

The Florida 40 Under 40 – *The Rising Stars in the World of politics and Policy*



Hilary Jacquelynne Danaïlova, *The News Service of Florida*

What makes Erin Ballas such an effective lobbyist? Maybe it's that she approaches her clients' priorities with the same personal investment that she brings to her role as a mother of two.

"I'll straight-up 'mom' my clients," says Ballas, now vice president at Public Affairs Consultants, the firm she joined as an intern in 2008. "Sometimes I have to 'mom' the legislators, too. I do it because I honestly do care about the outcome."

Ballas, 37, specializes in budgetary and appropriations lobbying for organizations dear to her Floridian heart. They include Keep Florida Beautiful, a nonprofit that was on the verge of dissolution when she stepped in to restore its state funding – and where she now serves as chair.

The Ormond Beach native has also championed

children's organizations like the statewide Boys & Girls Clubs organization, for whom she secured a record \$3 million recurring appropriation a few years ago, and a school safety firearm detection technology that provides real-time information to law enforcement.

Ballas' deep network of Florida connections makes her an effective matchmaker between funders and those worthy causes. "I can say, 'Hey, Department of Highway Safety, what about doing a program with Oyster City (Brewing) on a don't drink and drive campaign?'" she says.

In recent years, she has spearheaded numerous partnerships between sports teams, local businesses and Florida's college football bowl games. "Since I'm already looking at the budget," she says, "I know who has the money to spend right now."