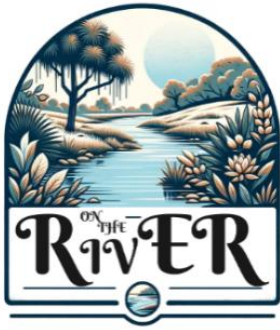


WEBSITE: www.OnTheRiver.org

Issue 85, February 2026, Circulation: Over 1,500 subscribers, 12,000 social media readers

As always, please share with anyone. Ken DeWalt, publisher, www.OnTheRiver.org



On The RIVER NEWS

Connecting Caloosahatchee River Communities from Fort Myers Shores to LaBelle

For all our NEIGHBORS and NEIGHBORHOODS

TO SUBSCRIBE, offer articles, or to contact the publisher/editor with any questions, email:

kendewalt@ontheriver.org

The deadline for receipt of any materials is the 20th of the month. Issues go out before the 1st of each month, and may be edited.

See our commercial advertising terms on the last page of this newsletter. We encourage all subscribers to consider patronizing the paid advertisers. Their support of our mission helps us provide you with local news every month.

FEATURED IN THIS MONTH'S OTR

LOCAL NEWS, Page: 2

Contributing Columnists: Page 12

ALVA, Page: 24

BUCKINGHAM & FORT MYERS SHORES, Page: 32

LABELLE AREA, Page: 36

NORTH FORT MYERS & NORTH OLGA, Page: 44

FOR ALL OF US, Page: 46

SOME LOCAL CHURCHES, Page: 66



An amazing SWFL sky

The area we cover for news and non-profit events



- 1 -

Access link to our ARCHIVE of ALL OTR issues from day 1:

<https://www.ontheriver.org/archive>

LOCAL NEWS

Lee County enacts burn ban due to dry conditions

Commissioners vote to ban outdoor burning as drought index reaches 637 out of 800

(TY Fox 4)



Lee County has enacted a burn ban for all unincorporated areas and municipalities effective immediately due to increasingly dry conditions throughout Southwest Florida. The Lee Board of County Commissioners voted to enact the ban at a regularly scheduled meeting January 20th, 2026.

The county's ordinance bans "outdoor burning ignition sources," including campfires, bonfires and trash burning, fireworks. Grills for food are not included.

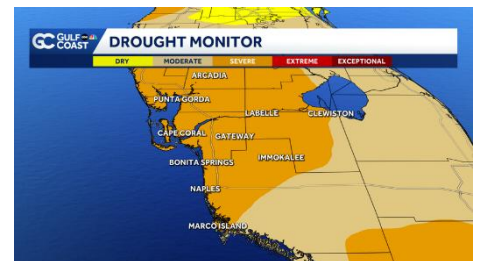
Officials ask all county residents to be mindful of dry conditions and to use good judgment to mitigate potential for significant wildfires.

For the county to enact a burn ban, certain conditions must be met, including a Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) that reached or exceeds a value of 600. Lee's index value was a mean average of 637 out of 800 Monday afternoon.

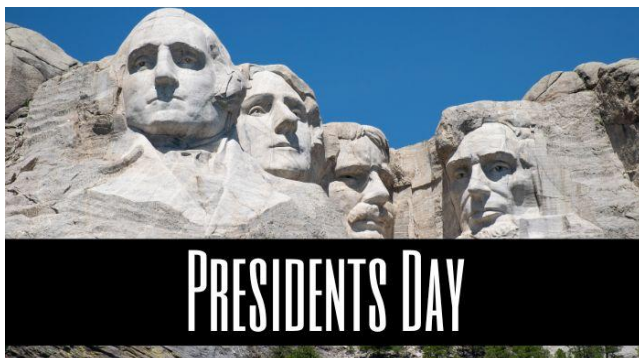
This ban does not apply to prescribed burns authorized by the Florida Forest Service.

All other South West Florida Counties initiated burn bans earlier.

Southwest Florida experienced its sixth-driest year in 2025, with dry conditions continuing into 2026.



IF YOU SMOKE, PLEASE DISPOSE OF YOUR BUTTS THOUGHTFULLY.



FEBRUARY 16
2026

Burn bans: What you can and cannot do

A small spark can go a long way in these dry conditions.

(TY Fox 4- Katie Walls)



Without significant rainfall, and cold fronts followed by dry air every 4 to 7 days, drought conditions across SWFL continue to worsen. Nearly every community with the exception of parts of Collier county are now in severe drought.

“It’s important to note that in times when it’s super dry right now one tiny little spark can cause a potentially very danger fire,” explained Megan Price, the new Public Education and Information Officer for Lehigh Acres Fire Control and Rescue District.

A little spark is exactly what happened on Tuesday afternoon in Lehigh Acres, when a 3.5-acre fire was sparked accidentally by construction equipment. Because it was in a residential area, Price says it was all hands-on deck to ensure no one was in harm’s way.

That fire happened just hours after Lee County issued an official Burn ban, the final county in Southwest Florida to enact the ban.

“Right now all of Lee County is under a burn ban. Any burning is a no go. Absolutely no burning of any kind outside right now is allowed. That includes yard debris and even recreational fires. And that burn ban is in effect until further notice,” said Price.

Grilling, however, is okay, so long as there is a cover with no open flame.

Price says that for those who choose to ignore the bans, expect monetary fines. Should a fire get out of hand, any damage and firefighting costs could also be charged.

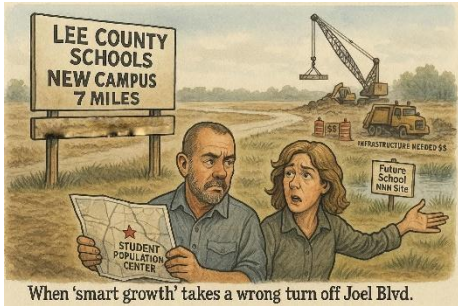
Bottom line, be cautious and stay vigilant. If you see smoke, don’t hesitate to call 911. With these dry conditions, any spark could quickly ignite and spread.

Hendry County increases fees for burn ban violations

Hendry County residents who violate the burn ban could face fines of \$500 for the first offense and \$2,500 for subsequent offenses. At the Jan. 13 meeting of the Hendry County Commissioners, County Attorney Matt Raulerson explained the change to the ordinance increased the fines for burn ban violations from \$100 to \$500 for the first offense and \$2,500 for any subsequent offense.

The ordinance authorizes enforcement by fire departments, the Hendry County Code Enforcement Office and the Hendry County Sheriff’s Office.

(TY Okeechobee News-Katrina Elsen)



ALVA's NEW HIGH SCHOOL STILL RAISES LOCAL COMMENT

The following email was shared by ALVA INC the first week of January

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Sandra Pavelka <sandrapavelka.fl@gmail.com>

Date: Sat, Jan 3, 2026, at 11:04 AM

Subject: HIGH PRIORITY - Preservation of natural habitat of Joel site

To: <armordp@leeschools.net>, <WilliamFRi@leeschools.net>, <samuelfj@leeschools.net>, Giovannelli, Melisa <MelisaWG@leeschools.net>, Jordan, Debbie <DebbieJ@leeschools.net>, <jadanfl@leeschools.net>, <VanessaMC@leeschools.net>, <superintendent@leeschools.net>

Cc: ALVA Inc <alvainc.fl@gmail.com>

Dr. Carlin, Chair Persons, and School Board Members,

Our Alva community is deeply upset and profoundly disappointed by the school board's decision to approve the Joel site. This natural habitat, one of the last truly pristine spaces in our community, will result in irreversible loss and damage by this decision. Anyone who has visited this remarkable property understands its value, its beauty, and what stands to be lost. The environmental impact to this cherished natural space will be permanent.

There remains a critical opportunity to lead with conservation. Respectfully and urgently, I implore you to preserve as many of the natural trees, native plants, and surrounding wildlife areas as possible, within the property and along its perimeter. Preserving a significant portion of the natural trees and native habitat will demonstrate respect for the community's rural character, values, and commitment to environmental responsibility.

I welcome a meeting to gather Alva community leaders, residents, and school board representatives to provide input and support planning solutions that protect the habitat and landscape while moving the project forward. Thank you for your consideration. It matters greatly to our community.

Dr. Sandra Pavelka

Sandra Pavelka, Ph.D.

Community & Restorative Justice & Associates <https://drsandrapavelka.com/>

Dr. Sandra Pavelka FGCU <https://www.fgcu.edu/directory/spavelka>

Expert File <https://newsroom.fgcu.edu/profile/?expert=sandra.pavelka>

Habitat for Humanity 2026 Women Build initiative

Sponsorship opportunities available for 16th season

(TY Lake Okeechobee NEWS)



Habitat for Humanity of Lee and Hendry Counties will host its 2026 Women Build Kickoff Party on March 2 at The Forest Country Club in Fort Myers, marking the start of its 16th season dedicated to empowering women through homeownership.

Each year, Women Build brings together women and men to support safe, decent homes for female-led families in Lee and Hendry counties. This annual campaign raises funds for local home-building efforts to help women and their families, partnering with Habitat for affordable homeownership. Habitat's fundraising goal is \$500,000 for the 2026 Women Build season.

Since 2011, Women Build in Lee and Hendry counties has partnered with 31 female-headed families to build strength and stability for their children through local fundraising and volunteer efforts. Last year, nearly 80% of Habitat's future homeowners were female-led households.

Sponsorship opportunities for the 16th annual Women Build season are available, with sponsor levels starting at \$5,000. Sponsorship benefits include engagement opportunities with the Women Build program and recognition through public relations, digital marketing and social media. To learn more, contact VP of Resource & Development Cece Willis at CeceW@Habitat4Humanity.org or 239-652-1691.

Tickets for the Kickoff Party will be available for purchase as the event approaches, which begins at 6 p.m. on Monday, March 2 at The Forest Country Club in Fort Myers.

For more information about Women Build or how to get involved, visit Habitat4Humanity.org/WomenBuild.



Glades County has started the construction of the new Muse Community Association pavilion

Thanks to Paul Carlisle, county manager, and our commissioners for their approval.

Manatees at risk from cold, pollution and herbicides

(TY Lake Okeechobee News-Katrina Elsen)



Manatee deaths are on the rise again in Florida, according to data released by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). According to FWC data, 628 manatee deaths were reported in 2025 in Florida, compared to 556 in 2024 and 546 in 2023.

Florida manatee deaths peaked in 2021 with 1,086 manatees dying that year and dropped to 787 in 2022.

In 2025, many of the dead manatees were not necropsied – 232 of the carcasses were not recovered -- so cause of death was not determined. Many of the manatee deaths were very young with 135 reported perinatal manatee deaths. Watercraft collisions were responsible for 97 manatee deaths in 2025 in Florida, compared to 96 deaths in 2024.

Cold stress killed more than twice as many manatees in 2025, with 33 cold stress deaths reported, than in 2024, with 14 cold stress deaths. Manatees experience cold stress when water temperatures fall below 68 degrees Fahrenheit. During cold weather, they seek warmer waters near natural springs, which stay a constant 70 degrees year-round. Manatees also gather near power plants to enjoy the warm water from the outflows.

Accidents with boat locks or flood gates killed 9 manatees in 2025, down from 17 deaths in 2024.

Lack of food continues to stress Florida manatees in the Indian River Lagoon, where nutrient pollution feeds the “brown tide” algae that shade out the sea grass. The state continues efforts to remove septic tanks near waterways to reduce the nutrient load in runoff.

A University of Florida study published in February 2025 found glyphosate, a commonly used herbicide, may threaten manatee health. The researchers found that glyphosate can reduce immune cell activity by more than 27.3%, potentially compromising the threatened species’ ability to fend off disease.

Glyphosate is one of the chemicals FWC vendors spray into Florida lakes and waterways to control the spread of invasive non-native plants. In 2025, one manatee death was reported in Hendry County; three in Okeechobee County; and seven in Glades County.

The manatee deaths in Hendry County were on Oct. 31, in the Caloosahatchee River, with undetermined cause. The carcass was not necropsied.

Editor’s note: Reported deaths in Lee County:

Manatee deaths in Lee County, Florida, including the Caloosahatchee River area, were high in 2025, with reports indicating Lee County was among the hardest-hit areas, facing issues primarily from boat strikes and water quality. While statewide figures showed an increase, Lee County stood out, recording over 100 deaths by late 2025, with many attributed to watercraft collisions, though many cases (over 50%) lacked definitive necropsy results.

Lee County Totals: Over 100 deaths (e.g., 113 recorded by early Jan 2026).

Statewide Totals: Over 600 deaths.

Primary Causes: Boat strikes were a leading cause in Lee County, with reports also highlighting water quality issues and pollution (like red tide/algal blooms) as underlying factors affecting seagrass.



Unusual Mortality Events: While not a declared event like 2021, the numbers in Lee County were concerning, with many deaths occurring in Pine Island Sound and Matlacha Pass.

Specific Incidents in the Caloosahatchee:

One early 2025 record noted a manatee death on the Caloosahatchee River near Moore Haven due to "Human Related: Other" causes, indicating human interaction.

Ongoing Concerns:

Boaters were urged to slow down and obey speed zones.

Environmental advocates pointed to nutrient pollution from agricultural runoffs (like from Lake Okeechobee down the Caloosahatchee) fueling harmful algal blooms, which starve manatees of seagrass.

Lee County Domestic Animal Services' website facing issues affecting adoption services

(TY WINK NEWS)

Lee County Domestic Animal Services has faced technical issues affecting the adoptable and lost pet sections on its website this past month. Other shelters using the same software are also experiencing this problem.

The shelter encourages individuals searching for a missing pet to visit in person. All stray hold times will be extended during the outage.



Lee County Domestic Animal Services apologized for any inconvenience and expressed appreciation for the community's patience and understanding in a Facebook post.

The website's portal can be used daily, even while the website sections are offline.

(TY East Lee County News-The Roar-James Kennedy)

What's Brewing in Alva? A New Local Business

James Kennedy | Roar | EastLeeNews.com



A long-vacant building along State Road 80 is getting a new lease on life, and with it, Alva is preparing to welcome a new locally owned business.

Anarchy Aleworks is preparing to open at 21450 Palm Beach Boulevard, in a building that owner John Ford admits "used to look much different" than it does today. The space, once divided into multiple businesses, has since been remodeled and reconfigured into a brewery and taproom.

Ford, who has spent his career as a pharmacist, said brewing has been a long-time passion. "I've been home brewing just for a hobby for about 30-something years," he said. After selling the specialty pharmacy and infusion business he and his wife built in Fort Myers, Ford said he was ready for a new chapter. "I wanted something to do and felt too young just to sit around, be retired," he said. "I thought, well, we'll start a brewery... I could get paid for it."

Ford said he initially debated whether to buy or lease, eventually choosing to rent to avoid bank loans and investors. "For me to buy property, I'd have had to go to the bank and get a loan. And I didn't wanna do all that," he said. The opportunity came through a personal connection made at a beer festival in Gainesville, which led him to the Alva property owner.

While Alva initially felt "kind of out of the way," Ford said traffic counts and nearby growth helped change his mind. "There are 23,000 cars a day that go past this place," he said, pointing to surrounding communities such as Babcock Ranch, Portico, River Hall, and Verandah. "You've got a lot of people that are out here that haven't really had anything to do. They had to go into Fort Myers to do it."

The brewery's name, Anarchy Aleworks, is one Ford has held onto for years. "I've had that name registered with the state... since '09, I think," he said. While acknowledging that the word "anarchy" can raise concerns, Ford said it reflects a personal philoso-

phy rather than chaos. "A lot of people think it means chaos and disorder, but it just means no government. That's all it means," he said. "I'm not changing the name. I've had it for 17 years now."

Ford said the brewery's goal is simple. "Just to be a place that people wanna spend time at," he said. Rather than operating a full restaurant, Anarchy Aleworks will host food trucks. "I didn't wanna run a restaurant because a restaurant's a hard business to be in," he said.

Live music is also part of the plan. Business manager Tia Ford said she is booking local musicians for the weekly schedule, with performances primarily planned for weekends. Music will be staged on the outdoor patio when possible, with flexibility to move inside if weather requires. "We're trying to support local as much as possible," she said.

The space is designed to be welcoming to families. "I wanna make this place where it's dog-friendly, kid-friendly," Ford said. "We'll have

games for the kids... I wanna make it a place where people come and hang out and feel like this is better than sitting at home."

Anarchy Aleworks will feature 22 taps, with Ford planning to open with 14 house-brewed beers, along with guest taps, cider, and other options. Wine will be served using preservation dispensers. "We wanted to do dispensers just because of the quality," Ford said. "Once you open that bottle of wine, it's gonna be good until it's gone."

Much of the build-out has been hands-on. "We built this bar," Ford said. "Blake and I built that. We finished the whole bar." He emphasized that the business has no investors and no bank loans. "I just need to be profitable. That's it."

While an exact opening date has not yet been announced, the family said renovations are nearing completion, with initial plans calling for a Wednesday-through-Sunday schedule and hours that may adjust as demand becomes clearer. 🍻



Canadian tourists' decline impacts Florida's Gulf Coast

(TY Gulf Coast News-Dave Elias)



The migration of Canadian tourists to Florida's Gulf Coast has slowed considerably over the past year, impacting the local rental market and prompting some seasonal residents to sell their homes. Fewer Canadian flags are seen along the Gulf Coast as many Canadians have decided to put their homes up for sale.

Cheryl Urquhart, a seasonal resident since 2010, expressed her frustration, saying, "With this situation of the leadership with the USA and the way they treat Canadians, we're not valued at all." This sentiment has led her to put her North Fort Myers home on the market.

"I'm not ready to go, but I feel like we're being forced to go," Urquhart said.

New data from the Florida Convention and Visitors Bureau indicates a 15% decrease in Canadian visitors to the U.S. Phil James, a Canadian who visits yearly, noted that many are visiting discreetly due to trade tensions.

"If you go down and your neighbors know you were in Florida, you might want to try and keep it secret because of the trade tensions," he said.

The decline in Canadian tourists is affecting the Florida rental market.

Dorit Dormayer, a top Florida property management specialist, observed, "We have Canadian guests who stopped renting after last winter." Despite this, the Florida Visitors and Convention Bureau reports a slight increase in overall tourism compared to last year.

Dormayer also noted a decrease in European bookings for the summer, saying, "I have talked to a lot of colleagues in Cape Coral who are seeing the same."

The market now relies more on U.S. travelers to visit the Sunshine State.



February 14th 2026

Who Holds The Levers Of Power In Lee County?

Katrina Salokar | Roar | EastLeeNews.com

APPOINTMENTS, POWER, AND THE 2026 RECKONING: HOW LEE COUN- TY GOT HERE AND WHAT VOTERS DECIDE NEXT

The appointment of Trish Petrosky to the Lee County Commission's District 5 seat has drawn attention not only to one vacancy, but to the systems that quietly shape who governs Lee County, and how much influence voters ultimately have in that process.

While the appointment followed state law after the death of Commissioner Mike Greenwell in October 2025, the timing of the appointment and the structure of county governance have prompted questions that extend beyond a single seat. Those questions touch on recurring appointments, the effects of at-large voting, long-standing approaches to budget oversight, and a 2026 ballot measure that could fundamentally change how commissioners are elected.

What emerges is less a story about one appointee than a broader look at how process, structure, and continuity interact, often long before voters ever cast a ballot.

A VACANCY, AN APPOINTMENT, AND AN UNEXAMINED PROCESS

The District 5 seat became vacant following the death of Commissioner

Mike Greenwell. Under Florida law, the Governor is authorized to appoint a replacement to serve until the next election.

Public records show that the Petrosky family listed their San Carlos home for sale on September 25, 2025, and entered into a contract to purchase property in Alva, within District 5, days before Greenwell's death. The transaction closed on October 29, less than three weeks after the vacancy occurred.

On December 13, Governor Ron DeSantis announced Petrosky's appointment. The Governor's office did not release a list of applicants, interview schedules, or selection criteria.

Petrosky has stated publicly that her move to Alva was coincidental and that she had long been interested in public service, despite having no prior elected or appointed political experience. While the timeline alone does not establish intent, it raised questions among some residents about how the appointment decision was made and who was considered.

DISTRICT VOTES VS. COUNTY- WIDE OUTCOMES

The appointment reopened debate over representation in District 5. In the most recent election, Amanda Cochran won approximately 65 percent of the District 5 vote and led countywide Election Day totals. She ultimately lost after absentee and mail-in ballots were count-

ed under Lee County's at-large voting system.

For many residents, the contrast highlighted a recurring concern: that district-level voter preference can be outweighed by countywide dynamics, particularly in rural areas where land-use and infrastructure decisions have long-term effects.

FROM APPOINTMENT TO INCUMBENCY: HOW STRUCTURE SHAPES OUTCOMES

Appointments are not unusual in Lee County government, and their influence often extends well beyond the moment a vacancy is filled.

Commissioner Mike Greenwell entered office through appointment in 2022 following the death of Commissioner Frank Mann, then went on to win election in 2024. That sequence reflects a broader pattern in which appointments function not just as temporary bridges, but as entry points to incumbency.

The same pattern appears outside the County Commission. Lee County Sheriff Carmine Marceno was appointed to the office in 2018 by then-Governor Rick Scott after then-Sheriff Mike Scott stepped down. Marceno, who

had been serving as Undersheriff, later ran for the position and won election in 2020.

Critics argue that appointments followed by elections provide structural advantages, including early visibility, institutional familiarity, and the authority of office before voters have an opportunity to compare candidates in a contested race. Supporters counter that appointments promote continuity and stability, particularly in complex organizations such as county government and law enforcement. In each case, the process itself is authorized under state law.

Lee County's at-large voting system amplifies these effects. Because all county voters participate in district commission races, perceived incumbency and countywide name recognition can outweigh district-level familiarity. Appointed officials appear on the ballot as sitting officeholders, with visibility established before voters ever cast a vote.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



THE ROAR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

A DOCUMENTED WEB OF POLITICAL CONSULTING AND INFLUENCE

Public records reviewed by East Lee News show that several key actors involved in land-use policy, electoral politics, and the District 5 appointment share a common political consulting firm.

Neal Communities has retained TM Strategic Consulting for lobbying related to utilities and development issues in Lee County. State Representative Tiffany Eposito has also retained TM Strategic for political consulting services. Campaign finance records further show that members of the Lee County Board of County Commissioners have engaged the firm for campaign-related work in recent election cycles.

TM Strategic is led by veteran political consultant Terry Miller, who authored the political biography used to publicly introduce Commissioner Trish Petrosky following her appointment and has served as a primary public voice describing her priorities.

In January 2025, Rep. Eposito sponsored legislation creating the Duke Farms Stewardship District on behalf of Neal Communities. The special district encompasses nearly 1,100 acres in rural Alva and authorizes long-term assessments and bonding authority to finance infrastructure. Despite organized opposition from residents, the bill passed, and the district was established.

Critics argue that overlapping roles among developers, elected officials, appointed officials, and shared political consultants raise questions about how influence operates in Lee County, particularly where appointments, land-use decisions, and campaign infrastructure intersect. Supporters counter that the use of experienced political consultants is common in Florida politics and does not, by itself, indicate improper conduct.

BUDGET POWER, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND REAL-WORLD COSTS

Petrosky's public positioning includes strong support for law enforcement, a stance widely shared among county officials and one that carries significant political weight in Lee County.

In media interviews following the appointment, Miller described Petrosky as "a good team player" who supports law enforcement and won't "do a good job" on the commission, emphasizing familiar themes such as keeping taxes low, cutting wasteful spending, and backing public safety. That messaging aligns with a long-standing political consensus in the county.

That consensus exists alongside concrete fiscal and safety outcomes.

Public budget records show that the

WWW.EASTLEENews.COM
JANUARY 2026

Lee County Sheriff's Office represents one of the largest components of county government spending, exceeding most other departments combined. Year after year, Sheriff's Office budgets have been approved by the Board of County Commissioners largely as presented, with few substantive amendments and limited public discussion linking funding levels to measurable outcomes such as traffic enforcement effectiveness or crash reduction.

Critics argue that this pattern functions as a de facto rubber-stamping of one of the county's most powerful agencies, not necessarily out of malice, but because questioning law-enforcement budgets has become politically risky in a county where "support for law enforcement" operates as a near-universal litmus test.

At the same time, Lee County continues to rank among Florida counties with the highest numbers of fatal and serious traffic crashes. In recent years, roadway deaths have averaged roughly one every few days. Traffic safety advocates note that enforcement visibility in many parts of the county, particularly in fast-growing and rural areas, remains inconsistent despite rising budgets and staffing levels.

The consequences are not abstract. Fatal and serious crashes carry direct human costs for families and long-term financial costs for the broader public. Florida consistently ranks among the states with the highest auto insurance premiums in the nation, and crash severity is widely recognized as a major driver of those rates. Residents ultimately absorb those costs through higher premiums, medical expenses, lost income, and long-term disability impacts.

Some residents argue that the combination of rising law-enforcement budgets, limited outcome-based scrutiny, and persistent safety failures reveals a structural disconnect between spending and results. Others contend that factors such as population growth, road design, and tourism complicate enforcement efforts.

What remains clear is that sustained political consensus around "supporting law enforcement," reinforced through campaign messaging and consultant framing, has made it difficult to have a frank public conversation about whether existing strategies are saving lives at a rate commensurate with their cost.

A STRUCTURAL CHOICE ON THE 2026 BALLOT

Voters will have an opportunity to address these underlying dynamics directly in the November 3, 2026, general election.

A countywide ballot question authorized by House Bill 4001 (HB 4001), approved by the Florida Legislature and signed into law, will ask whether Lee County should transition from at-large county commission elections to single-member districts beginning in 2028.

Lee County is currently one of only two Florida counties with populations over 500,000 that still elect all commissioners at large.

Supporters argue that single-member districts would allow each district to elect a representative with direct knowledge of local challenges, improve accountability, and reduce pressure for municipal incorporations driven by perceived lack of representation. Opponents maintain that at-large elections promote countywide cohesion.

The decision will rest with voters.

THE LARGER QUESTION

As of publication, Neal Communities and Rep. Eposito have not issued public responses addressing concerns raised by residents regarding the appointment and the broader political context. Commissioner Petrosky has stated publicly that the timing of her relocation to Alva was coincidental, but has not provided further detail addressing questions about the sequence of events surrounding her move and appointment.

For many residents, the central issue is not whether any single appointment complied with the law, but whether the systems governing appointments, elections, land-use policy, and budget oversight operate transparently, and whether voters are given meaningful opportunities to evaluate those systems before outcomes are effectively set.

WHEN PROCESS SHAPES OUTCOMES

In Lee County, these decisions are made often matters as much as the decisions themselves.

Appointments place individuals in positions of authority before voters have a say. At-large elections spread account-

ability across the entire county rather than anchoring it within individual districts. Budgets, including those tied to public safety, are approved year after year, often without sustained public discussion about whether spending is producing measurable results. Each of these practices is lawful on its own. Together, they form a system that can move major decisions forward with limited public friction.

For voters, the challenge is not a lack of information. It is that the information is scattered. Appointments, land-use legislation, campaign consulting, and budget approvals move through separate processes, even when their impacts converge in the same rural communities and neighborhoods.

As a result, residents are often left to evaluate outcomes after the fact, rather than being part of a transparent conversation before decisions are made.

That dynamic will come into sharper focus in 2026, when Lee County voters are asked to decide whether to retain at-large elections or move to single-member districts. The outcome of that vote will shape not only future appointments, but how accountability, representation, and decision-making function across the county in the years ahead.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

This article examines the intersection of appointments, election structures, budget practices, and political consulting in Lee County. It does not allege wrongdoing by any individual. Instead, it focuses on documented processes and systems that shape representation and accountability, particularly as voters prepare to decide the future of county governance in the 2026 election.

East Lee News welcomes factual corrections, documentation, and responses from readers and public officials.



Contributing Columnists

FROM THE CALUSA WATERKEEPER...

Lawrence Scrabis, captscrabs68@gmail.com

Blue-green Algae (Cyanobacteria)

Cyanobacteria is one of the oldest types of lifeforms on Earth and is found primarily in freshwater systems. There are thousands of species of cyanobacteria, and many are known to produce a variety of toxins.

Cyanobacteria is a photosynthetic microorganism that processes sunlight, nitrogen and phosphorous to live. They can regulate their position in the water column for optimal light and thrive in warm, nutrient-rich fresh or brackish water with low turbulence.

Microcystis and Anabaena are two of the most common cyanobacteria found in estuarine systems today. These bacteria are known to produce cyanotoxins dangerous to humans and animals. Microcystin and Anatoxin are classes of hepatotoxin and neurotoxin, affecting the liver and brain, respectively.

Human and animal exposure to Cyanotoxins comes in three primary forms of contact:

Dermal contact, Inhalation or aspiration from aerosolized surface water, Ingestion

Recently, a growing field of study is focusing on BMAA (beta-Methylamino-L-alanine), which is an amino acid produced by cyanobacteria. BMAA is a “slower working” toxin that has been linked to potentially terminal neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer’s, ALS and Parkinson’s disease in humans.

Calusa Waterkeeper is particularly interested in examining the potential human health risks from chronic cyanobacteria exposure in Southwest Florida and we are uniquely situated as an organization to do so.

When a potentially harmful algae bloom appears, it is typical to try and first identify the dominant species. For certain cyanobacteria and dinoflagellates, we are sometimes able to identify species microscopically or ask affiliates at SCCF



Franklin Lock Algae, 2018

(Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation) or FGCU (Florida Gulf Coast University) for assistance in identification.



AAd Hoc Water Testing

Having an idea of what you want to test for is important, because the effort and costs for assessment of multiple toxins can add up quickly. When we deem that a test for cyanotoxins is prudent, we solicit a third-party lab for that analysis. Results are usually returned within 3 days to a week, depending on the assay, and there is a fee for determining each species or type of toxin.

Monitoring the air for toxins related to harmful algal blooms is essentially a brand-new field of study. After the dreadful dual states-of-emergency caused by blue green algae and red tide in Southwest

Florida in 2018, several researchers became interested in performing air testing here, including some of our colleagues at Florida Gulf Coast University and Brain Chemistry Labs. Two of our original documentary series, Troubled Waters and Waterborne, explore aspects of this research.

In 2021, we designed a novel device called ADAM (Aerosol Detector for Algae Monitoring), which is used to detect aerosolized cyanotoxins. Calusa Waterkeeper volunteers with experience in the engineering and medical research fields worked closely with John Cassani to develop and build three ADAM units from scratch. These are highly portable kits designed to capture air samples over 24-hour deployments.



For more information about our impact programs, water quality, and our organization, please visit our website www.calusawaterkeeper.org.



Groundhog Day February 2, 2026

The COLORADO CORNER

For a taste of nature that does not thrive at near sea level this new OTR column comes from wildlife photographer James DeWalt, our son, who has lived in his 9,000 ft high village of Nederland, Colorado for over 25 years. He is an avid wildlife and nature photographer, and we thank the MOUNTAINEER, his local newspaper, for allowing us to share some of his articles which he creates for them.



Lords of Winter

A glimpse into the winter life of elk

Rocky Mountain National Park-Light snow falls from the sky into the woodland clearing as the day's remaining sun makes its way through the somber, gray clouds slowly drifting over the peaks above. A frigid breeze gently blows across the treetops, causing the creak of lower trunks and branches rubbing together to create a rhythmic tune. In the distance a lone woodpecker drums its cadence in search of a meal, and the cry of a gray jay makes for a lone lyric in the collective music of nature as it heads back to its nesting shelter for the night.

As this subtle symphony carries through the forest, the sound of a snapping twig breaks the mesmerizing enchantment, then another, and then once more. A slow but steady crunch of snow is discerned, just barely audible through the music. Not the heavy step of a booted foot, but the patient, methodical movement of beings who have intimately known this forest as home for time eternal. One by one, a small band of bull elk enters the snow-blanketed glade and spreads out for a late afternoon meal that will carry them through the long night ahead.

Winter living in the mountains is no easy task, even for a creature seemingly well accustomed to it such as our majestic elk. While herds often tend to migrate to lower elevations for the season, some prefer to keep to the higher country above the foothills. This is more often the case for the small bachelor herds that break off from the main group after the fall rut.

Migrations tend to be spurred by a need for ample food supplies more than a general escape from the harsher climates higher up. If there is ample food available, there isn't as much of a need to head down the mountain.

When the smaller summer herds of females, babies and yearlings gather for the rut, they tend to remain in that larger group throughout the winter along with the herd bulls. This larger grouping can sometimes hold numbers in the hundreds. With a population of that size, mountain living becomes far less sustainable, ultimately forcing

a move that can sometimes take them to the very base of the foothills and the far less snowy grasslands at the edge of the plains.

Bachelor herds typically consist of far lower numbers, usually around a dozen or so, but occasionally gathering as many as 20-30 or more bulls of varying age. I've had the pleasure of spending time with some larger groups as they wintered around the ranch pastures on the outskirts of Estes Park. Locally, I have only seen the smaller groupings, and those sightings tend to be rare.

Those that stay don't tend to wander far in a given day. Survival in the wild is reliant upon conservation of energy. With winter food sources being scarce, long-distance travel would consume far too much of the energy necessary to stay alive.



These herds can often be found near larger mountain meadows in valleys or smaller glades in the higher slopes. If the snow is not too deep, they will use their antlers to dig down to the grass below. While not rich in nutrients like the lush growth of spring and summer, anything helps. When grass is unreachable, they will turn to pine needles and twigs and even bark for sustenance.

The clearings of meadows and glades also provide a source of warmth during the daylight hours, a place to soak in whatever sunlight they may as they graze. If conditions are good enough, they might even enjoy an afternoon bed for an hour or so. If snow is deep, they will remain close to the forest edge, as a trudge too far out into a larger meadow may consume too much energy. They also tend to keep the forest close, retreating to the trees as the cover provides shelter from the oft brutal nightly winter winds.

When I spend time with these beautiful creatures any time of the year, I am always in humble awe at their fortitude, knowing the conditions they endure to live in this mountain kingdom. I am often reminded of a quote about them from one of my favorite naturalist authors, Craig Childs, in his book *The Animal Dialogues*:

"The elk that you glimpse in the summer, those at the forest edge, are survivors of winter, only the strongest. You see one just before dusk that summer, standing at the perimeter of the meadow so it can step back to the forest and vanish. You can't help imagining the still, frozen nights behind it, so cold that the slightest motion is monumental. I have found their bodies, half drifted over in snow, no sign of animal attack or injury. Just toppled over one night with ice working into their lungs. You wouldn't want to stand outside for more than a few minutes in that kind of weather. If you lived through only one of those winters the way this elk has, you would write books about it. You would become a shaman. You would be forever changed. That elk from the winter stands there on the summer evening, watching from beside the forest. It keeps its story to itself."

For additional information about James DeWalt Photography, check out <https://jamesdewaltphotography.com>

For additional information about James DeWalt Photography, check out <https://jamesdewaltphotography.com>

You may also visit Jame's ETSY store: <https://www.etsy.com/shop/JDeWaltPhotography>

Improve ANY meeting you LEAD or ATTEND!

By Laurie Dougherty,

Community Meeting Facilitator and Trainer

Laurie@Dougherty-Inc.com



How to Encourage Quieter Voices in Your Meetings

Every meeting has a few people who sit back, listen closely, and say almost nothing. They nod, take notes, maybe offer a comment after the meeting—but rarely speak up during the actual discussion. It's easy to assume they're shy or not interested. But often, they're observing, reflecting, or waiting for space that never quite comes.

In community groups, where we count on every voice to shape the work, helping quieter folks feel welcome to contribute is just as important as managing the over-talkers.

Here are a few simple strategies to draw out the quieter voices in your group—without putting anyone on the spot:

1. Ask for Written Input First

Before opening the floor, give everyone a minute or two to write down their thoughts. Then invite people to share, starting with volunteers. This gives people time to think and lowers the pressure of responding “off the cuff.”

2. Use Small Groups or Pairs

Quieter folks often open up in smaller settings. Try using breakout groups or dyads to discuss a topic before coming back to the full group. Ask each group to share one insight, not a full report-out.

3. Watch Your Wait Time

After asking a question, pause for a full 5–7 seconds before filling the silence. It can feel awkward, but that short wait gives people time to gather their thoughts, especially those who think before they speak.

4. Acknowledge Non-Verbal Contributions

A smile, a nod, a note in the chat—these all count. Say things like, “I saw a lot of heads nodding—anyone want to expand on that?” or “Looks like there's agreement in the chat—can someone read a few comments out loud?”

5. Follow Up Outside the Meeting

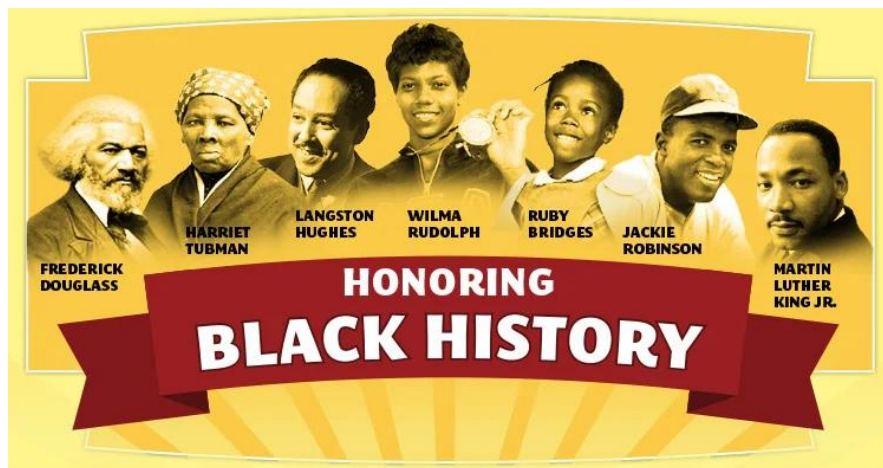
Sometimes, people need time or a quieter channel to share. A simple email saying, “I noticed you were thoughtful during our meeting—anything you'd like to add now that you've had time to reflect?” can go a long way.

6. Create a Safe Environment

Over time, people speak up more when they know their input is welcome and won't be talked over. Set a tone of curiosity, not criticism. Celebrate contributions, even short ones, and don't pressure people to perform.

Remember: being quiet isn't a flaw—it's often a sign of deep thinking. The goal isn't to make everyone talk the same amount. It's to create enough space and safety for people to contribute in the ways that work for them.

Author: Laurie Dougherty is a professional facilitator and trainer specializing in helping groups run more effective and engaging meetings. With years of experience in leadership training and community engagement, Laurie provides practical, easy-to-implement strategies to improve group discussions. Laurie has made Alva her home since 2021.



Southwest Florida Cooking by

MAGGIE McManis

of Oak Park, Alva

Contact Maggie to find out more at: Maggie1m@aatt.net



BEST GROUPE SANDWICH

Ingredients:

Chipotle mayonnaise:

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons chipotle hot sauce
- One and a half teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon ground chipotle chili pepper

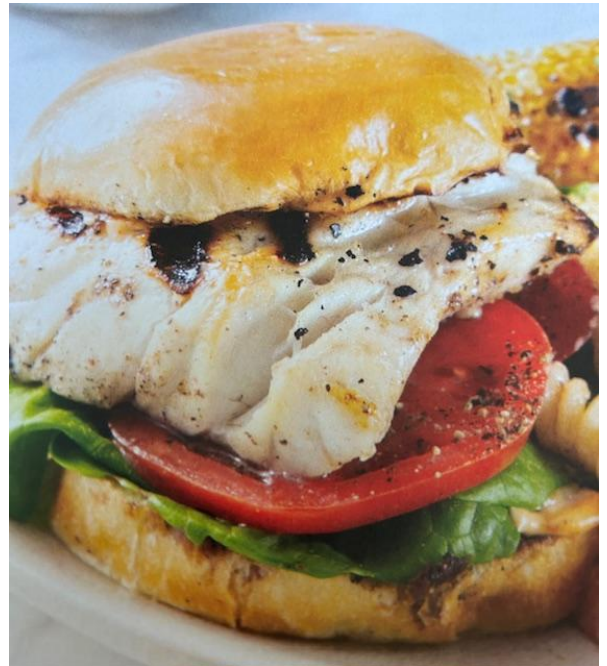
Two Sandwiches :

- 1 tablespoon butter at room temperature
- Two gourmet buns
- 3\4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 (8 ounce) grouper fillets.
- Four Romaine or buttery lettuce leaves.
- Four thick tomato slices

Directions

For the mayonnaise, stir together all ingredients in a small bowl and refrigerate 30 minutes or up to a week.

Heat a grill type pan over medium high heat.



For the sandwiches – butter the cut sides of the buns and place in pan and brown for one to two minutes

Sprinkle salt and pepper all over the fish, rub to coat. Place in pan and cook over medium high until the fish is browned and flakes easily with a fork. This should take about three or four minutes per side.

Lightly toast the buns if possible.

Spread one to 2 tablespoons of the mayo onto the cut sides of the buns. On bottom half of buns, layer the lettuce, tomato and fish covered with the top half of the buns and serve.

Enjoy!

HEARD IT WAS IN THE 40'S UP NORTH



OK
Sometimes its
40 or below
here.
So what!?

BUT I'M IN FLORIDA SO THAT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS

@FloridaSecretSpots

The **ALVA BOOKIE** Book Review

By Ramona DeWalt, Oak Park, Alva, Florida MonaDeWalt1@gmail.com

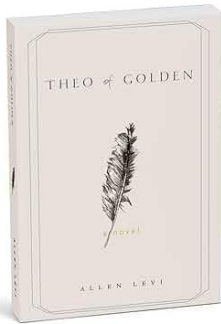
Mona spent 13 years with Borders Books before she opened her own 5,000 square foot GENTLY USED BOOK Store in Douglassville, Eastern PA, then sold it. The new owner changed the name and added new titles then added a second location, [storehttps://starrbookstore.com/](https://starrbookstore.com/)

Ramona retired along with her husband, Ken, in 2014 and has since made it her purpose to help others learn the joys of reading from helping to build the Children & Youth Library at Charleston Park

You may contact her via email at MonaDeWalt1@gmail.com



Theo of Golden by Allen Levi



One spring morning, a stranger arrives in the small southern city of Golden. No one knows where he has come from.....or why....

His name is Theo. And he asks a lot more questions than he answers.

Theo visits the local coffeehouse, where ninety -two pencil portraits hang on the walls, portraits of the people of Golden done by a local artist. He begins purchasing them, one at a time, and putting them back in the hands of their "rightful owners". With each exchange, a story is told, a friendship born, and a life altered .

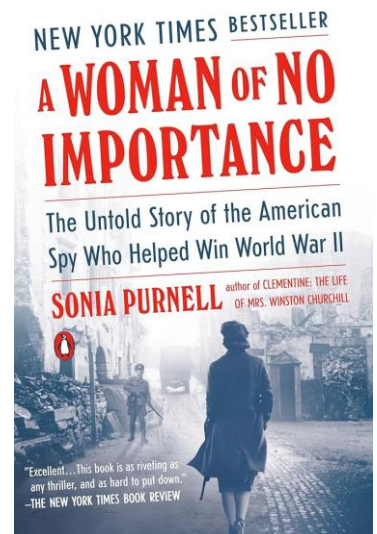
A story of grieving and receiving, of seeing and being seen, Theo of Golden is a beautifully crafted novel about the power of creative generosity, the importance of wonder to a purposeful life, and the invisible threads of kindness that bind us to one another.

A Woman of No Importance by Sonia Purnell

In 1942, the Gestapo sent out an urgent transmission: "SHE IS THE MOST DANGEROUS OF ALL ALLIED SPIES. WE MUST FIND AND DESTROY HER".

The target in their sights was Virginia Hall, a Baltimore socialite who talked her way into Special Operations Executive, the spy organization dubbed Winston Churchill's "Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare". She became the first Allied woman deployed behind enemy lines - and despite her prosthetic leg - helped to light the flame of the French Resistance, revolutionizing secret warfare as we know it.

It's a true breathtaking story of heroism, spy craft, triumph over adversity, and how one woman's fierce persistence helped win the war.



Please consider supporting our paid advertisers below with your business. They are supporting the mission of ON THE RIVER for you.

(Paid Ad – 12/26)



2024 THE EAST LEE COUNTY NEWS RATE TABLE

AD SIZES	FULL PG	3/4 PG	2/3 PG	1/2 PG	1/3 PG	ISLAND	1/4 PG	1/8 PG	1/8 PG	BUSINESS BILLBOARD
OPEN	1850	1525	1445	1045	760	PCI	575	445	325	1x Business Card \$145
3 TIMES	1640	1425	1280	930	720	PCI	530	420	310	
6 TIMES	1475	1260	1170	900	675	PCI	515	390	300	2x Business Card \$190
12 TIMES	1325	1130	1040	825	610	PCI	490	360	285	

*Ask about our Island Ads! Custom Sizing & Premium Placement

GROW YOUR BUSINESS IN SW FLORIDA!

EAST LEE COUNTY NEWS is a monthly direct mail local newspaper for the Daniels Corridor, Gateway, Lehigh Acres, Alva, Buckingham, and The Shores areas! Advertise in the East Lee County News to reach our 20,000+ direct mail readers and up to 2,500 more from our free pickup locations. Share news and special offers with consumers every month!

ADVERTISE IN THE ROAR

NOW SERVING
33936 • 33971 • 33972 • 33974 • 33913 • 33966 • 33912
ALVA • MOST OF BUCKINGHAM AND THE SHORES



(239) 470-5611 | PRESS@EASTLEENews.com | WWW.EASTLEENews.com

(Paid Ad – 4/26)




CAPABILITY. COMMITMENT. COMMUNITY.

CALL FOR A FREE QUOTE

GOODLAD & SWANK
INSURANCE, LLC

Why Not Insure It All Under One Roof?

239-674-7630
www.goodladandswank.com
702 Leeland Heights Blvd W Lehigh Acres, FL 33936



WEBSITE: www.OnTheRiver.org

Issue 85, February 2026, Circulation: Over 1,500 subscribers, 12,000 social media readers

(Paid AD – 6/26)

Manatee & Eco River Tours

March through November – join us for an ECO RIVER TOUR where we leave from Sweetwater Landing Marina on SR 31 in Fort Myers and travel eastbound on the Caloosahatchee River through the original river course (oxbows) learning of the history of the area. Travel through the W.P. Franklin Locks and then return to the marina after a lovely 2-hour narrated cruise.

At this time, we are NOT scheduling any tours for the remainder of January and February due to a health situation that we are dealing with.

As you know, we are a husband/wife owned and operated business and do not have a back-up Captain/Crew. So, when a health situation arises, we have to step aside from providing tours to take care of personal matters.

We apologize for the inconvenience and disappointment you may be feeling. We do hope you will visit with us again in the future and wish you continued blessings.

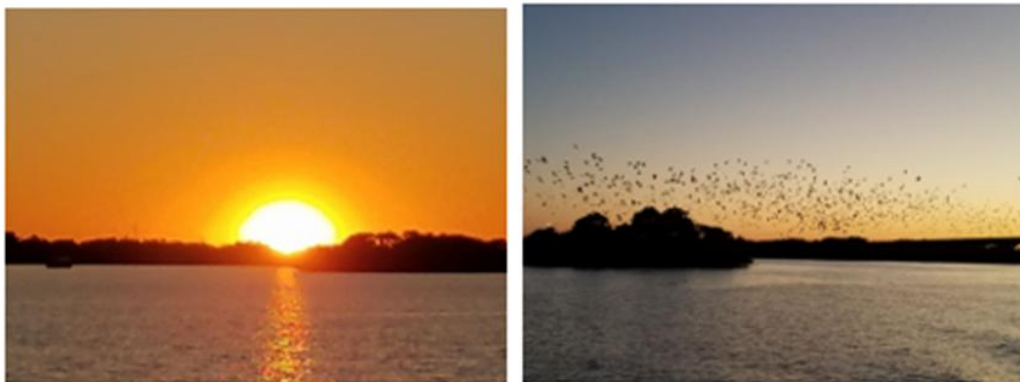
Kathy & Captain John Cookman

Owners



SUNSET CRUISE!

Join us for a sunset cruise from Sweetwater Landing Marina going westbound on the Caloosahatchee River. A nice spread of hors d'oeuvres is provided along with water and soda. You are welcome to bring your own beverage if you'd like. Enjoy a leisurely cruise on the Caloosahatchee, watch the birds come into rest for the night and enjoy the spectacular southwest Florida sunsets!



All tours leave from Sweetwater Landing Marina located at 16991 S.R. 31, Fort Myers, FL 33905

To book visit our website at: www.ManateeAndEcoRiverTours.com

Access link to our ARCHIVE of ALL OTR issues from day 1:

<https://www.ontheriver.org/archive>

WEBSITE: www.OnTheRiver.org

Issue 85, February 2026, Circulation: Over 1,500 subscribers, 12,000 social media readers

(Paid Ad-5/26)



Patricia (Patty) Walker
REALTOR®
Referrals welcome!

239-340-3904
PattyWalkerREMAX@gmail.com

RE/MAX GULF COAST LIVING
12928 Palm Beach Blvd Ste C
Fort Myers, FL 33905

Each  Independently Owned and Operated



- 23 -

Access link to our ARCHIVE of ALL OTR issues from day 1:

<https://www.ontheriver.org/archive>

ALVA EVENTS And Services



ALVA INC

21471 N River Rd, Alva, FL 33920

ZOOM access: <https://zoom.us/join>

Meeting ID: 852-1643-8980 Passcode: 302401

Info@AlvaFL.org www.ALVAFL.org NEXT MEETING: Every Second Tuesday, 7pm, Alva Community Center

ALVA INC MEETING NOTES, Jan 13, 2026

Tentative date for the Alva Country Days Festival: 3/28/26

-Volunteers, Vendors, sponsors & donors contact:

AlvaCountryDaysFestival@gmail.com

New Alva High School is clearing some of their land.

Alva Elementary/Middle School is working on expansion of parent's pick up area.

New Alva Baseball League has over 80 players for 7 teams so far.

Alva Fire Dept & Division of Forestry has our area at drought index of 600. VERY close to a burn ban. Also, continue to conserve water.

-President, Grant Fichter.



ALVA USS HANNAH CHAPTER

<https://usshannahnsdar.org/>



Alva Fire Protection & Rescue Service District

Join Our Team!



BENEFITS

- Florida Retirement System
- Medical, Dental & Vision Insurance
- Employee Health & Wellness
- Uniform Maintenance Allowance
- College Degree & Cert Incentives
- Training Allowance
- Salary Progression Base on Industry Years of Service

OPPORTUNITIES

- Marine Operations
- Public Outreach
- Career Advancement
- Special Events

REQUIREMENTS

- Valid Driver's License
- Good Driving Record
- FI Bureau of Fire Standards & Training Certification
- AHA CPR/BLS Provider
- Pass a Physical Assessment
- Current EMT Certification

The Alva Fire District is seeking qualified applicants for the position of **Firefighter/EMT**. The individual should demonstrate good moral character and judgement, be able to handle high pressure situations and display effective problem solving and leadership skills. The Alva Fire District consists of a tobacco and drug free workplace environment. Experience preferred.

Please forward a current resume, application and certs to Chief Echeverry at jetcheverry@alvafirecontrol.org or drop-off your resume to Firehouse 121, 2660 Styles Road, Alva, Florida between the hours of 9 AM - 4 PM. Applications and Acknowledgment & Full Release of Liability may be downloaded from the District's website at www.alvafirecontrol.org. Applications accepted through March 23, 2025.



WEBSITE: www.OnTheRiver.org

Issue 85, February 2026, Circulation: Over 1,500 subscribers, 12,000 social media readers



The Alva Library Museum

21420 Pearl St, Alva, FL
33920



Public Library, Alva

Originally a public library built in 1909, it now serves as a museum of artifacts from the original settlers.

The library-museum Board is making the building available as small group venue for parties, clubs, etc.

THE LIBRARY IS OPEN FOR FREE TOURS Every Saturday between 10am and 2pm

See a virtual video tour of the Museum at: <http://alvaflmuseum.com>

Grant Fichter is overseeing the museum for the board.

**The Alva Museum
Upcoming Events**

**Dec. 13
2-5**
Picture with Santa and the Mrs.

**Jan. 10
9-1**
**CAR, TRUCK, AND
CAR ART SHOW**

**March
14th
9-1**
**The Alva Museum Quilt
Show and Garden Club
Strawberry Festival**

21420 Pearl St. Alva, FL
for information contact 703-403-1560

**AMANDA
Cochran**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

for Lee County Commissioner

VOTE AUGUST 18

- 26 -

Access link to our ARCHIVE of ALL OTR issues from day 1:

<https://www.ontheriver.org/archive>

ALVA GARDEN CLUB

Each month we have special speakers presenting interesting and relevant information. We also plan field trips that enhance our knowledge and inspire good garden practices.



Membership in the Alva Garden Club is still only \$10 per person. We meet in the Alva Methodist Church Fellowship Hall the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 1 pm.

Everyone is welcomed to join or simply attend the meetings as guests!

Location: Alva Methodist Church

21440 Pearl St, Alva, FL 33920

Large Plant Selection
Bake Sale
Homemade Shortcake



Food Trucks
Vendors
Used Books

Free Admission and Parking

NEW! Credit Card Sales for Plants Available

Cash Only for Other Purchases

For more information, visit www.AlvaGardenClub.org



The 2026

STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

Mark YOUR CALENDARS
NOW!!!

Saturday March 14, 2026

9am to 1pm

is only 2 ½ months away!!!

Alva Garden Club February Events:

3: Edison-Ford Winter Estates Garden Class. Introduction to Florida Gardening, Part 2. (check EdisonFord.org website for more information.)

3: FMLC Garden Council Natural Decorations Committee. 10 a.m.-noon. Garden Council, 2166 Virginia. RSVP to 239-218-1905.

4: Alva Garden Club Field Trip: Peace River Nature Cruise. \$52 per person. Advance registration required. Please let Shari Hunt know if you are interested.

7: Edison-Ford Winter Estates Garden Class. Introduction to Florida Gardening, Part 2. (check EdisonFord.org website for more information.)

10: Strolling Flower Show. Sydney & Berne Davis Art Center, 2301 First St., Fort Myers, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

12: District IX Judges Council Annual Flower Show. FMLC Garden Council Headquarters.

14: Plant and Treasure Sale, sponsored by Poinciana Garden Club, 7 a.m.-1 p.m. at Berne Davis Gardens, 2166 Virginia Ave., Fort Myers. Cash only.

14: Edison Ford Spring Garden Festival. 9:30 a.m. carpool from the church. Lunch on your own.

17: Alva Garden Club Monthly Meeting. 1 p.m. Alva Methodist Church. Arts & Crafts with Roxanne Sprehe and Sandra Scheler OR Horticultural Roundtable with Dan Skean.

17: SW Florida Fiddlers Concert in the Garden, 10 a.m.-noon, Berne Davis Gardens.

19: Royal Palm 70th Year Placement Flower Show, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., FMLC Garden



PAGE 6

THE COURIER

JAN./FEB. 2026

MEMBER EVENTS / HAPPENINGS

ALVA GARDEN CLUB

The Alva Garden Club did a little celebrating and a lot of contributing in November and December.

Community contribution highlights included donating to and shopping for Angel Tree children from The Alva School, participating in Wreaths Across America for veterans' graves at the VA Cemetery, decorating the children's garden at The Alva School and roadside cleanup in Alva.

The AGC served breakfast at the November meeting of the FMLC Garden Council and we served as docents in the Berne-Davis Garden.

Several members carpooled to Punta Gorda for Holly Days. It was spectacular! We capped the month with an evening Christmas party for members and significant others at the home of club president, Ellen Lelfeld and her husband, Ron.



Sue Hegarty displays the Christmas gifts the club bought for a needy family through the Angle Tree project.



Jan and Jim Blythe place wreaths on veterans graves at the Alva Cemetery



Nancy Lee places a wreath at the grave of a veteran for Wreaths Across America



Roxanne Sprehe Attended the Punta Gorda Holly Days field trip.



Nancy Lee, Marsha and Fred Arnold enjoy the club's Christmas Party



Charleston Park Neighborhood Association

2541 Charleston Park Drive, Alva, FL 33920. 239-728-8895
Charlestonpark1926@gmail.com

Community Center Activities & Training, Lee County Children's and youth sport park, Events throughout the year, Meetings for all every second Monday of the month at 6pm at the Community Center are also available virtually via ZOOM.



We are Doghouse Rescue Academy - a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in Alva focused on helping make the world around us a better, happier place. We are a network of foster-based rescuers whose sole mission is to help adoptable dogs find homes.

Let us help you find your happily "fur"ever after!

<https://doghouserescueacademy.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/DogHouseRescueAcademy/>



ALVA MIDDLE FFA

Find us on FACEBOOK



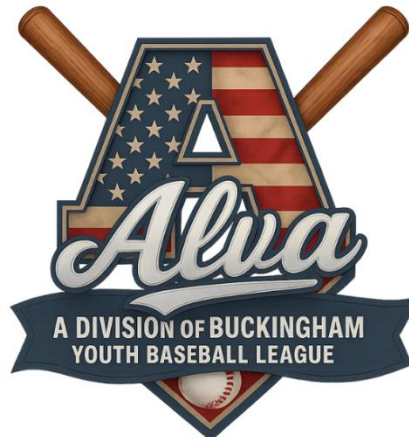
https://www.facebook.com/AlvaMiddleFFA/?show_switched_toast=0&show_invite_to_follow=0&show_switched_toast=0&show_podcast_settings=0&show_community_review_changes=0&show_community_rollback=0&show_follower_visibility_disclosure=0



Buckingham Youth Baseball has partnered with ALVA INC to create and oversee a NEW

ALVA YOUTH BASEBALL LEAGUE

<https://buckinghamyouthbaseball.sportsengine-prelive.com/page/show/9256737-alva-league>



BUCKINGHAM & FORT MYERS SHORES EVENTS

And Services



FORT MYERS EAST ROTARY CLUB

Fort Myers East Rotary Club has been in existence since 1973, and helps with so many community projects in East Lee County and with District and International Rotary activities.

They meet Wednesday mornings for breakfast at 7:30 AM at the River Hall Country Club. Stop by and join us for an invigorating meeting with good food, stimulating conversation and great speakers! For more information, contact FMERC.Secretary@gmail.com <https://www.fmeastrotary.com/>

Meatloaf Dinner



Thursday, February 12th, 4-7 pm

Delicious homemade meatloaf, mashed potatoes/gravy, coleslaw, corn, and dessert

\$10.00 adult \$5.00 child

Eat in or take out

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

14531 Old Olga RD S.E.

Fort Myers, FL 33905

(239) 694-3878

Click for All EVENTS at Riverdale Library:

Hours

Monday: Closed

Tuesday: Noon-8 p.m.

Wednesday: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Thursday: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Friday: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Saturday: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Sunday: Closed

RIVERDALE BRANCH LIBRARY
2421 Buckingham Road, Fort Myers



https://leelibrary.librarymarket.com/events/month/2026/01?branches%5B142%5D=142&branches%5B144%5D=144&branches%5B336%5D=336&bundles%5Blc_closing%5D=lc_closing&bundles%5Blc_event%5D=lc_event



HORSEPOWER for HEALING CAR SHOW

A FUNDRAISING EVENT BENEFITING SPECIAL EQUESTRIANS, Inc.

PRE-PAID EVENT DONATIONS APPRECIATED

CONTACT OR GENERAL DONATIONS: Specialequestrians.net
Day of Event: Dana 239.898.2855 or Marc 609.234.7174

Saturday, January 10, 2026 **SPECIAL EQUESTRIANS, Inc.**
9:00 am - 1:30 pm **5121 Staley Road, Fort Myers, FL**

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

- CLASSIC, CUSTOM, & PERFORMANCE CAR SHOW
- FOOD TRUCKS & REFRESHMENTS
- ANNUAL TACK SALE
- MIRACLE BOUTIQUE
- 50/50
- THERAPEUTIC RIDING DEMO
- OPEN HOUSE & TOURS

Show Off Your Ride For Charity!

- Car registration: \$25 donation before December 1st
- Pre-registration QR Code or mail-in form. Save your spot NOW!
- Checks payable to SPECIAL EQUESTRIANS.
- TOP 25 TROPHIES, PEER JUDGED
- All makes, models, and years welcome.
- Prepped Pasture Parking

Our Mission Statement

The mission of Special Equestrians, Inc. is to enhance physical, emotional, and cognitive growth for individuals with disabilities through equine-assisted activities and therapies. The organization serves people referred to Special Equestrians by doctors, therapists, and teachers. The participant application is on file with the County Clerk. There is a waiting list to ride in the program, although those potential riders who have flexible schedules will be able to ride sooner.

Call Us: 239-226-1221
Email Us: spequestrians@gmail.com
Map Us: 5121 Staley Road Fort Myers, FL 33905
Mailing: PO Box 61528, Fort Myers, FL 33906-1528
Fax Us: 239-226-1279

Complete Registration Form Online

Completed by staff
CAR NUMBER

Name: _____
Year: _____ Make: _____ Model: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____ Phone: _____

I will not hold Special Equestrians liable for any damage incurred while displaying my vehicle at this show.
Signature Required: _____



**HORSEPOWER FOR HEALING
REIN OF ROSES!**
KENTUCKY DERBY LEVEL SPONSORSHIP

\$100

We invite **EVERYONE** to be a Derby Sponsor as we enter the homestretch in support of our mission. All sponsors will receive a **rose corsage or boutonniere** to wear at the Horsepower for Healing event!

Imagine an event where everyone's support was materialized by wearing a rose?

Complete form, visit specialequestrians.net to make a donation or
Scan QR for all sponsorship opportunities!

Name: _____
Email: _____
Phone Number: _____
Address: _____

☐ Yes, I'm attending! ☐ Can't make it.
Checks payable to Special Equestrians, Inc.

**IF PAYING AT SPECIALEQUESTRIANS.NET PLEASE
TYPE REIN OF ROSES IN THE MEMO.**



**35th Annual Ride-A-Thon
at Babcock Ranch Preserve!**
*Where you can... **BE A CHAMPION!***

February 7, 2026
Gates open at 7:30 AM
8000 STATE RD 31
PUNTA GORDA, FL 33982

**ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT
SPECIAL EQUESTRIANS, INC!**
**REGISTER ONLINE AND CREATE YOUR OWN
CHAMPION PLEDGE PAGE:**

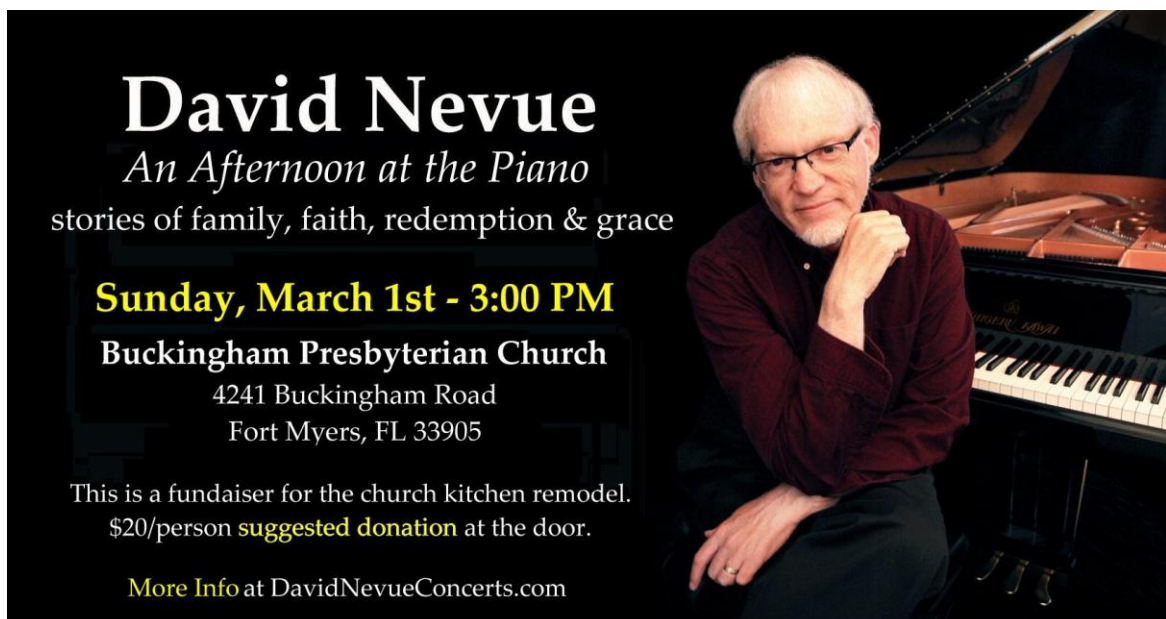
- Special Equestrians' Rider Showcase
- 12, 9, 3 Mile Equestrian Trails
- Earn a Minimum of \$80 in pledges to ride, complete Pledge Sheet or Create Digital Champion Page in a few easy steps! Share on social and Make Miracles Happen!
- **TOP PRIZES!**
- Bagged Breakfast
- Food Trucks & Refreshments
- Music
- Raffles & Silent Auction
- VIP Trailer Parking
- Horses Provided with sponsor package!

Text **RAT2026** to **76278 (SMART)**

*Be a sponsor!
make miracles happen*
Must bring your own horse (or purchase Trail Ride Sponsor Package!) & provide proof of negative coggins!

United Way DAY OF EVENT: DANA 239.898.2855 OR JAN 239.851.7070
RAIN DATE: FEBRUARY 8TH

Event Page at specialequestrians.net



David Nevue
An Afternoon at the Piano
stories of family, faith, redemption & grace

Sunday, March 1st - 3:00 PM
Buckingham Presbyterian Church
4241 Buckingham Road
Fort Myers, FL 33905

This is a fundraiser for the church kitchen remodel.
\$20/person **suggested donation** at the door.

More Info at DavidNevueConcerts.com

BUCKINGHAM

BASEBALL

WEE-BALL

ages 3-5
non-competitive
no evaluation required

T-BALL

ages 5-6
competitive with outs and score
keeping

COACH PITCH

ages 6-7
bridges the gap between T-ball and
machine pitch

ROOKIES

ages 7-8
machine pitch
designed to elevate play and
prepare players for upper
divisions

MINORS

ages 9-10
evaluation required
draft process by coaches for
team placement after evals

MAJORS

ages 11-12
evaluation required
draft process by coaches for
team placement after evals

JUNIORS

ages 13-16
evaluation required
draft process by coaches for
team placement after evals

BASE RUTH LEAGUE, INC.
BIRTH CHART FOR 2026 - BASEBALL DIVISIONS

	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
January	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
February	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
March	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
April	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
May	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
June	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
July	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
August	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
September	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
October	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
November	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
December	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18

All player ages are determined by the birth chart shown above. May 1 in any year shall be the deciding date.

Season of 2026

Cal Ripken - Any player born prior to May 1, 2022 and on or after May 1, 2012 will be eligible for Cal Ripken Baseball League competition.

Any player that turns 4 years old in the months of May, June, July, and August born in 2022 is eligible to participate in the Cal Ripken T-Ball Division.

13-16 - Any player born prior to May 1, 2013 and on or after May 1, 2009 will be eligible for Babe Ruth 13-16 League competition.



**SCAN CODE TO
REGISTER NOW**

LABELLE AREA EVENTS

And Services



Swamp Cabbage Festival

60th Annual

SAVE THE DATE!

FEBRUARY - 21st & 22nd

Barron Park

LaBelle, Florida



2026 Swamp Cabbage Festival

Starts on Saturday, February 21st, 2026
LaBelle, Florida, United States

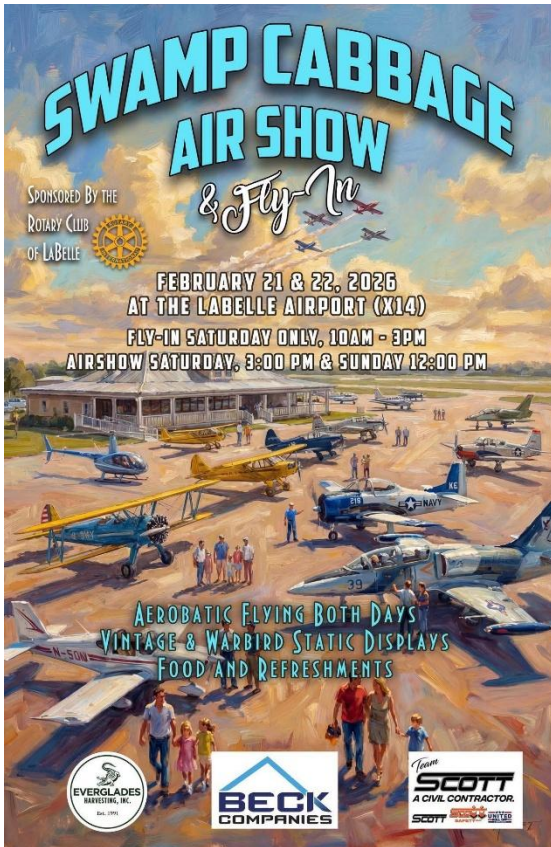
Hosted by [Swamp Cabbage Festival](#)



Parade & Vendor Application:

<https://www.eventeny.com/events/2026-swamp-cabbage-festival-17264/>





**SWAMP CABBAGE
AIR SHOW
& Fly-In**

SPONSORED BY THE
ROTARY CLUB
OF LABELLE

FEBRUARY 21 & 22, 2026
AT THE LABELLE AIRPORT (X14)
FLY-IN SATURDAY ONLY, 10AM - 3PM
AIRSHOW SATURDAY, 3:00 PM & SUNDAY 12:00 PM

AEROBATIC FLYING BOTH DAYS
VINTAGE & WARBIROD STATIC DISPLAYS
FOOD AND REFRESHMENTS

EVERGLADES
HARVESTING, INC.

BECK
COMPANIES

SCOTT
A CIVIL CONTRACTOR



STREET
WORLD & ALL MAKES WELCOME SEASON - 2
SHOW #1

MUSIC
VENDORS
SILENT AUCTION
RAFFLES
FOOD/DRINKS

**STREET
WARS**

@ The Swamp Cabbage Festival!
Sunday - February 22nd 461 N. MAIN ST.
LABELLE, FL 33935
Roll In 7am - 10am
Show 10am - 5pm
"NO VEHICLE ENTRY
AFTER 10AM"

239-877-2645 - streetworldentertainment@yahoo.com
NEXT EVENT CITY - NEPTUNE BEACH - REGISTRATION - \$25
TROPHY CLASSES: VIP PARKING - \$30

A) BEST EXTERIOR 13) 4X4
B) BEST INTERIOR 14) MINI TRUCK
C) BEST STEREO 15) SUV
D) BEST DISPLAY 16) VW
E) BEST ENGINE 17) HOT ROD
F) BEST PAINT / WRAP 18) VAN
G) BIGGEST CAR CLUB 19) TRUCK
1) 1900-49 20) TOYS - \$8 REG
2) 50-59 21) LOWRIDER
3) 60-69 22) SPECIAL INTEREST
4) 70-79 23) IMPORT SPORTS CAR
5) 80-89 24) IMPORT SPORTS LUXURY
6) 90-99 25) DOMESTIC SPORTS CAR
7) 00-09 26) STATION WAGON
8) 10-CURRENT 27) JEEP
9) MOTORCYCLES 28) EXOTIC
10) LUXURY
11) DOMESTIC
12) IMPORT

VENDORS:
MAMBO
LEMONADE
SWAMP CABBAGE FESTIVAL

PRE-REGISTER: 239-877-2645 - STREETWORLDENTERTAINMENT@YAHOO.COM
- THIS IS A SERIES OF 11 SHOWS - 3 - CATEGORIES
- POINTS ADDED UP AT EVERY EVENT - STOCK - STREET - CUSTOM
- THE 12TH SHOW IS FINAL SHOWDOWN! - 28 CLASSES
1ST AND 2ND PLACE TROPHIES IN EACH CLASS



The Greater
LaBelle
Chamber of
Commerce

**17th
February
2026 5:30-8pm**

**Barron Park
Desoto Rd**

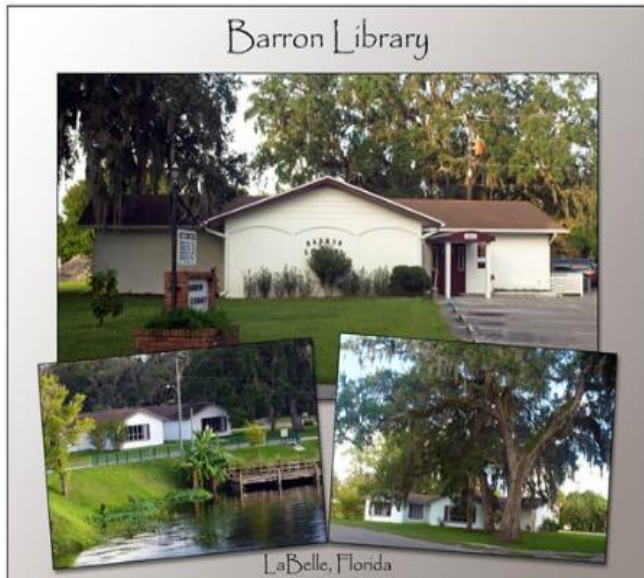
Aydin Holt
Live country music
&
Showtime Cloggers

VENDORS/FOOD
Free for Members /\$50 Non-members
You can Reserve your 10X10 spot now
labellechamber1@gmail.com
or 863-675-0125






Barron Library



461 N Main St, LaBelle, FL
33935

**The Friends of Barron Library
are hosting their first annual
BOOK SALE!**

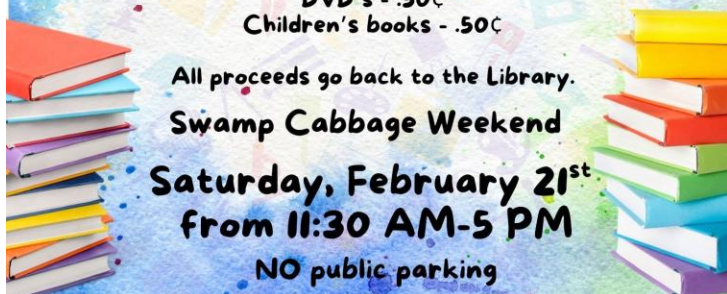


Stop by the Library,
grab a cold bottled water for \$1 each,
a Snow cone for the kids for \$1 each,
and browse our awesome
collection of books for sale!

Hard cover - \$1.00
Paperback - .50¢
DVD's - .50¢
Children's books - .50¢

All proceeds go back to the Library.

Swamp Cabbage Weekend
Saturday, February 21st
from 11:30 AM-5 PM
NO public parking



**BECOME A
HEALTHIER
You!**



PHYSICAL HEALTH **MENTAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH** **SPIRITUAL & SOCIAL HEALTH** **FINANCIAL HEALTH**

HEALTHIER HENDRY & GLADES
<https://healthierhendryglades.org/>

Humane Center 1200 Pratt Blvd, LaBelle

OUR MISSION

The Mission of Caloosa Humane Society is to serve, shelter, and protect the homeless pets in our care. We are

dedicated to finding permanent and loving adoptive homes for our companion animals in need. Our no-kill facility provides low cost spay/neuter services to the community with the goal of reducing the extreme overpopulation of unwanted pets.

WEBSITE: www.OnTheRiver.org

Issue 85, February 2026, Circulation: Over 1,500 subscribers, 12,000 social media readers

SHELTER (863) 675-0997

CLINIC (863) 675-7387

info@caloosahumanesociety.org



LaBelle Downtown Revitalization Corporation

proudly announces the Downtown LaBelle Historic Walking Tour! Take a walk into Old Florida's past through our new self-guided tour, featuring audio clips of those that helped make LaBelle what it is today.

Visit Downtownlabelle.com/walking_tour.com to start your tour today, or download the app with your Apple or Android device by searching "Downtown LaBelle." Happy trails!

<https://caloosahumanesociety.org/>



HERITAGE MUSEUM: LaBelle's century-old landmark

NOW Open Saturday's 10am to 2pm

<https://www.facebook.com/labelleheritagemuseum/>

NOW HIRING

Full-time Firefighter/E.M.T.

LaBelle Fire application and job description available on website

www.citylabelle.com

Submit applications in person at 481 W. Hickpochee Ave, or email to lisaawbrey@citylabelle.com by November 1, 2024

CITY OF LABELLE

Commission Meetings

SECOND THURSDAY OF EVERY MONTH @ 5:30 P.M.

City Hall
Commission Chambers
481 W. Hickpochee Ave.

Scan the QR Code
For full agenda
packet

More information: 863-675-2872
www.citylabelle.com

Meeting are open to the public

IF YOU REQUIRE SPECIAL AID OR SERVICES AS ADDRESSED IN THE AMERICAN DISABILITIES ACT, PLEASE CONTACT THE CITY CLERK'S OFFICE AT 863-675-2872, NO LESS THAN FIVE (5) DAYS PRIOR TO THE ABOVE STATED HEARING DATE.



DOWNTOWN SUPPORTER MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

Support the heart of LaBelle and grow with us!

The LaBelle Downtown Revitalization Corporation (LDRC) is powered by community memberships, fundraising efforts, and a strong public-private partnership. Our success comes from being a local initiative—driven by local people, funded by local support, and focused entirely on revitalizing and preserving the heart of LaBelle. By becoming a member, you're not just supporting a cause—you're investing in a vibrant, thriving downtown for generations to come.

INDIVIDUAL \$50.00

For residents and supporters who want to show love for downtown!

- Monthly e-newsletter
- Advance notice of LDRC events
- Be seen in our public supporter showcase online

NONPROFIT \$100.00

Exclusive rate for nonprofit organizations.

- Discounted participation at select LDRC events
- Listing in our online directory
- Featured in member promotions (newsletter & social media)
- Invitations to exclusive networking events and workshops

COMMUNITY PARTNER \$300.00

Perfect for small businesses and individuals wanting more visibility.

- Business listing in online directory
- Featured in our monthly e-newsletter with options for spotlights, ad placement, and special promotions
- Social media shares on LDRC channels
- Invitations to exclusive networking events and workshops
- Early access to event sign-up

BUSINESS \$500.00

For businesses who want visibility, impact, and a stronger downtown.

- Business listing in online directory
- Featured in our monthly e-newsletter with options for spotlights, ad placement, and special promotions
- Access to member-only referrals and features
- Social media shares on LDRC channels
- Invitations to exclusive networking events and workshops
- Early access to event sign-up
- 1 free booth at an LDRC Shop Downtown event.

READY TO JOIN?

Visit downtownlabelle.com

firehouse community theatre inc.

THE FIREHOUSE COMMUNITY THEATRE
PRESENTS



by Jones Hope Wooten

April 10, 11, 12 and 17, 18, 19

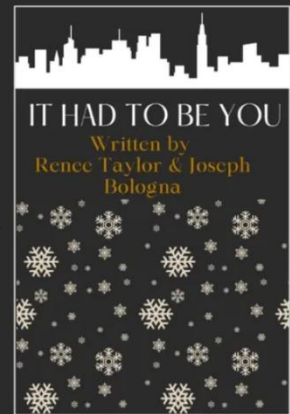
Five Southern women, whose friendships began many years ago on their college swim team, set aside a long weekend every August to recharge.

THE FIREHOUSE COMMUNITY THEATRE
PRESENTS

OUR 33RD SEASON

FEBRUARY 27, 28
MARCH 6, 7 AT 7PM
AND
MARCH 1, 8 AT 2PM

THEDA BLAU, A FAILED ACTRESS,
HEALTH FOOD NUT, AND
WOULD-BE PLAYWRIGHT
WANTS TO FIND
LOVE AND SUCCESS IN
NEW YORK.



CALL FOR ARTISTS

Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation
mural coming to downtown LaBelle.

APPLICATIONS CLOSE NOVEMBER 18TH.
Learn more and apply at the link below/in bio.



Become a Vendor

Become a Volunteer

EVERGLADES
SEAFOOD
FESTIVAL
EVERGLADES CITY, FL

2026 Event

Press

Q

Artist Line Up

Gator Nate will be the emcee
drone light show Friday night, February 13th

Friday, Feb.13

5:00-6:00 Aydin Holt
6:15-7:15 Big Cypress Band
7:15-7:25 *DRONE SHOW*
7:30-8:30 Fortunate Son (Creedence
Clearwater Revival Tribute)
9:00-10:30 Moonstone Riders

Saturday, Feb.14:

11:00-12:00 Edison Schetter
12:30-1:30 Bandana Brothers
2:00-3:00 Jack Shealy Band
3:30-4:30 C.J. Garton
5:00-6:00 Gator Nate
7:00-8:30 Tyler Farr (HEADLINER)
9:00-10:00 The Stones (Rolling Stones
Tribute)

Sunday, February 15th

11:00-12:00 Chokolokee Family Church of God
1:30-2:30 Wes Shipp
3:00-4:00 Charlie Pace Band
4:30-6pm Meetloaf (Meatloaf Tribute Band)

The NEWEST Theater in LaBelle!

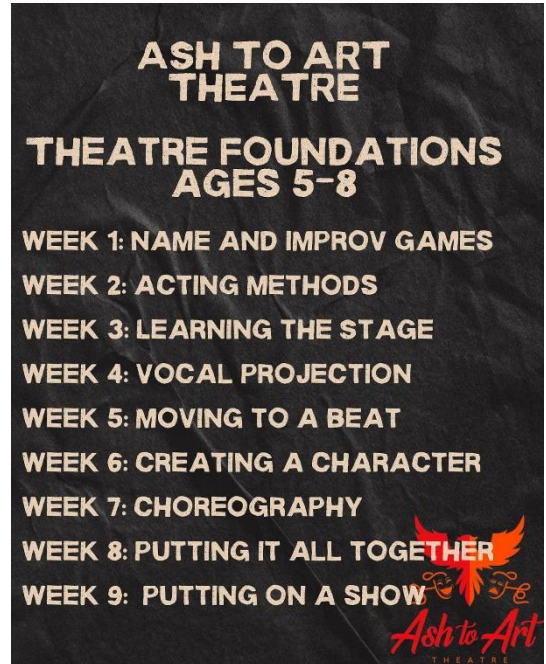
On Saturday evening, November 8th, the cast, crew, and directors of the YOUTH THEATER COMPANY performed a whimsical and fun stage play of ANNIE.

This was their FIRST public program, and it ran through two shows to large crowds. Of course, lots of family and friends of the kids. However, don't believe those youngsters and teens didn't give a heartwarming performance.

Watch for more programs in the future, and I'd advise you not miss a single one.

<https://www.ashtoarttheatre.com/>

atatheatreco@gmail.com



They are accepting donations to purchase new sound equipment for every performer.



<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=muse%20community%20association>

NORTH FORT MYERS & NORTH OLGA EVENTS And Services



BIT BY BIT SADDLE CLUB, INC.

**"A Fun Show for Horse Lovers of
All Ages, Disciplines and Skill Levels"**

9:00 am Show Begins  **Public Welcome!**

2025 - 26 SHOW DATES: Oct 19; Nov 9; Dec 7; Jan 11; Feb 15; March 8; April 19

Classes

- 1 In-Hand Showmanship
- 2 Lead Line Class
- 3 In-Hand Trail/Obstacle
- 4 Trail/Obstacle
- 5 Barrel Race
- 6 Gaited Pleasure ---W/T
- 7 Gaited Pleasure ---W/T/C
- 8 Slow Western Pleasure ----- W/T
- 9 Slow Western Pleasure ----- W/T/C
- 10 Ranch Rail Pleasure ----- W/T
- 11 Ranch Rail Pleasure ----- W/T/C
- 12 Pole Bending
- 13 Novice Box Reining/Boxing --- pattern - W/T
- 14 Novice Box Reining/Boxing --- pattern - W/T/C
- 15 W/E Ranch Riding class --- pattern---W/T
- 16 W/E Ranch Riding class ---pattern---W/T/C
- 17 Basic Western Freestyle Dressage ---W/T
- 18 Fun Speed Class
- 19 English Rail Pleasure -----W/T
- 20 English Rail Pleasure -----W/T/C
- 21 English Equitation -----on the rail ---W/T
- 22 English Equitation -----on the rail ---W/T/C
- 23 Command Class -----W/T
- 24 Command Class -----W/T/C
- 25 Fun Class

TENTATIVE SHOW BILL

IN Practice Arena!

Can be lead line

Year Membership (single) \$35.00
Year Membership (family) \$55.00
Show Cost for Unlimited # of Classes
Members \$50.00 Family \$70.00
Non-members \$70.00 per rider
Cost per class: \$15.00

★★ **Riders Must Choose W/T or W/T/C. Cannot do both.**

"Show Clinics" are offered on Saturday, a week before the show! Members Only!

★ **NEGATIVE COGGINS REQUIRED**
PLEASE, NO STALLIONS!

★★ **Riders Receive Placement Awards** ★★

Members also receive points from each show for year end prizes at the club party in late spring.

 **FACEBOOK PAGE**
Bit by Bit Saddle Club

Contact Adele Smith for more information
305-799-4651 or E-mail bitbybit338@gmail.com

FREESTYLE PERFORMANCES (In Hand & On Back) → These classes are non-judged & will run during lunch break

LOCATIONS:
Oct 19; Nov 9; Dec 7: Lee Civic Center 11831 Bayshore Rd, North Fort Myers, FL
Jan 11; Feb 15; March 8; April 19 Lee County Posse Arena 17401 Palm Creek Dr N. Ft Myers, FL

★ **ABSOLUTELY NO HITTING/ ABUSING OF HORSE ANYWHERE, AT ANYTIME!**
★ **PROPER DISCIPLINE EQUIPMENT, HEELED BOOTS, SUGGESTED ATTIRE SHORT OR LONG SLEEVE SHIRT OR "CLUB" T-SHIRT, JEANS, BREECHES, LONG PANTS. 18 YEARS OLD and Under MUST WEAR a HELMET!**
★ **MULTIPLE ATTIRE AND TACK CHANGES IN BETWEEN CLASSES ARE NOT NECESSARY!**



OCTAGON WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

WEBSITE: www.OnTheRiver.org

Issue 85, February 2026, Circulation: Over 1,500 subscribers, 12,000 social media readers



**41660 Horseshoe Road • Punta Gorda, FL
33982 • 239-543-1130**

Most mentioned offerings



Tiger Viewing



Lion Viewing



Guided Wildlife Tours



Bear Encounter

Events & Services



FOR ALL OF US



East Lee Wildlife Stewardship Group

Donate Today:

<https://www.paypal.com/US/fundraiser/charity/5100941>

Contact <https://www.facebook.com/james.kennedy.96155>



Big Brothers Big Sisters
of the Sun Coast

Would your child benefit from having a mentor?
WE CAN HELP!

COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM
Community-based mentoring relationships form between mentors and mentees. Mentors and mentees meet regularly, often in person, and work together to achieve goals and develop a friendship.

SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAM
School-based mentoring takes place at school during one class period a week. Mentors engage their students to reach their potential as they work on school assignments, promote self-confidence and develop a friendship.

TOGETHER, WE ARE DEFENDERS OF POTENTIAL

Learn more about the organization and how your child can benefit from a mentor!
Contact Laurie Wainiger at 863-343-0107
or lwainiger@bbsuncoast.org

Big Brothers Big Sisters
of the Sun Coast

**INSPIRE POTENTIAL
BECOME A 'BIG' TODAY**

Community-Based Program
Community-based mentoring relationships form between mentors and mentees. Mentors and mentees meet regularly, often in person, and work together to achieve goals and develop a friendship.

School-Based Program
School-based mentoring takes place at school during one class period a week. Mentors engage their students to reach their potential as they work on school assignments, promote self-confidence and develop a friendship.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
The Florida Department of Education is the primary agency for the Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast.

Learn More!
www.bbsuncoast.org
863-343-0107

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast is here for you and your child.
Reach out to them today.
Or, are you interested in beginning a BIG? There are kids waiting for you!



South Florida Wildlands Association

a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of wildlife and habitat in the Greater Everglades.

<https://www.southfloridawild.org/> <https://>

Lee County Florida 4-H

Are you a 4-H member ages 8-18 and showing a livestock animal? You will need to ensure that your ethics is up to date in order to show at our local livestock shows.

If you're in need of an ethics class, please visit Florida State Fair Agribusiness website at <https://floridastatefairag.com/ethics/>

- Please note classes fill up quickly, and you as the exhibitor/family are encouraged to stay on top of registration. For the full list of classes, please visit the Florida State Fair

website (this is updated as classes are added).

A blue poster for the '2024/2025 Youth Livestock Show Ethics and Animal Care Workshop'. The word 'ETHICS' is written in large, bold letters, with each letter containing a different image of a livestock animal (goat, pig, chicken, horse, cow). Below the title, there is a 4-H logo and a paragraph of text: 'For a list of available virtual and in person workshops, please visit the website. Note that new workshops are being added as needed.' Below this is the website URL: 'https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QcGJ7R-BtCdNkjheHF3oG-mpoIqDIYEiaCct3lW-922o/edit' with a green arrow pointing to a QR code. At the bottom, there is more text: 'Please note all youth must register to attend an ethics session. They are first come, first serve - don't wait to sign up! If these dates don't work in your families schedule, please see the master list for other dates available from other counties!' and 'Can't remember if your Ethics Number is still valid? Or what it is? If you need your current number or have any questions, please email us at Emily.Smith@FloridaStateFair.com or call (813) 627-4229.'



PROVIDING SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE FOR CITIZENS AND INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS WORKING FOR GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN FLORIDA

The Florida Center for Government Accountability gives citizens the necessary tools and information to engage government officials more effectively by helping them better understand what is happening in their local communities and the effect big money has on local politics.

Traditional news outlets, particularly at the local level, face pressures never before seen and are increasingly unable to meet the informational needs of the public due to limited and dwindling resources.

Florida has the most progressive open government laws in the nation, yet citizen and media demands for public records too frequently result in questionable agency-imposed rules and restrictions and unlawful delays and denials. Also, the lack of accessibility of accurate reporting and over accessibility of inaccurate and biased information on or through the internet and social media more often results in misinformation, rather than accurate and well-researched facts. Citizens need access to reliable, fact-based, non-partisan information in order to hold government accountable.

NICK PENNIMAN, PRESIDENT, NAPLES, FL



INTERACTIVE Crime Location Map for Lee County

<https://www.sheriffleefl.org/crime-map-2-0/>

Updated constantly



-----Fatherhood Mentors & Volunteers of Lee County, Florida

Sean Ryan, Fatherhood Mentors & Volunteers Administrator,
nearbyclinic@hotmail.com

Joshua Krakow, Active Dads Administrator

Single Dads Outreach has leadership opportunities on its Advisory Council for professions, retired or active, in the fields of social work, law enforcement, corrections and education. In addition, Single Dads Outreach services include mentoring from prior, seasoned fathers. Please contact www.SingleDadsOutReach.org or your local United Way in Lee County to learn about these volunteer opportunities.

Your Best Friend is Waiting

Lee County Domestic Animal Services (LCDAS) has lovable pets of all ages, sizes and breeds waiting to meet you. Every adoption includes spay or neuter surgery, age-appropriate vaccinations, a microchip and a county pet license, making adoption both simple and affordable. Whether you're searching for a playful puppy, a calm senior or something in between, your new best friend may be just a visit away.

Click here to learn more or visit leelostpets.com to browse adoptable animals today!



protect and preserve the rights and liberties of all people in the United States



FOR



<https://www.aclufl.org/>

Did you know? Criminals can try to steal your home or property by illegally recording a fraudulent deed.



Sign up for free Property Fraud Alerts and get notified within 24 hours if someone tries to file a fraudulent deed or mortgage in your name.

<https://www.facebook.com/leeclerkofcourt>



<https://my.lwv.org/florida/lee-county>

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.



www.lwvlee.org

Public Invited – Free

**Local Voice, Local Choice:
Choosing Commissioners by Single-Member Districts**

Saturday, February 7, 2026, 9:30-11:30am

9:30 Registration & Networking 10:00 Program

East Regional Library, 881 Gunnery Rd, Lehigh Acres and virtual

This program is not sponsored/endorsed by the Lee County Library System.

Information and Registration

<https://LWVLeeEdEventSingleMemberDistrictsforLeeCounty>

Email: lwvlee@lwvlee.org Call: 239-278-1032



In November 2026, Lee County voters will decide by referendum to ensure ***your*** District Commissioner is chosen ***by the people they serve!***



Hear from the experts & discuss this ***critical Lee County issue***

- ✓ breaking down the ballot language
- ✓ improving safety
- ✓ tackling neighborhood-specific issues
- ✓ increasing individual voter-power
- ✓ shaping the future
- ✓ representation for communities
- ✓ advocating for home district

The League of Women Voters of Lee County, Inc. is a nonpartisan organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League of Women Voters does not support or oppose candidates and/or political parties.

The League of Women Voters is fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice.

www.lwv.org, www.lwvfl.org, www.lwvlee.org. Call 239-278-1032 or e-mail lwvlee@lwvlee.org

[Sign Up for LWVLee Email Notices](#)

[Join LWV](#)



LWVLee Educational Events

March 7, 2026, 9-11am, Affordable Housing. --Part 3, Data, Barriers, Solutions, at the Collaboratory. <https://LWVLeeAffordableHousingUpdate.eventbrite.com>

April 4, 2026, 9-11am, Environment, at the Collaboratory. <https://LWVLeeEnvironmentUpdate.eventbrite.com>

May 2, 2026, 9-11am, Partnering and Networking for Voter Engagement at the Collaboratory. <https://LWVLeePreparingfor2026Election.eventbrite.com>



www.lwvlee.org

Public Invited – Free

Local Voice, Local Choice:

Choosing Commissioners by Single-Member Districts

Saturday, February 7, 2026, 9:30-11:30am

9:30 Registration & Networking 10:00 Program

East Regional Library, 881 Gunnery Rd, Lehigh Acres and virtual

This program is not sponsored/endorsed by the Lee County Library System.



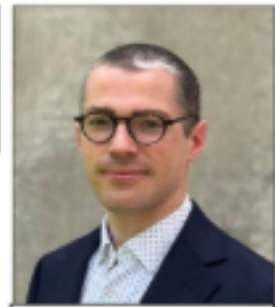
Information and Registration

<https://LWVLeeEdEventSingleMemberDistrictsforLeeCounty>

Email: lwvlee@lwvlee.org Call: 239-278-1032

Hear from experts & ask questions about how in *November 2026*, Lee County voters **can decide by referendum to ensure the Commissioner representing their District is elected by the people they serve!**

Florida native Nick Warren joined the ACLU of Florida in 2020 as a staff attorney focusing on voting rights. At the ACLU-FL, he has litigated redistricting cases; ballot initiatives; and led voting rights advocacy projects. He attended Middlebury College and NYU School of Law before resettling in Jacksonville.



Nicholas Warren Esq.



Dr. Sandra Pavelka

Dr. Sandra Pavelka is Founding Director of the Institute for Youth and Justice Studies, Professor at FGCU and a Lee County District 5 resident. She received her Ph.D. in Public Administration with a specialization in Justice Policy from FAU and is the recipient of the prestigious 2024 Women in Business APEX Award by the Greater Ft. Myers Chamber of Commerce.

Matt Caldwell currently serves as the Lee County Property Appraiser, a role he has held since 2020, and represented Lee County in the Florida House of Representatives from 2010 to 2018. Caldwell has been a long-time proponent of changing Lee County's commission structure from at-large voting to single-member districts, having pushed for this change since serving on the Charter Review Committee in 2008.



Matt Caldwell

The League of Women Voters of Lee County, Inc. is a nonpartisan organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League of Women Voters does not support or oppose candidates and/or political parties.

The League of Women Voters is fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice.

www.lwv.org, www.lwvfl.org, www.lwvlee.org. Call 239-278-1032 or e-mail lwvlee@lwvlee.org

[Sign Up for LWVLee Email Notices](#)

[Join LWV](#)

SCORE **Florida**

**2201 Second
Fort Myers, FL**

[Grab your reader's attention with a great quote from the document or use this space to emphasize a key point. To place this text box anywhere on the page, just drag it.]

South West

**Street, Suite 500,
33901**

(239) 533-3102, ch.admin0219@scorevolunteer.org

Serving Lee and Hendry Counties

We provide free and confidential one-on-one business counseling by phone, email, and in-person in Lee and Hendry counties We also conduct workshops for both start-up entrepreneurs and seasoned small business owners. SCORE is a fully independent private 501-3C non-profit with accountability to and some funding from the SB

SCORE Mentors...with experience in virtually every business category you can imagine help with:

- Business plan development, sales and marketing strategies
- Financing, taxes and E-commerce
- Management, administrative and operational procedures
- Ongoing advice to help your decision making

Life-Long Learning Made Easy

SCORE mentors, sponsors and local business owners with a specific areas of expertise conduct a variety of very popular, regularly scheduled, low-cost and free educational seminars and online workshops for establishing and managing a successful small business.

Free Resources

With access to a wide variety of documents, templates and tools to assist you in starting or growing your business, the information provided here covers a wide range of subjects including initial business planning, capital sources, government agencies, and much more.





Major William M. Footman

Sons of Confederate Veterans

Camp 1950, Fort Myers, Florida



Consider joining us at our monthly meeting every 4th Saturday at

Smoke'n Pit Bar-B-Q, 1641 N. Tamiami Trail, North Ft. Myers, FL 33903

Lunch and fellowship - 11:00am, Meeting - 12:00pm

Brigade Commander: Sean McFall

Find out more about us at

Camp Adjutant: Gerald W. Shell, email: adjutant@camp1950.flscv.org
<https://www.camp1950.flscv.org/>



*We care for local grave sites of
Confederate Civil War and
United States veterans of all
wars*

The Great Calusa Blueway Paddling Trail

A 190-mile marked canoe and kayak trail that meanders through the coastal waters and inland tributaries of Lee County, Florida. It attracts everyone from first-time kayakers to advanced paddlers and is home to abundant marine life, shore birds and crustaceans.

<https://www.fortmyers-sanibel.com/calusablueway>



www.RichAndLaurieInSouthFlorida.com



Listen to the Podcast and follow on Youtube, and more!

For information on where to go and what to do in SWFL!

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvcRaJr9jghdQOgsnU2B6Pw>



The global farm is not only a hands-on training ground for those searching for help in tropical agriculture, but also an educational tool to make the public aware of hunger related issues and the answers there are to alleviate malnutrition and starvation.

17391 Durrance Road, North Fort Myers, FL 33917 | 239.543.3246 | info@echonet.org
<https://www.echonet.org>



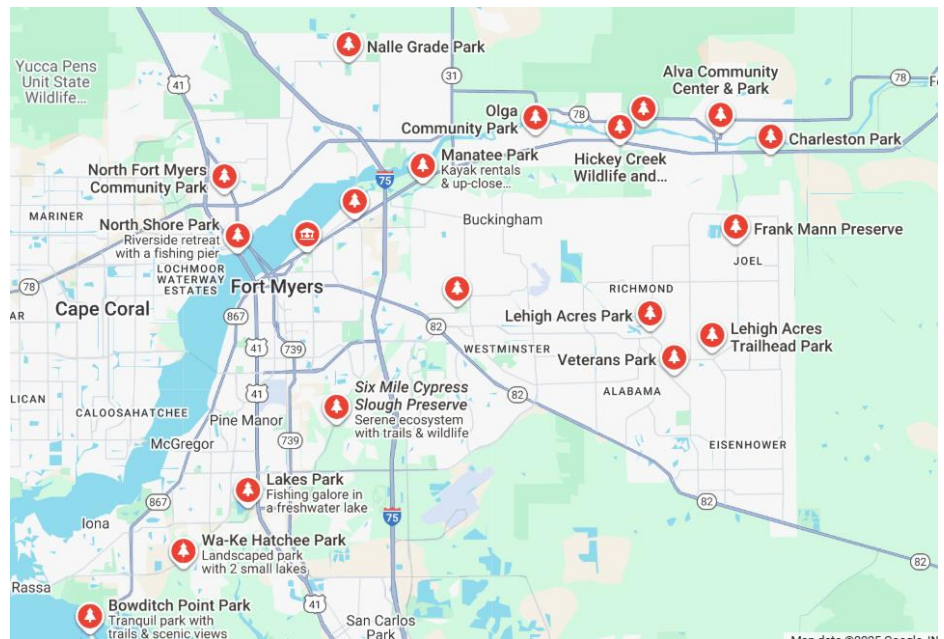
There are six fenced-in "Dog Parks" which allow for off-leash play. On-leash dog walking is allowed at many locations (listed below).

Dogs must be accompanied by an adult and must remain on-leash at all times while walking in the park. Find out more at: <https://www.leegov.com/parks/dog-parks>

Click to link below to all

LEE COUNTY PARKS

Contact information and interactive map



https://www.google.com/search?q=Lee+County+Parks&sca_esv=33d7c6e47e76292a&rlz=1C1CHBDen-GBUS1185US1185&sxsrf=AE3TifON_7qOfPqpR4DZQeqGWYYKd4mXTw:1764776637500&udm=1&lsack=vVowaciiHuWOWbkPj7DsiQ0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEWil9dek4aGRAXVIRzABHQ8YO9EQjGp6BAGIEAE&biw=1536&bih=695&dpr=1.25



Click the link below for contact, direction, and use information for

LEE COUNTY 20/20 PRESERVES



<https://www.leegov.com/parks/preserves>

FEBRUARY IS HEART MONTH!
HOW DOES MOVEMENT HELP THE HEART?
MADE BY FOCUS COMMUNITY & PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING STUDENTS

WHY SHOULD WE EXERCISE?

- MOVEMENT REQUIRES MULTIPLE ORGAN SYSTEMS, INCLUDING THE HEART. WHEN WE EXERCISE, THE BODY AND ITS ORGANS ADAPT AND IMPROVE OUR ABILITY TO MOVE AND EXERCISE!
- BY INCREASING MOVEMENT AND EXERCISING, THE HEART CAN PUMP MORE EFFICIENTLY. WHEN THE HEART PUMPS BETTER, MORE BLOOD AND OXYGEN CAN BE CIRCULATED THROUGH THE BODY!
- THE HEART IS A MUSCLE AND GROWS WHEN WE EXERCISE. HAVING A WELL-CONDITIONED HEART IMPROVES ITS FUNCTION AND PROLONGS LIFE!

WHAT EXERCISES CAN WE DO?

- EXERCISES THAT PROMOTE HEART HEALTH AND WELLBEING ARE THOSE CALLED AEROBIC EXERCISES, WHICH INVOLVE USING LARGER MUSCLE GROUPS IN THE BODY.
- AEROBIC EXERCISES INCLUDE: WALKING OR JOGGING, CYCLING, SWIMMING
 - WALKING IS THE MOST AVAILABLE FITNESS OPTION.
 - JOGGING IS FASTER THAN WALKING BUT IS NOT FOR THOSE WHO ARE INJURED OR HAVE JOINT PAIN. ATHLETIC SHOES ARE RECOMMENDED FOR THIS ACTIVITY.
 - CYCLING CAN BE DONE ON A STATIONARY BIKE OR A REGULAR BIKE, AND IS BETTER FOR THOSE WITH ARTHRITIS OR OTHER CONDITIONS THAT IMPACT THE JOINTS.
 - SWIMMING IS A LOW-IMPACT ACTIVITY THAT IS BETTER FOR THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE PAIN WHEN WALKING, JOGGING, OR CYCLING.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF AEROBIC EXERCISE?

- IMPROVES BALANCE
- IMPROVES MENTAL WELLBEING AND FUNCTION
- IMPROVES WEIGHT LOSS
- BUILDS STRONGER BONES
- IMPROVES FLEXIBILITY
- IMPROVES MUSCLE STRENGTH
- REDUCES THE RISK OF HEART DISEASE, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, STROKE, AND DIABETES
- IMPROVES LUNG FUNCTION
- LOWERS BLOOD PRESSURE, CHOLESTEROL AND BLOOD SUGAR

WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

STAY HEALTHY!

MADE BY FOCUS COMMUNITY & PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING STUDENTS
Scan the QR code for further information!
<https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/health-info/oral-hygiene>

DENTAL HEALTH CARE

Risk Factors for Poor Oral Health

- Smoking or tobacco use
- High sugar intake
- Poor oral hygiene habits
- Infrequent dental visits
- Chronic conditions such as diabetes

Common Dental Problems in Adults

- Tooth decay caused by plaque buildup
- Gum disease (gingivitis and periodontitis)
- Tooth sensitivity and enamel erosion
- Oral infections linked to poor hygiene

BENEFITS OF GOOD ORAL HYGIENE!

- Prevents cavities and gum disease
- Supports heart and metabolic health
- Reduces oral pain and infections
- Improves confidence and quality of life

Why Dental Health Matters

Oral health is closely linked to overall health. Poor dental hygiene increases the risk of gum disease, tooth loss, heart disease, and diabetes complications. Preventive care helps maintain both oral and systemic health.

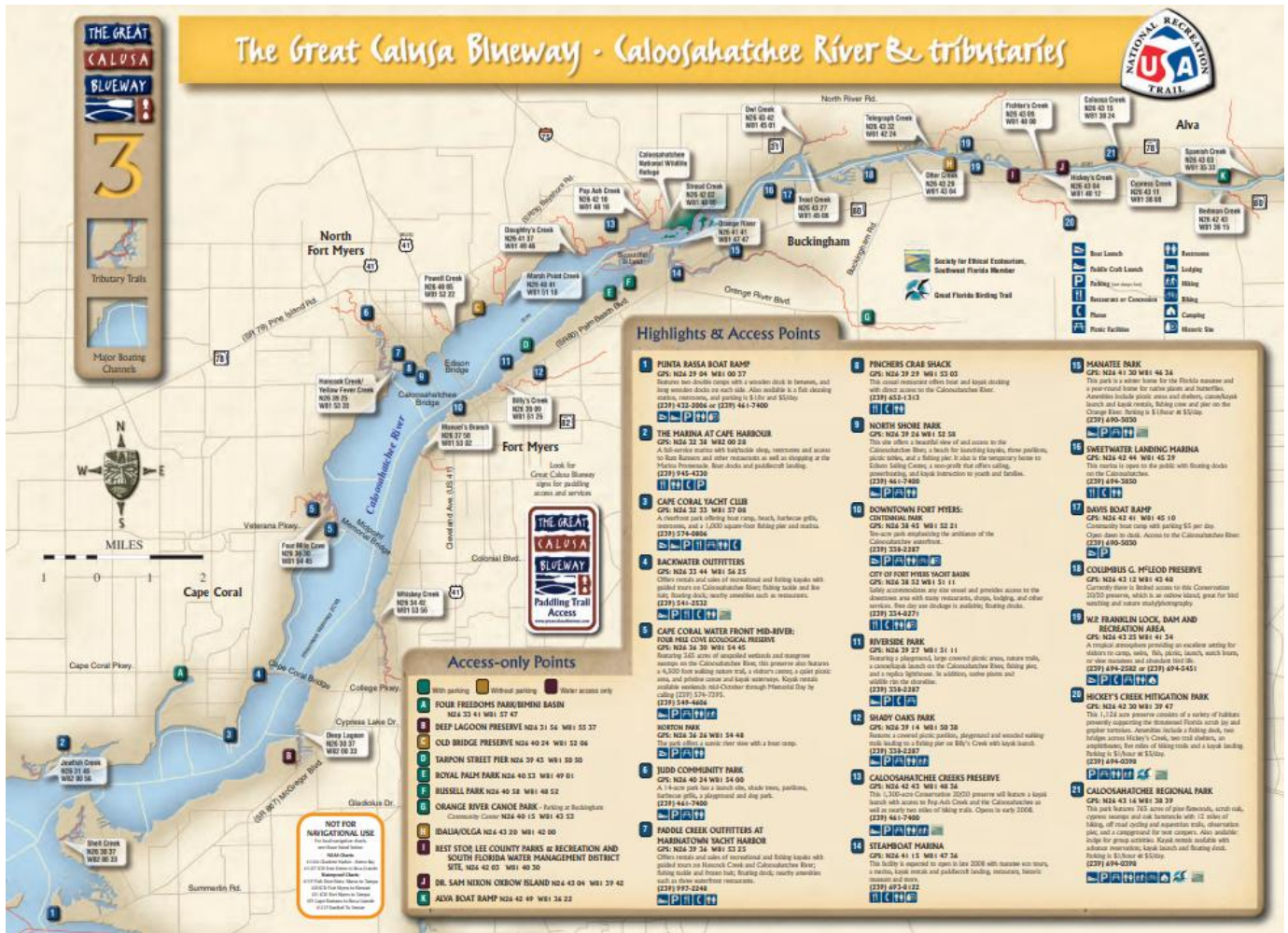
Daily Oral Care

- Brush twice daily with fluoride toothpaste
- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush
- Floss once a day to prevent gum disease
- Use mouthwash as recommended
- Replace toothbrush every 3-4 months

Routine Dental Visits

- Schedule dental exams every 6 months
- Professional cleanings remove plaque and tartar
- Early detection prevents costly dental problems

ORAL HEALTH IS CLOSELY LINKED TO OVERALL HEALTH. POOR ORAL HYGIENE INCREASES THE RISK OF GUM DISEASE, TOOTH LOSS, HEART DISEASE, AND DIABETES COMPLICATIONS. PREVENTIVE CARE HELPS MAINTAIN BOTH ORAL AND SYSTEMIC HEALTH.





CIVIL AIR PATROL

U.S. AIR FORCE AUXILIARY

JOIN US!

LEE COUNTY COMPOSITE SQUADRON

Adults Ages 19+ and Young Adults Ages 12-18

Non-Pilot, Pilot, Drone, Communications and Many Others

All Training Provided and No Military Experience Required

FORMATION MEETING • DEC 7TH • 10AM-12PM

Base Operations, 5200 Captain Channing Page Drive, Fort Myers, FL

Contact Lt. Jesse Spencer at jesse.spencer@flwgcap.us or 239-788-7820


Whatever Your Skill or Interest,
There is a Place for You in the
CIVIL AIR PATROL

VOLUNTEERS SERVING AMERICA! GoCivilAirPatrol.com





IS THAT VIDEO REAL OR NOT?



In our continuing discussion on artificial intelligence, or AI, this month we will cover videos created using artificial intelligence. These videos are commonly known as deepfakes; the definition of deepfakes includes images or sound in which a person's face, body, or voice has been digitally altered and are often used maliciously or to spread false information. According to research from the digital identity firm Signicat, deepfakes have surged by over 2,100% since generative AI went mainstream in 2022. For the purposes of this article, we will be covering deepfake videos.

EXAMPLES OF DEEPPAKE VIDEOS

Do you remember when video evidence was incontrovertible proof of what was shown on the video? Video proof can no longer be used as stand-alone evidence due to deepfakes; videos are supportive along with witness testimony and other accompanying evidence. There are many forms of deepfake videos, as noted in the list below and how those can be used.

Face-Swap Deepfakes: These videos overlay the face of one person onto the body of another body in motion. The AI neural networks are adept at matching expressions frame by frame with the body in motion, creating realistic looking video. Some of these deepfakes are just for fun, but others can be used for malicious purposes, like ruining a reputation or spreading false information.

Lip-Syncing and Audio Overlays: Sometimes called puppeteering, lip-sync deepfakes rearrange mouth movements to match audio, which may be manipulated or completely synthesized. Combined with voice cloning, which we covered last month, the "person" on the video appears to speak but the words were never spoken by any person.

Full-Body Reenactment: These videos feature models generated completely by AI, encapsulating one actor's posture, mannerisms, and movement, and ascribing those to a different individual. These deepfakes feature a person or people who appear to be performing tasks or involved in activities which they never did. Although movies and television use this in filming, the malevolent use is that of staged evidence and bogus alibi videos.

SCAMS USING DEEFAKE VIDEOS

Investment Scams: Watch out for investment requests from your favorite stars. Scammers create deepfake videos, employing the likenesses of financial gurus or celebrities urging viewers to invest in phony schemes, or "exclusive" deals. After the money is sent or the personal information is provided, the scammer can no longer be found, with no return for the victim. An example is a recent scam involving the "CEO" of a crypto company. A video the recruit investors featuring the "CEO" was actually an avatar reciting a script, all programmed with AI.

Romance Scams: Use caution when looking for a relationship online. If you meet someone who seems charming and too good to be true, they may be. After creating fake accounts, the scammer uses AI to generate photos, videos and even video chats that may be deepfakes to build relationships. After gaining the trust of their victim, the scammer begins to ask for money or personal financial information.

Fraud: Scammers are using AI deepfakes to commit fraud on social media. By manipulating video and audio of content creators, they create new content that appears to be the original creator selling a (non-existent) product for a (bogus) cause. The deepfake videos target the creator's following or audience.

Among the most deepfaked celebrities is Taylor Swift, who "appeared" in a series of social media ads offering free Le Creuset cookware. Participants only had to provide their personal information and pay for shipping. Unfortunately, the videos were fake, and she never made such an offer. Scammers scored the financial and personal information of thousands of Swifties, in addition to the cash.

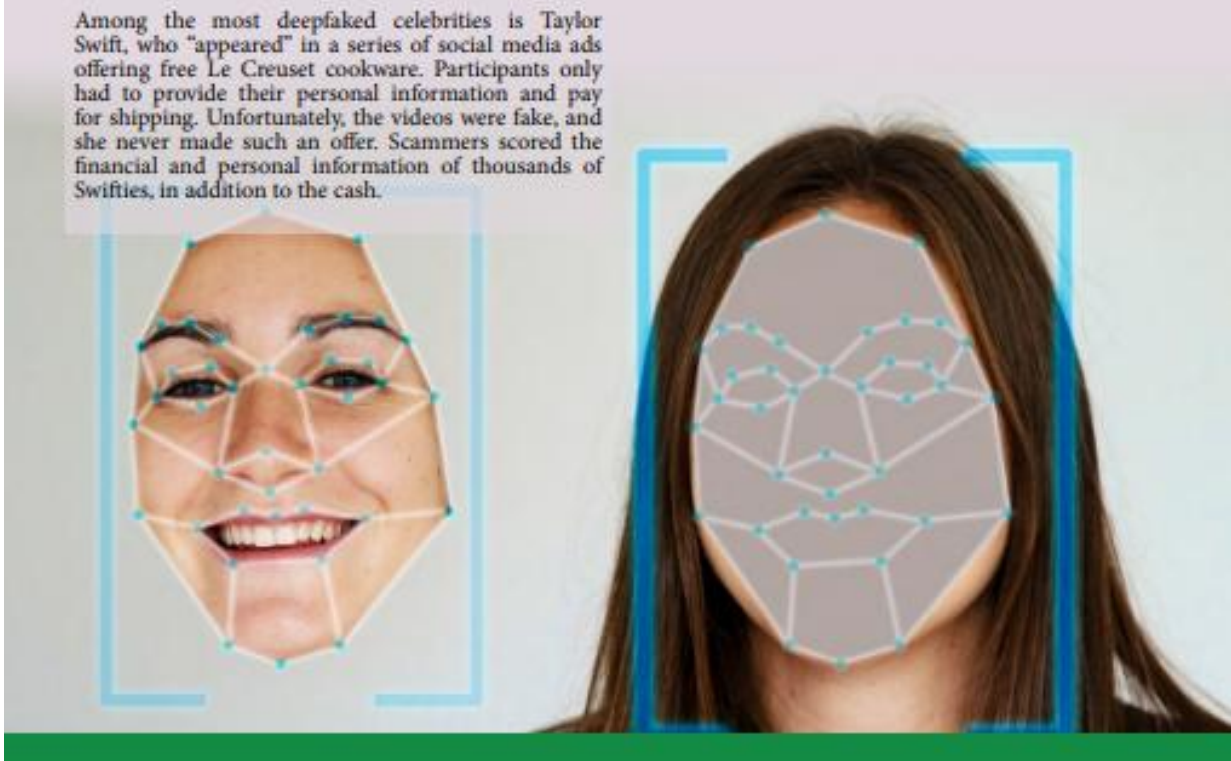
DETECTING DEEFAKES

How can you, the layperson, determine if a video is a deepfake? Here are a few examples you can employ without having to purchase extensive digital equipment.

Human observation: Your first line of defense in determining if a video is a deepfake is by watching closely. Look for clues that the figure in the video is an illusion, such as unnatural actions, facial features in which the expression is mismatched or distorted, and inconsistent movement. Do the hair and teeth look real? Are the eye movements natural? Pay attention to subtle anomalies in skin texture, blinking patterns, or mismatched reflections.

Context cues: Consider the background in the video. Are there no shadows when there should be? Or are the shadows not consistent with the lighting? Notice if the audio and video are out of sync. If there are objects moving, does the movement make sense?

Cross Reference the Source: If you see a suspicious video clip indicating the presence of someone, check the official source of the location to prove or disprove the claim. Press releases often contain alternative camera angles to prove such claims. Mainstream media relies on such cross-checks in the name of credibility.





SWFL Crime Stoppers is NOT a substitute for calling 9-1-1. In the event of an emergency, please call 9-1-1. Those who submit a tip are called "tipsters" and will remain 100% anonymous. No caller ID. No recorded lines. No tracking of phone calls. We want your information, not your name!

Put simply it is a three-part approach to solving the crime problem. SWFL Crime Stoppers relies on cooperation between our community, the media, and law enforcement to provide a flow of information about crime, wanted fugitives and suspicious activities.



Mission

Volunteer Florida strengthens Florida's communities through national service, fostering volunteerism and leveraging resources.

<https://volunteer.volunteerflorida.org/>



Effective immediately, persons who are experiencing homelessness (living outside, in a car, or other place not meant for human habitation) and seeking permanent housing resources in the Lee County CoC should contact 239-533-7900, and select options 1, 5, then 3, to complete a Coordinated Assessment.

WEBSITE: www.OnTheRiver.org

Issue 85, February 2026, Circulation: Over 1,500 subscribers, 12,000 social media readers



**Give TIME. Give
MONEY. Give FOOD.**

To make a donation, **call**
(239) 334-7007 or visit

www.harrychapinfoodbank.org

**We do our best to keep you all informed on where you can get food and how you
can help.**

For Food pickup locations:

<https://harrychapinfoodbank.org/?s=Food+locations>

Big Brothers Big Sisters
OF THE SUN COAST

All young people
DREAM of a bright
future—one that's full of
OPPORTUNITIES.
POSSIBILITIES.

**MENTORSHIP
MATTERS!**

Today's mentee is tomorrow's
leader, so let's help them
shape a **strong future.**

Join us for a **virtual open house** to learn
more about becoming a **MENTOR (BIG)**

EVERY WEDNESDAY FROM 4 PM - 4:30 PM

Contact **Teresa Taft** at **941-586-0707** | ttaft@bbbssun.org

JOIN US ON ZOOM AT:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81091089176>
Meeting ID: 810 9108 9176

The **Florida IMMIGRANT Coalition** asks that you copy and print these information cards to share with any person, documented or not, you may know who may be in danger.

ICE and local enforcement of immigration policies have escalated in Southwest Florida. Be aware of your rights.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR LOVED ONE WAS PICKED UP BY ICE



First, report the raid!

Contact your local community organization if you have one and share the raid information. If you do not know of any organizations, you can report the raid to the Immigrant Defense Project (IDP) at 212-725-6422. Be ready to provide details about the raid.

Second, retrieve your loved one's information. It is important to have your loved one's complete name, date of birth, country of origin, and their A-Number if possible. An A-Number begins with an "A" and is followed by eight or nine digits. This is an identifying number issued by the Department of Homeland Security for anyone who has had contact with any immigration agency.

Q: WHAT HAPPENS IMMEDIATELY AFTER ICE DETAINS MY LOVED ONE?

A: If ICE arrests your loved one, they will first be taken to an ICE office for processing and then to a jail where they will be detained. Families will often get a call from their loved one a few hours after the arrest.

Q: HOW DO WE KNOW WHEN THE FIRST COURT DATE WILL BE?

A: If your loved one does NOT have an order of removal, in most cases they will be placed in removal proceedings, which means they can fight their case in front of an immigration judge while detained. You can find out when and where the court date will be by calling the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) Automated System at 1-800-898-7180 or by visiting EOIR's automated website: <https://acis.eoir.justice.gov/en/>.

Q: HOW WILL THEY GET A LAWYER?

A: Most detained people are unrepresented, because the U.S. government does not provide an immigration lawyer, even if the person cannot afford one. In New York, some detained non-citizens will be appointed an immigration attorney through the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) after their first court date but before their second court date. This program provides a free attorney to individuals who are detained and do NOT have a prior order of removal (see the information sheet on NYIFUP included on page 27). **Important:** if you hire a private attorney before the first court date, you will be disqualified from NYIFUP, even if you cannot afford to pay that attorney in the future.

Q: SHOULD WE TALK TO AN IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY NOW?

A: If a loved one has an order of removal you should consult with an immigration attorney right away. It is important to determine whether the loved one already has a prior order of deportation because they will be at imminent risk of deportation and might need immediate attorney intervention.

Q: HOW LONG WILL THEY BE DETAINED?

A: If a loved one qualifies for a way to legally stop the deportation in court, they may be detained for many months and sometimes years, all while fighting their case. Under immigration law, some people qualify for a "bond hearing" within the first few months to try and fight their case from the outside while other people are not eligible. Even with a "bond hearing" many people will not be released or they may not be able to afford the bond amount set. Families should make financial plans in order to have money ready for bond and support themselves, for a potentially long period of time, without their loved one's income.

Q: HOW CAN I VISIT THEM AND SEND THEM MONEY?

A: Each jail has different rules. Specific updated information can be found here: <https://www.ice.gov/detention-facilities>. In the following page you can find information for the most common detention centers.

Q: CAN WE PREPARE NOW WHILE WAITING FOR COURT?

A: Yes. There are documents that the family can start to collect that may help. In addition, if the loved one had an ongoing obligation to report (maybe to criminal court to pay a fee, probation, a rehabilitative program, etc.), it is important to let the point of contact for that reporting know that your loved one is detained. This can be a long to do list - and a great way for organizers or community members to support the family through this process.

Community of Care

How Heart Wounds Heal

A group experience to bring healing to wounds of the heart—emotions, spirit, soul—from the unique hurt, trauma or loss experienced by many in their lives. People experiencing deep hurt of all kinds may find relief, reassurance and healing in this offering of care.

Often, those with heart wounds experience exhaustion, increased irritability or, feeling overwhelmed, isolated, or weighed down by grief or seemingly unending need.

These reactions require the security of a safe fellowship space to facilitate healing. The group will be led by compassionate, faith filled facilitators who are trained in Bible based trauma healing.

Together, we will make a safe space for group members to:

- Discover what the Bible says about those who hurt
- Learn about heart or soul hurt and its effects
- Experience being heard and valued
- Release some emotional pain
- Build resilience for the future

HurtMending Facilitators:
Tee Ormiston, Adult and Generational Trauma Facilitator/Trainer
George Ormiston, Adult and Generational Trauma Facilitator/Traine
Register at: Eventbrite
Contact: HurtMending@gmail.com
 Grace for Registration fee waived by emailed request

12 Tuesdays
 3/4 - 5/20
Time: EST
 6:30 - 8:00

Email for Registration
HurtMending@gmail.com
 or
 Follow us on
 Eventbrite

Trauma Healing INSTITUTE in collaboration with **AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY**

NOW HIRING

EARLY LEARNING TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS

Child Care of Southwest Florida is now hiring full and part-time positions at our locations across Lee County and our centers within Lee County schools.

Current Locations

- Children's Garden of LaBelle, LaBelle
- Joseph H. Messina Children's Center, Fort Myers
- P.A. Geraci Development Center, Fort Myers
- The Children's Learning Center, Fort Myers
- The Community Children's Center, Lehigh Acres
- G. Weaver Higgs Early Learning Center, Lehigh Acres

Opening Soon
In-School Early Learning Centers

- Harns Marsh Middle, Buckingham
- Bonita Springs Middle, Bonita Springs
- San Carlos Park Elementary, Fort Myers
- Ray V. Pottorf Elementary, Fort Myers
- Pelican Elementary, Cape Coral

COME GROW WITH US! APPLY NOW

SCAN THE QR CODE
 to explore career opportunities and apply for open positions online or call (239) 320-7799

The school district is neither endorsing nor sponsoring this event, product or service, nor endorsing the views of the sponsoring organization.

Big Brothers Big Sisters OF THE SUN COAST

We're Hiring

JOIN OUR TEAM

BECOME A MENTOR MANAGER- MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY!

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast is seeking an outgoing, experienced Human Services professional with a passion for working with youth in the role of Mentor Manager.
- BBBS Sun Coast is an Agency that promotes the mentoring relationships between Bigs and Littles for the purpose of igniting the potential in each child served.

JOIN OUR MISSION APPLY AT

- bbbssun.org

Premier Mobile Health Services

YOUR ROUTE TO BETTER HEALTH

February 2026 Mobile Medical Clinic Schedule

Florida residents without health insurance that can show proof of income below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines pay nothing for care. Patients who do not meet income guidelines are provided care at significantly reduced rates.

Tuesday, February 3rd East Naples United Methodist Church 10:00 am to 2:00 pm 2701 Airport Road, Naples, FL 34112	Multiple Days a Month Mount Hermon Ministries Call 239-222-1829 to make an appointment 2856 Douglas Ave, Fort Myers, FL 33916
Tuesday, February 10th & 24th Cafe of Life 9:00 am to 1:00 pm 26724 Nomad Dr Bonita Springs, FL 34135	Wednesday, February 18th Gladiolus Food Pantry 10:00 am to 2:00 pm 10511 Gladiolus Drive Ft. Myers, FL 33908
Wednesday, February 11th Baptist Church Ft Myers Beach 9:00 am to 1:00 pm 130 Connecticut St Ft Myers Beach, FL 33931	Thursday, February 19th Community Cooperative 9:00 am to 1:00 pm 3429 Dr Martin Luther King Jr Blvd #4403 Fort Myers, FL 33916
Thursday, February 12th Pine Manor Community Center 9:00 am to 1:00 pm 5547 Tenth Ave Fort Myers, FL 33907	Friday, February 20th Mahanaim SDA Church 10:00 am to 2:00 pm 318 Sabal Palm Road, Naples, FL 34114
Saturday, February 14th Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church 10:00 am to 2:00 pm 207 South 9 th St, Immokalee, FL 34142	2026 Wellness Fair Thursday, February 26th 5:00 pm a 6:30 pm Colonial Elementary School 3800 Schoolhouse Rd E, Ft. Myers, FL 33916

Walk-In Clinic/Main Office
 10676 Colonial Blvd, Suite 20, Fort Myers, FL 33913
 Mon. to Fri. 8:30 am to 5 pm --www.PremierMobileHealth.org
 (239) 222-1829 or (239) 288-7949

Premier Mobile Health Services screenings are supported by the Florida Department of Health through the Clinical Health Care Screening Grant Program and are provided at no cost to Florida residents who qualify under the 200% of the Poverty Guidelines. Throughout this program, we screen for cancer, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease. In addition, we screen for osteoporosis in children ages 11-18.

Colon Cancer

FGCU Community & Public Health Nursing Students

- Signs/Symptoms of Colon Cancer**
 Blood in stool, changes in bowel habits (constipation/diarrhea), unexplained weight loss
- How to Screen for it**
 The best way to detect colon cancer is through a colonoscopy- it usually starts at 45 years old. If your initial colonoscopy is normal, you only need one every 10 years
- Risk factors**
 High intake of red meats, not enough fiber, alcohol use, smoking, family history, ulcerative colitis, crohn's disease, African Americans are 20% more likely to get colon cancer
- Ways to prevent colon cancer**
 Eat food high in fiber (beans, broccoli, carrots, apples, almonds, lentils). Reduce smoking or alcohol use
- Report Changes Early**
 Don't wait—if you have any of these symptoms and are at risk for colon cancer make sure to get screened.

<https://coloncancercoalition.org/>



BREAST CANCER

FGCU Community and Public Health Nursing Students

Breast Cancer is the most common diagnosed cancer and the 2nd leading cancer resulting in death.

COMMON RISK FACTORS


Though a woman's chance of developing breast cancer is only 13%, there are certain factors that increase one's risk. Things such as alcohol consumption and decreased physical activity are examples of lifestyle factors while unchangeable risk factors include genetic predisposition and an early start of menstruation.

EARLY DIAGNOSTICS AND TREATMENTS

Early diagnosis is key to improving outcomes in breast cancer patients. Imaging techniques such as an MRI or ultrasound, or a tissue biopsy may be needed to formally diagnose one with breast cancer. Possible treatments for breast cancer patients include chemotherapy, radiation, and breast reconstruction surgery.

SELF-BREAST EXAM

Inspect the breasts for any changes in size, shape, and contour. Observe for dimpling, skin irritation, and nipple inversion or discharge. Then palpate in circular motions starting from the outer breast edge towards the nipple in an up-and-down manner. Note any lumps, knots, or tenderness and cover all areas of breasts and armpit.



WHAT IS A MAMMOGRAM?

A mammogram is a breast X-ray. It is the best screening test for identifying breast cancer at an early stage. It is recommended to start having mammograms at the age of 40 years old. A mammogram should be done every 1-2 years after that. If you have risk factors such as a family history of breast cancer, talk with your doctor to have a screening mammogram sooner than 40 years old.

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY
[HTTPS://WWW.CANCER.ORG/](https://www.cancer.org/)



Alva Area FOOD PANTRIES

Grace Church, Fort Myers Shores

2nd Saturday every month

**Food pick-up is by appointment.
Call the church office at 239-694-2797 for information.**

Charleston Park Community Center

239-728-8895

FOOD PANTRY

Every week, Friday, 10am-2pm

ALVA Methodist Church

Food Pantry @ Bethany House

Food Pantry: 9am-12pm 2nd & 4th Wednesdays

239-728-2277

CALVARY NATIONS Church

19850 Palm Beach Boulevard, Alva

Every Saturday, 3pm until supplies run out.

239-7285566

St. Vincent DePaul RC

Our Lady's Cupboard Food Pantry

Call (239) 694-3985 for hours open.

Some LaBelle Area Churches:

Assemblies of God	233 Clark St, Labelle, FL 33935
915 Lake Manor Dr Labelle, FL 33935	(863) 675-4227
(863) 675-0900	Pentecostal Church of God
	55 Orange Ave, Labelle, FL 33935
Carlson Memorial Church	(863) 675-0938
310 Campbell St Labelle FL, 33935	
(863) 675-0656	LaBelle Assembly of God
	915 Lake Manor Dr Labelle FL
The Channel UMC Ft Myers/LaBelle	(863) 675-0900
Fully ONLINE LIVE, Mondays, 7pm, EST	
https://www.facebook.com/TheChannelUMC/	LaBelle First Baptist
ZOOM LINK:	330 N Main St, Labelle, FL 33935
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89527254110?pwd=bWEyL283YW9sck52R2V5UDVqTEJiQT09	(863) 675-2171
Church of Christ Central	Our Lady Queen of Heaven Parish
60 Hendry St, Labelle, FL 33935	355 S Bridge St, Labelle, FL 33935
(863) 675-4796	(863) 675-0030
Eastside Baptist Church	Christ Central LaBelle, Reformed
1110 S Carlyle St, Labelle, FL 33935	540 1st Ave LaBelle FL
(863) 675-3595	(863) 675-2100
El Faro Assemblies of God of LaBelle	Good Shepherd Episcopal
431 Bryan Ave, Labelle, FL 33935	1098 Collingswood Pkwy, LaBelle FL
(863) 675-5947	(863) 675-0385
	https://goodshepherd.dioswfl.org
Grace Baptist	Christ The King Lutheran
4200 Ne Eucalyptus Blvd, Labelle, FL 33935	1362 Thigpen Rd, Labelle, FL 33935
(863) 675-3349	(941) 675-2733
International Christian Fellowship	New Testament Assembly

60 Calhoun St, Labelle, FL 33935

(863) 674-0444

Paynes Creek Primitive Baptist

83 Campbell St, Labelle, FL 33935

(863) 675-1435

Saint Matthews Missionary Baptist

929 Caloosahatchee Ave, Labelle, FL 33935

(863) 675-4451

Bethel Holiness

1153 Cornelia Dr SW, Labelle, FL 33935

Some Alva & Fort Myers Shores Churches:

Church of Peace

814 Fordson Ave, Labelle, FL 33935 (863) 674-0074

New Bethel Baptist

874 Suwanee Ave, Labelle, FL 33935

(863) 675-3205

Upper Room Church of God

345 S Bridge St, Labelle, FL 33935

(863) 675-7001

St. Vincent DePaul's RC Church

13031 Palm Beach Boulevard, Fort Myers, FL 33905

www.stvincentftmyers.org 239-693-0818

Alva Methodist Church

21440 Pearl St. P.O Box 96

Alva, FL 33920

Alvamc@embargmail.com

www.alvamethodist.org 239-728-2277

Alva Church of God

21520 Park St, Alva, Florida 33920

239-728-2644

Liberation International Church

Avenue D, Charleston Park

Alva, FL 33920,

239-601-4870

New Hope Faith Temple of Jesus Christ

23210 Avenue D, Charleston Park

Alva, FL, 33920 239-770-4974

Buckingham Presbyterian Church

4241 Buckingham Road

Fort Myers, FL 33905

www.buckinghampc.org

Light of the Nations Filipino Congregation

19850 Palm Beach Blvd (at Calvary Church)

Alva, FL, 33920

239-728-5566

First Spanish Assembly of God Church

2219 Joel Blvd

Alva, FL

Countryside Wesleyan Church

17750 Palm Beach Blvd, Alva, FL 33920

239-368-3270

Calvary Nations Church

19850 Palm Beach Blvd

Alva, FL 33920

CalvaryChurchSwfl@yahoo.com

www.calvarynations.org 239-728-5566

First Baptist Church of Alva

2790 Joel Blvd, Alva, FL, 33920

www.alvabaptist.com 239-728-2034

Grace Church, Ft Myers Shores

14036 Matanzas Drive, Ft Myers, Florida 33905

www.egracechurch.com 239-694-2797

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

14531 Old Olga Road,

Fort Myers, FL 33905

www.blcefml.org 239-694-3878

Olga Baptist Church

2364 South Olga Drive

Fort Myers, FL 33905

www.olgabaptist.org 239-694-2012

olgabapch1@embarqmail.com

Crossroads Baptist

10721 Palm Beach Blvd, Fort Myers, FL 33905

(239) 693-2777

Fort Myers Shores Seventh Day Adventist

14830 Palm Beach Blvd, Fort Myers FL

(239) 693-0341

Olga-Fort Myers Shores Methodist

14036 Matanzas Dr, Fort Myers, FL 33905

(239) 694-2797

Olga Baptist

2364 S Olga Dr, Fort Myers, FL 33905

(239) 694-2012

olgabaptistchurch@gmail.com

Rosa De Saron Assemblies of God

13235 Palm Beach Blvd, Fort Myers FL

(239) 694-8777

Victory Christian Center Assemblies of God

11431 Palm Beach Blvd, Fort Myers, FL 33905

(239) 694-5131

Cielo's Abierto's Ministries

10721 Palm Beach Blvd, Fort Myers, FL 33905

(239) 297-6472



12 Step Programs along the Caloosahatchee

Because Alcoholics Anonymous was exclusive to people who struggled with alcohol addiction, a vast array of other programs were formed to aid and support those in recovery from other addictive disorders. These include the following groups:

Any type of group you do not find listed below may be sought at this website:
<https://www.addicted.org/directory/category/lee-county-3.html>

Before going to the meeting, confirm time and place by phone

ALVA:

Alva Community Center, 21471 N River Rd, Alva, FL 33920

-AA Way, 8pm Wednesdays, Big Book, OPEN

St. Matthews House, Cypress Creek & North River (rte 78) Roads, Alva

Jill's Place (for women) AND Justin's Place (for men), 239-687-7633 or intake@stmatthewshouse.org.

<https://stmatthewshouse.org/whatwedo/justinsplace/jills-place-retreat-center>

FORT MYERS SHORES:

St. Vincent De Paul RC, 13031 Palm Beach Blvd, Fort Myers: Fort Myers Shores Group OStAH – Tuesday, 8:00 pm

Calvary Assembly of God, 11431 Palm Beach Blvd, Fort Myers:

-Night Owls OD – Saturday, 10:05 pm

LEHIGH ACRES:

-AA SUNRISE GROUP - MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS, FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS 7AM

705 Leeland Heights Blvd E, Lehigh Acres

(239) 275-5111

-AA MONDAY AT A TIME - MONDAY 6:30PM

5513 8th St W, Lehigh Acres

(239) 275-5111

-AA CHAIR'S CHOICE - TUESDAY 6:30PM

5513 8th St W, Lehigh Acres

(239) 275-5111

-AA SPIRITUAL SEARCH GROUP - TUESDAY 8PM

705 Leeland Heights Blvd E, Lehigh Acres

(239) 275-5111

-AA THIRSTY THURSDAYS - THURSDAY 6:30PM

5513 8th St W, Lehigh Acres

(239) 275-5111

-AA HERE AND NOW- SUNDAY 6:30PM

5513 8th St W, Lehigh Acres, 33971,

(239) 275-5111

**-NA HOPE WITHOUT DOPE - THURSDAY & SATURDAY
6:30PM**

705 Leland Heights Blvd. E., Lehigh Acres,
(866) 819-5346

-AA LEHIGH SUNDAY NIGHT - SUNDAY 8PM

705 Leeland Heights Blvd E, Lehigh Acres
(239) 275-5111

**-AA HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE - FRIDAY
6:30PM**

5513 8th St W, Lehigh Acres
(239) 275-5111

-AL ANON MOVING FORWARD AFG - MONDAY 10AM

705 Leeland Heights Blvd E, Lehigh Acres
(888) 425-2666

-AA FIRST THINGS FIRST - MON-SUN 7AM

5513 8th St W, Lehigh Acres
(239) 275-5111

-AA NOONERS - MON-SUN 12PM

705 Leeland Heights Blvd E, Lehigh Acres
(239) 275-5111

LABELLE:

**Good Shepherd Church, (239) 275-5111, 1098
Collingswood Pkwy, Labelle**

-AA-PORT LABELLE GROUP – ODH- SUNDAY 7PM

-MAKING THE EFFORT -OLbHD- MONDAY 7:00 PM

-AS BILL SEES IT- OD- SATURDAY 9:00AM

-WED BIG BOOK GROUP- OBBH- WEDNESDAY NOON

-OPEN DISCUSSION -ODH- FRIDAY 7:00PM

First Christian Church, Rte 29 & Ford Ave, LaBelle

-LABELLE GROUP-ODAH- THURSDAY 7:00PM

-STEP GROUP-Cst- TUESDAY 7:00PM

-AI Anon- AFG - THURSDAY 7PM

138 Ford Ave, Labelle
(888) 425-2666

-AA-THURSDAY 7PM

138 Ford Ave, Labelle
(239) 275-5111

-AA-MEETING AT THE INN - WEDNESDAY 7:15PM

Port LaBelle Inn, 1568 Oxbow Dr, Labelle
(239) 275-5111

NOT TODAY - MONDAY 6:00PM

133 N Bridge St, Labelle
(866) 819-5346

Other 12 step or non-12 step recovery group

**in the Alva area
(From Hendry
County Line to
Fort Myers
Shores, north
and south of our
river) please let
me know its
name, location
and the phone
number for
information to
list here.**

TY

Kendewalt1@gmail.com

Recovery Meetings at Grace Shores		
Meeting Time	Meeting Type	Location
Monday 12 Noon	AA Open	The Lighthouse
Monday 7 PM	Al-Anon	Room 1
Monday 7 PM	Men's AA	The Lighthouse
Monday 7PM	CA	The Cafe'
Tuesday 12 Noon	AA Open	The Lighthouse
Tuesday 7 PM	Men's SAA	Room 2
Tuesday 7 PM	Women's AA	The Community Center
Wednesday 12 Noon	AA Open	The Lighthouse
Thursday 12 Noon	AA Open	The Lighthouse
Thursday 7 PM	AA Open	The Community Center
Thursday 8PM	AA Open	Room 1
Friday 12:00 Noon	Co-ed	The Lighthouse
Friday 12:00 Noon	Al-Anon	Room 1
Friday 7PM	AA Big Book	The Lighthouse
Saturday 7PM	AA Speaker	The Community Center
Sunday 7PM	AA Big Book	The Lighthouse

Celebrate Recovery @ all 3 campuses

Dinner at 6:00, followed by large group then small group meetings.		
Monday 6:45-9pm	Central Campus 2415 Grand Ave., Fort Myers, FL 33901	
Wednesday 6:30-8:30	Ft. Myers Shores Campus 14036 Matanzas Dr., Ft. Myers, FL 33905	
Friday 6:45-9PM	Cape Coral Campus 13 SE 21st PL., Cape Coral, FL 33990	

The Lighthouse is located at 14006 Matanzas Dr. on the west end of campus. All other meeting spaces are on the main campus at 14036 Matanzas Dr. If you have questions or would like someone from our Recovery Team to call you, please call 239-694-2797

WEBSITE: www.OnTheRiver.org

Issue 85, February 2026, Circulation: Over 1,500 subscribers, 12,000 social media readers



Caregiver Respite and Support 12:15-2pm every 4th Friday

The challenges of being a caregiver of a loved one can be demanding. We invite you to an afternoon of support and care for you. We will serve you and your loved one (if they are able to attend) a delicious, free lunch. We have activities to engage your loved one while you restore with some relaxation and fun. This is monthly gathering is free and open to any caregiver.

You can register by emailing Paula pwinters@egracechurch.com or by calling the church at 239-694-2797 and leave a message. We will return your call.

WEBSITE: www.OnTheRiver.org

Issue 85, February 2026, Circulation: Over 1,500 subscribers, 12,000 social media readers

I have sponsored and recommended these well led and overseen groups for over 30 years in ministry -Ken DeWalt

<https://www.griefshare.org/>

<https://www.divorcecare.org/>

A banner for "HOPE & Healing" divorce recovery support groups. The background shows four people (three women and one man) sitting in a circle, engaged in conversation. Overlaid on the image is a large white play button icon. Below the play button is a green box with the text "Find a DivorceCare support group" and two buttons: "In-Person" and "Online". At the bottom of the banner is a dark blue section with a quote: "It was the best thing I did for my kids and myself." attributed to Melissa.



Important Phone Numbers & Websites

Font Size: [Share & Bookmark](#) [\[+\] Feedback](#) [Print](#)

AGENCY	NORMAL BUSINESS	EMERGENCY
American Red Cross (Local Chapter)	239-278-3401	239-278-3401
Arson Alert Hotline	800-342-5869	800-342-5869
Blood Donor Centers	888-9-DONATE	
- Lee Memorial Blood Center	239-343-2333	
- Florida's Blood Centers	239-574-3170	
Cape Coral Emergency Management	239-573-3022	911
Cape Coral Police Department (non-emergency)	239-574-3223	911
Dept. of Financial Services (Insurance)	239-461-4001	800-22-STORM
Federal Emergency Management Agency	800-621-3362	800-462-7585
Florida Division of Emergency Management	850-413-9969	
Fort Myers Police Department	239-321-7700	911
Lee County Animal Services	239-533-7387	239-533-7387
Lee County Emergency Information Hotline / United Way 211	239-433-2000	211
Lee County Emergency Management	239-533-0622	239-533-0622
Lee County Government	239-533-2111	
Lee County Health Department	239-332-9501	239-332-9501
Lee County Public Safety & EMS	239-533-3911	911
Lee County Sheriff's Office	239-477-1000	911
Mobile or Manufactured Home Residents	850-617-3004	
National Weather Service/Tampa Bay	813-645-2323	
Poison Information	800-222-1222	800-222-1222
Salvation Army, The	239-278-1551	239-278-1551
Sanibel Police Department	239-472-3111	911
Traffic Conditions in Florida (Current)	511	511
United Way of Lee, Hendry, Glades & Okeechobee Counties	239-433-2000	211

AGENCY	WEB ADDRESS
Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)	www.ready.gov/cert
Department of Financial Services (Insurance)	www.myfloridacfo.com
Department of Homeland Security	www.dhs.gov/
Florida Lightning Safety	www.weather.gov/safety/lightning
Mobile or Manufactured Home Residents	www.flhsmv.gov/mobilehome
American Sign Language Preparedness Videos	www.lee.gov.com/publicsafety/emergencymanagement/plan
StormReady	www.weather.gov/stormready/



You can donate to a number of reputable charities that help Ukraine, including these reported by Google as reputable charities

Ukrainian Red Cross Society, A long-standing and trusted charity that provides humanitarian aid and emergency response

Come Back Alive Foundation, Provides technology, training, and accouterments to the Armed Forces of Ukraine

Razom for Ukraine, Provides humanitarian relief and recovery, evacuates vulnerable populations, and advocates for Ukraine

United Help Ukraine, A charity that has been awarded 4 stars on Charity Navigator and Gold Transparency on Candid

Hope for Ukraine, A 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization

Other organizations that help Ukraine

World Central Kitchen Sunflowers for Peace

Caritas Ukraine Voices of Children

Vostok SOS

Before you donate funds to ANY relief organization, Protect Yourself

Give to established charities or groups whose work you know and trust.

Be aware of organizations with copycat names or names similar to reputable organizations.

Be wary of new organizations that claim to aid victims of recent high-profile disasters.

Do your research. Use the Federal Trade Commission's resources to examine the track record of a charity.

Give using a check or credit card. If a charity or organization asks you to donate through cash, gift card, virtual currency, or wire transfer, it's probably a scam. Learn more about this trick from the FTC.

Practice good cyber hygiene:

Don't click links or open email attachments from someone you don't know.

Manually type out links instead of clicking on them.

Don't provide any personal information in response to an email, robocall, or robotext.

Check the website's address—most legitimate charity organization websites use .org, not .com.

After a natural disaster or other emergency, carefully vet any contractors before hiring them to work on your home or business.

ON THE RIVER Alva Community Newsletter – Advertising Rates as of March 21, 2025

The FREE monthly online OTR E-Newsletter is circulated to 12,000+ readers including 1,500 individual subscribers. We encourage all to share it as well.

Ads run full across the 9x11" OTR page, then down the fraction of the page you choose.

Advertising rates per each month :

¼ Page... one issue: \$40.00, six issues: \$30.00each, twelve issues: \$25.00each

½ Page... one issue: \$60.00, six issues: \$50.00each, twelve issues: \$40.00each

Full Page... one issue: \$100.00, six issues: \$90.00each, twelve issues: \$70.00each

Upon request we can format ads for you with WORD.doc copy and j.peg photos or logos. We can also scan any copy and/or photos you provide to create a single j.peg of your ad.

You will receive a screenshot proof of the ad for your approval as soon as we have it formatted before its issue is published. Lack of response to the proof will be considered acceptance.

WEBSITE: www.OnTheRiver.org

Issue 85, February 2026, Circulation: Over 1,500 subscribers, 12,000 social media readers

Full payment for all issues contracted for is to be made by the 15th of the month preceding the first month in which the ad is to appear, which is also the date the ad copy is to be received. Payments are to be by check made out to Ramona DeWalt, noted: OTR.

CONTACT: Ken DeWalt, publisher, with any questions. kendewalt@ontheriver.org

**Special thanks to all whose advertising and donations
support the mission of ON THE RIVER.**

