

How Dr. Erika Bush Odom is Finding Balance While Helping Others Find Theirs

By Lorrie DeFrank

Dr. Erika Bush Odom has degrees, knowledge and work experience that more than qualify her to own and operate a wellness consulting business. But experiencing and overcoming major challenges taught her the most about the needs of her clients and how to connect with them as a new entrepreneur. Beautifully Balanced Wellness, the business she started last year, serves parents and other caregivers of children with special needs, whose own needs frequently get lost in the massive responsibility.



“When we are burned out, our children are not getting the services they need,” she said of herself and others, mostly mothers, who care for children with physical and/or emotional challenges. “I can communicate better than someone who is just a wellness coach because it’s a different level when you can say, ‘I know what you are going through.’”

A chiropractic physician licensed in Florida and Georgia, Bush Odom had been providing mobile wellness services for caregivers of children in their homes when she came across JAX Chamber while searching online for support services. In addition to private practice, she also had been a corporate wellness consultant. She participated in Cohort 22 of JAX Bridges in spring 2025, which she recalls as a great experience that pulled her out of her comfort zone and gave her confidence to start her own business. “I was able to see the vision on paper that I had in my mind. JAX Bridges gave me a road map for a starting point,” she said.

She also learned about the Jacksonville Women’s Business Center and was encouraged to apply for a scholarship for its Entrepreneur Certificate Program, which offers extensive financial, legal, marketing, leadership and customer development training. Excited to be among 12 women selected, she is grateful to be taking courses she otherwise would not be able to afford.

“This program is helping me move my idea from passion to strategy,” she said. “I would not have had the opportunity to be in a room with great panelists who have been where we are now encouraging us.”

She has finished Venture Leadership and Customer Development and Discovery, and has started Marketing Matters, which she anticipates helping her brand her vision. The classes opened her eyes to the practical and financial benefits of expanding her services from individual coaching to include organizations such as hospitals and school systems.

A big takeaway was clarifying that not all caregivers are her customers, so she is using demographics and databases to focus on children’s caregivers. She structured her business as an LLC during JAX Bridges and is refining its services through the JWBC program.

Mother of four children ranging from 27 to 9, Bush Odom made career decisions based on the health needs of her oldest and youngest, her only daughters, compounded by her own.

From Savannah, she served eight years in the U.S. Air Force, which provided structure and leadership skills, and veterans' health benefits she would need later. She earned a degree in health sciences but worked in another field until her oldest daughter developed autoimmune conditions and asthma when she was 8. Fascinated by her daughter's chiropractic adjustments and how the body can heal itself, Bush Odom went back to school for her doctorate in chiropractic. She had a practice in Atlanta before moving to Jacksonville in 2018, when she said her life changed a lot. Her youngest daughter was born prematurely with what they told her were developmental delays. When she was diagnosed with cerebral palsy a couple of years later, Bush Odom became her advocate. "My practice wasn't a priority anymore. It was how do I help my daughter. I became a caregiver to make sure she had the best quality of life possible," she said.

Having undergone multiple back and leg surgeries, her smart, talkative daughter is learning to navigate stairs and is slowly progressing to the next phase of independent daily life, according to her mother. A single mom who didn't know many people in Jacksonville during those hard years, Bush Odom went through burnout and realized she needed help.

"Thankfully I had a wellness background," she said. "You've got to take care of yourself or you can't take care of someone else."

She wrote two children's books to prepare her daughter to answer inevitable questions from strangers about her disabilities and pursued her desire to start a business to help others like herself.

"I spent many years advocating and taking care of everyone else, often putting my needs last. Over time I realized that there were few resources for caregivers. My experience is the foundation of my business," she said of Beautifully Balanced Wellness. It will soon have a nonprofit side, as well—a foundation that offers scholarships that are like stability grants for caregivers of children to use for their health and household expenses.

Bush Odom knows those challenges well, too.

She has an inoperable brain tumor, personal information she shares in hopes that her transparency about her own struggles will help other people with theirs. She spent a significant amount of time last year undergoing radiation to stabilize it and will soon start brain treatments to help with equilibrium, dizziness and related deficits. She welcomes being part of the cohort going through the Entrepreneur Certificate Program together as a positive step in finding her new normal while regaining her momentum with starting and growing her business.