

THE CAPE CORAL SUN

Celebrating the Past, Present, & Future of Southwest Florida's Largest City!



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Reimagined And Reopened: Jaycee Park Is Ready

By Ann Marie O'Phelan

Right off Del Prado Boulevard and to the east down Beach Parkway lies one of the city's oldest parks, Jaycee Park. The nearly 50-year-old park, located on the banks of the Caloosahatchee River, officially re-opened on Thursday, April 30, after several years of closure.

"As one of Cape Coral's oldest parks, Jaycee Park was in need of a refresh to better reflect how people live and gather in our community today. This project was about creating welcoming spaces designed for everyone," says Michael Ilczyszyn, City Manager.

Although the park is in the same place, it's not the same as it ever was, starting with a new park sign that welcomes guests on their arrival.

There are many new amenities designed to make the nearly 12-acre park



Michael Ilczyszyn, City Manager



more accessible and family-friendly. In those areas, the city hit the ball out of the park. Jaycee Park now offers a 5,000-square-foot public splash pad – the city's first. The pad will provide plenty of fun for the little ones to cool



off and get some exercise. There are also shaded picnic areas, a bandshell – perfect for local artists and school

Reimagined And Reopened on page 4

Lee County Honors Service Members And Veterans In An Emotional Ceremony

The Lee County community recently gathered to honor 250 local service members and veterans in a ceremony that not only celebrated the service and sacrifice of those who

have defended the country but also highlighted the diverse origins of the families who, over the years, have contributed in many ways to the United States Armed Forces.

Nearly 180 service members and veterans who attended the event received their recognition. Lieutenant Governor Jay Collins served as the keynote speaker, accompanied by Fort Myers Mayor Kevin Anderson.

The ceremony also honored special groups such as the Gold Star Mothers, Blue Star Mothers, the 64 Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) instructors from the county's 16 high schools, and first responders. All honorees were called by name and walked across the stage as their branch of service and photograph appeared on

the large screen. They were welcomed and thanked for their service by Jay Collins and Kevin Anderson.

This initiative was inspired by a call from the National Veterans Resource Center at Syracuse University, which invited communities across the country to recognize 250 of their veterans. "As soon as I learned about this initiative, I knew we had to do it here," explained Steve Epkins, retired Army colonel and creator of the event.

Lee County Honors on page 6



Steve Epkins, retired Army colonel



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The Rynski Report: Farewell, Florida: Thank You For The Transformation

By Ryn Gargulinski

Circling vultures were the first thing I noticed upon moving to Cape Coral in 2020. Sure, we have long been trained to wince at these so-called harbingers of death, but I was instantly enamored.

Vultures to me are majestic and savvy, knowing how to use the air currents to simply float through the sky. And that death stuff – well, whatever.

Little did I know that death had indeed been in store during my five years in the Cape. It had come as a series of demises that ripped me to shreds at my very core. It was the total annihilation of the old me.

I moved to Florida with red-purple hair, a fiancé, a thriving freelance writing career, and two dogs. Upon leaving I had silver-grey hair, an ex-fiancé and a massive shift in my career that traded helping people write their blog posts to helping people heal their soul.

The thrill of dying my hair freakishly beautiful colors died. The 15-year relationship died. The once-thriving freelance journalist and writer who was clinging to a career that no longer suited her died. And yes, one of my dogs died.

All of it hurt like hell at the time. When I made the decision to move back to my Arizona homebase, family members even asked, “Are you sorry you moved to Florida at all?”

No way. Florida was meant to be. It had long been on my bucket list of places to live. If I had not given it a go it would have stayed there like that annoying rock in your shoe you’re too lazy to bend over and fish out.

Besides, where else could I watch a tourist family of four actually move in the water toward the scene of a shark ripping up a piece of wildlife in the shallows.

“C’mere kids! Look at this!”

Yes. Florida is home to the absurd. Exotic. Subtropic. Powerful. And just the place for some of the greatest lessons to take place.

Like how Thomas Edison got it all wrong. I initially picked to live in Cape Coral because I heard Edison hypothesized the area was the least likely to get hit by hurricanes. Anyone who lived through 2022’s Hurricane Ian would be ready to argue with that one.

Ian was another sign that all I once knew was going to be mercilessly stripped away. At the time, however, my only focus was wondering if I’d still have my online writing jobs after some four weeks without the Internet.

The lesson here is that things come, things go. Nothing is permanent. And while you definitely rebuild after loss, you’re going to get cranky if you’re trying to recreate an exact duplicate what is already gone.

Gain peace by building something new (although I would have been totally fine without having to build a new fence).

The high humidity taught me that things rot fast if they’re no longer alive. Like the dead possum in my Cape backyard that actually disintegrated in about three hours. Not kidding.



This lesson definitely applied to the 15-year relationship, which had been a mushy shell of what it once was just waiting for the catalyst to vaporize it altogether.

The noseums taught me that it’s the tiny irritants that’ll get you. Our instinct and grit automatically kick in to get through the big things. But we just try to ignore the little things. Those are the things that will drive us insane.

This lesson applies to the intuitive hits telling me that sitting and writing at a computer all day was stifling rather than fueling my soul.

That brings us to leaving the paper. I continued to write for the paper after my November move to Arizona because it had started out fun and natural – and it’s owned by the coolest Cape Coral couple I ever met.

But I noticed it stopped feeling natural. It was part of the old me that had already dissolved. It was like trying to force a mangrove to thrive in a climate built for towering saguaros.

This does not mean I’ll stop writing in general – my new



Phantoms of the Desert book is already in the works. This does not mean I’ll stop loving vultures or beaches or the absurdity of tourists.

And it certainly doesn’t mean I’ll stop having a special place in my heart for the Cape Coral community and the glorious people I’ve met during my Southwest Florida chapter.

It just means I’m turning the page to something new. You’ll find me in Tucson baking Love into the desert, helping people and their pets walk through trauma and grief.

Writing books that make our souls dance. Hosting an online show about hauntings and healing. Painting crazy murals on my carport.

All while gloriously single with my best-buddy dog, my silver-grey hair shimmering in the twilight as we both howl our hearts out beneath the moon.

Thank you, Cape Coral readers, for being part of my journey. Feel free to stay in touch: RynskiLove.com.

Ryn Gargulinski [Rynski] is an award-winning author, artist, speaker and transformational doula who helps people see themselves and the world around them through the eyes of Love. With 10-plus published books and multiple awards, she also holds a BFA in Creative Writing, an MA in English literature, minister ordination, and certifications in coaching, Reiki and other forms of energy healing. Founder of RynskiLove.com, Rynski lived in Cape Coral before being called back to Arizona’s Sonoran Desert. More at RynskiLife.com. Contact: Rynski@RynskiLife.

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Mind Your Money

“Cash Is King, But Not Forever”

By Alexandra Valdes,
Azzendo Wealth Advisors



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WEALTH ADVISORS

Before we dive into this month’s column; a quick recap: We started with gathering cash flow data to understand your resources, then evaluated whether you run a monthly surplus or deficit. If there’s a deficit, the focus shifts to trimming expenses. Last month we addressed liabilities as a way to do this. This month, we turn to cash and its role in your overall plan.

Don’t Overlook The Importance Of Cash Reserves

Maintaining a healthy cash reserve is essential. This is the foundation of the financial house you are building. Without a solid foundation, it can jeopardize the rest of the construction.

A common rule of thumb is to keep three to six months of expenses in cash reserves. This provides a buffer to cover unexpected events like income disruptions, medical costs, urgent repairs or even opportunities. However, this is only a starting point – not a one-size-fits-all solution.

Your ideal reserve should reflect your personal situation. Inconsistent cash in-flow, home improvements, major travel plans, or large purchases may require an additional layer of a cash target. Planning for this in advance can help you avoid tapping into investments at the wrong time or taking on costly debt.

The Balance: Not Too Little, Not Too Much

While having sufficient cash is critical, holding too much can be a drag on your financial progress. Cash typically earns less than long-term investments, meaning excess balances can lose purchasing power over time due to inflation. It can also result in a costly missed opportunity.

Case in point – I did a financial plan for a couple planning to retire. Having gotten so scared from the painful 2022 market

year, they stayed in money market funds earning barely 4%. Meanwhile markets earned well above that. The effect – they need to consider delaying retirement for a couple of years.

That said, today’s higher interest rate environment offers an opportunity. You can park most of your cash reserves in interest-bearing accounts. This can include high-yield savings accounts, money market funds, even CDs allowing your cash to remain accessible while still earning a reasonable return.

Using CDs Strategically

Consider setting aside part of your cash in a Certificate of Deposit (CD). CDs typically offer higher interest rates in exchange for locking up your money for some time.

A practical approach is to limit how many months you lock up the money, ensuring you maintain flexibility while benefiting from higher rates. This strategy works best when you’re confident that portion of cash won’t be needed during the lock up period.

A Moving Target

Financial planning is a fluid process – not a one-time effort. The same is true for your cash target. Expect that your expenses will change over time and therefore so should your cash target. As a short-term cash need arises, this is your trigger to revisit your cash target and temporarily redirect income to replenish your cash back to its intended target. This ensures you’re prepared for the next time you need to access this cash.

Bringing It All Together

A strong financial foundation includes having the right amount of cash in the right places. Begin by building and maintaining an emergency fund to cover unexpected events, then account for upcoming short-term needs with additional targeted savings. Keep your cash accessible, but also intentional using interest-bearing accounts to ensure it remains productive.

Target enough cash to provide stability and peace of mind, without holding more than you need. With a clear plan and consistent discipline, your cash reserves can support both your day-to-day needs and life’s unexpected moments.

Alexandra Valdes is a wealth advisor focused on helping individuals, families and business owners confidently navigate

various financial decisions regardless of what stage in their economic life they are in. She likes to combine her financial expertise with a calm, zen mindset to help reduce the stress that often surrounds finances. Through education and clarity, she works to empower others to feel confident and in control of their individual financial journey.

Alexandra is also very involved with the Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce and is part of the 2025 Leadership class. Within her interest in serving the community, Alexandra focuses on helping children through her involvement in the Kiwanis organization. She is an outdoor enthusiast and loves to enjoy all the beaches her home state of Florida has to offer. You can reach Alexandra by phone at (305) 648-9814 or email her at alexandra.valdes@azzendo.com.

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7		2		8		5	1	6
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		5	9	1	3	6	8	4
6								1
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1	6	3		4		2		5
9			2					

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Reimagined And Reopened from page 1

performances – and recreational game areas including cornhole, pool, shuffleboard, and beach volleyball. There’s also a large inclusive modern playground with shade sails, a smaller playground for younger ones, and special needs adult changing stations. Plus, there’s more green space – perfect for those who want to enjoy a little relaxation, play catch, or attend planned community events. Upgraded pathways with cooling misters make it easier to enjoy a comfortable stroll through the park. While park-lovers can pack their own food and snacks and enjoy them under the shaded canopies, a dedicated food truck court offering food and beverages will be coming soon.

Major change was in store as the older amenities aged; there was less accessibility for all, and parking and pedestrian access were limited. There are now 128 parking places, up from 77 before renovation, along with 1.5 miles of shaded walking paths. The older towering shade trees along the river, some of which were unhealthy, were creating unevenness in the pathways and parking areas, making it difficult to travel over if using a cane, walker, wheelchair, or stroller. There were also trip hazards to consider. However, over 400 younger trees have been planted, nearly double the number before, with careful consideration given to long-term shading. Along the river, there’s now a lighted riverfront boardwalk and overlook that is more accessible to all, offering a picturesque view and the perfect place to watch a spectacular sunset.

“Park guests can now enjoy panoramic views of the Caloosahatchee River,” explains Ilczyszyn.

To help manage rainwater naturally, the low-lying grassy areas double as stormwater features. Plus, lush native plants that require less maintenance were added to the landscape.

Friday, May 8, featured a ribbon-cutting ceremony open to the public to celebrate the long-awaited opening.

“Whether you’re bringing young children to play, meeting friends for food and music, enjoying the



waterfront, or just looking for a place to relax, the park offers something for every age, ability, and interest. We’re proud to reopen the park and share its beauty with the community,” adds Ilczyszyn.

Jaycee Park is located at 4215 SE 20th Place, Cape Coral.

The city is also working to update other parks and public spaces, such as the Yacht Club Community Park, which was devastated by *Hurricane Ian*, the 175-acre former golf course on Palm Tree Boulevard, and Yellow Fever Creek Preserve on Del Prado Boulevard, among others.

Scan the QR code for a complete list of Cape Coral parks and facilities. So, get out and enjoy a park!



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Traci Talks: Real Conversations About Senior Living

Let's Talk About What Comes Next

By Traci Talley

If you've ever found yourself lying awake at night wondering, "Is Mom really safe at home?" or "What are we supposed to do next?"

Please know – you are not alone.

For most families, there isn't really a plan for this. It usually comes after a fall, a hospital stay, or just a quiet realization that things aren't as safe or manageable as they used to be.

And all of a sudden, you're faced with decisions you never expected to have to make.

Where do we even start?

What are the options?

How do we know what's right?

These are the questions I hear every single day.

My name is Traci Talley, and I'm the founder of Heartfelt Senior Solutions here in our community. For more than 14 years, I worked inside senior living communities, sitting across from families during some of the most emotional and overwhelming times in their lives.

But for me, this work is also personal.

Like so many families, I've walked this road myself. I've had those conversations and felt that same worry, wanting to make the very best decisions for someone I love.

That's a big part of why I do what I do today.

My husband, Gary, and I built Heartfelt Senior Solutions together because we both felt strongly that families needed something more personal – someone local who would truly walk alongside them through this process.

Gary is a veteran, and his heart for serving others – especially fellow veterans and their families – is something that really shapes who we are.

What I saw over the years was this:



Traci and Gary

Families weren't just looking for a place. They were looking for someone who understood. Someone who could help them make sense of everything and guide them toward the right decision. Because this can feel like a lot.

There are so many options – independent living, assisted living, memory care – and every community is a little different. Trying to sort through it all while you're worried about your loved one can feel overwhelming quickly.

When I work with families, I start by listening. Really listening.

What's going on? What matters most?

Then I help narrow things down so you're not looking at ten different places that all feel the same.

From there, I coordinate tours and walk alongside families through that process, helping them see not just what looks good on the surface, but what feels right.

And one of the questions I get all the time is: "How does

this work? There's no cost?"

I understand that question, because it does feel a little surprising.

The guidance I provide is at no cost to families. I'm compensated by the senior living communities.

My role is simply to help you find the right fit for your situation and your loved one.

What I've found over the years is that the next step usually isn't some big, overwhelming decision.

It's something smaller.

Sometimes it's just starting the conversation.

Sometimes it's taking a closer look at what's been changing.

And sometimes it's simply learning what the options even are.

It doesn't have to be rushed. It just needs to feel right for you and your family.

In the months ahead, I'll be sharing guidance here – answering the questions families ask me every day and helping you better understand what to look for, what to expect, and how to approach these decisions with more clarity.

Warmest,

Traci Talley, Heartfelt Senior Solutions

Traci Talley is the founder of Heartfelt Senior Solutions, providing personalized guidance to families navigating senior living decisions throughout Cape Coral, Fort Myers, and beyond. With over 14 years of experience in senior living, she and her husband Gary – an Army veteran – are passionate about serving families with a local, hands-on approach. Their services are provided at no cost to families.

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Health News

The Critical Role Of Trauma Care Close To Home

By Niki Rasnake, Director of Trauma Support Services for Lee Health



In emergencies, every second counts. A trauma center provides immediate, specialized care for life-threatening injuries – from severe car crashes to falls and other serious incidents. It brings together highly trained physicians, nurses and specialists available around the clock. Having this level of care close to home not only saves critical time but also saves lives, ensuring the community has access to expert treatment when it is needed most.

Traumatic injuries are a leading cause of death among individuals ages one to 44, surpassing many other illnesses. These events often occur unexpectedly and without warning.

The Trauma Center at Gulf Coast Medical Center has served residents and visitors across Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties for more than 30 years. As a dedicated trauma facility rooted in the community, it provides peace of mind, connection and an unwavering commitment to lifesaving care.

Understanding Traumatic Injuries

Traumatic injuries include motor vehicle crashes, sports

injuries, falls, accidents, natural disasters and other forms of physical harm that can occur at home, in public, while driving, at work or elsewhere. These injuries often require immediate medical attention. The trauma center serves as a critical safety net for families and individuals throughout the region, responding to emergencies when they are least expected.

The Gulf Coast Medical Center Trauma Center’s care network includes 911 dispatchers, EMTs, paramedics, EMS personnel, pilots, flight nurses, fire departments and law enforcement – all working together to ensure rapid, coordinated response and treatment.

After initial care, support continues through services that address the emotional and psychological impacts of trauma, including support groups and mentorship programs for patients and families.

A Regional Hub For Lifesaving Care

Since opening in 1994 as the only state-designated trauma center between Sarasota and Miami, the program has treated more than 58,000 patients and numbers continue to grow alongside Southwest Florida’s expanding population.

Today, the Trauma Center at Gulf Coast Medical Center treats approximately 400 patients each month, handling the most complex and urgent cases. More than 90% of these injuries are blunt trauma from falls, motor vehicle crashes and motorcycle accidents, events that can have lasting effects on individuals, families and the broader community.

Originally based at Lee Memorial Hospital, the trauma

program relocated to Gulf Coast Medical Center in 2022 as part of a major expansion to enhance patient care and better serve the region. This marked the first time a Florida health system relocated a trauma program.

Gulf Coast Medical Center is located at 13681 Doctor’s Way in Fort Myers.

When Every Second Counts

Trauma centers play a vital role in saving lives by providing critical care during the “Golden Hour” after severe injury. Treatment within this window can significantly affect survival and long-term recovery.

Gulf Coast Medical Center’s central location provides access across five counties. Studies suggest that up to 35% of trauma-related deaths could be prevented with timely access to a nearby trauma center.

In addition to emergency response, the trauma center leads injury prevention and safety education initiatives, including programs focused on high-risk and young drivers, youth violence prevention, driving safety for seniors, fall prevention and sports injury prevention.

To learn more, please visit www.leehealth.org.



Book Review: *Theo Of Golden* By Allen Levi

By Lillian Till, *Flutterbuy Books and More*



At Flutterbuy Books and More, we love discovering the kind of story that quietly captures hearts – and *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi is exactly that kind of book.

A No. 1 *New York Times* bestselling phenomenon and a standout pick for both Katie Couric and Jen Hatmaker’s book clubs, this novel has become a true word-of-mouth sensation – and it’s easy to see why.

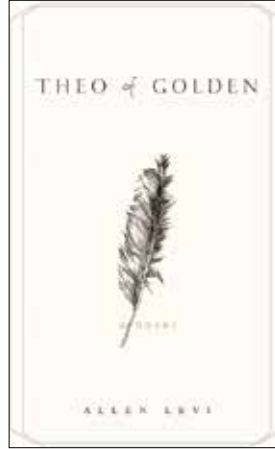
The story begins with a mystery: A stranger named Theo arrives one spring morning in the small Southern town of Golden. He offers little explanation about who he is or why he’s there. Instead, he quietly begins a curious ritual at a local coffeehouse.

On its walls hang dozens of pencil portraits of the town’s residents. Theo starts buying them – one by one – and returning each portrait to the person depicted.

But there’s one condition: In exchange, he asks for their story.

What unfolds is a beautifully layered narrative where each interaction reveals something deeper – hidden regrets, long-held secrets, and moments of grace that shape ordinary lives. Through Theo’s simple yet profound act, connections are formed, wounds begin to heal, and a community slowly transforms.

Levi’s storytelling has a gentle, almost allegorical quality. There’s no rush here – no need for dramatic twists or spectacle. Instead, the novel invites readers to sit with each moment, to listen closely, and to reflect on the quiet power of being truly seen. Theo himself remains somewhat enigmatic, yet his presence becomes a catalyst for change, reminding us how one person’s kindness can ripple outward in ways we may never fully understand.



What makes *Theo of Golden* especially memorable is its message. At its core, this is a story about generosity – not just in what we give, but in how we listen, how we show up, and how we honor each other’s stories. It challenges readers to consider the importance of connection in a world that often moves too quickly to notice it.

Readers looking for a fast-paced plot may find themselves slowing down here – but that’s precisely the point. This is a book to savor, to reflect on, and perhaps even revisit. It’s the kind of story that lingers, offering quiet wisdom long after the final page is turned.

For anyone seeking a heartfelt, uplifting read, *Theo of Golden* is a true gem – and a reminder that sometimes the most extraordinary impact comes from the simplest acts of kindness.

Looking for your next great read and great conversation? Join us every last Tuesday of the month at 5:30 p.m. for our popular book club – we’d love to have you there. Come browse our ever-growing selection of new and used books, discover puzzles and thoughtful bookish gifts, and enjoy the cozy charm that makes our store feel like home. And of course, no visit is complete without a hello from Finnigan, our beloved golden retriever, who’s always ready to greet fellow book lovers.

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Lee County Honors from page 1

To bring the idea to life, Epkins formed a committee that grew from 10 to 19 members. “Everyone contributed to something essential. It was a true community effort,” he noted. The team selected a commemorative medal and worked with Military Tribute Banners on the official materials, including certificates signed by Major General James L. Dozier.

The call for nominations was widely shared throughout the county. “The response was incredible. The community really wanted to participate,” Epkins said.

Upcoming Initiatives

Among the projects underway, Epkins shared

that one of the recent events he coordinated was the celebration of Major General James L. Dozier’s 95th birthday, held at Barrington Terrace. He is also working with county commissioners to establish a Lee County Veterans Hall of Fame, a permanent space to honor their legacy.

Additionally, he is promoting an initiative to convert the current Veterans Clinic into a Lee County Veterans Hospital, a project he is developing alongside several individuals and the county’s five commissioners. The proposal would bring specialized care even closer to veterans and benefit families of diverse origins who rely on these services.

Photos by Patricio Flores



The College And Career Compass By College UnMazed

Practical Guidance For Students And Families

Navigating The Path After High School

Your Teen's Summer Matters More Than You Think (And It's Not About Staying Busy)

By Dr. Amanda Sterk



If you ask most families what summer is for, you will hear the same answers: Relax. Recharge. Take a break from school. And while rest is important, here's the reality I see every day working with students: Summer is one of the most underutilized opportunities in a teenager's life.

Not because students need to be busier, but because they need to be more intentional.

The truth is, colleges, and more importantly, future careers, aren't built on grades and test scores alone. They are built on experiences. And summer is where many of those experiences should happen.

So what should students actually be doing? Start with this question: "What is one thing my student could explore this summer that connects to their future?"

That's it. Not 10 things. Not a packed schedule. Just one or two meaningful directions.

For some students, that might look like:

- Taking an online course to explore a possible career interest
- Getting a part-time job and learning responsibility (and yes, how to deal with a tough boss)
- Volunteering in the community and building real-world perspective

- Visiting a college campus to start understanding "fit"
- Or even starting a small project, business, or creative pursuit

These experiences matter because they build something far more important than a résumé. They build clarity in a student's postsecondary path. And clarity reduces one of the biggest challenges I see families face: decision-making stress during senior year.

When students haven't explored their interests early, everything feels overwhelming later, from choosing a major, picking colleges, even deciding whether college is the right path at all.

Summer helps prevent that.

It's also important to say this clearly: This is not about pressure or perfection. Students do not need to have their entire future figured out. In fact, they shouldn't. But they do need opportunities to try things, reflect, and grow.

That's what builds confidence. If you're not sure where to start, keep it simple:

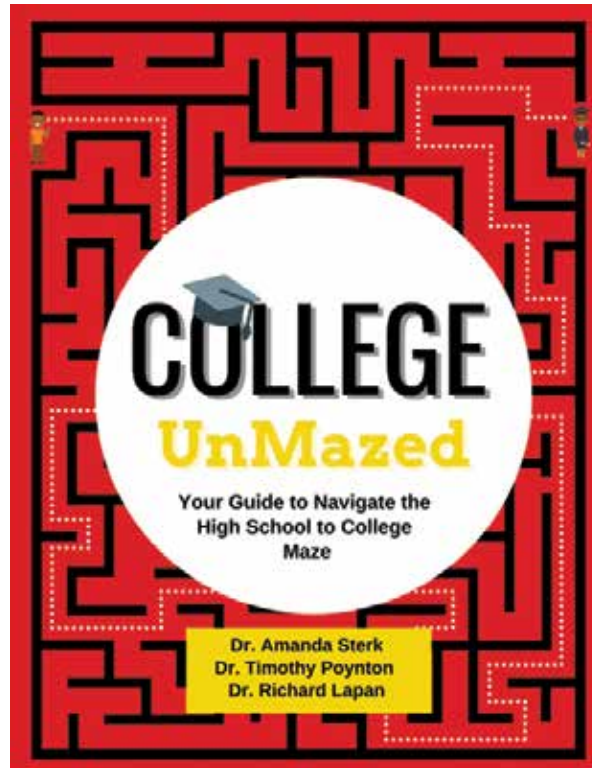
- Choose one area of interest
 - Add one structured experience
 - Have a few intentional conversations as a family
- That's it.

Because when students use their summer with purpose, even in small ways, they return to the school year more focused, more confident, and better prepared for what

comes next. And that's what college and career readiness really is. Not having all the answers but knowing how to start finding them.

Dr. Amanda Sterk is a national educational leader, college and career readiness expert, and co-creator of the College UnMazed guidebooks. With over 25 years of experience across K-12 and higher education, she has dedicated her career to helping students and families navigate the transition from high school to college to career with clarity and confidence. Her background in counseling and advising allows her to support students in academic planning, career exploration, and post-secondary decision

making. College UnMazed (www.collegeunmazed.com) hosts free weekly webinars for parents and students, small group classes focused on college applications and provides one-on-one advising to increase admission and scholarship opportunities, asterk@collegeunmazed.com.





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Heal To Connect: Helping Our Elder Generation Sleep Better, Live Better, And Feel More Connected

By Daniela Duran Cintra, APRN, RN, PMHNP-BC



Sleep is one of the most important parts of emotional, physical, and mental wellness, especially for our elder generation. As we age, sleep patterns naturally change. Many older adults may find themselves waking up earlier, sleeping lighter, waking throughout the night, or feeling tired during the day. While some changes are expected, poor sleep should never be ignored.

At Heal to Connect, we often hear older adults and their families say things like, "I just don't sleep like I used to," "My mind won't shut off at night," or "I wake up anxious and exhausted." These concerns matter. Sleep difficulties can affect mood, memory, concentration, energy, appetite, balance, and overall quality of life. For many seniors, poor sleep can also worsen symptoms of anxiety, depression, grief, loneliness, or medical stress.

Sometimes, sleep problems are connected to life transitions. Retirement, loss of a loved one, changes in independence, medical diagnoses, pain, medication changes, or feeling socially isolated can all impact rest. Many elders carry a lifetime of responsibilities,

memories, worries, and emotional experiences that become louder at night when the world gets quiet.

That is why sleep care should be compassionate, personalized, and whole-person centered.

At Heal to Connect, we believe that supporting sleep is not only about "getting more hours." It is about understanding what may be getting in the way of rest. Is the person feeling anxious? Grieving? Depressed? Experiencing racing thoughts? Taking medications that may interfere with sleep? Drinking too much caffeine late in the day? Napping too long? Feeling lonely or disconnected?

Healthy sleep support may include gentle lifestyle changes such as creating a calming bedtime routine, limiting late-day caffeine, getting sunlight in the morning, staying active during the day, reducing screen time before bed, and keeping a consistent sleep schedule. For some individuals, therapy, emotional support, medication review, or psychiatric care may also be helpful.

Families can also play an important role. Checking in on an older loved one, encouraging routine, helping them stay socially connected, and taking sleep complaints seriously can make a meaningful difference. Poor sleep is not "just part of getting old." It may be a sign that the person needs support.

Our elder generation deserves rest, dignity, connection, and care. They have spent years caring for others, building families, working hard, and carrying life's challenges.

Now, they deserve to be cared for with patience and respect.

At Heal to Connect, we are committed to helping older adults feel heard, supported, and understood. Whether someone is struggling with sleep, anxiety, depression, grief, memory concerns, or emotional changes, our goal is to provide compassionate mental health care that helps them reconnect with peace, wellness, and quality of life.

Because better sleep is not just about closing your eyes, it is about waking up with more strength, more clarity, and more hope.

Heal to Connect: Compassionate mental health care for every stage of life.

Heal to Connect
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The Busiest Part Of Hurricane Season Is Here!

How Does LCEC Prepare For Storm Season?

By Shannon Williamson, APR – Manager of Public Relations



Long before storm season, utilities develop response plans and options to mitigate damage and recover from destruction as quickly as possible. Experience from past storms helps LCEC in the planning process. Incorporating lessons learned into the plan ensures rapid recovery for future storms. Southwest Florida has had their fair share of storms and LCEC restoration plans have been refined over the years.

Investment in systems and programs year-long is aimed at reducing vulnerabilities and building a resilient electric system. LCEC continually hardens the electric system by proactively conducting inspections to identify potential problem areas and aging infrastructure, and repair or replace before the storm rolls in. Routine vegetation management helps to keep lines clear of trees and brush that could cause power outages.

No crisis can be managed without skill, knowledge, resources, and patience. Every employee and LCEC vendors and suppliers are on deck when the threat of a storm rears its ugly head. Restoration plans are practiced long before the first tracking model is published and many potential scenarios are considered.

No storm is the same and there is no way to know what each situation will bring. A resource estimator plan for additional crews, places to feed and house them, extra fuel, additional inventory and equipment, communications, fleet maintenance, and many other details are all proactively considered so that boots can be on the ground as quick as possible to restore critical infrastructure and help the community get back to normal. How can residents and business owners help in the restoration process?

Developing a family or business plan is critical. Remaining safe and comfortable without power is not a thrill but it is possible. Practice the plan and implement it when needed. Be patient and trust that utilities and their people are working as hard as possible to restore service quickly. Use the information in the www.lcec.net/my-reliability/storm-center/hurricane-guide/ to make life easier while the restoration team works.

Immediately after a major storm, there is no need to report an outage. LCEC will assess the damage and know where repairs are needed. After a few days, if you are the only one in your location without service, that is the time to contact your provider.

Working Together

Coming together as a community while LCEC focuses on restoration is critical. Those with power can aid others without. Encouragement and support to all emergency responders can help sustain them through long hard hours of service. As frustrating as being without power may be, remember workers are away from their families under challenging conditions to help everyone get on with their lives.

Shannon Williamson, APR, is the Manager of Public Relations for LCEC and has been part of the team since 2019. A Cape Coral native and proud Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) graduate, Shannon is actively involved in the community as a member of the Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce and currently serves as President of the Florida Public Relations Association.



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Culinary Adventurist

Big Nick's

By Ed Estes

We seem to have a great selection of barbecue restaurants in Cape Coral, and I am happy to have made my first visit to a new addition to the mix: Big Nick's in the South Cape. Returning home following a two-week vacation, I was hoping to get caught up on all the drama that was going on, or went on, over the Cape Coral Rowing Club's planned move to Tropicana Park or to Crystal Lake in lieu of Tropicana Park (I guess now that Jaycee Park is quieting down a bit, we needed something new to insure audience participation at City Council meetings). That being said, even if I were able to digest all that was written in the press over it, I still wouldn't be able to grasp it all, so I decided a "point counterpoint" perspective might be a good idea. And speaking of digesting ... I ran into Councilmember Laurie Lehmann at a Chamber of Commerce Ribbon Cutting at The Gallery retirement community (wow, what a culinary spread they put on for that event ... if they were open to the public for dining, a featured article would be a must for this column) who shared with me her perspective on the issue as well as some of the audience dynamics she enjoyed (tongue in cheek here) at an earlier City Council meeting. A couple days later, I had a chance to visit with City Council Candidate (District



6) Annette Warren at Big Nick's who offered her perspective. As a student of politics, I always enjoy hearing from the political players in our community.

Annette's and my meeting was during lunch and the venue: Big Nick's, is located in the new Cove mixed use building (you might recall I wrote an article about Oak and Stone previously, which is kind of next door). Big Nick's is much smaller, as most of their business is take-out, but they do have about a half dozen tables for customers inside if you are looking to dodge the heat this summer. However, for those of you who enjoy an open, al fresco experience, there is sidewalk table seating as well. Ordering is done at the counter, and normally they will call you up when your food is ready. But since there was only one other table occupied (and the lunch crowd had already passed through), our hostess said she would bring our order to us. Non-alcoholic beverages are self-serve: sodas (Coca-Cola fountain products) and both unsweet and sweet iced tea are available. For those of you looking for something a bit stronger, I noticed four brew taps, including Michelob Ultra and Kona Big Wave. The menu hosts a variety of barbecue style foods: wings, ribs and several meats: turkey, brisket, pork, all of which can all come in variations of platter items, sandwiches and tacos. Burgers (cheese or no cheese, single or double patty) also graced the menu. They offer several different sides as well: fried okra, coleslaw, baked beans, potato salad, waffle fries, hush puppies, and green beans.

Annette ordered a burger, with a side order of a Brisket

Pimento Cheese Egg Roll (truly a mid-western Asian fusion dish). She shared some of it with me and it was tasty. My side to my brisket sandwich was the Brisket Mac and Cheese (one of the most popular orders I am told and for good reason; it was excellent as well). Our food came out quickly, nice and hot, with plenty of napkins and four bottles of barbecue sauces on each table so you can keep dribbling sauce on your sandwich or burger as you eat.



Open Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. (or sold out). In other words, they make it fresh, and when it is gone, well, it's gone. Big Nick's is located at 4720 SE 9th Place, on the northwest corner of Cape Coral Parkway (easy access from both east and west bound on Cape Coral Parkway) with plenty of free parking in the city lot behind (north of) WinTrust Bank. To order online, go to <https://bignicksbbq.toast.site/order/bignicks-barbecue-cape-coral> or try calling (239) 204-2498.

Ed Estes is a retired author, lawyer, professor and real estate broker who enjoys writing for the Sun to legitimize his dining at Cape Coral restaurants. If you'd like Ed to visit your restaurant for a future publication you can contact him at edestesjr@gmail.com.



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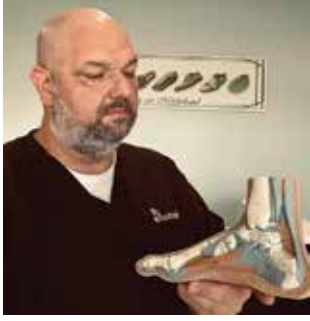


See Patient Stories

Ask The Foot Pro

By Chris, Licensed and Certified Pedorthist

Welcome to my column, Ask The Foot Pro. My name is Chris Hoppenworth, and I am an orthopedic shoemaker from Germany with 30 years of experience – the third generation in my family to carry on this profession. In 2024, I moved my entire workshop to beautiful Southwest Florida, along with my wonderful wife and our two children.



Today's Topic: Diabetic Neuropathy

Living in Southwest Florida, we're no strangers to the health challenges that come with our climate and lifestyle. As a licensed and certified pedorthist, one condition I frequently see impacting our community is diabetes – particularly when it leads to neuropathy in the feet.



Diabetic neuropathy is a type of nerve damage caused by prolonged elevated blood sugar levels. It often begins subtly, with tingling, numbness, or a burning sensation in the feet. Over time, this loss of sensation can become dangerous. When you can't feel pain or pressure, even a small blister, callus, or cut can go unnoticed – and untreated. In Florida's warm, often sandal-friendly environment, that risk only increases.

This is where pedorthic care plays a critical role. My job focuses on protecting the foot, redistributing pressure, and preventing injury through properly fitted footwear and custom orthotic devices. Many patients are surprised to learn that something as simple as the wrong pair of shoes can lead to serious complications when neuropathy is present.

Foot deformities, pressure points, and uneven gait patterns are common in individuals with diabetes. Without proper support, these issues can create high-pressure areas that break down skin and lead to ulcers. Once an ulcer forms, healing becomes more complicated – in severe cases, it can lead to infection or even amputation.

Prevention is key. Diabetic patients should inspect their feet daily, keep skin clean and moisturized (but dry between the toes), and never ignore changes such as redness, swelling, or sores. Regular visits to healthcare providers – including pedorthists – can make a significant difference.

Proper footwear is not a luxury; it's a medical necessity. Shoes should fit well, provide adequate depth, and minimize friction. Custom orthotics can help offload pressure and accommodate deformities, reducing the risk of breakdown. Importantly, Medicare often covers therapeutic diabetic shoes and custom-molded insoles at little to no cost for eligible patients – yet many people are unaware this benefit exists.

In Cape Coral, where staying active and enjoying the outdoors is part of everyday life, protecting your feet means preserving your independence. Neuropathy doesn't have to limit your lifestyle – but it does require awareness and proactive care.

If you or a loved one has diabetes, don't wait for a problem to appear. Pay attention to your feet – carry you through life, and with the right care, they can keep doing so safely.



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No Veteran Left Behind

The Story That Started It All

By Fabian Flores

Almost three years ago, I served my first veteran: John M., a Vietnam veteran in North Fort Myers. His wife had been placed in assisted living three years earlier. Every week he drove to visit her, even after his driver's license was revoked. Why? He loved her so much that he hoped to bring her home, though she no longer recognized him.



He used to share a joke his wife once told him: "John, I love you so much I don't care that you're fat and ugly." He'd smile and say, "I'm no longer fat, I'm only ugly." His neighbors told me he lost so much weight after his wife left. In her absence, his house became infested with bed bugs. Depression hit him hard, and he stopped caring for his home.

When I met him, he was fragile. He didn't know he qualified for VA benefits like home care. I explained the process, but I didn't accompany him to the clinic. The bed bug issue grew worse. After weeks and multiple calls, a pest control company gave us an estimate: nearly \$5,000. He had no money. I eventually learned of an organization that helps veterans called Mission United. They raised 100% of the funds. That act of solidarity struck me. I also learned it wasn't isolated. Mission United has helped multiple veterans for many years, quietly stepping in when families and systems fall short. The veteran community in Lee County is incredibly cohesive. His house was fully fumigated, cleaned, and livable again. But he lost all his furniture. Worse, his car was finally taken away. It had been his

only way to see his wife. Anxiety and depression consumed him. He stopped answering the phone. He was supposed to return to the VA clinic. A few days later, I learned he had passed away.

Regret hit me hard. Should I quit? Is this right for me? I failed this veteran. I wish I had known I could refer him to Lee Tran Passport for transportation, or Hearts and Homes for Veterans for furniture. I didn't quit. Almost three years later, I've helped more than 224 veterans' secure care. Now I accompany them to the VA clinic and stay with them until they're safe at home with quality services like Senior Helpers. I don't just explain the process. I walk it with them.

Lee County is home to more than 52,000 veterans. Over 300 senior veterans face hospital discharge each year without adequate caregiver support. That gap costs our healthcare system billions in avoidable expenses and costs veterans their dignity, health, and sometimes their lives.

That's why I created Community Bridge of Southwest Florida: to close those gaps and connect veterans with resources through a more holistic approach to healthcare. Transportation, housing, benefits, furniture, home care. No veteran should have to navigate it alone.

I wish my first experience had been successful. But it pushed me to do what I do now: prevent this from happening again. This column is to share these stories, hoping to find more like-minded people and organizations willing to join efforts and make Lee County a place where we never leave a veteran behind.

Fabian Flores is a healthcare navigator and outreach coordinator serving Southwest Florida veterans. He bridges veterans to VA benefits, in-home care, and greater independence through personalized assessments and care plans. He has secured thousands of weekly home-care hours for hundreds of Lee County veterans.

May Fun Facts

May, named for the Roman goddess of fertility, Maia, is the fifth month with 31 days and is strongly associated with spring, growth, and flowers.



1. The Empire State Building opened (May 1, 1931), the Golden Gate Bridge opened (May 27, 1937), and Alan Shepard became the first American in space (May 5, 1961).

2. May is the only month that never starts or ends on the same day of the week as any other month.

3. Cinco de Mayo (May 5) celebrates the Mexican

stating: "Marry in May and you'll rue the day."

5. The emerald, which represents love and success, is May's birthstone. The birth flower is the Lily of the Valley.

army's victory over the French at the Battle of Puebla in 1862. Mother's Day is celebrated in the United States on the second Sunday of May. Memorial Day is celebrated in the United States on the last Monday of May to honor military personnel who died in service.

4. It was once considered bad luck to get married in May, with an old proverb

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Concur Or Object: Differing Viewpoints From Diverse Attorneys

One Flag, Two Views

One City, One Flag: A Beacon Of Freedom

By Robson D.C. Powers, Esq.

Cape Coral stands at a rare crossroads where symbolism and community identity can align in a meaningful, lasting way. The proposed 250-foot flagpole at Bernice Braden Park is not an act of excess; it is an act of intention. This project represents a visible commitment to our shared American values at a time when they are too often fragmented.



At 250 feet, this structure is designed to be the tallest freestanding flagpole in Florida, flying a massive 80-by-150 foot American-made banner. Illuminated to be visible across the region, it will serve as a constant reminder of our national heritage. The initial \$420,000 cost of installing the flag is expected to be funded through donations.

Across Florida, even the most prominent displays often fall short in height and presence. While commercial flags along our highways serve a brand, this project serves our national identity. Positioned at the foot of the Cape Coral Bridge, it will be the first thing people see as they enter our city. It will be a landmark that defines who we are and what we stand for.

A flag of this scale is more than fabric; it is a tribute to America's 250th anniversary and a salute to the veterans and families who call our community home. As Cape

Coral experiences rapid growth, we must ensure we don't lose the patriotic spirit that draws people here in the first place. Large civic symbols have always functioned as the glue for a community, creating gathering points and a shared sense of place. This flag will stand as a permanent reminder that we are part of something larger than ourselves. It will be a tangible reminder of our history and a shining beacon for our future.

Cape Coral should raise it.

Substance Over Symbols: Putting Our People First

By Kara B. Rogers, Esq.

A flag is a powerful reminder of our history, but it is not a substitute for our values. When we prioritize an expensive symbol over the very people that symbol is meant to honor, we aren't practicing patriotism, we are practicing performance. Symbols are meant to inspire action; they should never become a distraction from the tangible struggles of our neighbors.

It is easy to salute a flag, but it is much harder to support the families who have sacrificed everything for it. With inflation on the rise, Cape Coral is home to numerous veterans and Gold Star families who are struggling to make ends meet. Money which has been donated to erect this symbolic flag could have been used to support the many wonderful local charities that provide direct support for our nation's heroes, like the



Brotherhood of Heroes Resource Center & Museum, which provides regular food distributions in collaboration with the Gunterberg Foundation and Midwest Foodbank and cooperates with other community organizations to provide support to our local military and first responders, whether active duty or retired.

We should also be concerned about the reality of funding a project of this scope. The city has already wired \$420,000.00 for the flag contract into escrow, but to date only \$306,053 has been raised towards the initial cost. Even assuming that the remaining funds can be raised for the initial contract, we cannot ignore the long-term reality of the costs of maintaining this flag, including the cost of maintaining LED lights and halyard repairs, as well as replacement flags which are anticipated to cost \$14,000 each. Even assuming donations can sustain the upkeep of the flag, which is uncertain at best, this creates a massive ongoing expense that could otherwise be devoted to providing direct assistance to our veterans and first responders.

So, I find myself asking the question: what truly honors the sacrifices of our nation's heroes? Is it a massive, ostentatious display of fabric, or a community that ensures these sacrifices are met with tangible care? Personally, I would choose the latter.

Robson D.C. Powers, Esq. and Kara B. Rogers, Esq. are the founders of Powers & Rogers, PLLC located at 615 Cape Coral Pkwy. W., Suite 206, Cape Coral, FL. Both have been selected as Rising Stars by Super Lawyers, a recognition bestowed on only 2.5% of attorneys in the state. They practice in civil litigation including business, real estate, construction, and probate litigation.

Disclaimer: Nothing contained herein should be construed as legal advice. You should always consult an attorney for any legal questions.

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Roman Roofing: Cape Coral's Trusted Leader In Quality, Craftsmanship, And Community Commitment

In Southwest Florida, where weather conditions can shift from sunshine to storms in an instant, homeowners and businesses need a roofing partner they can depend on. Roman Roofing Inc., headquartered in Cape Coral, has earned that trust through years of outstanding workmanship, exceptional service, and a steadfast commitment to the community. More than just a roofing company, Roman Roofing is a team of dedicated professionals who bring integrity, precision, and heart to every project.



A Workplace Defined By Excellence

Behind every shingle, tile, and metal panel installed by Roman Roofing lies a workforce driven by pride and purpose. The company has built a reputation not only for its high-quality roofing services but also as an exceptional place to work. Employees are empowered, trained to excel, and embraced as part of a company-wide family.

The Customer Care and Internal Sales Teams exemplify

this strong workplace culture. Known for their professionalism, knowledge, and compassion, they serve as the first point of contact for homeowners and businesses seeking guidance. Their dedication ensures every customer receives clear communication and support throughout the roofing process, reinforcing the company's customer-first philosophy.

Roman Roofing invests heavily in its people through regular training sessions, educational opportunities, and team-building events. Leadership prioritizes open communication, competitive benefits, and a healthy work-life balance. This supportive environment enables employees to grow, innovate, and deliver exceptional service to the community.

Production Team: Precision In Action

Just as vital to Roman Roofing's success is its talented production team. Their hands-on approach ensures that every roofing project meets the highest standards of craftsmanship and safety. The company utilizes job site supervisors and a dedicated team of skilled W-2 craftsmen, setting them apart from many competitors who rely solely on subcontractors. This structure provides accountability, consistency, and superior results.

Each roof is installed with meticulous care, using premium materials engineered to withstand Florida's severe weather conditions – from scorching sun to hurricane-force winds. The production team also prioritizes homeowner comfort, taking extra steps to make the installation or repair process smooth, transparent, and stress-free.

Full-Service Expertise For Every Roofing Need

Roman Roofing has grown into one of Cape Coral's most respected roofing contractors due to its comprehensive lineup of services, including:

- **New Roof Installations:** Built with durable materials for long-term protection
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- **Roof Replacements:** Customized options for aging or compromised systems
- **Commercial Roofing:** Scalable, reliable systems for businesses and facilities



• **Free Inspections and Estimates:** Providing clear, trusted evaluations. Whether working with tile, metal, or shingle roofing systems, Roman Roofing approaches each job with the same level of care and expertise. **Prepared For Florida's Toughest**

Weather

Living in Southwest Florida means staying vigilant about roof health year-round. Roman Roofing emphasizes the importance of regular maintenance to safeguard homes from intense sun exposure, heavy rainfall, and seasonal storms. By staying proactive, homeowners can extend the life of their roofing system and prevent small issues from becoming costly challenges.

The company's thorough inspections and detailed reporting help homeowners understand their roof's condition and make informed decisions about repairs, maintenance, or replacement.

Locally Rooted, Community Focused

Roman Roofing is deeply committed to the Cape Coral community. As a locally owned and operated business, it supports neighborhood initiatives, participates in charitable programs, and sponsors local events. This dedication reflects the company's philosophy that strong businesses help build strong communities.

A Legacy Of Integrity And Trust

What truly elevates Roman Roofing is its unwavering focus on honesty, transparency, and customer satisfaction. From detailed estimates to proactive communication, homeowners always know what to expect. The company is known for delivering on its promises with no hidden costs or surprises.

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Meet The Candidate Florida's 19th Congressional District Candidate – Cape Coral's Mike Pedersen

Mike Pedersen is running for Congress because Southwest Florida deserves a representative who has lived the same challenges as the people he seeks to serve, not someone still learning the community.



A Floridian with deep roots, Pedersen moved to Miami at age 10 and, at 18, earned an appointment to the United States Naval Academy, widely recognized as the nation's top public institution. After graduating, he spent 20 years as a United States Marine Corps flight officer. He completed TOPGUN before it became a household name, flew combat missions in Desert Storm, and held above a Top-Secret clearance. His career was defined by strength, discipline, and firsthand knowledge of what weak leadership can cost.

After military service, Pedersen returned to Florida and has called Cape Coral home for 27 years. His children attended local public schools and graduated from Florida Gulf Coast University. Living on a Gulf-access canal, he has boated and fished Southwest Florida's waters and witnessed the impact of Lake Okeechobee releases on the local environment and economy. He has driven the roads, seen rapid growth, and understands the strain on infrastructure. He does not need a briefing on this region. He has lived it.

As a homeowner, he has weathered eight hurricanes. He understands what it means to board up windows, file claims, rebuild, and absorb the relentless rise in insurance premiums that are crushing Florida families.

Pedersen is also in his 23rd year coaching wrestling at Mariner High School. For two decades, he served as a Naval Academy Admissions Liaison Officer, mentoring students through one of the nation's most competitive application processes. He has visited every high school in the district and founded a free youth wrestling program in Cape Coral. Investing in young people remains central to his belief that strong communities begin with strong kids.

In Congress, Pedersen pledges to secure the border, restore fiscal discipline, protect our Second Amendment, strengthen the military, and defend Southwest Florida's water, infrastructure, to include the UEP, and our way of life.

Combat-tested, community-proven, and Florida-rooted, Mike Pedersen is running to be a true representative for Southwest Florida and would be honored to earn the community's support.

Candidate profiles published by The Cape Coral Sun are informational and do not constitute as an endorsement.

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Professionals Connect Council Hosts Design And Development Event, Donates \$1,000 To Inspiring My Generation

By Adela Beqo

Professionals Connect Council (PCC), a Southwest Florida-based professional development and community-impact organization, recently hosted its Design and Development Networking Event. The event was held at Quality Stones, a premier showroom known for its high-end stone slabs for countertops and its strong presence within the local design and construction community.



The event brought together a strong group of active multifamily developers, interior designers, architects, construction professionals and business owners. Attendees connected, exchanged ideas, and built relationships within Southwest Florida's growing development community.

The evening reflected PCC's mission to create meaningful connections while supporting local causes. As part of this effort, PCC donated \$1,000 to Inspiring My Generation, a preventive suicide awareness nonprofit founded by Francesca Reicherter.

Through the organization's Encouragement Card Program, volunteers have created over 30,000 handmade cards for patients in psychiatric units, each delivering messages of hope and connection during difficult times. Francesca is also developing a K-12 emotional wellness curriculum with guided workbooks already being introduced in schools. These resources help students build self-awareness, resilience and healthy coping skills.

"Events like Design and Development are about more



Adela Beqo, founder of PCC and Rishi Pasham, owner of Quality Stones

than networking," said PCC founder Adela Beqo. "They bring professionals together with purpose supporting both industry growth and organizations making a real impact in our community."

Through its events and partnerships, Professionals Connect Council continues to bridge business and philanthropy, creating opportunities for collaboration, growth and lasting community impact.

Adela Beqo is a visionary entrepreneur, community builder, and the founder of the Professional Connect Council (PCC), a Southwest Florida platform dedicated to transforming professional networking into purposeful collaboration and community impact.

With a background in business development and international engagement, Adela brings a global perspective and a deep sense of purpose to every initiative she leads. Her past involvement with global and community organizations, including the British Council, the German-American Chamber of Commerce, and the World Affairs Council, reflects her belief that leadership begins with service and that connection is the foundation of progress.

In addition to her work with PCC, Adela continues to play a strategic role at Lifestyle Homes For Less, a family-owned Cape Coral homebuilding company recognized among the area's top builders. Her experience in brand growth, partnerships, and community relations continues to guide her mission of building bridges between business success and philanthropy.

Adela's purpose is clear: to inspire collaboration, empower leadership, and cultivate a community where professionalism and purpose thrive together.



Attendees gather at Professionals Connect Council's Design and Development Networking Event at Quality Stones in Fort Myers

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Local Organizations Work To Fill Summer Meal Gap For Kids

As summer approaches in Cape Coral, families across the community are preparing for longer days, warmer weather, and a break from the school routine. For many children, however, the end of the school year brings more than just free time – it also means the loss of reliable, school-provided meals.



During the academic year, thousands of students depend on breakfast and lunch programs to meet their daily nutritional needs. When schools close for summer, that safety net disappears, leaving many families struggling to fill the gap. This seasonal challenge, often referred to as “summer hunger,” affects children who may not always have access to consistent, healthy meals at home.

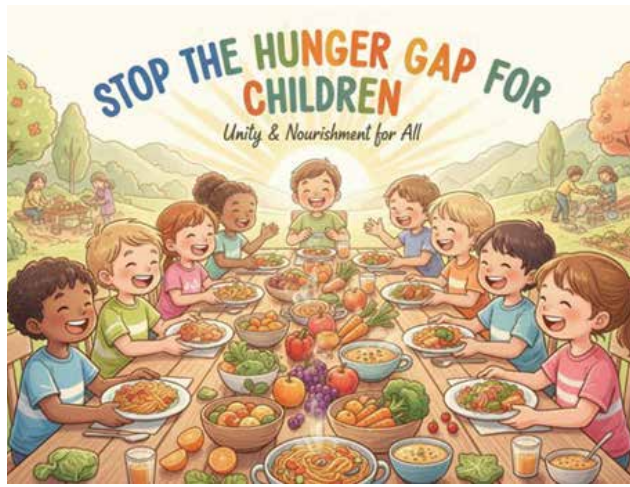
In a growing community like Cape Coral, where many households are already feeling the strain of rising food costs, the need becomes even more urgent. Children who do not receive proper nutrition are at risk of experiencing not only physical hunger but also setbacks in learning and development. Without regular meals, their ability to stay healthy, active, and prepared for the next school year can be compromised.

Fortunately, local organizations are stepping up to help bridge this gap – and they are calling on the community to do the same. Groups like Cape Coral for the Children (www.capecoralforthechildren.org) are actively working to provide kid-friendly food bags filled with easy-to-prepare, nutritious items. These bags are designed specifically for children to use when school meals are no longer available, particularly on weekends and throughout the summer months.

In addition, regional partners such as Harry Chapin Food Bank (www.harrychapinfoodbank.org) play a critical role in distributing food across Southwest Florida, including Cape Coral. Through partnerships with local agencies, they help ensure that food reaches families who need it most.

Local efforts continue to expand with organizations like Cape Coral Caring Center (www.capecoralcaringcenter.org) which is currently hosting a food drive through an Amazon wish list. This initiative allows community members to conveniently purchase much-needed items online and have them shipped directly to the organization, making it easier than ever to contribute to the fight against child hunger.

Community members can make a meaningful difference by donating nonperishable, kid-friendly items such as peanut butter, cereal, canned pasta, fruit cups, and snack packs. These simple contributions can go a long way in helping a child get through the day without hunger.



There are also opportunities to volunteer time – whether it’s packing food bags, assisting with distribution events, or helping to organize local food drives. Every effort, big or small, contributes to a larger network of support that helps protect the well-being of children in the community.

As summer begins, it’s easy to focus on vacations, camps, and time off from school. But for many local families, this season brings added stress and uncertainty. By coming together as a community, Cape Coral residents have the opportunity to ensure that no child goes hungry simply because school is out.

Supporting local hunger relief programs is more than an act of charity – it’s an investment in the health, growth, and future of the community’s youngest residents.

Free Summer Meal Sites (BreakSpot / School District Program)

One of the biggest supports in the area is the federally funded Summer BreakSpot program, run through the School District of Lee County. It provides free breakfast and lunch for all children ages 18 and under, no registration required.

In Cape Coral, several park locations typically serve meals during the summer, including:

- Four Freedoms Park
- Gator Trails Park
- Del Prado Linear Park
- Paul Sanborn Park

These sites usually operate on weekday schedules and allow children to simply show up during mealtimes. Meals must generally be eaten on site.

The 2026 Summer BreakSpot site map will be available on May 15. Visit www.summerbreakspot.org/find-location to sign up for notifications and be the first to know when the map goes live.

We look forward to a great summer of working alongside our community partners to provide nutritious meals to Florida children.

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Real Estate Corner

What Home Sellers Expect This Spring Versus What The Data Shows In Cape Coral

By Kirstin Moll

We have officially entered the 2026 spring housing market, and for many homeowners nationally, there is a sense of optimism in the air.

According to the latest Spring Seller Survey from Realtor.com, sellers are heading into the season with high expectations.



But as we transition into a more nuanced market, there is a gap between what sellers expect and what the national data actually shows. So, let's pull back the curtain on the national "Expectation vs. Reality" and look at how our local market compares.

Pricing: What Sellers Expect Vs. Reality

Nationally, seller price expectations are running high. The survey found that 83% of those planning to sell in the next 12 months expect to receive at least their full asking price, if not more:

- 46% of sellers expect to receive their asking price
- 37% expect to exceed it

• Only 12% anticipate settling for less than their list price
That optimism isn't entirely unfounded, especially in tight markets. But it does require getting the price right from the start. Homes that are overpriced tend to sit longer, which invites skepticism from buyers and often leads to price reductions down the road – a cycle that's much harder to recover from than simply pricing accurately on day one.

Cape Coral Sale-To-List Price Ratio

While 83% of sellers nationally expect to receive their full asking price or more, here's what's happening here in Cape Coral, Florida:

In Q1 2026, homes in Cape Coral sold for 96.5% of their list price on average, showing that buyers here are less willing to hit that full asking price.

Days On Market: Timing Expectations Vs. Reality

Three-quarters of potential sellers nationally expect to be under contract within four months, and 27% expect their home to sell within just one to two months.

So, what is the reality? The national median days on market is currently 57 days according to the Realtor.com March 2026 Monthly Housing Report, so most sellers' timelines are within range.

Cape Coral Days On Market

In Cape Coral, the current median days on market for Q1 2026 was 90 days. That's well above the national average, meaning buyers have more options, and taking their time and pricing competitively is key.

A Few More Things Worth Knowing

Beyond price and timing, the 2026 survey surfaces a few other trends that are shaping the seller experience this spring:

Concessions are becoming more common. The share of sellers who expect to make concessions has risen to 39% in 2026, up from 30% in 2025. That 9-point jump is a signal that sellers are becoming more realistic about the give-and-take of today's market, even if their headline price expectations remain high. Concessions might include covering a portion of closing costs, including a home warranty, or agreeing to repairs after inspection.

Preparation pays off. Among sellers who feel most confident about their outcome, the most common actions taken were researching comparable prices (54%), making small fixes and decluttering (50%), and identifying needed home improvements (44%). Sellers who invest a little time upfront tend to get better results.

The bottom line? Seller optimism this spring is largely well-placed, but the sellers who convert that confidence into successful closings will be the ones who ground their expectations in local data, price strategically from the start, and are prepared for a bit of negotiation. Cape Coral is nearing the end of season and towards the slower summer months. You'll need a strong pricing and marketing strategy to make the most of it!

Before you go: here are the stats on the real estate market in Cape Coral this month:

- Median Sale Price:** \$462,000 vs. \$489,000 last year
- Price Per Square Feet:** 240 | -46.38% 1Y Change
- Average Days on Market:** 90 Days. +8.97 1Y Change
- Median Rent:** \$2,035/month -9.56% 1Y Change

Until next month, Kirstin Moll
Kirstin made the move from Missouri to the sunny shores of Southwest Florida in 2015 and has been proud to call it home ever since. Before stepping into the world of real estate, she honed her skills as a marketing director for a real estate company and then moved on to be a creative director, designing campaigns for some of the top companies in the country. Kirstin's background in marketing and design gives her a unique edge in showcasing properties in their best light. Kirstin is passionate about providing a full-service luxury experience for every client, whether buying or selling. From the initial consultation to closing, she ensures that every detail is meticulously handled, delivering a seamless and elevated process tailored to meet each client's needs. Please contact Kirstin at (573) 450-3181 or email with any questions to realestate@kirstinmoll.com.

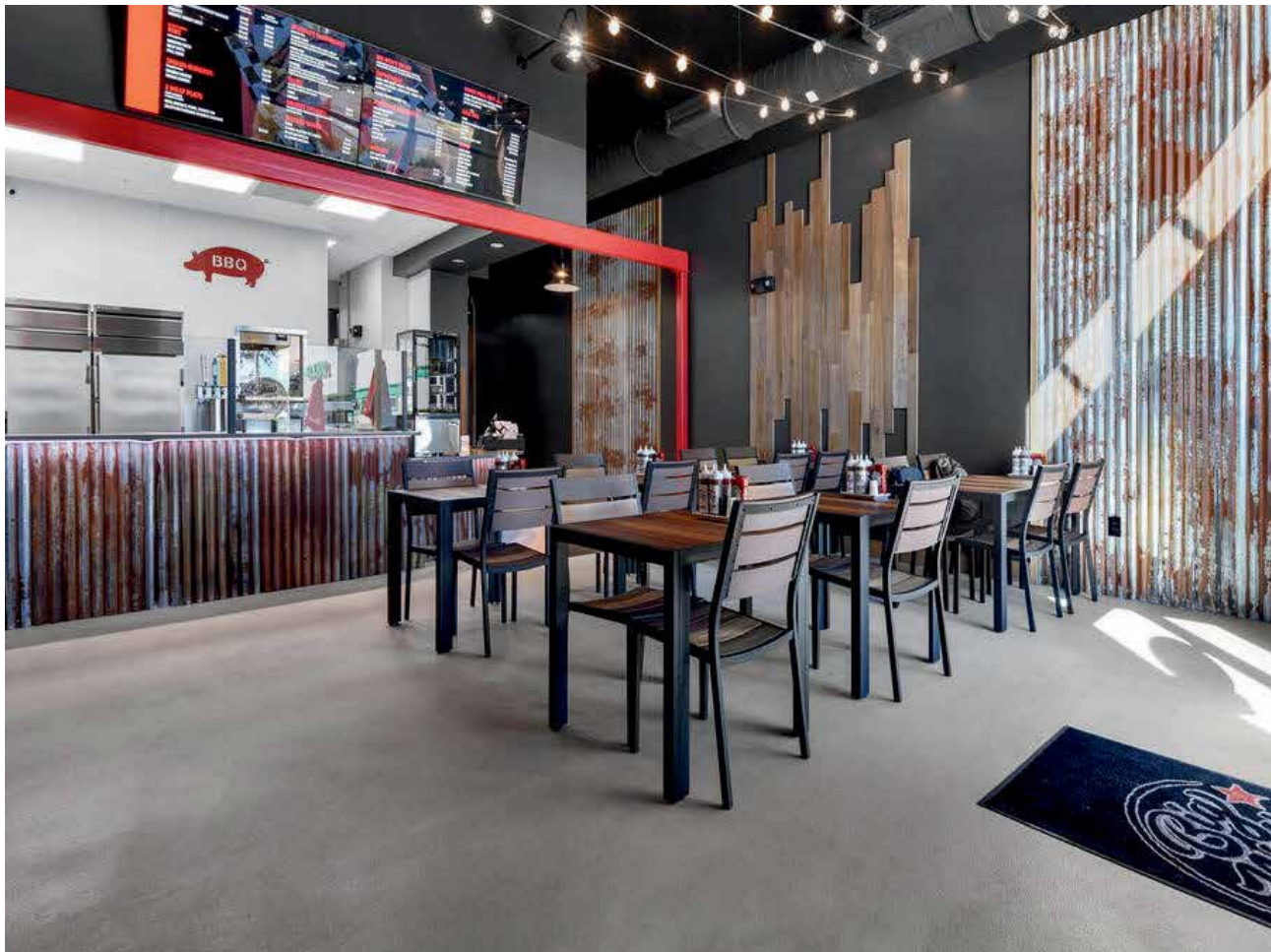
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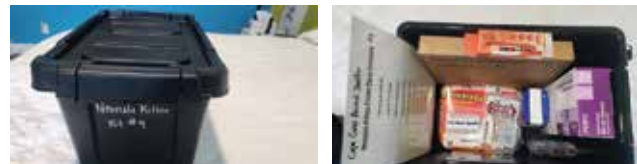
Cape Coral Animal Shelter Receives Lifesaving Grant — From Orphan Kitten Club Just In Time For “Kitten Season”

The Cape Coral Animal Shelter (CCAS) is proud to announce it has received a generous grant from the Orphan Kitten Club, providing critical resources to care for the most vulnerable feline population – neonate kittens – just in time for the start of “kitten season.”

This lifesaving funding will directly support the shelter’s neonatal kitten program, equipping foster caregivers with essential supplies and specialized tools needed to care for kittens from birth to eight weeks old – an age when survival depends on intensive, around-the-clock care. The grant, which included a financial contribution of \$1,105 and vital equipment such as neonatal kits, will allow CCAS to expand its capacity to save fragile kittens who would otherwise be at high risk.



Each neonatal kitten kit is thoughtfully assembled to give foster caregivers everything they need to successfully raise bottle-fed kittens. Kits include nursing bottles, Miracle Nipples for safe feeding, a digital pet scale to monitor daily weight gain, a microwaveable heating disc to maintain proper body temperature, a digital thermometer, petroleum jelly, a flea comb, disposable gloves, and a blender bottle for formula preparation. These comprehensive kits ensure fosters are fully equipped to provide lifesaving, hands-on care from day one.



In 2025 alone, Cape Coral Animal Shelter cared for 250 kittens under eight weeks old, achieving an impressive 96% live release rate for this highly vulnerable group. The shelter’s growing foster network – now more than 250 families strong – plays a crucial role in this success.

“We are grateful to partner with Orphan Kitten Club, whose commitment to advancing lifesaving care for the most vulnerable population in shelters – neonate kittens – directly empowers us to place fragile neonates into foster homes with the resources they need to survive and thrive,” said Gretchen Cuthbertson, shelter animal processing supervisor.

The timing of this grant is especially impactful as shelters nationwide prepare for the annual influx of kittens known as “kitten season,” when thousands of newborn kittens enter shelters and require specialized care.

Kelly Hartman, foster coordinator, shared her gratitude for support from this national organization. “As a result of their generosity, our foster families are better prepared to respond, nurture and save the lives of fragile neonate kittens.”



Founded with a mission to save the lives of the most vulnerable kittens, Orphan Kitten Club is a nationally recognized nonprofit dedicated to providing lifesaving resources, education, and innovative programs focused on neonatal kitten care. The organization is known for advancing best practices in kitten care, supporting shelters through grant funding, and training caregivers across the country in critical techniques such as bottle-feeding, medical triage, and neonatal support. Through partnerships like this one, Orphan Kitten Club helps shelters increase survival rates for kittens who would otherwise have little chance of making it.

Neonatal kittens – particularly those without a mother – require bottle feeding every two to three hours, careful temperature regulation, and close medical monitoring. Through this partnership, CCAS is better equipped than ever to meet these demands and continue its mission of saving lives.

The Cape Coral Animal Shelter remains committed to expanding its neonatal kitten program, training additional bottle-baby fosters, and ensuring every kitten – no matter how small – has a chance to survive and thrive.

About Cape Coral Animal Shelter

Cape Coral Animal Shelter is a nonprofit organization dedicated to sheltering and finding homes for animals in need while promoting responsible pet ownership through education, community outreach, and compassionate care. The mission of the Cape Coral Animal Shelter is to engage a special bond between people and animals by means of adoption services, medical care, education, and training for the prevention of cruelty and abandonment. We provide a safe place where animals will remain in our care until they are placed in qualified, forever homes.



A Chilling Psychological Thriller Live On Stage!

Tension builds and nerves fray in the Off Broadway Palm’s production of *Misery*, playing April 17 through May 23, 2026. Based on the acclaimed novel by Stephen King, this gripping thriller delivers edge-of-your-seat suspense, shocking twists, and unforgettable performances.



After a devastating car accident during a winter storm, famous romance novelist Paul Sheldon awakens in the remote home of his self-proclaimed “number one fan,” Annie Wilkes. At first, Annie seems like a devoted caretaker, but it quickly becomes clear that her admiration hides a far more dangerous obsession. As Paul struggles to recover and secretly plots his escape, Annie’s unpredictable behavior escalates into a terrifying battle of wills.

Starring Jenny Smith and Paul Bernier, *Misery* draws audiences into a claustrophobic world of suspense where every moment tightens the grip of fear. With intense performances, gripping dialogue, and shocking moments, this stage adaptation faithfully captures the psychological terror that made the story a classic.

Performances are Wednesday through Sunday

evenings with select matinees. The Off Broadway Palm, located inside Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre, offers a full meal and show experience in an intimate setting that puts you close to the action.

Tickets are on sale now and can be reserved by calling (239) 278-4422, visiting BroadwayPalm.com, or stopping by the box office at 1380 Colonial Boulevard in Fort Myers.

Content Advisory: *Misery* contains strong language, intense psychological suspense, gun shots, and scenes of violence. Some moments may be disturbing. This production is recommended for mature audiences.



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Remember When ...

The Land That Became Cape Coral

By Wendy Schroder, Past President Cape Coral Historical Society and Ron Sindaco, Docent Cape Coral Museum of History

Who owned the land before it became Cape Coral? Brother's Jack and Leonard Rosen purchased the land now known as Cape Coral from several individuals. The foresight the brothers had to create such a development cannot be matched. So, who were those individuals that owned the land that is now called the City of Cape Coral.

The first piece of land that became Cape Coral's downtown area was originally owned by Dr. Franklin Miles from Elkhart, Ind. Dr. Miles founded and owned Miles Laboratories, also based in Elkhart. You may be familiar with some of his most famous products: Alka-Seltzer and One-A-Day vitamins. He passed away in 1929, followed by his wife Elizabeth in 1941. After Elizabeth's death, ownership of the properties transferred to their children. Dr. Miles' daughter, Louise Miles Bass, shared that her father bought the land for about \$0.75 per acre. The properties were eventually purchased from the Miles Estate. On July 28, 1957, Granville Keller represented nine other heirs in selling 1,781 acres of land at \$375 per acre, totaling \$678,000.



Dr. Franklin Miles Founder Owner Miles Laboratories

The Miles also became friendly with another famous Fort Myers' resident, Thomas Edison. The two met after Dr. Miles and his wife Elisabeth Ann first purchased a home in Fort Myers in 1908-1909. The two often shared discussions about mutual interests and hobbies during their years in Fort Myers.

The next property belonged to Ogden and Lillian Bostwick Phipps, who were from Florida's East Coast. Mr. Phipps was distinguished as a Carnegie Steel heir and a highly successful investment banker, renowned



1959 Aerial Cape Coral



1965 Aerial Cape Coral



1970 Aerial Cape Coral

for his involvement in the ownership, breeding, and racing of champion-thoroughbred horses. Mrs. Phipps was also notable for her steeple-chase racehorse ownership and her prominent family background; her grandfather, Jabez A. Bostwick, was one of John D. Rockefeller's founding partners at Standard Oil Company. Driven by his passion for hunting and fishing, Mr. Phipps intended the estate to serve as a private hunting preserve. The property, which included guest houses, was managed by his resident guide, F.F. "Fingers" O'Bannon.



Lillian Bostwick Phipps



Black Helen and Ogden Phipps. Photo courtesy of Keeneland Library Thoroughbred Times Collection

Leonard Rosen chose the Miles property for its location next to a large area of land to the west. Reports varied on the Phipps' property size: *News-Press* listed 2,100 acres in 1957, realtor James Fortiner recalled 1,721 acres, Rosen said 1,781 acres, and the deed recorded 1,724 acres. On Nov. 19, 1957, the Rosens also bought a nearby 320-acre tract from the Phipps.



Jack and Leonard Rosen

Further acquisitions occurred on Sept. 28, 1959, including a significant parcel facilitated by Lilly Pulitzer (daughter of Lillian Phipps), known for her resort-inspired fashion brand. This purchase comprised of 16,181 acres, now recognized as West Cape Coral, extending from Santa Barbara Boulevard west to Matlacha Pass and from Pine Island Road south to the Caloosahatchee River.

Cape Coral's development depended on acquiring large, continuous plots from willing sellers; the Rosen Brothers would have faced obstacles with only smaller parcels. Some local landowners opposed their plans and refused to sell.



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Business Spotlight

Trebing Tile & Carpet

By Ryn Gargulinski

Walk into Trebing Tile & Carpet and you'll be floored – both literally and figuratively.

Literally from the massive selection of high-quality tile, carpet, service and repair options that have made the decades-strong business the biggest tile, carpet and LVT (luxury vinyl tile) showroom in Cape Coral.

The place is actually breathtaking enough for two weddings to have been hosted there. And it's not a surprise that people would choose to get married in the shop based on the philosophy of the entire business. That's where being floored figuratively comes in.

The business was built out of hard work, sure. But it was also built on a foundation of integrity and customer service that remains the driving force behind all they do – and how they do it.

"We want to treat your home like it's ours," said Julia Trebing Miller, daughter of business founders Ralf and Heike Trebing. Julia has been at the helm since her parents semi-retired, parents who launched the shop out of their garage when they first moved from Germany to the Cape in 1989. Julia and her brother grew up in the family business. Whether they were pulling weeds, answering phones or just helping out around the shop, it had always been part of their daily lives.

"At the time, it just felt normal," Julia said, "but looking back, I realize how much I was learning without even knowing it."

Hard work. Math. Customer relationships. What it takes to run a business. And something that can only be taught by example: that deep compassion, caring and personal touch that too many modern corporations trade for automated operations steeped in mediocrity.

"We put so much time and attention and energy into every single customer," Julia said, "whether it's one tile repair, just a bag of grout, or a whole house. I lose sleep if someone's order is delayed or we forgot to select a grout color. My dad loses sleep trying to come up with a solution to or reason for someone's buckling floor or leaky balcony."

Some team members show up at 6:30 a.m. everyday business day, and it's not uncommon for them to stay late to wait for a truck that's not on schedule.



After a leak into a bathroom remodel and everything was gutted, the tile I selected for the inset backsplash ended up being unavailable and left me hunting high and low for the perfect mosaic tile to use. I walked into Trebing and the girls were extremely helpful. They not only found the perfect tile but were able to get it ordered to be here before the contractor needed it and I felt like they were just as excited as I was to save the day and generally wanted to see how it turned out.

"A customer's satisfaction with what we did and how we did it is so important to all of us," Julia said. "I would rather not sell you something at all, then have you unhappy when it's all said and done."

"We joke around that my dad lives, breathes tile – and it's 24/7 for him. We inherited that from him. Our family actually created a rule for nights and weekends: the first person to bring up a customer or work has to take a shot. My dad loses most of the time!"

In short, the dedication they bring to the business is not just a mission statement plastered on a website. It's a way of being that emanates from their very souls.

In addition to providing flooring materials, repairs and services, Trebing Tile & Carpet also gives back to the community. The business sponsors many local schools and sports teams, as well as organizations such as the Cape Coral Animal Shelter, the PTSD Awareness Summit, and the Cape Coral Police Department's Explorers Program.

"We also love to be a big part of the German American Social Club and their annual Oktoberfest!" Julia added.

Yes, it's an intensely busy schedule. And yes, Julia – who is married with two children and one dog – finds a way to juggle it all. She started full-time in the tile business when she was 19, adding a real estate license to the mix 18 years ago and a general contractor license five years ago.



What's her secret to staying upbeat, energetic and able to get everything done?

"I don't know if I have a true 'secret,'" she said, "but a lot of it starts with strong coffee in the morning and maybe a beer (or two) at night. In all seriousness, it's not always easy balancing everything – being a mom, a wife, running the showroom, selling real estate, being a good friend, daughter, granddaughter, neighbor, every day comes with its own responsibilities and challenges."

"I've learned to take it one day at a time, stay organized, and give myself a little grace when things don't go perfectly – which is hard to do when you have slight OCD and a hard time relaxing."

Staying positive and looking on the bright side of things are lessons she picked up from her parents, as is working hard and continuing to move forward – even on the tough days.

"Family is important," Julia said, "and life is too short to be mad or stressed all the time."

Her favorite aspect of Cape Coral is definitely the overall lifestyle.

"It's just a great place to slow down a little and really enjoy time together. Being around the water and on the sunshine, the warmth, and having that balance between work and family life is huge for us. It feels like a place where you can build both a business and a life, and that's something I don't take for granted. It's been a great place to raise my family."

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Nonprofit Spotlight

17th Annual Guardian Angels For Special Populations Fashion Show

By Ryn Gargulinski

How much love and laughter can you fit into the event space at the Westin Resort & Convention Center at Marina Village? The Guardian Angels for Special Populations found that out at their 17th annual fashion show on March 14.

The center was packed with more than 450 attendees – making it the organization’s largest attended event to date. And that wasn’t the only number worthy of excitement. The total amount raised weighed in at \$87,430, a generous sum that will go toward purchasing a new bus for the organization.

While attendance records and funds raised were huge claims to fame for the event, Special Pops President Mick Sheldrake noted they weren’t the only ones.

When asked about the greatest moment of this year’s gala, he quickly responded: “Seeing the pure joy on our participants’ faces as they walked the red carpet and stage.”

In addition to being the highest-attended event yet, this year’s show featured additional models as well as an outfit change before the grand finale. Outfits were provided by Cape Coral’s Just Lovelee Boutique, adding one more layer of local support to what Mick summed up as “an awesome event.”

Its awesomeness comes from the sheer joy of the entire gathering, of course, as well as “how the entire community embraces our participants and the cause.”

The Guardian Angels for Special Populations is a volunteer nonprofit providing support to the programs at the Cape’s Freida B. Smith Special Populations Center. The funds from this year’s fashion show will be used to purchase a 15-passenger bus with a special wheelchair lift.

“This bus will be used to transport the participants not only back and forth from home to the center,” Mick noted, “but also to different activities and events throughout the county.”

“This bus is another way to provide our participants with safe and secure transportation from staff members, who have a really good working knowledge of our participants very specific needs and home life.”

The Guardian Angels for Special Populations will purchase the vehicle and then donate it to the city, which will then maintain the vehicle as part of its fleet.

“We are extremely grateful to be part of Cape Coral and its community,” Mick said. “The city is exceptional when it comes to embracing our 501(3)(c) nonprofits!”

The city maintains a strong partnership with the organization, which was founded in 1996 to help provide additional resources not covered by the city budget. More than half of the original board of directors were parents of participants, and family members remain an active part of the organization.

The Guardian Angels for Special Populations specifically helps sponsor two distinct programs: Project Independence and the Enclave program. The former teaches life skills and self-sufficiency. The latter focuses on job skills, with participants operating and working at the Pops Café in Cape Coral City Hall.

“We are constantly changing and developing,” Mick said. “We have a great cross-section of community leaders engaged to provide the best experience possible for our participants.”

“Our ultimate vision is to continue to set the example of a program that helps enhance the lives of everyone involved.”

The lives of the special-needs population served by the organization are definitely enhanced, program participants




Guardian Angels for Special Populations
 Donate or Learn More:
 Facebook Page: @ilovespecialpops
 Website: www.myspecialpops.org

have a way of enhancing the lives of everyone they meet. They are known to bring to joy to board members, volunteers and anyone else who has the pleasure of attending events or visiting the center.

“We are a great organization,” Mick said, “and all of the funds raised are used to benefit the participants and program.”

Mick invites readers to visit the organization’s Facebook page @ilovespecialpops and visit the website at myspecialpops.org.



The Future of Cataract Care: In-Office Surgery

Elmquist Eye Group is Leading the Way

By Yasaira Rodriguez, MD

As an ophthalmologist, I've had the privilege of performing sight-restoring surgeries in temporary operating rooms during mission trips, often working in environments with limited resources and equipment. Here in the U.S., we're fortunate to have high standards for care, and I am passionate about continually improving the patient experience. That's why I'm thrilled to announce the launch of our new in-office surgical suite for cataract surgery, where we bring an unparalleled level of convenience, comfort, and precision right into the heart of our practice. Office-based surgery is the next revolution in health care, providing patients with the best possible experience, in a safe, familiar setting.

Cataract surgery has come a long way since Elmquist Eye Group was founded 30 years ago. Originally, these procedures were only performed in hospitals, where patients endured long wait times and very high costs. Eventually, ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) became the standard, and while they helped streamline the process, many ASCs have begun prioritizing higher-revenue procedures, such as orthopedics, over cataract surgery. This shift in focus created a growing need for a new

approach, one where patients could access timely, quality care without having to rely on ASC restrictions.

Today, technological advances have allowed us to bring cataract surgery directly into the office—a concept that would have been unimaginable even five years ago. "Our in-office surgical suite is a testament to how far ophthalmology has come," shared Dr. Kate Wagner, optometrist and managing partner of Elmquist Eye Group. "With this facility, we're not just enhancing efficiency; we're giving patients the ability to undergo life-changing surgery in a comfortable environment—without having to navigate the complications of hospital or ASC scheduling." This new approach means patients experience a seamless process, from consultation to post-operative care, all within one trusted location.

Advanced Technology for Today's Cataract Patient

Our new surgical suite is designed to perform a range of eye surgeries, with cataract procedures as the primary focus. We offer presbyopia-correcting lens implants as well as vision correction for astigmatism, allowing patients to enjoy a broader range of vision after surgery, often able to see well at a broad range of distances without glasses.

In-office cataract surgery is performed without IV sedation, reducing anesthesia costs and the risk of

anesthesia-related complications. This means patients are not required to fast beforehand, eliminating a common point of frustration about the pre-operative process.

And today's sophisticated technologies, like femtosecond lasers and advanced phacoemulsification devices, allow us to perform cataract procedures with an incredible level of precision and minimal recovery time. The combination of these tools improves outcomes, ultimately providing patients with an unprecedented level of care.

Making Advanced Care Accessible

We understand that the cost of innovation often reduces accessibility; however, that would not benefit the patients we serve. We're committed to making in-office cataract surgery affordable, with pricing competitive to that of ASCs and acceptance of most major insurance plans, including Medicare. Patients opting for Lifestyle IOLs, or additional vision correction procedures are provided with upfront, transparent pricing to make informed decisions.

Schedule Your Cataract Evaluation

Our new surgical suite is now open, and we're accepting patients for cataract evaluation. If you or a loved one is considering cataract surgery, we'd love to walk you through your options and how this new approach can make a difference. Schedule your evaluation by calling 239-350-4696 or visiting Elmquist.com

For over 30 years, Elmquist Eye Group has provided expert eye care anchored in excellent service. Our combination of experience, compassionate care and proven results is unparalleled. If you'd like to schedule an appointment with Yasi Rodriguez, M.D.; Kate Wagner, O.D.; or Nina Burt, O.D., please call (239) 350-4696 or visit Elmquist.com.



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COMEDY

PLAY

MATURE AUDIENCES

Free May Events

01
CULTURAL PARK THEATRE
64th Season Announcement
May 16th at 6:00 PM
Your Community. Your Passion. Your Theatre.

May 16th at 6:00 PM

02
ADULT ACTING Showcase
MAY 27th AT 7:00 PM
FREE EVENT

May 27th at 7:00 PM

03
ADULT SUMMER CAMP
Welcome to Camp ACTAWANNA, Cultural Park Theatre's adults-only summer camp where the wine is poured, the drama is on purpose, and the nostalgia is real.
JUNE 17th - AUGUST 5th WEDNESDAYS FROM 7-9 PM
Registration \$280

Summer Program
June 17th -August 5th

Friends Of The Cape Coral Library

Children's Art Awards And Black Bear Program May 13

On Wednesday evening May 13 from 6 to 7 p.m., the 20th Annual Children's Environmental Art Contest Awards Ceremony was held in the large meeting room at the Cape Coral Library. This year's theme was "Protect Our Florida Black Bears," and young artists age 5 through 12 were asked to create an original painting or drawing that shows how we can protect this precious species from habitat loss, trophy hunting and other main threats. A panel of judges selected the winning entries based on four different age categories. The public was encouraged to join youngsters, parents, families, teachers and members of the community at this popular yearly event and enjoy some refreshments.



Black Bear photo by Jean Blom



Black Bear photo by Jan Stefka

Applaud the children as the winners accept their awards. Hear a fascinating presentation about Florida Black Bears by keynote speaker Cris Costello, State Campaign Director for Sierra Club of Florida. The contest is sponsored by the Friends of the Cape Coral Library and the Cape Coral-Lee County Public Library. The 20 pieces of awarded artwork was framed and on display in the Art Gallery of the Cape Coral Library on the night of the Awards Ceremony on May 13, and the exhibit will remain in place through June 25. Photos of the winning art entries can also be viewed by visiting www.capefriends.org/art-gallery.

Friends Of Cape Coral Library Had Another Successful Book Sale Fundraiser!

The Friends of the Cape Coral Library Spring Book Sale fundraiser held in April was a big success thanks to everyone in the community who donated books, our many wonderful members who volunteered for the sale as well as year round,



Crafters made beautiful items made of repurposed books for the sale.



Shoppers at the spring book sale



Joanne and Sandy at member preview check-in



Book Sale greeters Ann and Joy



Gail at the garden club table during the book sale



Karen and Flo helped with the Florida book section.



Barb helped with special books at the sale.



Bob C. and Bob F. were a big help at the book sale.



the local media who helped get the word out, and all the book lovers who came to shop in the large meeting room of the Cape Coral Library. Proceeds from the event will be used to support the local public library branch. Visit www.capefriends.org or follow us on Facebook for updates about the next book sale.



Some of our wonderful volunteers posed on book sale set-up day.

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Dex Imaging - Christine Plimpton, Information Technology, 24031 Tamiami Trl., Bonita Springs, FL 34134, www.deximaging.com, (630) 317-4495.



Frantz EyeCare - Jonathan M. Frantz, M.D., FACS, Eye Care, 2301 Del Prado Blvd. S., #630, Cape Coral, FL 33990, www.bettervision.net, (239) 418-0999.



Seed and Bean Market, Café, 4720 SE 9th Pl., Suite 300, Cape Coral, FL 33904, (239) 471-7339.



Schulte Construction Inc, Hurricane Protection, 210 Del Prado Blvd., Suite 6, Cape Coral, FL 33990, www.Callsci.com, (239) 313-9883.



Richard "Rick" Erickson Campaign for Cape Coral Mayor 2026, Political Campaign, www.ericksonformayor.com, (239) 788-7431.



Jeremiah's Italian Ice of Cape Coral, Ice Cream, 2209 Santa Barbara Blvd., Unit 101, Cape Coral, FL 33991, <https://jeremiahsice.com/locations/cape-coral-fl>, (239) 471-0791.



Germany Travel V.I.P., Travel Agency, www.germanytravel.vip.



The Gallery at Cape Coral, Assisted Living, 2307 Chiquita Blvd. S., Cape Coral, FL 33991, <https://gallerysriving.com/communities/the-gallery-at-cape-coral>, (239) 317-7555.



Choppers Hair Garage, Barber Shop, 1511 NE Pine Island Road, Suite 120, Cape Coral, FL 33909, www.choppershairgarage.com, (239) 299-6505.

Cape Coral Social Club

Friends, Fun, Community

The Cape Coral Social Club provides members with the opportunity to make new friends while enjoying the camaraderie of current friendships in a warm and congenial atmosphere. Members are encouraged to have fun and participate in the club's various offerings that include monthly general meetings featuring informative and entertaining speakers and monthly dinner dances with great food, music and dancing. We also offer organized day trips, cruises, games, boating and much, much more.

To find out more about the Cape Coral Social Club you can attend our monthly meetings as a guest. Monthly meetings are held every fourth Thursday of the month at the German American Social Club (we rent space there). Sign in and light refreshments start at 9:30 a.m. and the general meeting with the guest speaker starting at 10 a.m. The address is 2101 SW Pine Island Road, Cape Coral, FL 33991.

Dogs Day Of Summer Dinner Dance: A Tail-Wagging Good Time!

Get ready to kick off the summer season with an evening full of fun, friendship, and lively entertainment at the Dogs Day of Summer Dinner Dance! Hosted by the Cape Coral Social Club, this exciting event is the perfect opportunity to gather with friends, meet new faces, and enjoy a festive night out in the heart of Cape Coral.

The celebration takes place on Friday, June 6 at 5 p.m. at the German American Social Club, 2101 SW Pine Island Road, Cape Coral. Known for its welcoming atmosphere and vibrant events, the venue sets the stage for a memorable evening filled with great food, music, and dancing.

Guests will be treated to a delicious dinner along with upbeat music that will keep the dance floor lively all night long. Whether you're an experienced dancer or just looking to enjoy the music and socialize, there's something for everyone to enjoy. The Cape Coral Social Club is known for creating warm, friendly gatherings, making this event a standout way to celebrate the start of summer.

Attendees are encouraged to select their entrée choice

and preferred table seating when registering to ensure a personalized and enjoyable experience.

Pricing: \$35 for members, \$40 for guests (cash or check preferred). \$38 for members, \$43 for guests (credit card).

Important Details: Payment must be received by noon on June 2. No refunds for cancellations or no-shows.

How To Pay: Payments can be made in person at Farmer Joe's or Family Hardware on SE 47th Terrace, online at www.capecoralsocialclub.org, or by contacting Judy at (239) 699-0123.

Don't miss this chance to celebrate summer with great company, delicious food, and plenty of dancing. Mark your calendar and get ready for a tail-wagging good time!

Coming Up In The Cape

Cape Coral Farmers Market At Club Square Every Saturday – 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Presented by the Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce, a Farmers Market is held every Saturday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., downtown Cape Coral at Club Square (intersection of SE 47th Terrace and SE 10th Place).

The Cape Coral Farmers Market is always overflowing with fresh, local, and healthy produce, fruits, and foods, along with melt-in-your-mouth baked goods, made-on-site guacamole, salsas, homemade jams and jellies, pickles and olive mixes, cheeses, take home foods and much more.

For more information, visit www.capecoralfarmersmarket.com.

MGA League At Coral Oaks Golf Course Wednesday, May 13, 20 and 27; June 3, 10 and 17 – 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Coral Oaks Golf Course hosts an 18-hole Men's Golf Association (MGA) event every Wednesday with an 8 a.m. "shotgun" start. This means every golfer starts at 8 a.m., with each four-man group on a different hole. Groups are drawn by the Coral Oaks Pro shop.

MGA annual dues are \$50, and each Wednesday, every golfer pays for golf plus \$6 into the prize money pool, which is given as credit to be spent at Coral Oaks, either in the Pro Shop or the restaurant (golfer's choice).

There are also MGA events offered on Mondays, Fridays, and Saturdays, starting at 7 a.m. These are typically smaller groups, with every foursome starting in succession on hole No.1.

For more information on the MGA League, Contact Dave Kenney at flsaltbass@gmail.com or Coral Oaks Golf Course at (239) 573-3100.

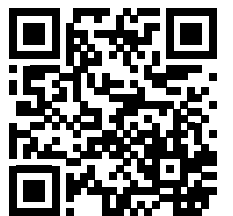
Free Hurricane Expo At German American Social Club

Saturday, May 30 – 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The City of Cape Coral will host the annual Hurricane Expo Saturday, May 30, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the German American Social Club, 2101 SW Pine Island Road.

This free event offers residents a comprehensive opportunity to prepare for the 2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season. Attendees will have access to valuable resources and information from city departments and key community partners.

Don't miss a thing – scan the QR code for the full Cape Coral event calendar



Personality Traits For People Born In May

Those born in May are often described as balanced, charismatic individuals who blend strength with adaptability. With personalities shaped by determination and curiosity, May-born individuals tend to create stability while also embracing change, inspiring those around them with both their reliability and lively spirit.

Reliable And Grounded – May personalities are often known for their steady and dependable nature. They provide a strong foundation for those around them and are often the people others turn to for support, guidance, and consistency.

Charming And Sociable – Naturally likable, people born in May tend to have an easygoing charm that draws others in. They enjoy conversation, connection, and often bring a warm, welcoming energy into any setting.

Determined And Persistent – When May-born individuals set their sights on a goal, they pursue it with patience and focus. Their persistence allows them to overcome challenges and steadily work toward success.

Adaptable And Curious – With a natural curiosity about the world, those born in May are open to new ideas and experiences. They can adjust to change when needed, making them both flexible and resourceful.

Appreciative Of Comfort And Beauty – May individuals often enjoy the finer things in life, from peaceful surroundings to good food and meaningful experiences. They have a strong appreciation for comfort, nature, and aesthetic beauty.

Expressive And Quick-Witted – Many May-born people have a sharp sense of humor and a talent for communication. Their ability to express themselves clearly and thoughtfully makes them engaging and memorable.

Welcoming life with both stability and curiosity, those born in May balance reliability with a vibrant spirit – individuals who ground those around them while bringing energy, warmth, and a sense of possibility to every moment.

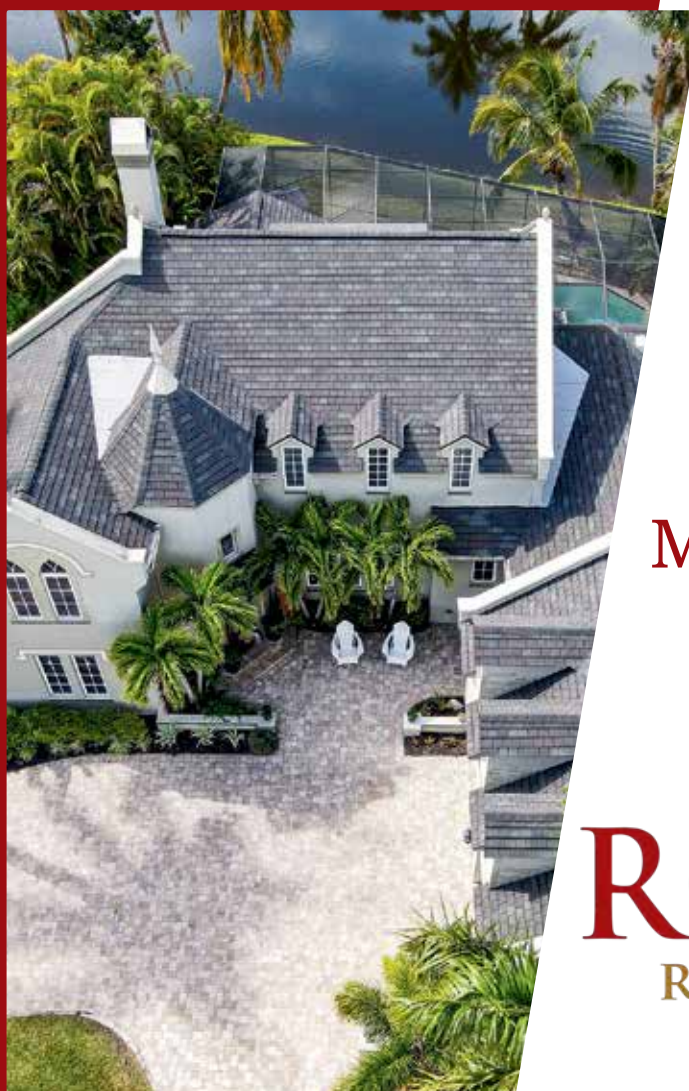


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Unlocking The Future Of Anti-Aging: The Rise Of Peptides And Cellular Regeneration

By Kristin Gustin, APRN,
Functional Medicine Provider



Aging is no longer something we passively accept – it’s something we can now proactively influence. Thanks to advancements in peptide* science and cellular biochemistry, the conversation around aging is shifting from aesthetics to function, vitality, and longevity.

Science Is On Our Side

Thanks to ground-breaking research in longevity, experts now understand that aging isn’t just a matter of years – it’s a biological process we can influence. From telomere lengthening to stem cell regeneration and mitochondrial health, researchers are uncovering ways to slow, and in some cases, reverse, the signs of aging on a cellular level.

Anti-aging isn’t about vanity. It’s about prevention. By addressing inflammation, oxidative stress, and hormonal imbalance early, we’re not just adding years to our lives—we’re adding life to our years.

At the forefront of this revolution are a handful of ground-breaking molecules: Epithalon, Thymosin Alpha-1, GHK-Cu, and NAD+ to name a few. These aren’t just trends – they’re clinically researched compounds that are redefining what it means to grow older.

Epithalon: The Longevity Peptide

Often referred to as a “telomerase activator,” Epithalon is a synthetic peptide derived from the naturally occurring pineal peptide epithalamin. Studies show it can:

- Stimulate telomerase, the enzyme that repairs telomeres (the protective caps on our chromosomes)
- Support pineal gland function and melatonin production, improving sleep and circadian rhythm
- Potentially extend lifespan and delay age-related diseases

Originally studied in Russia, Epithalon is now gaining global recognition as a longevity enhancer.

Thymosin Alpha-1: Immune System Guardian

As we age, our immune system becomes less responsive – leaving us vulnerable to infections, inflammation, and chronic illness. Enter Thymosin Alpha-1 (Ta1), a peptide derived from the thymus gland.

- Enhances T-cell function and modulates immune responses
- Shown to have antiviral, anti-inflammatory, and immune-balancing effects
- Used in clinical settings to support immunity in immunocompromised and aging populations

In the anti-aging context, Thymosin Alpha-1 is valued for restoring immune resilience—a critical piece of staying well over time.

GHK-Cu: The Skin And Tissue Repair Miracle

GHK-Cu is a copper-binding peptide found naturally in human plasma. It has become a standout in both regenerative medicine and skincare because it:

- Promotes wound healing and tissue remodeling
- Stimulates collagen and glycosaminoglycan synthesis
- Reduces inflammation, oxidative stress, and signs of photoaging
- Improves skin firmness, elasticity, and tone

Whether applied topically or used in more advanced therapies, GHK-Cu helps restore youthful function and appearance at the cellular level.

NAD+: The Fuel For Your Mitochondria

While not a peptide, NAD+ (Nicotinamide Adenine Dinucleotide) is essential for energy metabolism and cellular repair – and levels decline dramatically with age.

- Crucial for mitochondrial function, DNA repair, and enzyme activity
- Boosted through precursors like NMN or NR (nicotinamide mononucleotide/riboside)
- Improves mental clarity, energy levels, and may slow biological aging markers

NAD+ therapy – via supplements or IV infusions –

is gaining traction in longevity clinics worldwide as a foundational tool for reversing age-related decline.

The Synergy Of Modern Anti-Aging

These peptides and coenzymes don’t work in isolation – they synergize. When paired strategically, they offer a multi-layered defense against aging:

- Epithalon + NAD+: Telomere maintenance and mitochondrial energy support
- Thymosin Alpha-1 + GHK-Cu: Immune regulation and cellular repair
- Combined, they target the root causes of aging – not just symptoms.

This is no longer science fiction. It’s personalized, proactive, and available now through functional medicine providers, peptide protocols, and longevity clinics.

Personalized Longevity: The Future Is Now

Imagine anti-aging regimens based on your DNA, lifestyle, and biometrics. It’s already happening. Personalized peptide therapies, advanced skincare, and hormone-optimization programs are making longevity more accessible than ever.

And this isn’t just for the rich or famous. What used to be elite is now available to anyone ready to take control of their health span.

Don’t Wait For Symptoms To Start

The best time to start an anti-aging routine? Yesterday. The second-best time? Now. You don’t have to overhaul your entire lifestyle. Small, consistent actions – daily SPF, peptide-rich skincare, clean eating – compound over time.

Because aging is natural. But how you age? That’s optional.

*Peptides for research purposes only.

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Cultural Park Theatre Is Winding Down Season 63

But We're Far From Slowing Down

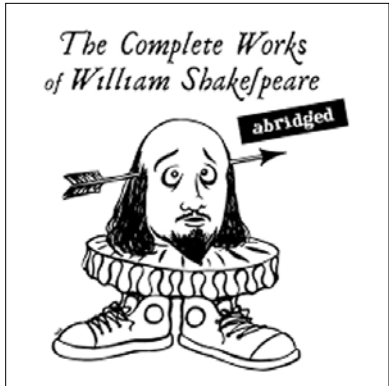
By Robin Murray, Executive Director, Cultural Park Theatre



As we begin to wind down Cultural Park Theatre's Season 63, I want our community to know one thing loud and clear, we are still very busy at the theatre.

Yes, our season finale is approaching but the weeks ahead are packed with performances, special events, and opportunities for all ages to stay connected to the arts.

Our season finale: *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*



We're closing out Season 63 with a fast, funny, and wildly entertaining final production: *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*. If you've never seen it, it's the Bard like you've never experienced him before, high energy, and quick witted.

Performance dates and times:

- Thursday, May 22 at 7 p.m.
- Friday, May 23 at 7 p.m.
- Saturday, May 24 at 3 p.m.

We also have our last cabaret of the season on May 9 at 7 p.m., and it's a free event.

The evening will be emceed by the fabulous Cassy Terwilliger, and our concession stand will be open for snacks and drinks. So, settle in for a night of music, memories, and movie magic.

Instead of a ticket price, we're inviting you to bring a donation for one of these wonderful local causes:

- A new toy for Oma's Heart
- Dog or cat food for the Cape Coral Animal Shelter
- Canned or dry food for the Cape Coral Caring Center

Our much-anticipated Season 64 Announcement Party is coming up on May 16 at 6 p.m.

This is your chance to find out before anyone else what our 64th season has in store! We have shows, classes, and events. (Our full Season 64 list won't be posted online until May 18, so this party is truly the first look.) This is a free event with basket raffles, new merchandise, and an opportunity to purchase our Flex Pass at a discounted price. These seats go fast so reserve

Sudoku Answers

8	5	6	1	9	2	4	3	7
7	9	2	3	8	4	5	1	6
3	4	1	5	7	6	8	9	2
2	7	5	9	1	3	6	8	4
6	3	9	4	5	8	7	2	1
4	1	8	6	2	7	3	5	9
5	2	4	7	3	1	9	6	8
1	6	3	8	4	9	2	7	5
9	8	7	2	6	5	1	4	3

your seats at www.culturalparktheatre.org quick!

Looking ahead, our Summer Camp begins in June and we are almost full – so if you're interested in signing your child up, I encourage you to do so quickly.

New this year, we're also thrilled to introduce Adult Summer Camp on Wednesdays starting June 17 at 7 p.m. Camp ACTAWANNA Cultural Park Theatre's adults only summer camp where the wine is poured, the drama is on purpose, and the nostalgia is real.

And don't discount our Summer Camp shows! These performances are a fantastic way to get out of the heat and enjoy a wonderful show at an incredible price.

Our first summer camp production is *Seussical Kids!* Tickets are only \$10.

Show dates and times:

- Thursday, June 19 at 7 p.m.
- Friday, June 20 at 10 a.m.
- Friday, June 20 at 2 p.m.

Next up is our Adult Acting Class taught by Max Rousseau will also have a showcase on May 27 at 7 p.m. This is a free event.

Students of Max Rousseau will be putting the skills they have learned to use on stage as they present their monologues in this special Adult Acting Class Showcase.

Please note: Due to some subject matter, this event is for our 18-plus group.

Even though Season 63 officially closes on May 24, our work doesn't stop. We still need volunteers over the summer to help with theatre projects.

If you're interested, please visit our website and fill out the volunteer form:

<https://culturalparktheatre.org/fundraisers-support/volunteer/>

As you can see, we may be closing out a season but we're still creating, teaching, and bringing people together through theatre.

Thank you for supporting Cultural Park Theatre, and we can't wait to share what's next with you.

Cultural Park Theatre

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Cultural Park Theatre

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Catch The Action

May On The Water

By Capt. Bill Russell

May is a month that ranks high for anglers fishing in the coastal waters of southwest Florida. It could be our best time of the year for chasing big fish.

Tarpon season is at its peak. If you want to hook into a big tarpon, this is the time to do it. Large schools gather off the beaches, and inshore from Charlotte Harbor south to the Ten Thousand Islands. Gulf passes up and down the coast are popular tarpon hangouts, with Boca Grande Pass getting the most attention. It's common to see upwards of a hundred boats on any given day tarpon fishing Boca Grande Pass. If you are going to fish Boca Grande Pass from your own boat, do your homework first.

Sharks large and small invade our waters from the shallow inshore flats to offshore. Many of the larger females including bull, lemon, and blacktip, move into inshore waters to give birth to their pups. Sharks are an underrated game fish. When hooked on moderate tackle they are an absolute blast, especially high-flying blacktip, and spinners. Be careful when handling them, or better yet leave them in the water. If you cannot easily remove the hook, cut the leader as close to the hook as possible. Watch those teeth!

May is time for big snook to head for the Gulf passes and nearby areas for their upcoming summer spawning session. Although snook season is closed, they offer a challenge, and a lot of fun for the catch and release angler. If you hook into one, please handle it with extra care for a safe release. Never hang a large fish from its lips or mouth; this has proven to do irreversible damage to the heavier fish, often leading to its death, plus it's illegal. It's best to not remove a big fish from the water at all, not just snook, but any big fish to be released. If you remove one for a picture, hold it horizontally with both hands while supporting the belly. Make it quick, snap the picture, and return the fish to the water.

Hooking into redfish, and some big ones, is possible throughout the month. Calm mornings or evenings give sight anglers on the skinny flats some great opportunities at stalking tailing fish. Shallow draft skiffs, kayaks, canoes, or getting in the water and wade fishing gives the angler a better chance to sneak up on fish in the calm shallow waters.



As days get hotter, fish under the shade of the mangroves, docks, or overhangs on the midday high tides. The last couple of hours of the incoming are often most productive. Redfish may run in size from little guys less than a foot, to brutes pushing well over thirty inches. Redfish eat a wide range of baits including live, cut, and artificial.

Mangrove snapper might be my favorite fish on the table. They aren't the biggest fish around, but they fight incredibly hard for their size and offer excellent table fare. As we move closer to summer, expect numbers of snapper to increase throughout the inshore waters, Gulf passes, and nearshore reefs.

Look for Spanish mackerel are harassing bait schools inshore, around the passes, and nearshore reefs. Mackerels, with blazing speed, are a blast to catch on light tackle and often run in large schools. They are good on the table but should be eaten fresh, not frozen. While a stationary bait like a live shrimp under a bobber works for mackerel, they really like quick moving shiny baits. A fast retrieve with a small silver spoon is hard to beat.

With the month bringing days with little to no wind, fishing offshore in gulf waters is a good choice. Long runs to deeper water give you the best chance for the larger bottom dwellers such as red grouper, snapper, porgy, and others. If you're looking for a shorter trip and the potential for action, hit the near-shore reefs in depths from 20- to 50-feet. Coordinates are available for all public reefs, and most hold a variety of fish, large and small.

This is a month to be prepared for anything; you never know what you might come across. I like to always keep a heavier rod rigged and ready, just in case. If you are fishing for tarpon or sharks, you already have the heavy arsenal out, but if you are just having fun on the flats with trout, you never know when that once in a lifetime cobia or school of tarpon might show up. Preparation and awareness are the key. Have a rod that will handle the job rigged and ready and pay attention to your surroundings. If not, that trophy fish might just swim right by without you even knowing it. The weather should be good and fishing even better. Get out there and take advantage of it!

Stay up to date with fishing regulations by visiting www.myfwc.com. Also, upload the Fish Rules app to your phone. It has current regulations and seasons with pictures to help identify fish.

For charter information, please contact us at Gulf Coast Guide Service and "Catch the Action" with Capt. Bill Russell, call or text (239) 410-8576, website: www.fishpineisland.com, email: gcl2fish@live.com.

Capt. Bill Russell is a native and lifelong resident of Pine Island who has spent his entire life fishing the waters surrounding Pine Island and Southwest Florida. For the past 30 years, Bill has been a professional fishing guide who takes pride in customizing each trip to ensure everyone on board has a great time and will return again. Come join us and "Catch the Action."





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Simily Insurance Celebrates 12 Years

Transforming Florida's Insurance Industry While Earning Recognition As The State's Top-Ranked Agency

Simily Insurance proudly celebrates 12 years of continuous service in the Southwest Florida community, marking a milestone that reinforces its leadership as Florida's Top-Ranked Insurance Agency. For more than a decade, the company has redefined industry standards by delivering personalized service, highly competitive pricing, and a customer experience that is unmatched in the marketplace.

"At Simily Insurance, we believe every client deserves more than just a policy – they deserve understanding, real guidance, and solutions tailored to their lives. That commitment is what has allowed us to grow and establish ourselves as leaders in Florida," said CEO Lázaro Rodríguez.

Vice President Madelyn Rodríguez added, "Our approach has always been people centered. We listen, educate, and support our clients every step of the way. That closeness is what sets us apart and what will continue to drive our growth."

Comprehensive Coverage For Everyone

Simily Insurance offers a full range of insurance solutions, including health, auto, home, boat, commercial, life, and more. Its professional team provides fast online quotes, personalized guidance, and full support to ensure every client understands their policy and can make informed decisions.

The company also continues to expand its reach beyond Florida:

In Texas, Simily Insurance offers auto and commercial insurance with the same excellence and competitiveness that define its brand.

It also provides access to high-quality health plans across multiple U.S. states, including Texas, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina, ensuring reliable coverage for more families and businesses.



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This initiative is designed to attract entrepreneurs seeking to join a strong, well-supported brand with a structured and proven path to success.

Commitment To The Community

Beyond business, Simily Insurance has maintained a strong social and philanthropic commitment, actively supporting seniors and children within the community. Its mission extends beyond protecting assets – it aims to create well-being and opportunities for those who need them most.

Presence In Florida

The company operates multiple offices across Florida, including Cape Coral, Naples, Lakeland, Haines City, and Palm Coast, strengthening its accessibility and service for thousands of clients.

About Simily Insurance

Simily Insurance is a leading Florida-based agency specializing in all types of insurance, recognized for its service excellence, competitive pricing, and community commitment. With 12 years of experience, it continues to make a significant impact on the insurance industry at both the state and national levels.

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Consumer Alerts That Text About A Traffic Violation Is Probably A Scam

Did you get a text with a picture of what looks like an official notice of a traffic hearing? You're not alone. The FTC has seen a spike in reports about this text scam in the last month. It's just the latest story of how scammers are trying to separate people from their money. Here's how this scam works – and how to avoid it.



It starts with a text message with a QR code. The message says you need to scan it to pay for a traffic violation to avoid court. The text might look official with a seal from whatever state it claims to be from and a (fake) case number. It'll tell you when your (fake) hearing is scheduled – date and time – and will give you two options: go to the (fake) hearing, or pay the fine now. More on that in a minute.

Scammers want you to act quickly, so the text will also list bad things that can happen if you don't respond now: default judgements, fines, enforcement actions. All stuff to scare you into (supposedly) making it all go away by scanning the included QR code to settle your (fake) unpaid balance. If you scan it, they'll try to steal personal information (like your Social Security or credit card number), download malware on your phone, and steal your money.

If you get a text like this, don't respond, and don't scan the QR code. If you think the message might be real, check the court's website for case information or call the court directly – but use a website or phone number you know is correct, not info from the text message.

Already paid or gave your information to a scammer? Read What To Do if You Were Scammed (<https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/what-do-if-you-were-scammed>) to find out what to do next. And tell the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.

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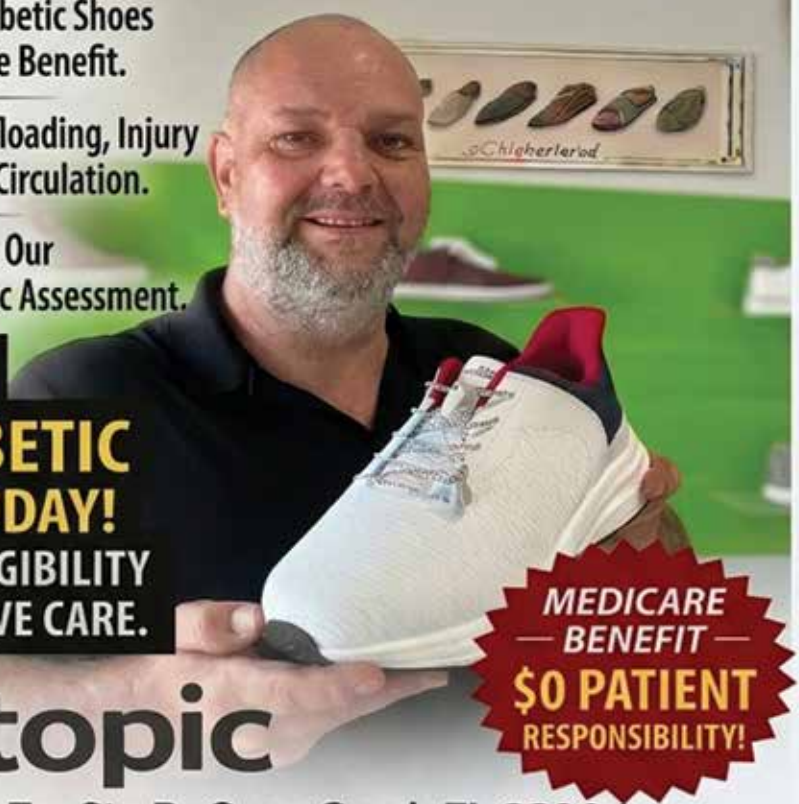


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Talking From The Sidelines: The Write Way And The Hard Sell

By Marc Freden

Everyone has a book in them! Right? Well, not really. I know that everyone thinks their life experiences constitute a telling in print for all to see and absorb. But the truth is: When it comes to seeing if your story is book-worthy, you have to ask yourself if there is a broader perspective, a universal message – something a reader can relate to, learn from, or glean value from your story. Think that one man’s adventure reflects every man’s understanding. That is my benchmark when I am approached to write or collaborate on another person’s story. That, in my opinion, is the foundation for a good book.



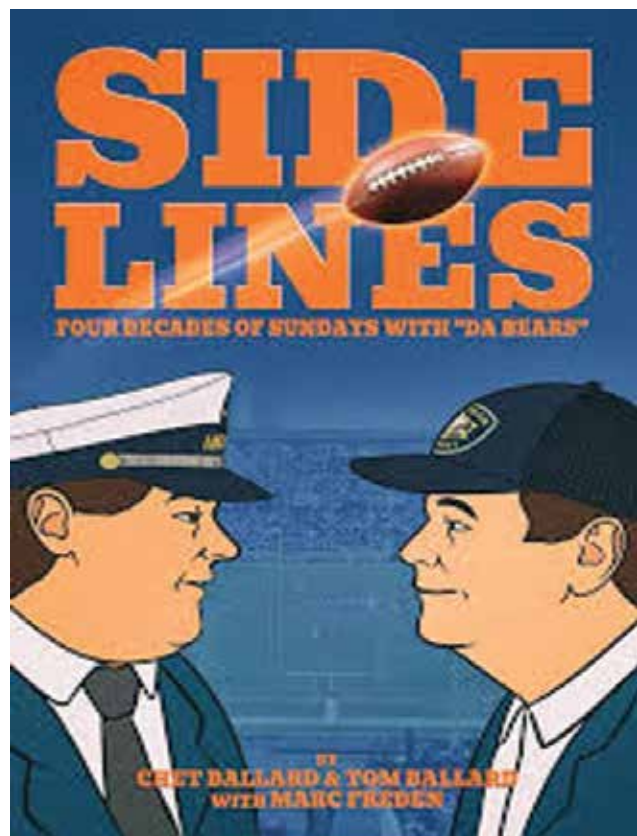
Enter Chet Ballard, a Cape Coral transplant via Chicago, whom I met through a cameraman colleague. Chet had dreamed of a documentary idea that described his and his brother Tom’s adventures over a collective 40 years working as “concierge” security and escorts for players and coaches with the Chicago Bears organization and visiting team players – something that had never been done or replicated since.

During my first call with Chet, I told him in plain talk that a documentary would be cost-prohibitive, but writing a book – given there was enough interesting content – would be the best option.

Why a book? Because a book is considered IP – intellectual property – and a compelling book is a lot easier to sell in Hollywood to adapt for a movie or documentary. I sold him on the idea, and my mind started to race because the Ballard brothers appeared to have a story with universal appeal. I believed my criteria for what makes a good book were met.

But what Chet and his brother Tom had were tens of dozens of what I called “barstool anecdotes” that needed to be turned into comprehensive stories – anecdotes combined with similar anecdotes to make a singular themed story that had a beginning, middle, and end ... and more importantly ... a deeper meaning with something the reader could understand and relate to. Once combined, I had to place those dozens of stories into a cohesive structure of a book. No easy task.

What is found in this collaboration between the storytellers – them – and the book’s craftsman – me – is not just the telling of peek-a-boo moments about the Chicago Bears, but rather insightful stories about the American dream – two kids who, by circumstance and accident, found themselves given an extraordinary opportunity, thus providing the reader, football fan or not, with a fantastical journey of imagination and dreams. This was nowhere close to what Chet had envisioned when this odyssey began, nor was I in the amount of work it



Tom Ballard, Marc Freden, Chet Ballard

would take to turn their misadventures into meaningful moments.

So, after hours and hours of interviews and conversations with the Ballard brothers, transcriptions, crafting ... months of writing and rewriting ... we have a book. I knew we had a winner when Chet cried when he read it.

The final result: SIDELINES: Four Decades of Sundays With Da Bears.

Now what? I say that with my tongue tucked in my cheek because, despite the months of hard work, I could now see that was the easy part. There is nothing easy about marketing and selling the book. Unless you are a big-name author or are backed by a prestigious publisher, you might as well be invisible. Grassroots, sweat equity, and the media are the only ways to turn your dust-collecting tome into a best seller. Hope is not a plan. As for prayers ... well ... “Ka-Ching” better be your new “Amen!”

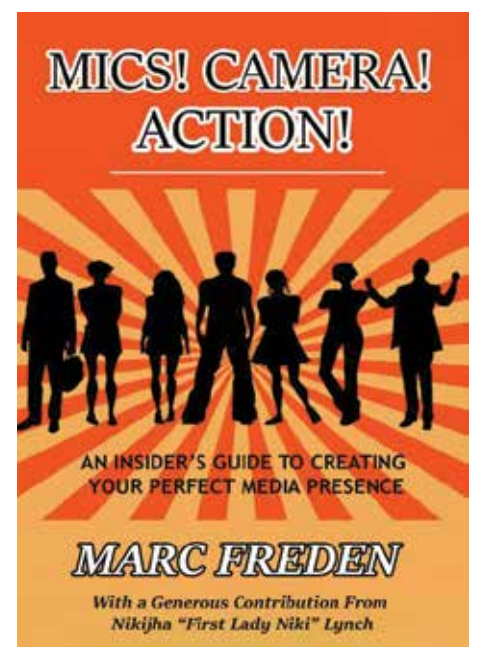
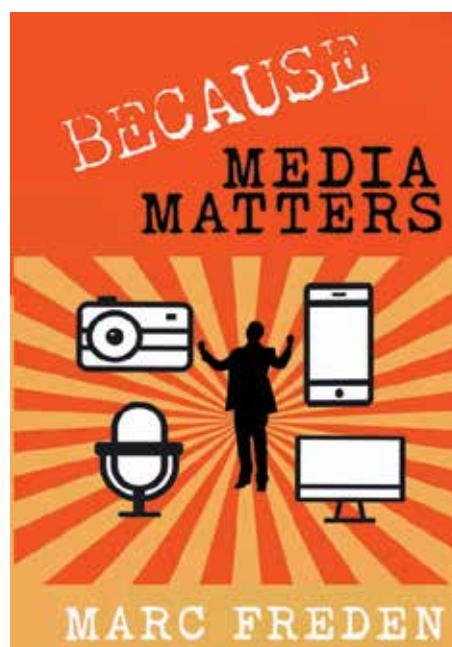
The Ballard brothers are at a unique advantage in having had me as a collaborator on *SIDELINES*, as I have 40-plus years of boots-on-the-ground experience with the media. I have been a producer, director, editor, on-camera talent, marketer, and author. My two latest books, *Mics!*, *Camera!*, *Action!*, and *Because Media Matters* (both available on Amazon), are companion books on how to use the media to achieve your best results for personal growth and professional success. Specifically for *SIDELINES*, I am tapping into the lessons offered in *Because Media Matters*, which focuses on 20 key insights on how to transform the “person” of YOU into the “product” of YOU, then takes that product of YOU and brands it. (In the case of Chet Ballard, the brand would be a sports insider/commentator.) Once branded, you market the brand to achieve your end goal results. The goal here is to sell *SIDELINES* books and potentially option the film rights.

Let’s face it, the media is no longer a luxury. It is a necessity. Getting Chet to become a media presence is key. The irony is

that, in doing so, the trick is not to promote the book blatantly but rather tangentially. In other words: mold Chet into a “character,” an “opinion-maker,” and/or an “influencer.” In doing that, we subliminally, as if it were an afterthought, mention that Chet is the co-author of *SIDELINES*. When people invest in Chet, they potentially buy the book. Then we rinse and repeat with his brother, Tom, and take the same approach.

Is this the only approach? No. Is this the obvious approach? Yes! Why? Chet is excitable, bombastic, loud, enthusiastic, and a consummate salesman. He is a character. And social media eats that up. You will either love him or loathe him. So why not use him? Is this a guaranteed success strategy? No one can promise success. And it even seems counterintuitive to disassociate yourself from the product to sell the product. But the media is all about providing entertainment and infotainment (emphasis on the latter) to get the job done. Webpages, tapings, editing, streaming ... I could go on. Be cautious with costs but be prolific. Once you go down this road, you have to continue to feed the beast.

From my perspective, I look at the big picture. I use the best assets of the client to get to the end game. There are several million documented Chicago Bears fans out there. Millions more football fans ... and who knows how many more sports fans in general, or those who love the American dream. If we can turn Chet into a product and that product gets books sold, then guess what my end goal is? Next stop Hollywood. It’s my American dream ... oh yeah, and Chet’s from the very beginning.



Cape Coral For The Children Partners With Incredible Bank To Fight Child Hunger

Cape Coral for the Children is taking meaningful steps to address childhood hunger in the community through a new partnership with Incredible Bank. The collaboration includes a \$2,500 grant that will directly support efforts to ensure local children have access to nutritious food when school meals are not available.

The funding will be used to produce 50 kid-friendly food bags, designed to provide meals for children during weekends and summer breaks – times when many families face increased challenges in keeping food on the table. These bags aim to bridge the gap and offer consistent nourishment to children who rely on school programs during the academic year.

Community involvement is a key part of this initiative. Cape Coral for the Children is inviting residents to contribute by donating kid-friendly food items. Suggested donations include peanut butter and jelly, canned soup and spaghetti, breakfast bars, cereal, Pop-Tarts, macaroni and cheese, cheese and crackers, juice packs, pudding cups, fruit cups, and cookies. These items are selected to be both nutritious and appealing to children, making them easy to include in the prepared food bags.



Donations can be dropped off at 4112 SE 8th Ave in Cape Coral through the end of May. Organizers hope the community will come together to help expand the reach of the program and ensure that no child goes without meals during critical times.

“This grant allows us to make an immediate impact,” organizers shared. “But it’s the continued support of the community that truly makes a difference in the lives of these children.”

As Southwest Florida continues to grow, so does the need to support families facing food insecurity. Initiatives like this not only provide essential resources but also highlight the power of local partnerships and community generosity.

For more information or to get involved, residents can call (239) 540-8288 or email capecoralforthechildren@gmail.com.

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Go Ahead, Pinch Yourself – You Really Do Live Here

Where every morning starts with sunshine and ends with a sunset worth stopping for ...

Let's be honest. There are mornings in Cape Coral when you step outside with your coffee, the sun is already warm on your face, a great blue heron is standing regally in the canal like he owns the place, and you think: How is this real life?

It is, in fact, very real. And if you've recently made Cape Coral home – or if you've been here long enough to take it for granted – consider this your friendly reminder that you are living somewhere genuinely spectacular.

Cape Coral is one of those rare places that keeps revealing itself. You think you've seen it all, and then a pod of dolphins turns up in your backyard canal on a Tuesday. Just because.

With more than 400 miles of navigable waterways – more than any other city on earth, a fact locals will tell you approximately once per conversation – Cape Coral is essentially a city built around the idea that boats are a perfectly reasonable form of transportation. Need milk? Boat. Dinner out? Boat. Just want to drift around and watch the sunset turn the water pink and orange while a pelican gives you a side-eye? Definitely boat.

Of course, life in Cape Coral isn't just about the water – though it's mostly about the water. It's also about the wildlife, which here operates on the assumption that humans are simply guests who've overstayed their welcome in a very agreeable way.

The burrowing owls, for instance, have absolutely no interest in your commute. They will stand in the middle of a vacant lot, stare you down with those enormous yellow eyes, and dare you to be in a hurry. Spoiler: You will stop. You will take a photo. You will be late. And you will not regret it for a single second.

Then there are the manatees – those gentle, lumbering sea cows who surface in the canals like living proof that the universe has a sense of humor. Spotting one never gets old. Neither does watching an osprey dive-bomb the water and come up with a fish or seeing a roseate spoonbill wade through the shallows like a flamingo who took a wrong turn and decided to stay.

And the weather! Yes, summers are warm – let's call them "enthusiastic." But winters in Cape Coral are the kind of mild, breezy, golden-skied perfection that the rest of the country dreams about while shoveling their driveways. From October through April, Cape Coral might as well be the set of a retirement community commercial, except everyone here is actually enjoying it.

The community itself is one of the city's best-kept secrets – except it isn't really a secret at all. Cape Coral draws people from everywhere, which means your neighbors might be a retired couple from Ohio, a young family from Colombia, a snowbird from Canada, and a lifelong Floridian who remembers when the city was mostly dirt roads and big dreams. They all end up chatting at the boat ramp. That's just how it works.

Local events keep the calendar full in the best way. The annual Burrowing Owl Festival draws wildlife lovers from across the state. Farmers markets, food truck rallies, waterfront concerts, and community cleanups happen with the easy frequency of a town that genuinely likes itself. Rotary Park, with its butterfly garden and

environmental center, is the kind of place that makes you feel good about the world just by walking through it.

Is Cape Coral perfect? Of course not. The traffic on Del Prado has opinions. Lovebug season is a thing. And yes, you do need a good insurance agent. But show us a paradise without a few quirks and we'll show you somewhere deeply boring.

The truth is, Cape Coral is a city still writing its story – growing, buzzing, building, and blooming all at once. And right now, in the middle of all that becoming, it is a genuinely wonderful place to be. So go ahead. Step outside, feel the sun, wave at the heron, and pinch yourself.

You really do live here.

Cape Coral Re:MADE Volunteer Spotlight - Monica S.

At Cape Coral re:MADE, creativity and community come together in remarkable ways – and few embody that spirit quite like Monica S., our latest spotlight honoree.



Monica joined re:MADE in August 2022 after being referred by the Dixie Belle Paint Company, and she quickly became an integral part of the organization. Originally from California, Monica lived in several states across the country, most recently Ohio, before making Cape Coral her home. She is the proud mother of one adult child and a devoted grandmother to four, cherishing every opportunity to spend time with them.

Known for her warm personality and genuine honesty, Monica has a natural gift for connecting with people. She is especially passionate about helping customers explore the creative possibilities of Dixie Belle and Fusion paints, offering guidance that inspires confidence and creativity.

As one of re:MADE's dedicated store managers, Monica ensures the shop runs smoothly while fostering a welcoming atmosphere for volunteers and visitors alike. Beyond her leadership, she expresses her artistic talents through her business, Luna LiBelle. Her handcrafted items – ranging from gift card holders and greeting cards to whimsical "funky owls" made from repurposed materials – reflect both ingenuity and heart. She has also shared her talents with teaching classes and is excited to introduce a new line of card calendars.



For Monica, re:MADE is more than a place – it's a supportive community, a source of purpose, and, as she describes it, "love under one roof."



Five Florida Fun Facts

1. No matter where you are in the state, you are never more than 60 miles from the nearest saltwater body.
2. In 1982, the Florida Keys "seceded" from the United States for about one minute to protest a Border Patrol roadblock, declaring themselves the Conch Republic.
3. Every year, thousands of people gather at the state line in Perdido Key for the Interstate Mullet Toss, where they throw dead fish into Alabama.
4. Florida leads other states in the United States in tornadoes per year.
5. Lake Okeechobee is the largest freshwater lake in Florida. It is also the third largest freshwater lake (after Lake Michigan and Alaska's Iliamna Lake) located completely within the United States.

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Kari Mann Dental Celebrates One Year Anniversary At Their New State-Of-The Art Location

This month marks one year since Kari Mann Dental Studio opened its doors at its current location, and our team has found ourselves reflecting on how grateful we are for the support we've received from the Cape Coral community.

Long before we welcomed our first patient, many local residents watched our building take shape. People would often stop to ask what was coming, sharing their excitement about something new in the area and their interest in meeting our team. Those early conversations meant a great deal to us then, and they still do today.

As we reach this milestone, our message is simple: thank you. Thank you for welcoming us so warmly and for trusting us with your care.

When Dr. Kari Mann founded the practice, her vision was to create a dental office where clinical excellence and the patient experience were equally important. She set out to build an environment where patients feel comfortable, respected, and confident in the care they receive – something we continue to prioritize every day.

Over the past year, we have also been fortunate to grow with the addition of Dr. Jenna Johnson. Dr. Johnson brings a strong restorative dentistry perspective, with a focus on both function and aesthetics, and has helped expand access to care while maintaining the relationship-driven approach our patients value.



Dr. Mann and Dr. Johnson

Together, our doctors offer comprehensive general and restorative dentistry, while also providing advanced solutions for more complex needs. Dr. Mann specializes in All-on-X procedures and advanced implant cases, working with patients seeking long-term solutions for missing or failing teeth.

For many people, the journey to that kind of care doesn't start easily. Some patients come to us feeling discouraged or even hopeless about their smile. They may have been dealing with discomfort, embarrassment, or years of avoiding the dentist altogether. We understand that making that first call can take a great deal of courage.

That's why one of the most important parts of what we do is simply meet people where they are. From the very first conversation, our role is to guide patients with clarity and care – listening closely, understanding their concerns, and leading them through a thoughtful treatment approach grounded in the highest standard of care.

One of the most meaningful aspects of our first year has been witnessing what can happen when patients take that step.



Implant dentistry, particularly full-arch solutions, can be truly life-changing. It's not just about restoring teeth – it's about restoring confidence, comfort, and a sense of self.

There is something incredibly powerful about seeing a patient smile again after years of holding back. Those moments – when someone sees their reflection and feels like themselves again – are what stay with us. It's why we do what we do.

What we hear most often from patients is not just about the dentistry – it's about how the office feels. That sense of difference is intentional. From the modern design to the calming water views, every detail was chosen to create a more relaxed and welcoming experience. We also developed what we call our Comfort Care approach, recognizing that many people experience anxiety when visiting the dentist. Our philosophy is simple – we treat people first and patients second. Thoughtful touches and a supportive team help patients feel more at ease.

For some, that comfort comes from small details. For others,



it comes from something more unique – our two hypoallergenic dental companions, Pearl and Flossy. These specially trained comfort dogs are available to sit calmly with patients during visits, offering reassurance and help ease anxiety.

We have also invested in modern technology that allows us to deliver care more efficiently and comfortably. Our same-day crown technology allows many restorations to be completed in a single visit, reducing the need for multiple appointments while maintaining high standards of quality.

While we are proud of the space we've created and the care we provide, what matters most to us is the trust we have built within this community. Many of our patients come to us through referrals from friends, neighbors, and family members, and that trust is something we never take for granted.

Even as we grow, we remain committed to a personal, relationship-driven environment where patients feel known and valued. That culture will always remain at the center of who we are.

As we enter our second year, our focus remains simple: to continue improving, to continue investing in our team and technology, and most importantly, to continue earning the trust this community has placed in us.

Cape Coral has been incredibly welcoming – from those who watched our building go up to the patients who chose to visit a new practice. We are sincerely thankful to be part of this community.

We look forward to continuing to grow alongside you and to serving Cape Coral for many years to come.

Meet Doc And Pearl, Our Dental Anxiety Service Dogs

We understand that our comfort companions are not for everyone. We have chosen a hypoallergenic breed of dental anxiety service dog. Please rest assured that our lovable companions are not allowed to run free and are kept behind closed doors unless specifically requested by a patient.

Doc and Pearl aren't just your regular run-of-the-mill pups! These dogs have a job to do, and they know it.

Doc and Pearl know that many of us are fearful of the dentist. They also know that despite fear of the dentist, taking care of your oral health is very important. So, these pups are here to help and want you to be comfortable.



So much so, that you're welcome to request their presence during your visit. Doc and/or Pearl will sit quietly on your lap and welcome your loving pats and scratches.

These service dogs know that if they can help calm your nerves, so you feel

more comfortable, they've done their jobs. Be sure to request a visit from Doc and Pearl if you feel at all like they might make your visit more comfortable. Don't let dental phobia keep you from great oral health!

Doc and Pearl want you to be comfortable. So much so, that you're welcome to request their presence during your visit.



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 Cape Coral, FL 33904
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May Is Water Safety Month: Protecting Lee County's Children Around The Water

As temperatures rise across Lee County, families are heading to pools, beaches, and waterways to cool off and enjoy the season. But with increased water activity comes a serious reminder: May is National Water Safety Month, and it's a critical time to focus on protecting children from preventable tragedies.

Drowning remains the leading accidental cause of death for children under the age of five. It can happen quickly and silently – often in residential pools and in just a matter of minutes. In many cases, a brief lapse in supervision is all it takes. That's why prevention is key, relying on constant adult supervision, proper safety barriers, and early swim education.

Local resources are stepping up to help. The Cape Coral Fire Department offers free Family and Friends CPR training, giving parents and caregivers the skills they need to respond in an emergency. If a child is pulled from the water and is unresponsive, starting CPR immediately while calling 911 can make a life-saving difference. Outcomes often depend on how long the child was submerged and how quickly help begins.

Water safety isn't just about reacting – it's about building habits that prevent accidents before they happen. Experts emphasize that children should always ask permission before going near the water, and they should never swim alone. Active supervision is essential, whether at a backyard pool, the beach, or even during bath time. Caregivers are encouraged to keep children within arm's reach at all times.

Other important precautions include avoiding breath-holding games, ensuring inexperienced swimmers wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets, and teaching children what to do if someone is in trouble. Instead of jumping in, which can put another life at risk, the recommended approach is "reach, throw, don't go" – using an object to help pull someone to safety without entering the water.

Organizations like the YMCA promote these safety principles through programs that teach children confidence and awareness in and around water.

Families in Southwest Florida can also look to the Live Like Jake Foundation, a Florida-based nonprofit dedicated to preventing childhood drowning. The organization provides scholarships for survival swim

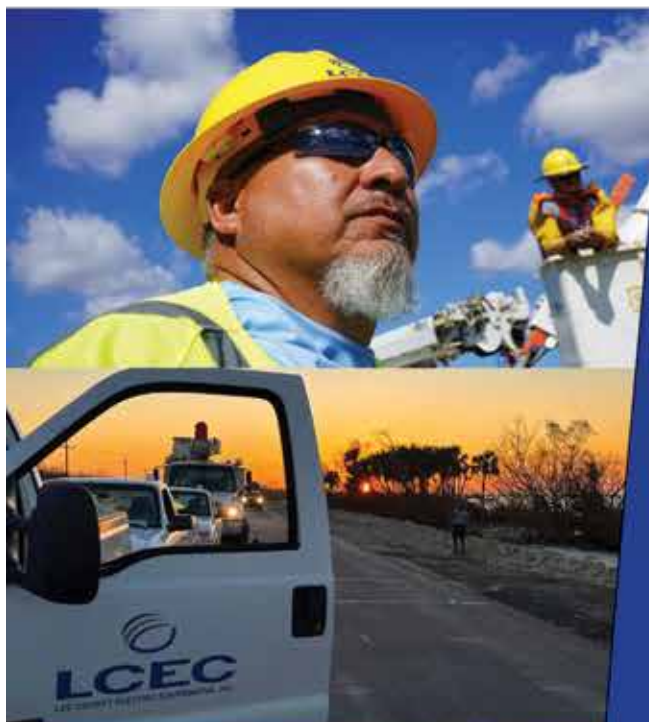


lessons and promotes critical water safety education for young children – resources that can make a life-saving difference for families throughout the region.

The Live Like Jake Foundation, www.livelikejake.com, also hosts events throughout the year, including its annual 5K Run/Walk and water safety initiatives, raising funds for life-saving swim lesson scholarships that benefit families across Florida.

In a coastal community like Lee County – where water is part of everyday life – these reminders are especially important. From neighborhood pools to the Gulf shoreline, opportunities for fun are everywhere, but so are the risks if proper precautions aren't taken.

As families enjoy the start of summer, officials and safety advocates encourage everyone to stay alert, stay prepared, and make water safety a top priority. A few simple steps can make all the difference in ensuring that fun in the sun doesn't turn into a preventable tragedy.



PLAN. PREPARE. PATIENCE.

LCEC works year-round to harden the system and prepare for storm season. Utility customers are encouraged to prepare with a plan that includes special needs, evacuation, and a storm kit.

The plan

LCEC has a tried and true plan that is updated and practiced annually. The electric grid is built to be resilient. Resources and relationships are cultivated in case they are needed.

Preparation is key

LCEC has comprehensive vegetation management, inspection, and maintenance plans to mitigate the potential for outages. When power is interrupted, the LCEC team is prepared to respond as quickly and safely as possible.

When the lights are out, we are on!

Since 1940, LCEC employees, contractors, and vendors have been there to respond to every major event with a sense of urgency. We know our members depend on electricity to power their lives and we are committed to meeting the needs of our community 24/7/365.

Visit the lcec.net Storm Center for more information about Storm Preparedness.

HOW LCEC RESTORES POWER

Safety is the priority

During disaster response, and every day, safety is everyone's responsibility. While LCEC and all of our responding partners are laser-focused on restoring power as quickly as possible, safety is always the priority.

- Stay clear of downed power lines, as they may be energized.
- Puddles of water contacting downed lines are dangerous.
- Keep LCEC phone lines clear for emergency calls by only calling to report safety threats.



AFTER A MAJOR EVENT... HERE'S HOW THE RESTORATION PROCESS WORKS



STEP 1. DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

Includes physical inspection of our facilities. Once damage assessments have been made, LCEC begins repairs.



STEP 2. CRITICAL REPAIRS

We repair main circuits and restore critical facilities such as hospitals, police, and fire stations.



STEP 3. QUICKLY & SAFELY

Repair lines that get the greatest number of customers on as soon as possible.



STEP 4. REMAINING OUTAGES

Restoring power to those small pockets or individuals still without power.

www.lcec.net



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DINE IN ONLY, CANNOT BE USED WITH OTHER OFFERS. SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, JUNE 20TH & 21ST ONLY



Memorial Day is only once a year
but our gratitude is endless.



Join us as we honor this special holiday.

MONDAY, MAY 25, 2026 | 10:00 A.M.

**45TH ANNUAL MEMORIAL DAY REMEMBRANCE
FIELD OF HONOR - CORAL RIDGE CEMETERY**

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