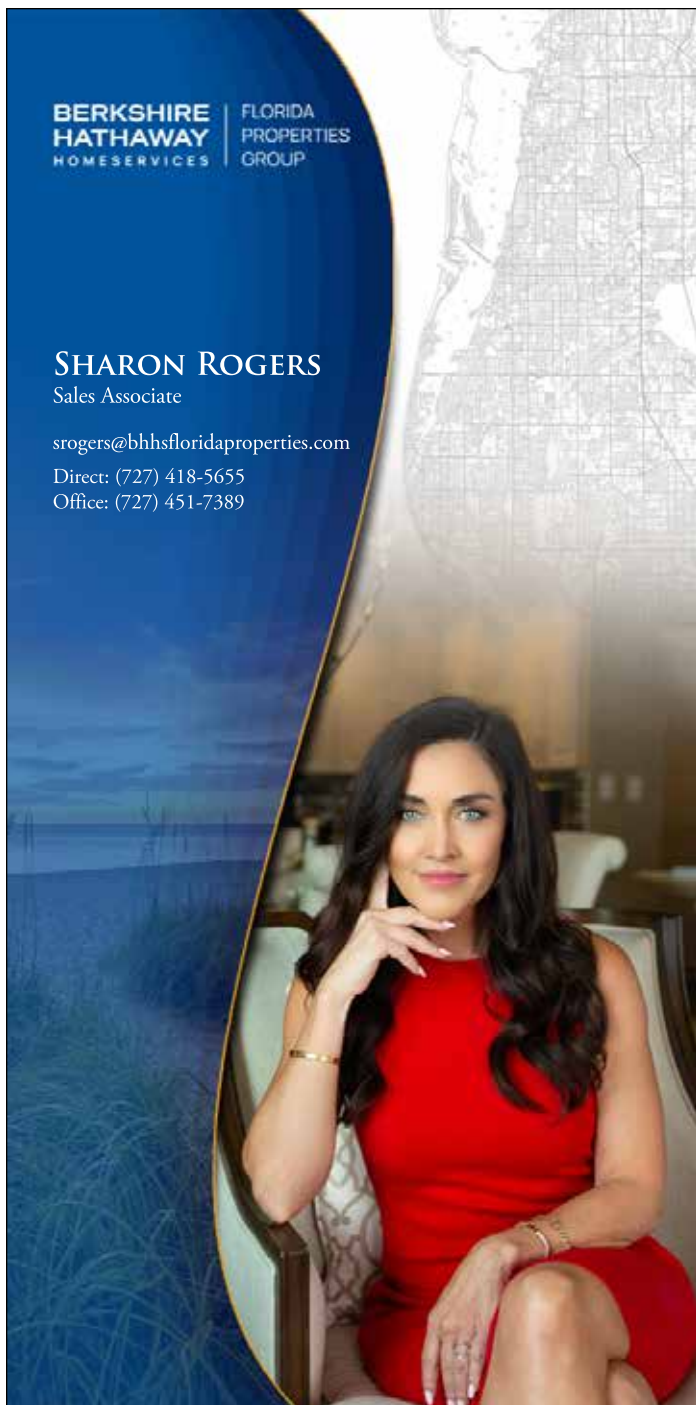
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*"No Elk stands so tall  
as when they stoop  
to help a child"*

Vincent P. & Liselda Como, PSP, PGLC  
Florida State Elks Association Board Chairman





## "Different, Not Less"

by Temple Grandin

I'm not like you, and that's okay,  
My mind works in a different way.  
Sometimes I struggle, sometimes I thrive,  
But in my heart, I'm truly alive.

I see the world through different eyes,  
Colors and sounds, they mesmerize.  
A world of patterns, details, and more,  
A symphony that others often ignore.

I may not speak your language well,  
But my thoughts and dreams, they surely tell  
Of a passion burning deep inside,  
A spirit you cannot deny.

So, embrace my differences,  
don't cast me away,  
For in my uniqueness, I proudly say  
That though I may be different, not like the rest,  
I am not less, I am simply blessed.



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# Committee Members and Sponsors



wanted to thank all the committee members, who unselfishly donated their time, talent, ideas, and expertise in helping to make the Florida Elks Charities Unmasking Autism Gala a success! Through your dedication we are helping children with autism spectrum disorder and their families to overcome the challenges that they deal with daily. The funds raised by this gala will be used to help enhance and expand the treatment of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) through Florida Elks Children's Therapy Services. A special thank you goes to Carol Bressler. Without her, this program would not have happened. Again, I want to thank you all for your contributions to this gala. It takes a great team to make great things happen! – Dan

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