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News, Events, Community Services PLUS from I-75 to LaBelle

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# On The RIVER

Connecting ALVA Florida

NEIGHBORS and NEIGHBORHOODS

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Photo by Jeanine Cook

## FEATURED IN THIS MONTH'S OTR:



- LOCAL Alva area development: Babcock Ranch moves into more of Lee County
- LOCAL history: What happened to Alva FIRST Baptist Church?
- LOCAL Community services: Alva Fire Company looking for volunteers
- LOCAL club and organization: DAR taking donations for WREATHS for Christmas 2024
- LOCAL recipe: Florida's BEST strawberry cobbler
- LOCAL Sports: New Sponsor for Ross Chastain

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## ALVA INC, At the Alva Community Center.

ZOOM access:

<https://zoom.us/join>

Meeting ID: 852-1643-8980

Passcode: 302401



[Info@AlvaFl.org](mailto:Info@AlvaFl.org) WEBSITE [www.ALVAFL.org](http://www.ALVAFL.org)

**NEXT MEETING: Every Second Tuesday, 7pm, Alva Community Center**



## Alva is Beautiful and Bucolic and it's being eyed by Developers

(TY WGCU/NPR | By Eileen Kelley)

*Originally published January 11 before the Lee County Board of County Commissioners took up the matter when it met January 17.*

Growth in Lee County is nothing short of astonishing as it rapidly approaches one-million people. But tucked away from most of the hubbub of the city and suburban sprawl is one of the last vestiges of old agricultural Florida. And like so many relics that have gone away, this too could also be a thing of the past.

“That’s Mr. Allen Hendry and his wife. They are the Hendry’s. They’ve been here forever,” said Amanda Cochran. “That’s Mr. Allen Hendry and his wife. They are the Hendry’s. They’ve been here forever,” said Amanda Cochran.

Cochran is pointing out a house with a familiar family name, just like the Hendry’s, Amanda Cochran and her husband Darius’ families have been around Southwest Florida for generations. WGCU spent the day touring the North Olga Alva area and northeastern Lee County with them.

“They’ve been here for a long, long time,” Amanda Cochran says as she continues with the tour on a four-wheel gator. “His name is Glen and his wife Ellen.”

We drive on a partially paved, one-lane road called Taylor Road. It’s considered one of the oldest roads in the county in an area considered to be Lee’s first known, platted settlements. One lane roads aren’t a problem around here. At least not yet.



“We’re very southern polite out here he just move over wave and talk for a minute and keep on going,” Amanda Cochran said. Missing from this place are the endless, large planned gated-communities. Here the vegetation is native with gnarled oaks and Florida scrub. It’s a place where creeks and many roads are named after families who settled here generations ago.

Federally endangered or threatened wood storks, tri-colored herons, roseate spoonbills, panthers and bears live among the generations of first families Gates around here are for keeping cows and horses

from roaming the roads. The wide open expanses is some of the last remaining tracts of agricultural land in Lee County. And from time-to-time, the quietness gets blunted When a cow is on the run.



“Oh, oh here we go! Here Darius. Open the Gate. You all stay in the truck,” Amanda Cochran orders.

We have been brought to a stunning river-view home site that Darius Cochran’s father recently purchased. Problem is one of the steers has apparently been lulled away from the pasture in search of apples that local schoolchildren have been feeding him.

As Amanda scampers in search of the steer, Darius mans the gate. Several children come racing down the road chasing it back to pasture. To a layman like myself, it truly seems like an old movie reel is playing out right before my eyes. But a bull, also part of the errant steer’s pack on the Cochran land, isn’t too happy with us journalist interlopers.

“Hah! Hah! Get away. Hah!” my colleague Andrea Melendez and I cry out In time, all settles and crickets can be heard again.

“Cows, not condos,” Amanda says as a playful reminder that this is the way of life that she and a legion of others want to preserve in rural Lee County. But all that is under threat.

The Board of Lee County Commissioners will soon hear a plan that could easily double, even quadruple the number of families in this area along the north side of the Caloosahatchee River. Neal communities has an offer to buy 788 acres of rural land from longtime landowners who have primarily been operating the land as cattle ranch.



The group recently acquired some 350 neighboring acres of undeveloped land. Current codes allow for one home or residential unit per acre. But for the 788 acres, Neal communities would like to put 1,099 different units -- that's a 42% increase of homes.

Out here homes are on septic and well systems. The developers are hoping to convince the county to include the area in its growth plans for public water and sewer services. Cochran is pointing out a house with a familiar family name, just like the Hendry’s, Amanda Cochran and her husband Darius' families have been around Southwest Florida for generations. WGPU spent the day touring the North Olga Alva area and northeastern Lee County with them.

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Residents of Alva and North Olga say they don't mind more houses and are keenly in favor of landowners having the rights to sell their property. What they are against is increasing density. Most homes are on many acres of land. So to increase density above the minimum one unit per acre goes against the very way of life out of here., destroying the last bits of rural Lee County.

An advisory group to the board of county commissioners, the Land Planning Agency failed to give a nod to the Neal proposal.

While that could be good news to the Cochran's, they believe in their hearts that the county will side with the developers and not the residents.

"We're not being selfish. We think it's not fit in a farm cow town of 2,000 people," Darius Cochran said. "Condos are good -- in the city. ... It is just nothing about Alva that fits with that." Darius and Amanda Cochran next take us on a tour of the bucolic Caloosahatchee River near the Franklin Locks. Like our tours on land, it's breathtaking. The stillness of it all is refreshing in fast growing Lee County.

"We're trying to preserve the rural character and honor the history of this area," Amanda Cochran said. "Because once it's gone, it's gone. You can't get it back, you know."



**Some**

**Concerns from**



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## Lee County commissioners approve Alva sewer extension

(TY David Dorsey, Gulfshore Business)



With no public explanation or any debate from the dais of the Old Lee County Courthouse, all five Lee County commissioners voted to amend the comprehensive land-use plan to allow a sewer extension to Alva under the Caloosahatchee River.

About 40 Alva residents spent more than two hours pleading with the commissioners not to approve sewer, which would allow Neal Communities the opportunity to ask for increased density on the 788 acres at a future hearing.

County staff and Neal Communities agreed sewer would be better for the environment because it more effectively could eradicate nitrogen from entering waterways. Alva residents insisted a sewer spill under the river wasn't worth the risk and modern septic tanks are just as effective. More homes would mean more pollution along the Caloosahatchee River, they argued.

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The decision clears the way for a clustered neighborhood of about 2.5 homes per acre (788 homes) on 315 acres adjacent to about 473 acres of conservation land. That density could rise to 3.5 homes per acre (1,099 homes) following a future hearing, according to a development order.

### **Neal Communities pledged to fund the \$10.9 million sewer extension.**

Commissioner Mike Greenwell, who recused himself from voting on the rezoning of his Alva land last year, didn't recuse himself from this vote. He began the meeting by asking the county attorney if he had any reason to recuse himself, and the attorney said he didn't.

Lee County Communications Director Betsy Clayton did not answer questions regarding whether Greenwell's future nearby shopping center would be able to connect to Neal's sewer extension in future years.

The edge of Greenwell's property is about 2,500 feet from the beginning of the Neal sewer line, the property appraiser's map shows.



Retired Judge Keith Cary, whose family has lived on and raised cattle on those lands for four generations, was among those in favor of the sewer extension. The landowners intend to sell the land to Neal Communities following the approval process, Cary said.

Neal already owns 342 acres that has been approved for 440 homes, an average of 1.2 homes per acre. “We came together and looked at options,” Cary said. “We decided not to pursue 788 individual ranchettes, each with its own water well.



“We do not believe that septic or wells are good for the community. Even though our family has deep roots in North Olga, we have all had to face the reality that the character of State Road 31 has already changed.”

Alva resident after Alva resident visited the podium as Neal sat directly behind them. They continually told commissioners the incoming sewer extension forever would change their home from paradise to becoming part of a sprawl they wanted to be protected against.

Alva resident Darius Cochran pointed to all the septic tanks Lee County approved for the Lennar Homes community in Alva called Serengeti, which is even closer to the river than the new planned neighborhood.

“Please don’t fool us and tell us you’re trying to save the environment by bringing 6,000 people to North River Road,” Cochran said. “I ask you guys to decide for the people who actually voted for you guys. Most everybody in here voted for you guys. And we feel like we’ve been stabbed in the back. What you did at Gunnerly Road and Buckingham, we are fearful.”

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Alva resident Grant Fichter, who filed Jan. 16 to run against Greenwell in the November election and announced his candidacy after the meeting, spoke against approving the sewer expansion. .16 to run against Greenwell in the November election and announced his candidacy after the meeting, spoke against approving the sewer expansion.

“I respect the property owners,” Fichter said. “This is not personal to me. I really want you all to prosper and sell your property and do what’s right for your family. That only makes sense. Certainly Mr. Neal bringing this impressive, dream team of planners and engineers to this table is pretty awesome. Pretty unbelievable.

“But I’m here in opposition to this. I wanted to dispose of the narrative that these septic tanks are awful for the river. How can more sewage be better for the environment? I can’t rationalize that.”

Steve Hartsell, an attorney with Pavese Law Firm, which represented Neal, rationalized that in his closing remarks. He said the community will preserve 52 acres of wetlands and will have 60% open space and will protect Owl Creek.

“I appreciated the comment that the one gentleman made about finally getting the horse before the cart,” Hartsell said. “Because we’ve heard that so many times, the cart before the horse. No. This is the horse. This is the infrastructure that is needed within this area.”



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## Grant Fichter, Local Alva Surveyor, rescinds his candidacy for fall County Commission election

(Ken DeWalt, Jan 20, 2024)



On the afternoon of January 17 Grant Fichter, a generations long family landowner in Alva, on the north side of the Caloosahatchee River, announced his candidacy for Lee County Commissioner in the fall 2024 election. His platform would have stood on moral and moderate growth of home and commercial development on what open land is still available in Lee County.

However, on Saturday, January 20<sup>th</sup> Mr. Fichter, at a campaign event set at the historic Alva Library Museum before about 100 supporters and campaign staff, announced he was, after about 48 hours of serious discernment and prayer, removing his name from the ballot.

Instead, he announced that while he and his family had spent many months preparing for typical political opposition, the attacks became much more serious against he and friends not formally associated with his campaign after his January 17 announcement.

In rescinding his bid to run with an impassioned speech, he received full support from his campaign team and local supporters for his decision, and asked that God show another who might have “stronger walls against attack” to pick up the fight.

As one campaigner said, “Now we pick ourselves up and move on with what we have learned.”



North

Olga

## Planning Resident's Group Learns Babcock Ranch has fully arrived in Northeast Lee County

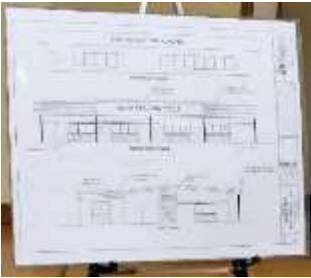
At their quarterly meeting at the Bayshore Fire Company in North Fort Myers (because there is NO venue space in all of North Olga at present for any indoor public meeting) on Thursday evening January 18 several developers presented and annual board elections were held.

At the opening of the meeting President Dr. Dennis Van Roekel shared the way the group has historically voted and approved voters. Dennis said that the bylaws needed to be updated soon, but the concern over who could vote was established that any land owner in the County designated area of North Olga who was a member in good standing of the group (dues paid basically) would be allowed to vote.

At the end of the two hours meeting the election was not needed as there were only as many candidates as openings so they were as stated in the bylaws, appointed to the board. Election by the board then was held by the new board and Dr. Dennis Roekel was re-elected president, Ronnie Hipp elected as secretary, and Mary Povia as Treasurer.

Developer presentations filled the rest of the evenings agenda.

### **New Alva Brewery OR Grocery?**



The opening subject was a presentation of Rock Aboujaourdi's newest project. Rock owns the building where Jack's very successful market is located on Joel Boulevard in Lehigh Acres. He is now partnering with another to develop a local craft brewery in the old 'convenience' store on the south side of Rte 80 at Styles Road in Alva.

If the county cannot allow him the required zoning changes to open the brewery, he will instead open a quality grocery store and butcher shop like Jack's, with the same management team, only a bit smaller.

The development name for the project is "Alva Trading Post" however this may change by the time it opens as a brewery or grocery. If it is a brewery, food will not be served inside but he is planning a couple of food trucks to be there regularly on weekends. The entire project requires only 1.9 acres of land. One of his zoning requests is to turn current AG zoned land at the back of the property into a paved parking lot for 54 cars.

Rock told the residents that there will be 2,700 square feet for retail space and 2,300 square feet for retail whether brewery or grocery. He has been improving the outside of the building and cleaning up the inside since acquiring it earlier this year. The new roof was the first project to stop further deterioration of the interior. The design of the exterior and interior is expected have a clean but rustic feel. He has already cleaned up the appearance of the outside and the safety of the interior as he waits for the county to proceed with permits needed.



Mr. Aboujaourdi took many suggestions for either business, and heard several offer strong desires to offer only the grocery, and no alcohol in the store. Rock listened patiently and respectfully to all comments.

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The Neal Property development entitled Cary-Duke-Povia (and their acquisition of the already approved Owl Creek Development to its west) between the river and Rte 78 was next on the agenda.



Alexis Crespo, representing Neal Co. shared that with the Lee County Commissioner's unanimous approval of public water and sewer at their meeting on January 17 that approval now goes to Tallahassee for state inspection by department of all concerns, and comes back in at least two more county public meetings before the commissioners before final approval for construction may begin. Neal hopes this occurs before the end of 2024.

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Alexis continued as Lee County spokesperson for Babcock Ranch's expansion into Lee County from Charlotte County.

Babcock has made application to Lee County for major changes to their original plan to turn almost all of the eastern side of their property into preserve and managed wetland in perpetuity. To do that they wish to build approximately 1,000 additional homes with

increased density (beyond the original Lee Plan) to the west with all access from Rte 31.

While this area is part of the North Olga area the development of homes and water retention lakes (Babcock Ranch is too large to call these retention ponds), without the new applications addressed, has been started by Pulte Homes.

Long and varied discussion about potential increased flooding on existing homes to the south of rte 78 to the river, additionally supposed from the Greenwell and Neal developments of commercial and residential properties, was heard.

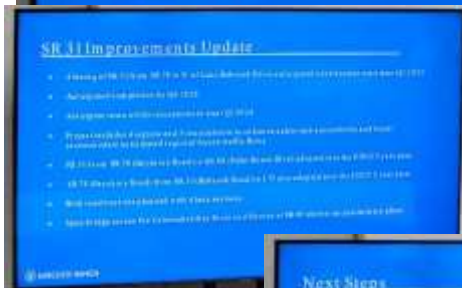
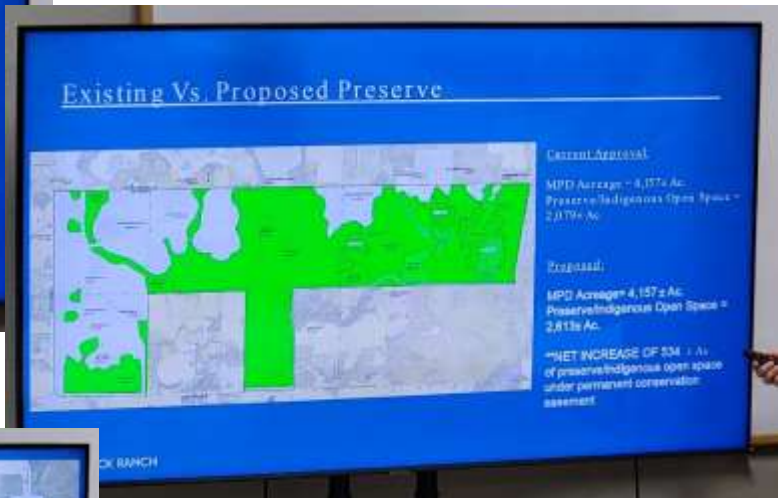
Babcock's own staff present, and their Development Director, John Broderick, who sits on the NOP board as the Babcock (large landowner) representative, shared also that existing Florida law states that a new development must shed less water beyond its boundaries than before construction. Some residents now living along the river stated that parts of their land have flooded since Babcock began building to the Lee-Charlotte County line several years ago, where no flooding occurred in many years previous.

Alexis will bring Babcock engineers to the next meeting of the NOP in three months to explain what she calls an unlikelihood.

Here are a series of slides Alexis shared for discussion in the meeting. The last slide includes a QR code you may photograph to open up Babcock Ranches complete website on development plans for the public.



NOTE: Did we forget to mention Babcock Ranch has been approved to place a hotel in Lee County, up to six stories high with over 200 rooms? Sorry. Very sorry.



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## 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.



### 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](http://www.ManateeAndEcoRiverTours.com)

## FDOT Workshop on LaBelle Bridge and SR 29 changes

(TY Leonard N. (Len) Enriquez)

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) invites you to a second Public Workshop for the SR 29 Improvements from County Road (CR) 80A (Cowboy Way) to north of CR 731 (Whidden Road) in Hendry and Glades Counties.

This re-evaluation will evaluate proposed improvements to address traffic operations, access and mobility along SR 29. Please see the newsletter attached to this email. The second public workshop is being conducted to present changes in design based on stakeholder comments. The workshop will present information about the updated alternatives and provide the opportunity for the public to express their views about the project.

You can participate live online or in-person. The same materials will be displayed at both the online and in-person events.

IN-PERSON OPTION: Wednesday, January 31, 2024 Anytime between 5 -7 p.m. LaBelle Civic Center 1481 Hickpochee Ave., LaBelle, FL 33935

This will include a looping video (no formal presentation) and the project team will be available for discussion.

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The process which includes the meeting described above seems to be in the hands of our city elected leaders. FDOT needs a NEW OFFICIAL OUTRIGHT APPROVAL from the City Commission to take over Main Street. Otherwise, the Dogleg design cannot go through.

The city ALREADY OFFICIALLY SAID "NO" (Unanimously 5 to Zero) and asked for a Bypass Route Feasibility Study back in OCT 2022.

FDOT may reflect on the reality of the situation, and then the way may be opened for what we are asking for...a Bypass Route Feasibility Study. (See some Bypass Route examples in the image below.

Yellow is basically Helms Road (may be initial candidate for Bypass), for reference. The Bypass Route could cross the river on the green segment, or on the aqua segment. The main idea is still to get the heavy Tractor-Trailers and Sand Trucks off Bridge Street and out of Downtown LaBelle.



# Southeast Lee County Wildlife Could Be Sacrificed For Homes, as in Alva/Olga

## PROPOSED KINGSTON DEVELOPMENT STATE 404 PERMIT APPLICATION

### BACKGROUND

In June 2022, the Board of County of Commissioners in Lee County unanimously approved the proposed Kingston development off Corkscrew Road and State Road 82. Due to the project's proposed footprint and impact to wetlands, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is processing a State 404 permit application (DEP File No. 423130-001) for the proposed development. This development encompasses a 6,675-acre project area and will impact approximately 12.87 acres of wetlands.

Due to the dredge (e.g. excavation) and fill (e.g. deposition) component associated with construction, the applicant, CAM7-Sub, LLC/Cameratta Companies, LLC, is required to obtain a State 404 Permit. Pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, a permit is required before dredged or fill material can be discharged into Waters of the United States (WOTUS), which is the case in this project.

Alterations of environmental landscapes can have impacts on local communities. DEP's role is to ensure compliance with the applicable environmental regulations, including ensuring the applicant avoids or minimizes impacts, as necessary, associated with the proposed activities.



### PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed Kingston development is a master-planned, mixed-use community project located south of State Road 82 and east off Corkscrew Road (proposed footprint picture above).

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

CAM7-Sub, LLC/Cameratta Companies, LLC is seeking authorization to impact approximately 12.87 acres of wetlands deemed WOTUS. To offset these impacts, the applicant will purchase 4.57 Mitigation Credits from the Corkscrew Regional Mitigation Bank. Additionally, as part of this project, the applicant will create a conservation area over 3,250 acres and will perform wetland preservation and enhancement, including exotic vegetation removal and supplemental planting.

Wetland impacts include fill areas for roads, utility features and pedestrian trail crossings, residential areas, and graded slopes along the perimeters of development areas and stormwater management lakes.

### PERMITTING TIMELINE



To access all documents related to the proposed Kingston development's State 404 permit application, please visit: 



Tuesday January 16<sup>th</sup>, the final day for public comment to be received on wildlife and environmental protection on this project above, ended.

the Florida Department of Environmental Protection 404 permit process held a public display at the Gunnery Road Lehigh Library. The plan for Kingston Developers to go ahead with their 6,676 acre project south of Lehigh Acres and State Rte 82 requires this permit to be approved.

The Lee County Commissioners have already approved this project. All comments to this permit, pro or con, ended by 12 am, just five hours after the close (7pm) of this one public forum.



## PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed Kingston development is a master-planned, mixed-use community project located south of State Road 82 and east off Corkscrew Road (proposed footprint picture above).

The above closeup of the plan may help you understand the size of this basically new suburban unincorporated city which likely will soon be built south of Lehigh Acres.

With the completion of this plan, and the Neal Property North River Road developments, the Kitson Babcock Ranch extensions into Lee County from Charlotte and the Greenwell plan for large commercial development on Rte 31, the last Lee County rural and non-county managed wildlife and open land will be gone.

### But not without opposition



Today, in pouring down crazy winter torrential rain dozens of a hoped for hundreds of Lee County residents came out to place their comments on the 404 permit statement pages.



Others used the State website until midnight to register their concerns.

It is expected that 22 more panthers, and hundreds or more rare birds, gopher tortoises, etc. will die per year once construction gets under way.

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# Southwest Florida braces for population surge as Lee County nears 1 million residents

## (Especially East Lee and West Hendry Counties)

(TY NBC 2- Zuri Hoffman, Anchor)



With more than 800,000 people now calling Lee County home, experts predict that this number could skyrocket to over 1 million residents by 2030.

If you live or work in Southwest Florida, the landscape of the region has likely transformed before your eyes—new buildings, apartments, and road changes echoing the influx of residents. Lee County, in particular, has experienced remarkable growth, with more than 800,000 people now calling it home.

Experts predict that this number could skyrocket to over 1 million residents by 2030, driven by migration from across the nation and other parts of Florida. Mike Darda, a seasoned realtor with the Darda Real Estate Group, reflects on his 35 years in Lee County; he's seen transformation happening first-hand as the area becomes a year-round destination. "People are moving from Miami, Fort Lauderdale, cashing in on the higher prices of their homes there to get a great value on a home here and also get out of some of that congestion," Darda said.

### **The growth in Lee County is nothing short of astonishing.**

Data from The University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research and the U.S. Census Bureau reveal that the county gained over 200,000 residents in just 13 years. By the end of the next year, projections indicate that the population could surpass 900,000, with the 1 million mark on the horizon for 2030.

Lee County government officials acknowledge the need to prepare for this anticipated growth. Each year, the Lee Board of County Commissioners holds a Strategic Planning Workshop where growth is a central theme. The focus includes making infrastructure and public safety ready for an increasing number of residents.

Collaboratory, a local community foundation dedicated to solving community problems, is also doing its part to help mitigate issues associated with rapid population growth. Tessa Lesage, Collaboratory's Chief Impact Officer, emphasizes the importance of addressing issues like housing, mental health services, and job opportunities for young people. With more Lee County residents reaching retirement age, these factors become even more critical.

"It's really important to keep our eye on these challenges and be thinking not just about the short-term impacts but the long-term results that we want as a community," LeSage said. LeSage notes that housing costs have surged by about 52% over the last three years, while income has only increased by 20%. She hopes everyone can come together to address these issues that only continue to grow with a larger population.

"This is a really big challenge that is going to take all of us working together to solve it," she said.

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# The East Lee County ROAR

THE ROAR

WWW.EASTLEENews.COM  
JANUARY 2024

06

## THE ALVAINIAN

### Sprawl Hurts Us All

By Susan Allen



Photo: Susan Allen  
www.alvastrong.org

Why should anyone lose sleep over what happens in little Alva, Florida, or any other rural area? For many, Florida's planned communities offer the seemingly perfect lifestyle with their protective gates, golf courses and clubhouse. But once outside the cloistered existence, we begin to see the devastating effects of Sprawl.

I was born in Washington, D. C., but grew up in a distant city suburb. I rode horses, climbed trees, built forts and played with neighborhood friends. Evenings were filled with the sounds of whippoorwills and bobwhites calling their mates. Coves of quail frequented my back yard and it was not unusual to see deer grazing in our yard. When we got sick, our pediatrician would make a house call or we were seen in his office without delay. The treatment was usually a prescription of a ghostly green concoction, which was mostly alcohol, but it always worked. No one waited for weeks to see their doctor or was forced to go to urgent care or an ER for minor health issues. Teachers had time for their students and crime was something one only saw on the evening news. Life wasn't perfect, but we all knew we were living the American Dream. Now, the sound of whippoorwills is only a memory, our forts and treehouses have been bulldozed over and replaced with tightly packed subdivisions. With time, our community expanded, neighborhoods became more restrictive, and children could no longer stray far from their own backyards. Hometowns became a thing of the past, replaced with condos, duplexes and houses on tiny lots. Children once played outdoors, interacted with and appreciated nature. Now they sequester themselves in their rooms with their designer sheets and handheld devices, rarely speaking face to face with their fellow humans, let alone their parents. The sense of community is gone with the coves, horses, forests and fields. It may be time to bring it all back or, at the very least, reign in the sprawl.

Florida has suffered a similar fate. Lee County's rural community of Alva faces off with aggressive developers and complacent County Commissioners who are perpetuating the problem of irresponsible over-development. Alva has become a microcosm of the issues that face us all in Lee County and much of the nation. What are now pristine fields, pastures and precious (and increasingly rare) habitats in rural Alva have been slated for a massive development by Neal Communities. The proposed subdivision would nearly triple the existing population of the area. The housing density of one

dwelling unit per acre dictated by the county plan has been promoted by the Board of County Commissioner and large developers to increase the density to 1.39 dwellings per acre to include over 1000 homes on 730 acres consisting of duplexes and houses on 30-40 foot-wide lots. This represents a disregard for the community plan that was so thoughtfully created by those impacted. The property is currently a combination of woods, pasture, wetlands and critical habitat. It is home to protected and endangered wildlife, with recent sightings of panther, caracara, spoonbills and gopher tortoise. Some of these species are considered to be keystone species as they support and are necessary to the existence of other species. While, as a whole, the community of Alva is not opposed to development, it is opposed to the devastating effect of high-density housing and the corresponding population surge that will destroy our rural feel and collapse our infrastructure. The neighboring property (owned by our Lee County Commission Mike Greenwell) has already been approved for 400,000 SF of commercial space to include a big box store and apartments. Such development will compound the existing problems involving the wildlife corridor, availability of timely healthcare, emergency services, traffic, teacher shortages and the affected quality of our rivers and beaches. Developers who live elsewhere damp their houses and retreat to their neighborhoods, leaving the consequences of overdevelopment behind.

On a daily basis, the impact of Sprawl manifests itself as endless hours stuck in traffic. Add seasonal snowbirds and visitors to the mix and paralysis starts to set in like The Hunger Games. Gridlock is a symptom of a serious issue and is directly population-driven. If a patient is bleeding to death, you don't jump in and wash his sheets, you stop the bleeding. The carte blanche approval of proposed large high-density development, compounded by the lack of infrastructure, is the underlying pathology we all have to deal with. It's a disease that needs treatment and the prescription lies with our Lee Board of County Commissioners. The ill effects of worsening traffic aren't simply an inconvenience. Our very health is also at risk.

When was the last time you could see a doctor promptly? An acute illness or injury may have to wait days, weeks or months for treatment. This forces many patients to seek care at an urgent care center, which often refers them back to their primary care physician, thus creating a Catch-22 situation. Worse, patients flood our ERs with non-emergency cases, thus delaying critical services and causing prolonged wait times. Why? It boils down to poor planning! According

to the Florida Medical Association, a report from IHS Market, commissioned by the Florida Safety Net Hospital Alliance and the Florida Hospital Association, projects a shortfall of 17,924 physicians in the Sunshine State by 2035. This analysis is based on projected supply and demand, accounting for Florida's population growth. The greatest shortages in Lee County are in Cape Coral, Lehigh Acres and Fort Myers. Emergency services are struggling to keep up with demand as well due to increasing numbers of patients and an aging population that requires greater levels of care. The Lee County Staff Report states, "Lee County CAN NOT yet sufficiently serve the entirety of the subject property within the "established response time threshold".

If your child is healthy enough to attend and can get to school with an already overstated bus system, there may not be a desk or a teacher waiting for him when he arrives. Lee County is facing a severe shortage of teachers and classrooms. According to Lee County School Board representative Armor Perston, Riverdale High School has no room to add more seats for the expected 2,000-3,000 new students coming into the area thanks to the expansion of Babcock Ranch and the proposed Neal Communities projects near Alva. So despite the lack of student space, teachers, doctors and emergency services, our County Commissioners continue to approve the unchecked growth of Lee County.

Local elections are increasingly important as the tie between local government and developers has become an unholy union. Lee County Commissioners and land developers are stuck together like conjoined twins. Neither makes a move without the other. Our District 5 commissioner, Mike Greenwell, had his own land reamed after taking office. Many believe this to be a conflict of interest and a blatant move to profit from his elected position personally. In the meantime, irresponsible development degrades every aspect of our quality of life. Who are our elected officials beholden to? Is it their constituents, or is it the developers? The recent fight over building heights on Captiva demonstrates the answer: Despite overwhelming local opposition to tall and high-density buildings on Captiva, the public petition with over 13,000 signatures was ignored in favor of the developers.

We have been told development for development's sake is beneficial. They



Photo: "The Tree" by James Kennedy captures the heart of rural Alva

call it "growth," but in truth, unbridled development hurts us all. At some point, we must hit the pause button and make strategic decisions about how we want our communities to look and function. Our responsibility is to elect honest and responsible leaders and hold our state and local officials accountable for poor management. Our commissioners must stop green-lighting developers and the exponential growth masked in their shiny plans and slick pandering. The projects are planned, approved, forwarded through our county pipeline without regard to infrastructure, the effect on the community. Most importantly our officials are tone deaf to the voice of the constituents they have sworn to represent.

So what's the fix? First, learn the reputation, background, and track record of each candidate for county commissioner. Second, vote in your party's primary. Good elections start with good candidates. Ask yourself who will listen to their constituents and live under the same rules as those he/she represents. Just because a candidate has achieved fame in the past, it does mean he will make a good leader. Get involved and attend local government meetings. You may be shocked at what you experience.

Ultimately, we all need to take note of little rural Alva, Florida and come to her aid. Our Lee County Board of Commissioners tentatively plans to meet on January 17th to vote on the transmittal of CPA 2022, which will amend the county plan to bring public water and sewer to over 1000 acres of rural land. Go to leegov.com for up-to-date information. Let this be your Call to Action. It's time for all of us in Lee County to let our County Commissioners know that SPRAWL HURTS US ALL.

#### ABOUT SUSAN ALLEN

Susan Allen is an Alva resident and the Secretary for ALVA STRONG, whose mission is to unite the region to protect the rural character of Alva, Florida. To preserve the past, influence the future, and enjoy Florida's Natural state. [www.alvastrong.org](http://www.alvastrong.org)

is a new to East Lee County publication which is free. Unlike ON THE RIVER which focuses on communities on both sides of the Caloosahatchee from I-75 to LaBelle, the publishers cover the entire east side of the county, which, as development of homes and highways occurs makes us more connected on the east side of I-75 than ever.

This is an article about ALVA which appeared in January 2024 ROAR.

Sign up to receive ROAR by email or read it on their website as you wish.

<https://eastleeneews.com/east-lee-news-paper/>



## **New image, new fair, new name, Lee County preps for 'Southwest Florida Ag Expo' on Feb. 29**

(TY NEWS PRESS- Bill Smith)

The first really big event at the fairgrounds in North Fort Myers since Lee County assumed responsibility for

operations and events has been set for late winter when the Lee County Civic Center Complex hosts the Southwest Florida Ag Expo.

This year's Lee County agricultural exposition comes with a new name, but many events will be typical when the gates open to the 100th county fair next month. Ag Expo is Thursday, Feb. 29, through Sunday, March 10.

Ag Expo represents a re-branded continuation of a century of events at the annual fair, with rides, food, entertainment and celebration of the displays of farm goods and animals.

As the county's agricultural fair, the event has a long focus on events and activities for young people and their 4-H clubs draw a large crowd interested in seeing how the young farmers fared in raising farm animals and growing plants and produce.

In addition to judging animal stock, there are contests, including photography, art, gardening and penmanship, among other creations that will vie for blue, red and white ribbons.

### **Lee County took over fair in October**

Lee County Commissioners started taking some responsibility for the fair and operation of the fairgrounds in early 2023 after a post-Hurricane Ian examination revealed significant damage and wear, some of it long-standing. But buildings and equipment have undergone extensive repair, and county officials say the fair is ready for the crowds that gather for the annual event.



County commissioners took back operations at the fairgrounds after the county and the fair association came to an impasse over a new contract, and the association said it would cancel the fair. The association canceled its plans for the fair and the county officially took it over.

The county's announcement of the dates for the 2024 fair was similar to remarks made by Commission Chair Mike Greenwell in October, when he made it clear that the fair, and everything that it means to Lee County, residents and visitors alike, would continue as a winter tradition.

"Lee County will be running the fair," Greenwell said in October. "The board has always been committed to having a 4-H and Future Farmers of America program as well as a county fair and we will have all of them."

### **Improvements begin, ADA-focused changes**

Lee County has spent nearly \$1 million on repairs and upgrades to the fairgrounds including a study that looked at all of the buildings at 100-acre site.

The study by Weston & Sampson of Reading, Mass., was commissioned in February 2022 and paid \$360,000. Including the payment for the building inspection the county has invested \$965,398 in physical repairs and investment. They include such items as

- replacing chillers in the main fairground building for \$375,750,
- spending \$108,000 for health and safety repairs, and
- projects such as making bathrooms compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, at a cost of \$24,375.



**Lee County aims for inclusive participation at fair**

Special events aimed at community groups will be part of the 2024 fair. One example is the county's decision to hold a Sensory Friendly Day at the fair on from 4-6 p.m., Friday, March 1.

Lee County's Miriam Dotson said the Sensory Friendly event is to give families who may have members and friends who otherwise may not be able to enjoy a day at the fair with the opportunity to participate.

"A lot of families have difficulty attending that they just want to attend without the powerful arc lights, or noise from the rides and fair attractions," Dotson said.

"The (standard) lighting may be too harsh for those with a sensory disability, the sounds may be too loud — whether they have one child, or an adult, or another family member, it is an opportunity to enjoy this year's fair in an atmosphere that takes their reactions to sights and sounds," she said.

The late afternoon time schedule is to reduce the need for bright lights in late afternoon. Other special events will be announced for the 2024 fair.

**How much does the fair cost in 2024?**

Admission prices for this year's fair are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 4-11 years old, and free for children younger than 3.

A single-day \$25 "Mega Pass" has been created for advance buyers of admission tickets. The ticket gives the buyer unlimited "mechanical" rides and gate admission on any date. The Mega Pass, not yet on sale, must be purchased before the gates open February 29.



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Annual Meeting  
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March 24th, 2024  
2-5pm

Westin Hotel & Resort, Cape Coral, FL

Featuring



Calusa Waterkeeper  
Capt. Cody Pierce



Guest Speaker  
Capt. Benny Blanco

An Afternoon of Insight, Inspiration & Community  
Great Food & Drinks – Exclusive Auction Items  
Celebrate Accomplishments & Support Our Shared Goals

## FIB results for Calusa Waterkeeper testing 1/20/2024.

Please visit our website <http://www.calusawaterkeeper.org/> for more information, including a interactive map with historical data.



**Notice the report for water from Alva to Fort Myers**

ON THE RIVER – Connecting ALVA Florida NEIGHBORS and NEIGHBORHOODS monthly, online, FREE



## 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!**

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**2023 - 24 SHOW DATES: Oct 15; Nov 12; Dec 10; Jan 14; Feb 18; March 17; April 14**

<p><b>Classes</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 In-Hand Showmanship ←</li> <li>2 Lead Line Class ← <i>IN Practice Arenal</i></li> <li>3 In-Hand Trail/Obstacle ←</li> <li>4 Trail/Obstacle ← <i>Can be lead line</i></li> <li>5 Timed Fun Class</li> <li>6 Gaited Pleasure —W/T</li> <li>7 Gaited Pleasure —W/T/C</li> <li>8 Slow Western Pleasure —WT</li> <li>9 Slow Western Pleasure —W/T/C</li> <li>10 Ranch Rail Pleasure —WT</li> <li>11 Ranch Rail Pleasure —W/T/C</li> <li>12 "Timed" Fun Classes...To be determined</li> <li>13 Novice Box Reining/Boxing — Fun pattern work — WT</li> <li>14 Novice Box Reining/Boxing — Fun pattern work — W/T/C</li> <li>15 WE Ranch Riding class — pattern—WT</li> <li>16 WE Ranch Riding class —pattern—W/T/C</li> <li>17 Basic Western Freestyle Dressage —WT</li> <li>18 English Rail Pleasure —WT</li> <li>19 English Rail Pleasure —W/T/C</li> <li>20 English Equitation —on the rail —WT</li> <li>21 English Equitation —on the rail —W/T/C</li> <li>22 "Timed" Fun Class</li> <li>23 Command Class —WT</li> <li>24 Command Class —W/T/C</li> <li>25 Fun Class — On Back</li> </ol>	<p><b>TENTATIVE SHOW BILL</b></p> <p>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</p> <p>☆☆ Riders Must Choose W/T/C or W/T. Can not do both.</p> <p><b>"Show Clinics" are offered on Saturday, a week before the show! Members Only!</b></p> <p>☆☆ <b>NEGATIVE COGGINS REQUIRED</b></p> <p><b>PLEASE. NO STALLIONS!</b></p> <p>☆☆ Riders Receive Placement Awards ☆☆</p> <p>Members also receive points from each show for year end prizes at the club party in late spring.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <b>FACEBOOK PAGE</b> Bit by Bit Saddle Club</p> <p>Contact <b>Adele Smith</b> for more information 305-799-4651 or E-mail <a href="mailto:bitbybit338@gmail.com">bitbybit338@gmail.com</a></p>
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FREESTYLE PERFORMANCES (In Hand & On Back) — These classes are non-judged & will run during lunch break.

**LOCATION: 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!



## ARBOR DAY IS NOT IN SPRING...in Florida

### Why is Florida Arbor Day in January?



Arbor Day was established to celebrate the beauty of trees and their importance to our environment. In Florida, Arbor Day began in 1886, making it one of the first Arbor Day holidays in the nation. Officially, Florida Arbor Day is the third Friday in January, as our cooler months are the best times to plant trees.

And the Alva Garden Club partnered up with the Alva School Ag Class and FFA (Future Farmers of America) to plant a 6' tall Live Oak at the school playground on Friday January 19<sup>th</sup>.

SHELTER (863) 675-0997 CLINIC (863) 675-7387  
<https://caloosahumanesociety.org/>

[info@caloosahumanesociety.org](mailto:info@caloosahumanesociety.org)

## Caloosa 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.



### South Florida Wildlands Association

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

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



## ALVA HAS A **BUY NOTHING** FACEBOOK PAGE!

This page is all about getting rid of stuff you don't need/want & helping others in the community!

You can press and hold the QR Code & It will take you straight to our page!

Feel free to join & share with your neighbor. Here's the link also:

<https://m.facebook.com/groups/607856844854663/?ref=share&mibextid=OjTNLd>







## Don't let 2024 accidentally be your last year

Lee County, as a rule, experiences an approximate population increase of 22 percent during season. This equates to a significant increase in the number of vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians on our streets and roadways.

Some of the drivers here during the winter season are unfamiliar with our roadways and with recently-updated traffic patterns.



These variables require that drivers and pedestrians remain focused while out and about.

The Lee County Sheriff's Office, in an effort to reduce traffic-related incidents, remind drivers to obey speed limits, comply with traffic signals and to maintain distance between vehicles.

A significant percentage of vehicular collisions occur as a result of tailgating and failure to maintain an adequate distance between ourselves and the car or truck ahead of us.

### **Some thoughts:**

- Ensure that you are maintaining a full three-second distance between yourself and the vehicle in front of you. Additionally, wet roadways require additional stopping distance, especially at highway speeds.
- Should you be operating a heavily-weighted vehicle or towing a trailer/camper, recognize that significantly more time is required to bring your vehicle to a complete stop.
- Should the car or truck behind you be following at an unsafe distance, please attempt to change lanes and allow that individual to pass. Avoid speeding up or intentionally slowing in response to the tailgater.
- Avoid partaking in road-rage incidents. This is a difficult time of year for many...there is an element of stress returning to work after the holiday season...the additional traffic adds to our frustration. It is important, however, to do whatever is necessary to avoid aggressive interaction with other drivers.

## Killing a python: 3 SWFL locations where permit, hunting license waived

(TY News-Press, Mark H. Bickel)



If the Burmese python isn't the most wanted invasive species in Florida, it's certainly near the top of the list.

As the massive snake continues to wreak havoc on the ecosystem in the Everglades, there are growing fears pythons will slither in a more northward direction. In a recent study on Burmese pythons in Florida, scientists reveal that the snakes are now as far north as Lake Okeechobee, though most prefer to stay within south Florida, below Palm Beach County.

So, not surprisingly, getting rid of the critters – or humanely killing them – is a priority.

There are only 32 places in the state where you can bag a python humanely without needing a permit or a hunting license – three are right here in Southwest Florida. The locations are in Cape Coral, Estero and Naples. The Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission calls these places Commission-managed land. Of course, the greatest challenge is finding these beasts. They are not easy to find.

### **CREW Wildlife and Environmental Area**

Spans more than 28,000 acres of the 60,000+ acre Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) land acquisition project.

Owned and maintained by the South Florida Water Management District (SWFMD) and co-managed by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

Straddles Lee and Collier counties and provides natural flood protection, water filtration and vital aquifer recharge.

### **Picayune Strand Wildlife Management Area**

Consists of more than 74,000 acres in Collier County two miles east of Naples, south of I-75 and north of U.S. 41.

Was logged for cypress and pines in the 1940s and 1950s.

The area was officially named Picayune Strand State Forest in May of 1995.

The Sabal Palm Hiking Trail, jointly owned by Collier County, consists of two short loops (1.9 and 1.3 miles) and traverses a dwarf cypress forest. The trail can be accessed from Sabal Palm Road.

### **Fred C. Babcock/Cecil M. Webb Wildlife Management Area - Yucca Pens Unit**

Over 50 percent of the land cover at Babcock/Webb is composed of mesic and wet flatwoods dominated by south Florida slash pine.

Includes the largest known population of the rare “Beautiful Pawpaw,” a plant endemic to Charlotte and Lee counties and listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Florida Department of Agriculture.

The landscape of the WMA appears flat, but is actually slightly rolling, with ridges rising 20 to 40 feet above mean sea level.

During the summer rainy season, a majority of the area may be flooded for brief periods.

### How to humanely kill a python

How do you humanely kill most nonnative reptiles, including large constrictors and lizards?

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) recommends a two-step process to prevent suffering and destroy the brain completely for humane killing of reptiles.



Draw an imaginary X between the eyes and jawbones. The brain is located where the red lines intersect.



**STEP 1: Your method should result in the animal losing consciousness immediately. A captive bolt, firearms or pre-charged pneumatic are recommended.**

If used correctly the following tools should result in the immediate loss of consciousness when applied with a shot directed to the brain of the reptile:

Captive bolt (pictured left, standard velocity of 55 meters/sec)

Firearms or pre-charged pneumatic (PCP) air guns (muzzle energy of 300 foot-pounds (FPE) recommended) \*

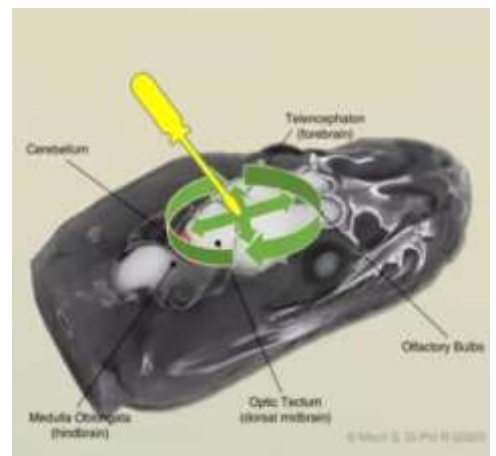
\*The AVMA recommends a firearm with a muzzle energy of 300 FPE for animals weighing up to 400lbs and 1,000 FPE for animals over 400lbs. Other tools may also be adequate to achieve an immediate loss of consciousness and must be followed by pithing. Be sure to follow property-specific and local firearm rules for each area where you intend to kill nonnative reptiles.

**STEP 2: You should then destroy the animal's brain by “pithing” which prevents the animal from regaining consciousness.**

Regardless of the method you choose for Step 1, you should complete the following process for STEP 2:

After rendering the reptile unconscious, ensure the animal's brain is destroyed by “pithing”.

Insert a small rod (a rigid metal tool like a screwdriver, spike or pick) into the cranial cavity using deliberate, multi-directional movement, ensuring destruction of the entire brain.



# BARRON LIBRARY

at the LaBelle Barron Park



## USS Hannah Chapter, Alva, Florida,

<https://usshannahnsdar.org/>

### Support Veterans buried at Alva Cemetery in 2024

Help the *USS Hannah* Chapter, NSDAR, honor our veterans by making your donation to Wreaths Across America now and get more bang for your buck!

From DEC 16 THRU JAN 16, 2024, all purchases are doubled.

1 wreath becomes 2, 10 becomes 20 and so on. Even if you purchase a wreath for a different location, as long as it is done using our code, FL0533P, *USS Hannah* Chapter will get credit for it.

[www.wreathscrossamerica.org/FL0533P](http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/FL0533P)





## A local, Worldwide, Recognition of American Veterans

A service for all American veterans by Alva resident, Richard Erschik

Contact Richard by email at CLICK HERE: [SgtErschik@VeteranVisitor.com](mailto:SgtErschik@VeteranVisitor.com) or by phone/text at 630-642-6500

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### CONTACT:

*Calusa  
Waterkeeper*

*P.O. Box 1165*

*Ft. Myers, FL  
33902*

*info@CalusaWaterkeeper.org*

**239-899-1440**



**Winter 2024 Session Schedule**

**Saturday, January 6, 2024 | 9:30am**  
Fort Myers Regional Library  
South Building, Meeting Room A  
1651 Lee Street  
Fort Myers, FL 33901

**Saturday, February 3, 2024 | 9:30am**  
Location TBD

**Saturday, March 2, 2024 | 9:30am**  
Location TBD

### CWK Ranger Academy - Winter 2024 Session



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<sup>†</sup> Humana Inc. First Quarter 2022 Earnings Release, April 27, 2022. Humana is a Medicare Advantage HMO, PPO and PFFS organization with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in any Humana plan depends on contract renewal. **At Humana, it is important you are treated fairly.** Humana Inc. and its subsidiaries comply with applicable federal civil rights laws and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, ancestry, ethnicity, marital status, religion or language. **English:** ATTENTION: If you do not speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call **877-320-1235 (TTY: 711)**. **Español (Spanish):** ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al **877-320-1235 (TTY: 711)**. **繁體中文 (Chinese):** 注意: 如果您使用繁體中文, 您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 **877-320-1235 (聽障專線: 711)**。

## Fatherhood Mentors & Volunteers of Lee County, Florida

Sean Ryan, Fatherhood Mentors & Volunteers Administrator, [nearbyclinic@hotmail.com](mailto:nearbyclinic@hotmail.com)

Joshua Krakow, Active Dads Administrator

B 7065, Responsible Fatherhood Initiative (Media News Release)

During a Florida Legislative hearing, September 25, 2023, the Department of Children & Families was criticized by Patt Maney, Vice Chairman of the Subcommittee on Children, Families & Seniors, for mishandling of the House Bill 7065 provisions, intentions and spirit for awarding grants. HB 7065 is the Responsible Fatherhood Initiative.



Single Dads Outreach, a local 501c3, nonprofit Florida corporation alerted the legislative subcommittee that DCF Tallahassee's awards went primarily to multiple award winners, to federally funded organizations and to national nonprofit powerhouses not located in Florida. HB 7065's provisions clearly state funds were intended to encourage grassroots, community-based organizations, like Single Dads Outreach. In addition, many areas of Florida were overlooked or passed over, including SWFL.

Vice Chairman Patt Maney, Representative for the Florida Panhandle, another area passed over by DCF in Tallahassee, ordered DCF to repeat the grant application process promptly to address this short-coming. On December 13 DCF in Tallahassee announced that grant applications for The Responsible Fatherhood Initiative will be accepted.

Single Dads Outreach has, once again, prepared a grant application to provide community, social, educational and counseling services to fathers with sole or joint custody of children and single fathers seeking family reunification including those previously incarcerated.

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](http://www.SingleDadsOutReach.org) or your local United Way in Lee County to learn about these volunteer opportunities.



## **FORT MYERS EAST ROTARY CLUB**

### **NEW LOCATION!**



Fort Myers East Rotary Club is moving to River Hall Country Club, 3500 River Hall Parkway in Alva on Wednesday, February 7, 7:30 AM for our breakfast meeting.

We are excited to make this our new home for our weekly meetings.

For more information about this active Rotary Club, call Ellen Erickson at 239-218-4789.



**The Alva Library  
Museum**  
**21420 Pearl St, Alva, FL  
33920**



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

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**

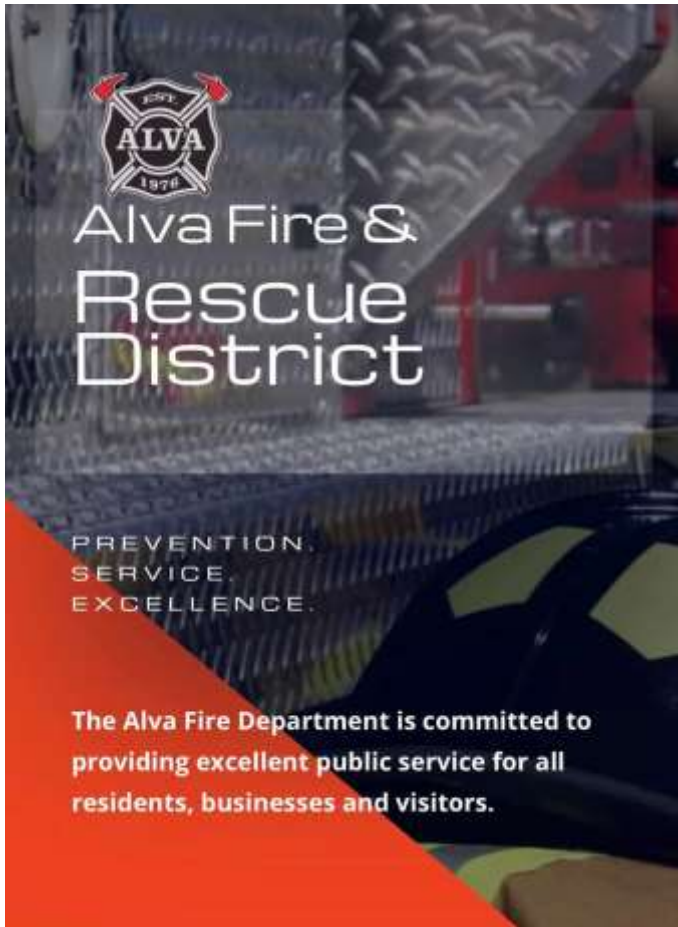
See a virtual video tour of the Museum at: <http://alvaflmuseum.com> (click on Virtual Tour)

Grant Fichter is overseeing the museum for the board.

Come on out and check out the Alva Museum this Saturday between 10-2, cool off in the AC and check out some of those long-lost treasures. Also, if you have some Alva area history to share bring it by and let us look at it.

**ON THE RIVER – Connecting ALVA Florida NEIGHBORS and NEIGHBORHOODS monthly, online, FREE**





Styles Road, Alva, Florida 33920, (239) 728-2223



**Alva's own  
Ross Chastain  
And Trackhouse Racing now rolls  
for BUSCH!**

## The 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!**

### The January meeting featured a presentation from ECOVISION

**About EDIBLE plant landscaping for your yard.**



**And this month's door prize  
Tommy the outdoor Light up Turtle**



**Berne Davis Botanical Gardens**  
**Looking for a day trip to Downtown Fort Myers?**

No Entrance Fee Open Tues & Thurs only 10 AM to 1 PM  
2166 Virginia Ave, Fort Myers  
Across the street from Edison Fort Winter Estates  
Park in the Larchmont Ave lot

Stroll, take photos, or sit and relax in the botanical gardens with bromeliads, hibiscus, rare and tropical fruit, roses, herbs, native plants, orchids, and a bonsai display.

Tours with a Master Gardener at 10 AM and 11 AM, Tues & Thurs.

Tues Feb 13, 10 to 4 Strolling Flower Show, Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center  
Sat Mar 2, 8 AM Plant & Yard Sale at FMLCGC, The Poinciana Garden Club  
Sat Mar 9, 9 to 3 PM March in the Park Garden Club of Cape Coral, Jaycee Park, end of Beach Pkwy, Cape Coral  
Sat Mar 9, 9 to 1 Annual Plant & Strawberry Shortcake Festival Alva Garden Club at Alva United Methodist Church, 21440 Pearl St. Alva.

Looking for a garden club or plant society near you?  
Contact the Fort Myers-Lee County Garden Council (239) 332-4942 (FMLCGC)  
Check out their website directory for garden clubs and plant societies.  
Web site: <http://www.fmlcgardencouncil.com/council-directory/>  
FB: Fort Myers-Lee County Garden Council, Inc. | Facebook

Member of National Garden Clubs Inc.,  
Florida Federation of Garden Clubs & American Public Gardens Assoc.

## Youths and Adults **EXPERIENCE ARCHERY**



**Lee County Archers** welcomes youngsters, adults, individuals, and families, to experience and enjoy this exciting and emerging sport. An affordable individual or family membership fee provides full range access 24/7. Non-members are also welcome on Thursdays and Saturdays, from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, for an introduction to the range and/or the basics of archery.

Join us at **Lee County Archers**, where skilled instructors and top-notch facilities await the adventurous. Become a part of our welcoming community.

Visit our website [www.LeeCountyArchers.com](http://www.LeeCountyArchers.com) for more information! Or...

scan the QR Code below.



# SCORE Southwest Florida

**2201 Second Street, Suite 500, Fort Myers, FL 33901**

**(239) 533-3102, [ch.admin0219@scorevolunteer.org](mailto: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 SBA.

**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](mailto: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*



## JOB-LINK

Florida Job Link connects talent



and opportunity, enabling on-the-spot HIRING!

UPCOMING EVENTS BELOW! WE KEEP FLORIDA WORKING! The Best and Brightest Candidates connect with Top Florida Employers face-to-face via our Hiring Events in cities throughout Florida! Florida Job Link is voted #1 Job Fair experience in the state of Florida by attendees!

<https://www.indeed.com/q-Goodwill-I-Lee-County,-FL-jobs.html>



## Charleston Park Neighborhood Association

2541 Charleston Park Drive, Alva, FL 33920. 239-728-8895

[Charlestonpark1926@gmail.com](mailto: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.



## 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>

ON THE RIVER – Connecting ALVA Florida NEIGHBORS and NEIGHBORHOODS monthly, online, FREE

[www.RichAndLaurieInSouthFlorida.com](http://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>

FGCU Nursing Students are proud to offer...

## COMMUNITY HEALTH SCREENINGS

- Every Wednesday until April 24th (excluding 3/6, 3/27, and 4/3)
- 10:00 am- 12:00 pm
- Located at Charleston Park Community Center



**Our Services :**

- ✓ Free Blood Pressure Screenings
- ✓ Health Education
- ✓ Community Resource Information

**Health is wealth**

**For More Information:**  
Contact Tina Ellis at (239)-994-3750 or email [tellis@fgcu.edu](mailto:tellis@fgcu.edu)

The Firehouse Community Theatre, Inc.

241 N Bridge St, Labelle, FL 33935 (863) 675-3066



## Fort Myers CAMERA CLUB



Photographers at all levels of ability throughout Lee County are invited to the regular bi-monthly meetings of the Fort Myers Camera Club. Meetings are held the 1st and 3rd Wednesday each month (from November 1 to April 3) from 6:30 to 8:30 pm.

Meetings are held at the All Faiths Church, 2736 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers. Annual dues for membership are \$30. Novices are welcome and mentoring is available. Various speakers at the meetings cover topics such as critiquing, competition, and instruction.

See [ftmyerscc.com](http://ftmyerscc.com) website or email [carolheff23@gmail.com](mailto:carolheff23@gmail.com) for additional information about the Camera Club.

Paid AD

**PATTY WALKER**  
REALTOR<sup>®</sup>  
239-340-3904

Cell  
239-340-3904

Office  
239-693-1959

Email  
[PattyWalkerREMAX@gmail.com](mailto:PattyWalkerREMAX@gmail.com)

Web  
[GulfCoastLivingPatty.com](http://GulfCoastLivingPatty.com)

Address  
12928 Palm Beach Blvd., Ste A  
Fort Myers, FL 33905

  Each Office Independently Owned & Operated

## *A bit of ALVA History*

### The ALVA Baptist Church

Not today's congregation, One of long ago.

I have no pictures, and no more data than this note below.

However, if YOU have anything referring to this church that I may take photos of please contact me at [kendewalt@ontheriver.org](mailto:kendewalt@ontheriver.org) and I will share it if possible, with your permission, in a future ON THE RIVER issue.

Thank you for helping us all keep our WELL RESEARCHED HISTORY remembered.

ALVA BAPTIST CHURCH, 1902-<sup>b</sup>35. Defunct. North side Cahoesahatchee River, Alva, Lee County.

Constituted 1902. Services held in school house until rectangular, white, frame building was erected in 1903. This building was repaired in 1924, and church became defunct in 1935. In 1940 building was razed and material sold to Mr. Ben Walker. Earliest known pastor, Rev. A.T.Hovey, 1903. First settled pastor, Rev. H.C.Peelman, 1904-05. Last pastor, Rev. J.H.Sutley, 1932-33, Punta Gorda, Fla.

CONVENTION CHURCH RECORD, 1928-36, 2 vols. Showing minutes of meetings, membership roll, reports, baptisms, deaths. Custody of clerk, Mr. S.A.Sylvest, Alva, Fla.

LETTER BOOK, 1927-36. 1 vol. Showing members transferred, date, church and pastor. Custody of clerk, Mr. S.A.Sylvest, see supra.





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](mailto: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>



### Six Mile Cypress Slough, Lee County Park

7751 Penzance Boulevard, Fort Myers, FL 33966

A mile of wonder 30 minutes away from Alva.



### Manatee Park

10901 Palm Beach Blvd,  
Fort Myers, FL 33905

**239 690 5030**



### Olga Community Park

2325 S Olga Dr, Fort Myers, FL 33905

(239) 533-7275



## Hickey's Creek Mitigation Park

17980 Palm Beach Blvd, Alva, FL, 33920

-Great for quiet creek kayaking. -Fun for walks and picnics.



### ALVA BOAT RAMP PARK

21580 Pearl St,

Alva, FL 33920



## W.P. Franklin Lock & Dam South Recreation Area

Franklin Lock Rd. , Alva , FL 33920. Contact: (239) 694-2582



WP Franklin South Recreation Area is a day use area located on the Caloosahatchee River adjacent to the WP Franklin Lock and Dam. Visitors can watch boats traversing the 152 mile Okeechobee Waterway

### W.P Franklin Lock & Dam CAMPGROUND

Camp by reservation only

17850 NORTH FRANKLIN LOCK ROAD, ALVA, FL 33920, 239-694-8770

<https://www.recreation.gov/camping/campgrounds/233661>



### Alva Community Center PARK

21471 North River Road, Alva, FL 33920 , (239) 728-2882

Shady lawns & baseball field

### Telegraph Creek: Unspoiled kayak trail

out-of-the-way, uncrowded, scenic, quiet and full of wildlife.





## NORTH FORT MYERS Recreation Park

2000 North Recreation Park Way, North Fort Myers, FL 33903,

This park features an 18 hole Disc Golf course , call (239) 297-8916

## Veterans Park Recreation Center

55 Homestead Road South, Lehigh Acres, FL 33936



**BABCOCK RANCH ECO TOURS, Museum and Gator Shack Restaurant** Go to website to reserve tours

<https://babcockranchecotours.com/>



## Alva Angel's



**Giving back to the families of our community**

Are you cleaning out your house and planning to donate the items you no longer want? Please consider donating those items to Alva Angel's. We can pick up small and large items and we will gift those items to people in need or sell the items to raise money for the upcoming holiday season to purchase wish list items.

**Facebook Page:** <https://www.facebook.com/AlvaAngelsOrganization>





Lee County Conservation 20/20 manages over 50 preserves spread throughout Lee County, including within the boundaries of most cities. These preserves combined total nearly 30,000 acres.

Preserves are open daily during daylight hours. Access may be limited at certain locations due to temporary flooding, special restoration projects, or isolated location. Information about each Conservation 20/20 preserve can be accessed from the website:

<http://www.leegov.com/conservation2020/preserves>



*Bob Janes Preserve*



*Daniel's Preserve at Spanish Creek*



*Carter's Lane*



*Buckingham Trails Preserve*



*Olga Shores Preserve*



*Alva Scrub Preserve*



*Telegraph Creek Preserve*



*Oak hammock*



*Frank Mann Preserve*



# CALOOSAHATCHEE REGIONAL PARK

19130 North River Road, Alva, FL 33920

EMAIL: leeparks@leegov.com

Shelter rentals, primitive tent camping,  
Horse and bike trails.

**Campground phone: 239 694 0398**



**EXPLORE**  
*Caloosahatchee Regional Park*

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14TH & 28TH**  
**9:00AM - 10:00AM**

This 0.85 mile guided walk will take you along the Caloosahatchee River where you'll learn about the history of the Calusa Indians and the Alva Community. You'll learn about the different flora and fauna that make up a live oak forest and upland pine habitat.

Space is limited to 15 people. Participants are encouraged to prepare for terrain that includes a boardwalk, gravel path and dirt trail with exposed roots.

Please bring a water bottle for the walk. Dressing for the elements is encouraged (bug spray, sunscreen, old shoes, and hat).

**FREE TOUR**  
WITH PAID PARKING  
PARKING FEES:  
\$1 | HOUR  
\$5 | DAY

📍 18500 North River Road, Alva, FL 33920  
☎ (239) 694-0398  
🌐 www.leeparks.org



**EXPLORE**  
*Cypress Creek*



**COME ON A GUIDED TOUR WITH US!**

**📌 Important Information**  
Experience Level: Beginner  
Cost: \$25 - Includes kayak, paddles, & life vest  
Time: 9 a.m. - noon

**📌 Kayaking Tour Description**  
This slow paced tour will allow you to gain confidence on the water and learn about the history of Alva, Florida. The program will begin on land with a demonstration before launching. Once on the water, kayakers will be guided upriver through farmland and preserves.

Please come prepared with a water bottle, hat, bug spray, sunscreen, water shoes, & SPF shirt (recommended).

SPACE IS LIMITED TO 12 PERSONS.

**Caloosahatchee Regional Park**  
19130 North River Road  
Alva, FL 33920

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8TH, 2024**  
REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS THE TUESDAY PRIOR TO THE TOUR

(239) 694-0398  
www.leeparks.org

## Don't miss out on 2024 Health coverage!



The deadline to apply for, renew, or change your Marketplace plan for 2024 coverage is at 5 am Eastern Time on January 17<sup>th</sup>.

### Not sure where to start?

If you're unfamiliar with HealthCare.gov, reach out to us, and we'll assist you in creating an account and exploring valuable tips about the Marketplace.

### Already have a plan?

Feel free to contact us if you're interested in either retaining your existing plan or exploring new options. We can assist you in logging in and updating any changes in income or household to ensure you receive the correct savings. Additionally, you may discover alternative plans that are better suited to your specific needs.

Don't miss out – make sure you call us today.

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### What happens at Disney stays at Disney



ON THE RIVER – Connecting ALVA Florida NEIGHBORS and NEIGHBORHOODS monthly, online, FREE



## AVOIDING TRAVEL-RELATED SCAMS

Are you planning to travel in the new year? No matter where you're going, how you're getting there, or where you're staying, here are the scams to avoid along the way.

- **You've Won a Vacation:** You get a notification saying you won a free trip. There's just one catch. You must pay a processing fee, a deposit, or a fee for "taxes" to collect the prize. Real prizes are free. And if they ask you to pay by wiring money, sending cash, or paying with gift cards or cryptocurrency to get your prize, it's a scam.
- **Cheap Rental Cars:** Rental cars are in high demand, and scammers are looking to cash in on the fear of missing out. If you suddenly find an available car for cheap, do your research before you provide your personal or payment information. Scammers may have hijacked a legitimate company's ad. And if someone asks you to pre-pay for a rental by wiring money, sending cash, or paying with gift cards or cryptocurrency to get your prize, it's a scam.
- **Fake Rental Listings:** Like with rental cars, scammers hijack real rental listings — changing the contact information and reposting listings on different sites. If you call or email about the rental, you'll reach a scammer, who will probably ask you to pay a deposit or fee by wiring money, sending cash, or paying with gift cards or cryptocurrency. Then, the scammer will disappear, and you will be left with no place to stay. Some scammers also list places that either don't exist or aren't true rentals.

Here's how to avoid scams while planning your trip:

- **Do some research.** If you're looking to rent, search the rental company's name, plus words like "scam," "review," or "complaint." You can also conduct an image search to see if images used in an ad are being used anywhere else on the internet.
- **Spot rental listing scams.** Look for the name of the rental company and search their website — using a link you know is real — to see if the property is listed there, too. If it isn't, the listing is likely a scam.
- **Pay by credit card,** which gives you the best protections. Scammers want you to pay in ways that make it hard to get your money back — like wire transfers through Western Union or MoneyGram, cash, cryptocurrency, or payment apps.

Traveling is stressful enough, so tell the Federal Trade Commission about scams you see: [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/report-fraud).



Southwest Florida Cooking by  
*MAGGIE McManis*  
of Oak Park, Alva

Contact Maggie to find out more at: [Maggi1rn@aol.net](mailto:Maggi1rn@aol.net)



## FLORIDA'S BEST STRAWBERRY COBBLER

### Ingredients

- 1 cup flour.
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1/2 stick butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon baking powder.
- Dash of salt.
- 4 cups strawberries sweetened with 1/2 cup sugar.



### Directions

Combine flour, sugar, buttermilk, and melted butter. Stir until blended. Add baking powder and salt, stirring until blended. Pour batter into a greased 9 x 13 baking dish. Pour strawberries evenly on top and bake at 325° for 30 minutes. Remove from oven and sprinkle with a small amount of sugar, then return to oven to bake for an additional 5 to 10 minutes, just until golden brown.

---



Eager to pull a prank on his chiropractor, Dennis taped a bag of potato chips to the small of his back.



**SWFL CRIME STOPPERS**

**SAY IT HERE!**  
**WHY?**  
We guarantee anonymity!  
We pay cash rewards.

**HOTLINE: 1-800-780-TIPS**  
CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT A TIP

DOWNLOAD OUR FREE TIP MANUAL ANY TIME YOU WANT

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.**





All young people **DREAM** of a bright future—one that's full of **OPPORTUNITIES** and **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](mailto:ttaft@bbbssun.org)

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

The **ONLY** Online Based Church in Southwest Florida fully open to all, all over the world.

Small Groups - Worship - In Person gatherings for locals – Counseling – Prayer – no grass to mow - no sidewalks to sweep.

Lead Pastor

*Rev. Christy Holden*

LaBelle Downtown



**Let's Gather in ....**

**EVERY one WELCOME!! Really.**

**Every Monday Evening, 7pm Eastern Time**

Zoom ID: 895 2725 4110  
Passcode 475719



## 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](http://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!

---

## COMMUNITY COOPERATIVE



### *Community Cafe, Mobile Pantry's, and Meals on Wheels*

**HOW YOU CAN HELP:** DONATE so that we can continue purchasing food to distribute at our Mobile Pantries. HOST A FOOD DRIVE and collect non-perishable food items to stock our shelves.

**VOLUNTEER** in the Community Cafe, at a Mobile Pantry, or as a Meals on Wheels Driver. Call (239) 332-7687. [Tami@communitycooperative.com](mailto:Tami@communitycooperative.com) or call 239-332-7687, ext. 125.



## **ALVA MIDDLE FFA**

### **Find us on FACEBOOK**

[https://www.facebook.com/AlvaMiddleFFA/?show\\_switched\\_toast=0&show\\_invite\\_to\\_follow=0&show\\_switched\\_tooltip=0&show\\_podcast\\_settings=0&show\\_community\\_review\\_changes=0&show\\_community\\_rollback=0&show\\_follower\\_visibility\\_disclosure=0](https://www.facebook.com/AlvaMiddleFFA/?show_switched_toast=0&show_invite_to_follow=0&show_switched_tooltip=0&show_podcast_settings=0&show_community_review_changes=0&show_community_rollback=0&show_follower_visibility_disclosure=0)

**RIVERDALE BRANCH LIBRARY**  
2421 Buckingham Road, Fort Myers



*Riverdale Public Library presents:*



**Artificial  
Intelligence**

**10:30 a.m.  
Wednesday,  
February 14**

Curiosity Connection aims to bring adults in our community the opportunity to explore a new subject each month in arts, culture, science and technology by combining interactive presentations and hands-on experiences with open and engaging discussions. Participants will have the opportunity to shape future programs by providing monthly subject suggestions.

This month, we'll explore the current state of artificial intelligence and discuss the impact of AI on business, arts and society.

For more information on this and other great programs and resources, please visit our website at [leelibrary.net](http://leelibrary.net).

## Meatloaf Dinner



Thursday, February 8th, 4-7 pm

Delicious homemade meatloaf, mashed potatoes/gravy, coleslaw, peas, bun, drink, and delicious 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





Hey there, festival enthusiasts and local artisans! The much-celebrated [Swamp Cabbage Festival](#) will be here before we know it; the vendor applications are now open for sign-ups.

If you've got unique crafts, mouthwatering treats, captivating art, or one-of-a-kind products to share with our vibrant community, this is your chance to shine! Join in making this year's festival an unforgettable experience for all attendees.

**Festival Date:** Feb. 24 & 25, 2024

**Location:** Barron Park, LaBelle, FL

**Vendor Application Link**

<https://www.eventeny.com/events/vendor?id=10967>

Hurry and submit your application soon, as spaces are limited and they're filling up.



## Alva School Intramurals



### **SOCCER SCHEDULE**

*All Regular season Games will be played at the Lehigh Soccer Fields*

**Tuesday 2/06 Alva Ramblers v. Harns Marsh**

**Thursday 2/08 Alva Ramblers v. Veterans Park**

**Tuesday 2/13 Alva Ramblers v. Lehigh**

**Thursday 2/15 Alva Ramblers v. Harns Marsh**

**Tuesday 2/27 Alva Ramblers v. Lemuel Teal**

**ALL GAMES START AT 6PM**

*Boys Play First on Tuesdays, Girls Play first on Thursdays*

### **PLAYOFFS!!**

**Round 1 - Thursday 2/29 Alva Ramblers @ Three Oaks**

*Boys Play First for Round 1 Playoff Game*

**Round 2 - Monday 3/4 Alva Ramblers @ Bonita**

*If we advance, Girls Play First for Round 2 Playoff Game*

**ALL GAMES START AT 6PM**



**LEARN HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR FRIENDS, FAMILY AND NEIGHBORS**

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among adults.

You'll build skills and confidence you need to reach out and provide initial support to those who are struggling. You'll also learn how to help connect them to appropriate support.

**AFTER THE COURSE, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO:**

- Recognize common signs and symptoms of mental health challenges.
- Recognize common signs and symptoms of substance use challenges.
- Understand how to interact with a person in crisis.
- Know how to connect a person with help.
- Use self-care tools and techniques.

Join the more than

**2.6 MILLION**

*First Aiders who have chosen to be the difference in their community.*

**REGISTER TODAY FOR IN-PERSON TRAINING!**

**Date and Time:**

February 28-29, 2024

9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

**Location:**

Hendry County Emergency Management

4425 FL-80, LaBelle, FL

**How to Register:**

Email Edwin Melendez at

Edwin.Melendez@FLhealth.gov

Learn how to respond with the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (**ALGEE**):

- A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm.
- L**isten nonjudgmentally.
- G**ive reassurance and information.
- E**ncourage appropriate professional help.
- E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies.



For more information, visit [MHFA.org](http://MHFA.org)

**Adiestramiento en Persona**

Fecha y hora:

**Sabado febrero 10, 2024 de 8:30AM-5:00PM**

Lugar:

**Our Lady Queen of Heaven (OLQH) Catholic Church**

**355 S. Bridge Street LaBelle, FL 33935**

Dónde inscribirse:

**Contactar a Edwin Meléndez**

Correo Electrónico: [Edwin.Melendez@FIHealth.gov](mailto:Edwin.Melendez@FIHealth.gov)

ó **llamar a (863)843-0168**

lan de acción de Primeros Auxilios de Salud Mental (**REDES**):

- R**iesgo de suicidio o autolesión.
- E**scuchar sin juzgar.
- D**ar información con respeto.
- E**stimular el uso de ayuda profesional adecuada.
- S**ugerir estrategias de autoayuda y de apoyo.



Para más información, visite a [MHFA.org](http://MHFA.org)





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

To make a donation, **call (239) 334-7007** or visit [www.harrychapinfoodbank.org](http://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>



SalusCare is a Fort Myers, Florida based not-for-profit mental health and substance abuse service provider.

SalusCare has 6 locations to serve you throughout Southwest Florida. Our fees are affordable and may be adjusted to the means of our patients based on household income.

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

Call our Welcome Center at 239-275-3222 Mon. – Fri. 8:00 am – 5:00 pm to speak with a customer service representative to schedule a Care Connection appointment in-person or via tele-health.





# Alva Area FOOD PANTRIES

## Grace UMC, Fort Myers Shores

Second Saturday Free Meal & Food Pantry, 8am to 2pm

**CALL to RESERVE your FOOD**

**239-694-2797**

## 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 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> 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:***

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Assemblies of God  
915 Lake Manor Dr Labelle, FL 33935  
(863) 675-0900

LaBelle Assembly of God  
915 Lake Manor Dr Labelle FL  
(863) 675-0900

Carlson Memorial Church  
310 Campbell St Labelle FL, 33935  
(863) 675-0656

LaBelle First Baptist  
330 N Main St, Labelle, FL 33935  
(863) 675-2171

Church of Christ Central  
60 Hendry St, Labelle, FL 33935  
(863) 675-4796

Our Lady Queen of Heaven Parish  
355 S Bridge St, Labelle, FL 33935  
(863) 675-0030

Eastside Baptist Church  
1110 S Carlyle St, Labelle, FL 33935  
(863) 675-3595

Christ Central LaBelle, Reformed  
540 1st Ave LaBelle FL  
(863) 675-2100

El Faro Assemblies of God of LaBelle  
431 Bryan Ave, Labelle, FL 33935  
(863) 675-5947

Good Shepherd Episcopal  
1098 Collingswood Pkwy, LaBelle FL  
(863) 675-0385

Grace Baptist  
4200 Ne Eucalyptus Blvd, Labelle, FL 33935  
(863) 675-3349

Christ The King Lutheran  
1362 Thigpen Rd, Labelle, FL 33935  
(941) 675-2733

International Christian Fellowship  
233 Clark St, Labelle, FL 33935  
(863) 675-4227

New Testament Assembly  
60 Calhoun St, Labelle, FL 33935  
(863) 674-0444

Pentecostal Church of God  
55 Orange Ave, Labelle, FL 33935  
(863) 675-0938

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

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

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### Some Alva & Fort Myers Shores Churches:

St. Vincent DePaul's RC Church

13031 Palm Beach Boulevard, Fort Myers, FL 33905

[www.stvincentftmyers.org](http://www.stvincentftmyers.org) 239-693-0818

Alva Methodist Church

21440 Pearl St. P.O Box 96

Alva, FL 33920

[Alvamc@embarqmail.com](mailto:Alvamc@embarqmail.com)

[www.ouralvachurch.org](http://www.ouralvachurch.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](http://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](mailto:CalvaryChurchSwfl@yahoo.com)

[www.calvarynations.org](http://www.calvarynations.org) 239-728-5566

First Baptist Church of Alva

2790 Joel Blvd, Alva, FL, 33920

[www.alvabaptist.com](http://www.alvabaptist.com) 239-728-2034

Grace Church, Ft Myers Shores

14036 Matanzas Drive, Ft Myers, Florida 33905

[www.egracechurch.com](http://www.egracechurch.com) 239-694-2797

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

14531 Old Olga Road,

Fort Myers, FL 33905

[www.blcefml.org](http://www.blcefml.org) 239-694-3878

Olga Baptist Church

2364 South Olga Drive

Fort Myers, FL 33905

[www.olgabaptist.org](http://www.olgabaptist.org) 239-694-2012

[olgabapch1@embarqmail.com](mailto: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

**Rosa De Saron Assemblies of God**

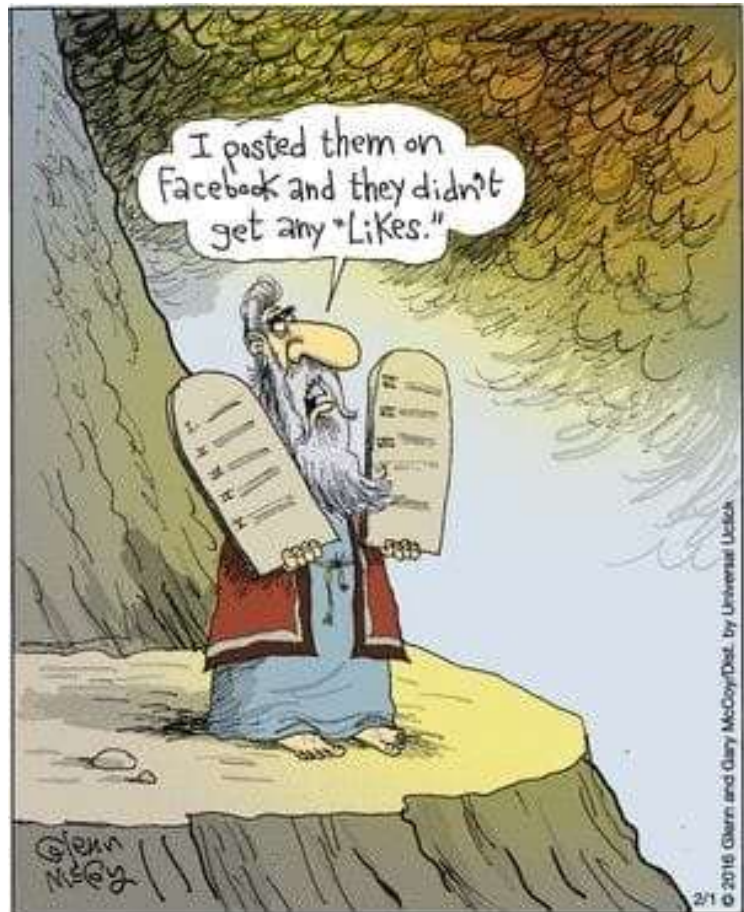
13235 Palm Beach Blvd, Fort Myers FL  
(239) 694-8777

**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](mailto:intake@stmatthewshouse.org).

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

### FORT MYERS SHORES:

**Grace**, Fort Myers Shores, (239) 694-2797, 4036 Matanzas Dr, Fort Myers:

-AA COED, Open Disc: Mon, 12pm, office

-AA Men: Mon, 7pm, office

-AA Women: Tues, 7pm, office

-AA COED, Open Disc: Wed, 12pm, office

-AA Open Disc: Thu, 7pm, office

-AL Anon COED: Fri, 12pm, Classroom 2

-AA COED, Open Speaker: Sat, 7pm, Community Center

-AA COED, Open Disc: Sun, 7pm, office

-CHOOSE RECOVERY: 6:00pm, Grace UMC Shores Facebook Page LIVE until COVID-19 is under control.

**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

### LEHIGH ACRES (cont):

**-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

**-Al 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

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**IF you know of any 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. Thank you! [kendewalt@ontheriver.org](mailto:kendewalt@ontheriver.org)**

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## 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)	<a href="http://www.ready.gov/cert">www.ready.gov/cert</a>
Department of Financial Services (Insurance)	<a href="http://www.myfloridacfo.com">www.myfloridacfo.com</a>
Department of Homeland Security	<a href="http://www.dhs.gov/">www.dhs.gov/</a>
Florida Lightning Safety	<a href="http://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning">www.weather.gov/safety/lightning</a>
Mobile or Manufactured Home Residents	<a href="http://www.flhsmv.gov/mobilehome">www.flhsmv.gov/mobilehome</a>
American Sign Language Preparedness Videos	<a href="http://www.lee.gov.com/publicsafety/emergencymanagement/plan">www.lee.gov.com/publicsafety/emergencymanagement/plan</a>
StormReady	<a href="http://www.weather.gov/stormready/">www.weather.gov/stormready/</a>

## 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.



### SUNSET CRUISE!

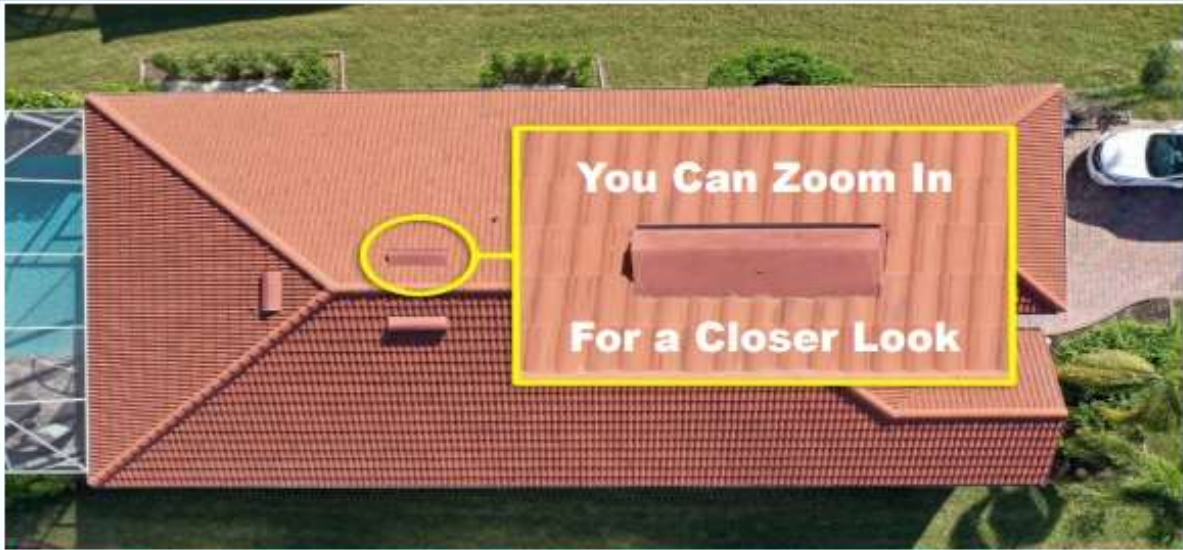
Join us for a sunset cruise from Sweetwater Landing Marina going westbound on the Caloosahatchee River. A nice spread of hors d'oeuvres is provided along with water and soda. You are welcome to bring your own beverage if you'd like. Enjoy a leisurely cruise on the Caloosahatchee, watch the birds come 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](http://www.ManateeAndEcoRiverTours.com)

# GET A DRONE PIC OF YOUR ROOF



## Save a Fortune – Gain Peace of Mind

**Discover the Affordable Roof Inspection Solution for just \$99.00**

**Forget costly contractors!** With this exclusive offer, you save money while gaining peace of mind about the condition of your roof. Within 2-days of ordering, we will "fly-over" and provide you with a "zoomable" Air Shot image of your roof in .JPG format. Simply provide your **name, address, phone, and email**, and we'll handle the rest. Don't miss out—order now!

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Drone Pics / Vids by a FAA Licensed Pilot  
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15225 Yellow Wood Dr | Alva, FL 33920



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Turning 65 or new to Medicare?

## It's time to get Medicare-ready

### Get a free\* benefits review from a professional

Whether you have Medicare already or you're taking your first steps toward it, now's the time to learn about what Humana Medicare Advantage plans are available for 2023 and what they offer.

### More than a plan

Humana goes the extra mile to help you get the care you need. This is more than health insurance. It's human care.

See why more than 8.7 million people across the country<sup>†</sup> have chosen Humana Medicare Advantage plans and stand-alone prescription drug plans.

### Call a licensed Humana sales agent



**Breanna Willis**  
 239-771-9949 (TTY: 711)  
 Local Alva agent  
 7 days a week  
 bwillis12@humana.com

**Humana.** A more human way  
to healthcare™

\* There's no obligation to enroll.

<sup>†</sup> Humana Inc. First Quarter 2022 Earnings Release, April 27, 2022. Humana is a Medicare Advantage HMO, PPO and PFFS organization with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in any Humana plan depends on contract renewal. **At Humana, it is important you are treated fairly.** Humana Inc. and its subsidiaries comply with applicable federal civil rights laws and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, ancestry, ethnicity, marital status, religion or language. **English:** ATTENTION: If you do not speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call **877-320-1235 (TTY: 711)**. **Español (Spanish):** ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al **877-320-1235 (TTY: 711)**. **繁體中文 (Chinese):** 注意: 如果您使用繁體中文, 您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 **877-320-1235 (聽障專線: 711)**。



Cell  
239-340-3904

Office  
239-693-1959

Email  
PattyWalkerREMAX@gmail.com

Web  
GulfCoastLivingPatty.com

Address  
12928 Palm Beach Blvd., Ste A  
Fort Myers, FL 33905

 Each Office Independently Owned & Operated

<https://supportukrainenow.org/>

Support Ukraine Now (SUN), we are a community of Ukrainian and international activists. Our mission is to engage the network of leaders in supporting Ukraine.

We work on providing the most effective help to Ukraine, in immediate response and rebuilding, by enabling foreigners (individuals and organizations) to help.



We started as an informational platform, and turned into an ecosystem of diverse projects in the civil sector, economy, diplomacy, and welfare.

Initiated by Global Shapers Hubs in Ukraine (Kyiv, Lviv), and supported by the Global Shapers Community and the World Economic Forum.



<https://www.hawaiicommunityfoundation.org/maui-strong>

**The Maui Strong Fund is providing financial resources that can be deployed quickly, with a focus on rapid response and recovery for the devastating wildfires on Maui.**

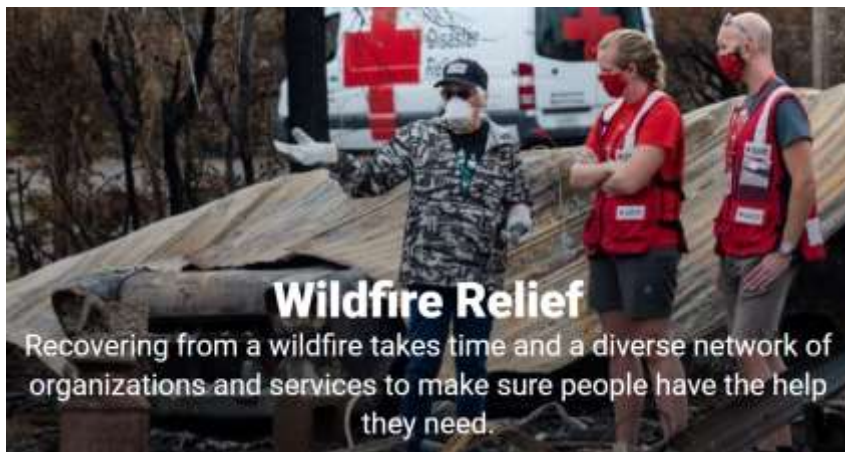
**HCF will not be collecting a fee for donations to the Maui Strong Fund; 100 percent of the funds will be distributed for community needs.**

<https://fortmyers.org/resources/hurricane-information/>

## *Hurricane Ian*

The Greater Fort Myers Chamber of Commerce seeks to provide solutions and strengthen our local economy following Hurricane Ian. Please complete our Business Damage Assessment Form, which you will find below along with numerous hurricane-related resources. This includes important articles, volunteer/donation opportunities, emergency information, FAQs and more.

**Wildfires are EVERYWHERE in North America, Europe, Africa...everywhere this year.**



**What can you do to help people dealing with the loss of homes, loved ones, entire communities?**

<https://www.redcross.org/donate/donation.html>

L



### **Is MSF providing medical care in Israel?**

MSF does not currently run medical programs in Israel. This is because we focus on filling the greatest gaps in health care, and Israel has strong emergency and health systems. MSF has offered its support to Israeli hospitals treating large numbers of casualties following attacks by Hamas militants on October 7.

### **How is MSF helping in Gaza?**

MSF's activities in Gaza are currently very limited. We are unable to safely coordinate and run our usual activities. We have made the very difficult decision to move our international medical staff to the south of the Gaza Strip following Israel's evacuation order. Some Palestinian staff have also moved south. However, some of our Palestinian colleagues have remained in northern Gaza, on an individual basis, and continue to offer their support to the wounded under extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

<https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/get-involved/ways-to-give>

## 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.



**Meet Sam**  
**Owner of**  
**Hopeful Horizons Counseling**

- ~ Registered Clinical Social Work Intern
- ~ Completed Bachelor's degree in Social Work from Florida Gulf Coast University - class of 2022
- ~ Completed Master's degree in Clinical Social Work from University of Central Florida - class of 2023.
- ~ Supervised by Jessica N. DiMaria, LCSW - Florida / SW17667
- ~ Validator, empathizer, warm and non-judgmental to all.

Contact Sam by calling 941-769-2844 or by emailing [Sam.HopefulHorizons@gmail.com](mailto:Sam.HopefulHorizons@gmail.com)  
[HopefulHorizonsCounseling.org](http://HopefulHorizonsCounseling.org)



## ON THE RIVER Alva Community Newsletter – Advertising Rates as of August 28, 2023

The FREE monthly online OTR E-Newsletter is circulated to 12,000+ readers including 1,200 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

**NEW!!! Beginning with the February issue, 2024, Ads will appear a second time at no additional cost, selectively placed within the body of the newsletter.**

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.

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](mailto:kendewalt@ontheriver.org)

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

We especially encourage our readers to patronize the professional and community supporters who advertise with us.