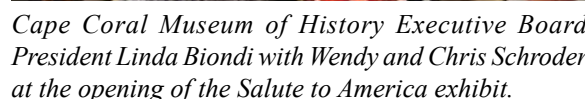


Through this national streaming platform, Michelle Richard, broker/owner of The Cape Coral Real Estate Company, serves as Cape Coral's Lifestyle Expert, introducing viewers across the country to the people, places, and stories that make our community so special. Her role isn't to act or follow a script. It's to tell authentic stories about the people, businesses, nonprofits, and places that give Cape Coral its



Seven Service Dogs Graduate, Changing 14 Lives Through Wolfhounds Legacy Program

Seven Service Dogs on page 8



Legacy Of Love: Caring For Pets Beyond A Lifetime

By Liz McCauley,
Executive Director of the
Cape Coral Animal Shelter
& Veterinary Clinic

Throughout my years in animal welfare, I've had countless conversations with pet owners who share the same concern: "What will happen to my pet if something happens to me?" It's not an easy conversation to have. None of us likes to think about a time when we won't be here for the animals we love so deeply. But as difficult as that thought can be, planning for their future is one of the greatest acts of love we can give them.

That's why the Cape Coral Animal Shelter and Veterinary Clinic developed the Legacy of Love Pet Care Plan. For most people, pets are family. They are our daily companions, our comfort during difficult times, and often our closest friends. For seniors in particular, a pet may be their constant source of companionship and unconditional love. Yet many people worry because they don't have a family member or friend who can confidently step in and care for their pet if they are no longer able to do so.

The Legacy of Love Pet Care Plan was created to provide peace of mind. Through this program, pet owners can make arrangements with Cape Coral Animal Shelter so that if the unexpected happens, their beloved pet will come directly into our care. We collect all pertinent information about their pets ahead of time, including vital medical records and health history, and give the owners tools to make sure their pets are legally transferred to our care when the time comes. We will ensure they are safe, loved, and supported while we work to find the right home for them. What makes this program so important is that it removes uncertainty. It gives people the reassurance that their pet's future has been considered and protected, and it allows them to focus on living their lives knowing they have a plan in place for the companion who has given them so much love.

I often tell people that responsible pet ownership doesn't end with providing food, veterinary care, and affection. It also means planning ahead for circumstances we hope never happen. Sadly, we see this happen often in our world – someone passes away, their pets end up at our shelter, and we have no history whatsoever on that pet. Sometimes we don't even know their name.

For me, Legacy of Love is about honoring the bond between people and their pets. One of the most meaningful things we can do for our pets is make sure they are cared for even when we can no longer care for



them ourselves. I've met so many people whose biggest worry isn't about themselves – it's about the dog waiting for them at home or the cat curled up beside them every night. This program gives them peace of mind and gives their pets a future. Knowing that we can provide comfort to both pets and their owners is one of the most rewarding parts of what we do.

Three local businesses saw the value of this program early on and sponsored the program: Raso Realty, Inc.; Mullins Memorial Funeral Home & Cremation Service; and Burandt, Adamski, Feichthaler & Sanchez, PLLC. We are grateful they recognized the need for this program in our community.

At Cape Coral Animal Shelter & Veterinary Clinic, we believe every pet deserves a safe and loving future.

Because love doesn't end when we're gone – and neither should the care we provide for the pets who have given us their hearts.

If you would like more information about the Cape Coral Animal Shelter's Legacy of Love Pet Care Plan, please contact me at liz@capecoralanimalshelter.com or (239) 573-2002, Ext. 100. I will be happy to sit down with you to explain the program and give you peace of mind for the future of your beloved animals.

With more than 20 years of experience in animal welfare and nonprofit leadership, Liz McCauley has dedicated her career to improving the lives of animals and strengthening community support for shelters and rescue organizations. In addition to her work as the Executive Director of the Cape Coral Animal Shelter & Veterinary Clinic, she serves as president of FAAWO (Florida Association of Animal Welfare Organizations), advocating for collaboration and progress across the state. Liz lives on Pine Island with her husband, Bobby, and their four crazy rescue dogs – Buckey, Oliver, Lucy, and Henry. You can reach Liz at (239) 573-2002, Ext. 100 or at liz@capecoralanimalshelter.com.



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Mind Your Money

“To Roth Or Not To Roth”

By Alexandra Valdes,
Azzendo Wealth Advisors

A common question people ask when saving for retirement is whether they should contribute to a Traditional or Roth retirement account. While both are excellent tools for building wealth, the biggest difference comes down to taxes: Do you want the tax break today, or later?

Traditional Vs. Roth: What’s The Difference?

Traditional retirement accounts, in many cases, allow you to contribute pre-tax dollars, reducing your taxable income today. Your investments grow tax-deferred, but withdrawals are generally taxed as ordinary income.

Roth retirement accounts are the opposite. Contributions are made with after-tax dollars, meaning you don’t receive a tax deduction today. In return, your investments grow tax-free, and withdrawals are generally tax-free. Think of it as a toll: you either pay when the money goes in or when it comes out.

Neither approach is necessarily better than the other. The right choice depends on your current tax bracket, expected future tax rate, and overall financial plan. The challenge is you may not know all these answers when making the decision, or your situation may change. Since none of us know what the world or laws may look like when it’s time to access those funds, it is ideal to create as many options as possible today, giving yourself greater flexibility tomorrow.

Employer Plans

Many employers now offer both Traditional and Roth 401(k) options.

In 2026, employees may contribute up to \$24,500 across their 401(k)s. Individuals age 50 and older may contribute



an additional \$8,000. Those ages 60 through 63 may make an enhanced catch-up contribution of \$11,250. These limits apply to the combined total; you cannot contribute the maximum to each separately, even if you have multiple accounts.

One important advantage of Roth employer plans is that there are no income limits. Regardless of how much you earn, you may choose Roth contributions if your employer’s plan offers the feature.

Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs)

Outside of an employer plan, individuals may also save through a Traditional or Roth IRA.

For 2026, the annual contribution limit is \$7,500, or \$8,600 if you are age 50 or older. These limits also apply across all IRAs. You cannot contribute the full amount to each separately, even if you have multiple IRAs.

Unlike Traditional IRAs, Roth IRAs have income restrictions – you can’t contribute if you make too much.

For 2026:

- For single filers, income phase out begins at modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) of \$153,000 and becomes ineligible at \$168,000.
- Married couples filing jointly begin phasing out at \$242,000 and cannot contribute directly once income reaches \$252,000.

If your income exceeds these limits, you cannot make a direct Roth IRA contribution. However, depending on your circumstances, strategies such as a Roth conversion or “backdoor Roth” may be available. These can have important tax consequences and should be discussed with a financial advisor and tax professional.

It is also important to remember that IRA contributions require earned income, such as wages or self-employment income. Investment income or pensions don’t qualify you to make an IRA contribution.

Which One Is Right For You?

If you expect to be in a lower tax bracket during retirement, traditional may provide greater value by giving you a tax deduction today.

If you believe your tax rate will be higher in retirement, a Roth account can be attractive.

For many investors, the best answer is not choosing one over the other. Building savings in both Traditional and Roth accounts creates tax diversification, giving you greater flexibility to manage taxable income throughout retirement.

As with many financial decisions, there is no one-size-fits-all answer. The best strategy depends on your income, tax situation, retirement goals, and long-term financial plan. A thoughtful conversation today can help ensure you are making the most of every dollar you save.

Alexandra Valdes is a wealth advisor focused on helping individuals, families, and business owners confidently navigate financial decisions at every stage of their economic lives. She combines 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 financial journey.

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





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Michelle Richard from page 1

“Paradoxically, many of the most meaningful relationships and opportunities in my life began with a volunteer position, a committee, a board, an event, or a simple introduction.”

Her work in real estate – grounded in preparation, integrity, and a deep commitment to service – has also given her the credibility needed to represent Cape Coral before a national audience. Her career began with a fascination for architecture, design, construction, and the impact a home can have on a family’s life or on a generational investment. Becoming a broker/owner was a natural evolution that allowed her to create a service experience aligned with that vision.

Her professional training is supported by highlevel credentials such as the Graduate REALTOR® Institute (GRI), the Accredited Buyer Representative (ABR), and the Seller Representative Specialist (SRS), certifications that validate her expertise in contracts, buyers, sellers, and complex transactions. She has also completed specialized training in military relocation and second-home markets, along with ongoing education in digital marketing, pricing strategies, new construction, and investment properties. For Michelle, education is not an accessory but a tool that builds trust and leads to better decisions. Her early years in the industry taught her that real estate is not about houses – it is about preparation, communication, integrity, and the ability to guide others even during emotional moments.



As broker/owner of The Cape Coral Real Estate Company, she has intentionally chosen a boutique model. Although she previously led larger brokerages, those experiences helped her realize that her true passion was not growing in size but elevating the level of service. Today, her focus is on excellence, preparation, and personalized attention, treating every property as a strategic launch rather than a simple transaction.

A key element of that standard is her partnership with her husband, Chris, also a licensed professional and her business partner. Although he works behind the scenes, Chris’s contribution is essential. While Michelle leads strategy, negotiations, and client experience, he manages systems, technology, research, and marketing execution. Together, they prepare each listing with meticulous detail, including positioning, presentation, photography, video, and storytelling.

That level of detail is complemented by their concierge-style service, an approach Michelle defines as anticipating client needs and solving problems before they arise. Their goal is simple: “to make the process feel easier than clients ever thought possible.”

But without a doubt, it is her active involvement in the community – serving, participating, and being part of Cape

Coral’s growth – that allows Michelle to share an authentic and meaningful vision of the city on *American Dream TV*. Her presence on the show reflects not only her professional trajectory but also her genuine commitment to the place she calls home.

She describes Cape Coral’s growth as an exciting moment that also demands responsibility. Looking ahead, she envisions a more connected, vibrant, and confident city, with real momentum that – she assures – has only just begun.

When it comes to her personal and professional goals with *American Dream TV*, Michelle hopes to use the platform to highlight the businesses, organizations, and leaders who drive Cape Coral forward, while continuing to grow, learn, and build connections that strengthen the community she loves. “If I can help more people discover what makes Cape Coral special while supporting the communities and organizations that make it unique, I will consider that a success.”

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Traci Talks: The Conversation Families Wish They Had Started Sooner

Why The Best Senior Living Decisions Are Made Before A Crisis Occurs

By Traci Talley, Heartfelt Senior Solutions

The phone rings. It's a hospital. A doctor. A nurse. A social worker. And within minutes, you're having a conversation you never thought you'd be having.

"Your mom can't safely return home alone."

"Your dad needs more support than he's currently receiving."

"We need to discuss the next step."

For many families, this is the moment everything changes. Not because the problem started that day, but

because it finally became impossible to ignore.

One of the biggest surprises families share with me is that they never expected things to unfold this way. A few weeks earlier, life seemed manageable. Mom was living at home. Dad was insisting he was fine. There may have been a few concerns – a missed medication, increasing forgetfulness, difficulty keeping up with the house, or a fall that thankfully didn't result in serious injury – but nothing that felt urgent.



Life continued as usual until it didn't.

Sometimes it's a fall. Sometimes it's an illness. Sometimes it's a hospitalization that appears unrelated to everything else. Suddenly, a family finds themselves sitting in a hospital room, overwhelmed, emotional, exhausted, and being asked to make important decisions with very little time and very little information.

What makes these moments so difficult isn't just the situation itself. It's the timing. The crisis didn't create the problem. It revealed it.

In many cases, the warning signs had been building for months or even years. Perhaps mom was becoming more isolated. Maybe dad wasn't eating well. Maybe driving had become a concern. Maybe medications were being missed. Maybe keeping up with the house had become more difficult.

Individually, these changes can seem small. Together, they tell a different story – one that families often don't fully recognize until something happens.

That's why I believe one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves and the people we love is the gift of planning before a crisis forces the conversation.

That doesn't mean someone has to move tomorrow. It doesn't mean a decision has already been made. It simply means taking the time to understand the options before those options are needed.

One of the biggest misconceptions I encounter is that exploring senior living means you've already decided it's time. It doesn't. Exploring is simply gathering information. It's learning what resources exist. It's understanding the differences between independent living, assisted living, and memory care. It's asking questions before the answers become urgent.

Most importantly, it allows older adults and their families to make thoughtful decisions instead of rushed ones.

This is where having guidance can make all the difference. Families rarely need someone to pressure them into making a decision. What they need is someone who will listen, ask the right questions, help them understand their options, and walk alongside them as they determine what makes the most sense for their unique situation.

Because every family is different. Every older adult is different. And there is no one-size-fits-all answer.

Sometimes the right answer is staying at home with additional support. Sometimes it's independent living. Sometimes it's assisted living or memory care. The goal isn't finding a place. The goal is finding the right fit.

The families who tell me they feel most confident about their decisions aren't necessarily the ones who had all the answers. They're the ones who started asking questions before they were standing in a hospital hallway trying to make a life-changing decision by Friday afternoon.

Because when a crisis occurs, your options often become smaller. Your timeline becomes shorter. And the decision becomes harder.

But when you begin the conversation earlier, something important happens. You gain clarity. You gain choices. You gain time.

And those three things can make all the difference.

So, if you've noticed changes in a loved one – or if you've simply found yourself wondering what the future might hold – don't wait until a hospital stay forces the conversation.

Start it while you still have the freedom to explore, ask questions, and consider your options.

Because the best senior living decisions are rarely made in a hospital hallway.

They're made long before anyone ever walks through those doors.

Traci Talley is founder and senior placement advisor with Heartfelt Senior Solutions. She helps older adults and their families navigate senior living decisions throughout Southwest Florida, providing personalized guidance and support at no cost to families.

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The Things I Want To Say

... Before My Warranty Runs Out

By Joe Yapello,
Sun Publisher

I started my media empire back in 1977, hurling the *Erie Morning News* at 70 unsuspecting homes just a few blocks away from where I grew up. I was just 11 years old. It was a proud family tradition. My dad did the same in the late '40s delivering the *Erie Dispatch-Herald*, and my siblings, cousins, and friends all had paper routes as well. We strapped on massive, blindingly orange delivery bags, braved rainstorms and blizzards, and dodged aggressive porch hounds for one simple, economic reason: It was the golden age of underpaying kids to do adult work.

And nothing screamed, “Rob me, I am a walking cash register” quite like that tiny orange collection bag. It was essentially a neon billboard strapped to a middle schooler, broadcasting to every bully or local delinquent within a five-mile radius that you were currently carrying several separate \$1.30 customer payments and a staggering amount of 20-cent tips.

But my first true test of survival on my route came one brutal winter morning when I was fortunate enough to have my dad drive the neighborhood as I delivered. There was this massive Alaskan Husky guarding a front porch door, begging anyone to try and cross his threshold. As I approached the stairs I could see his lurking



shadow making its way off the porch and down the steps. I heard a good amount of growling, and at the very last second, I could see his pearly whites shining through the darkness ... Uh oh, I thought.

Sensing the impending disaster, a loud voice pierced the calm of daybreak. “Don’t move!,” my dad’s voice rang out through the open car window.

I promptly disobeyed, made a slight football move to the left and was immediately mauled by my new furry friend. I could feel his huge canines sink into the back of my leg just behind the knee. He shook me like a rag doll in a vice grip. I screamed in pain, threw the paper straight up into the air and that was that. He scurried back up the stairs and I promptly slid myself inside the front seat of my dad’s car. A short distance ride to the emergency room for a tetanus shot and a few really large puncture wounds left behind to remember it by.

Wow, delivering papers was a safe and fun job. And you didn’t sue people back in those days, because you knew it was probably your fault – even if it wasn’t. But the real horror of the route wasn’t the weather or the wildlife; it was Tom Sucharski. Tom was the neighborhood’s self-appointed critic, famous for leaving scathing, handwritten notes in his mailbox every time I failed to live up to our agreement. I’ve saved this one particular note for almost 48 years. Tom didn’t even know my name.

Paperboy, with all due respect to your hard and tedious job. I should know. I was a paperboy for four years as well. Is it that hard to put my paper inside the door? On Tuesday September 12th, 1978, I went outside again to try and find where you had hidden the paper this time. I found it on the steps soaking wet. I wonder if you ever tried reading a paper that was so wet that you couldn’t even lift it without water dripping from it. Try it sometime and then you will understand what I am so upset about.

This was the second time my paper was water-logged. I would appreciate that this is the last time it will happen, but I wouldn’t bet on it.

Also, I don’t appreciate finding my paper in the flowers. Papers, I don’t think, grow in flower beds. Also, when you started delivering my paper I thought we came to an understanding that you were to put, or try to put, my paper in the door. I would then leave the bill money and your 20-cent tip inside as well.

But, alas, I guess that chore was too hard for you to accomplish. So you took the easy way out and would



rather play games – hide and seek the paper.

Well, that’s enough of this and that, and I hope this little note stirs your little brain into understanding what I am a little upset about. With kind regards, Tom Sucharski

After reading the note under the dimly lit morning streetlights, I couldn’t wait to get it home to show my parents. Surely, they would be ready to defend me – especially regarding the “little brain” dig. But instead, they asked me why I stopped putting his paper inside the door. By the late 1980s, adults took over delivery and the heroic paperboy faded into history.

The gig was a masterclass in grit. For basically zero vacation pay, zero raises, and the occasional emergency room visit, you learned discipline and how to deal with a menacing public. You had to collect the cash yourself, and if a customer stiffed you, you worked for free. No one really wanted to take over your route, so you also had job security.

Despite the rigors and disappointments of managing my own paper route, the real magic of those mornings was reading the front-page headlines before the rest of the world even opened their eyes. I felt like a rogue investigative journalist breaking monumental news to a sleeping public. If a major story missed the 11 p.m. television broadcast, I knew the printing presses would catch it – and I would be the very first person in the neighborhood to know.

My shivering, eleven-year-old self couldn’t possibly comprehend it at the time, but that incredible paper route was laying the groundwork for everything to come. Fast forward 48 years later, and writing, reporting, and publishing have become my absolute life’s work.

I guess my “little brain” figured it out after all. Thanks Tom Sucharski!

Joe Yapello is a results-driven publisher and media executive with nearly four decades of experience helping local businesses navigate their marketing needs in Southwest Florida. Since 2022, Joe and his wife, Bonnie, have served as the owners and publishers of The Cape Coral Sun. Throughout his diverse career, Joe has worked as an independent sales director, publisher, and freelance writer, spanning print, radio, and television media. His extensive corporate background also includes key advertising sales roles with Comcast Spotlight and The Breeze Corporation. Deeply invested in his local community, Joe graduated from the Chamber of Commerce of Cape Coral Leadership Class of 2025 and currently serves as the Co-chair for the 2026 class. In addition to his leadership roles, he volunteers on the Chamber’s Membership Development Committee and serves as a board member for the Cape Coral Museum of History.



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Concur Or Object: Differing Viewpoints From Diverse Attorneys

Property Tax Reform: Relief Or Risk For Cape Coral?

Give Homeowners A Break

By Robson D.C. Powers, Esq.

For many Cape Coral homeowners, the dream of homeownership is getting harder to hold onto. Insurance premiums are climbing, inflation persists, and property assessments keep rising without any corresponding increase in household income. Florida's proposed homestead property tax reforms are a direct response, and they deserve support.

In my practice, I regularly speak with homeowners worried about the cost of staying in their homes. Rising property values may look good on paper, but they translate to higher tax bills, a real burden for retirees on fixed incomes and working families already stretched thin.

Critics point to the effect on local government budgets. It's a fair consideration, but government should find efficiencies before asking taxpayers for more. Florida's growth creates room to fund essential services while offering homeowners relief.

Stable homeownership strengthens communities. When residents can afford to stay, neighborhoods thrive, property values hold, and local businesses benefit. Tax relief is about more than saving money; it's about preserving the fabric of our city.

Florida has long protected homeowners through the homestead exemption and Save Our Homes. The proposed reforms build on that tradition. Homeowners shouldn't be penalized because the market moved.



The Bill Will Come Due

By Kara B. Rogers, Esq.

I don't object to the goal. Homeowners, especially retirees and working families, are being squeezed. That's a real problem worth solving. But HJR 1F, the constitutional amendment Floridians will vote on this November, isn't the clean fix it's being sold as. Before Cape Coral residents mark "yes," they deserve to read the fine print.

The headline is a new homestead exemption of \$150,000 starting in 2027, rising to \$250,000 in 2028, with an escalator tied to the Consumer Price Index after that. That sounds significant. But the exemption does not apply to school levies, which make up roughly one-third of a typical Lee County tax bill. And it comes with a five-year waiting period before new Florida residents can access the increased exemption at all.

HJR 1F also constitutionally restricts how cities and counties can spend ad valorem revenue, limiting it to an enumerated list of seven categories. For the first time, Tallahassee would have constitutional authority to determine what local tax dollars can and cannot fund. At the same time, the non-homestead assessment cap drops from 10% to 5%, reducing revenue from commercial and rental properties as well.

The original proposal included a state trust fund to backfill what municipalities lose. That language was removed during the special session. There is no dedicated funding source to offset what cities and counties will give up.



For Cape Coral, city staff projected a revenue loss of approximately \$28.6 million in 2028, climbing to \$46.6 million annually from 2029 forward.

That gap has to close somewhere. SB 4F, the companion bill, complicates the most direct path by tying the default maximum millage rate to the rolled-back rate, meaning the city would need a supermajority vote just to offset what it loses. The homeowners this amendment was designed to help could find their savings eroded by reduced services or cost-shifting through fees and special assessments. The exemption giveth; the fine print taketh away.

What frustrates me most is that better tools exist. Luxury assessment tiers and pied-à-terre taxes would shift more of the tax burden onto high-value investment properties and part-time residents, freeing up the capacity to provide meaningful, targeted relief to the primary homeowners who actually need it. But Florida's constitution centralizes tax classification, and local governments cannot act without Tallahassee's authorization. So instead of targeted, locally-designed solutions, Cape Coral gets a one-size-fits-all constitutional mandate, no backfill, and a new restriction on how we spend the revenue we have left.

I'm not saying the state should ignore homeowner affordability. I'm saying Cape Coral deserves the tools to solve this problem the right way. Read the fine print before you vote.

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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Ask Dick Wagner

Straight Answers About Sales, Service, Marketing, And Every Day Buying Decisions

Helping Average Salespeople Become Million-Dollar Produces

By Dick Wagner

Question: Why does the cheapest price sometimes make me nervous?

Answer: Because most people know cheap can get expensive fast.

Price matters. Nobody wants to overpay. But when hiring a contractor, buying insurance, hiring a cleaner, or selecting a remodeler, the lowest price should not be the only thing you consider.

For the customer, a low price only helps if the company is reliable, qualified, insured, responsive, and clear about what is included. A cheap estimate with missing details is not a bargain. It is a surprise party, and you are the cake.

For business owners, this is why sales training matters. If your salesperson cannot explain value, your company will always be judged by price. When customers don't understand the difference, they usually choose the cheaper option.

A good salesperson should never apologize for price. They explain what the customer is getting, what problems they are avoiding, and why it matters.

Question: Why do I trust some businesses before I ever meet them?

Answer: Because their message feels clear, honest, and useful.



Ask Dick Wagner Coaching
Dick Wagner, Owner
Email: dick@askdickwagner.com
www.askdickwagner.com
Cell: (419) 202-6745

Before most people call a business, they've already formed an opinion. They looked at the website, reviews, photos, Facebook page, and wording. Fair or not, people judge quickly.

For consumers, this is helpful. A company's public image gives clues. If the message is confusing, outdated, sloppy, or full of vague claims, pay attention. It doesn't always mean they are bad, but it may mean they are not paying attention.

For business owners, your marketing is not decoration. It is the front porch of your company. If it looks neglected, people may assume the inside is not much better.

Good marketing doesn't need to be fancy. It needs to be clear. Tell people what problem you solve, who you help, why you are credible, and what they should do next.

Confused people don't usually buy. They keep scrolling.

Question: What is one simple sign that a salesperson is worth my time?

Answer: They respect your time before they ask for your money.

A good salesperson does not ramble, pressure, dodge questions, or make the conversation harder than necessary. They are prepared. They ask good questions. They listen. They explain things clearly. They follow through.

For customers, early behaviour is usually a preview. If someone misses appointments, gives vague answers, talks in circles, or cannot explain the next step, consider that a warning sign.

For business owners, your salespeople are teaching people

what it feels like to do business with you. Every call, visit, email, estimate, and follow-up either builds confidence or creates doubt.

The best salespeople don't just get attention. They earn permission for the next conversation.

AskDickWagner Coaching, Dick Wagner, dick@askdickwagner.com, www.askdickwagner.com.

About Dick Wagner

Dick Wagner is a sales and marketing coach with more than 28 years of real-world business development experience. Through Ask Dick Wagner Coaching, he helps service-based businesses build stronger sales systems, improve follow-up, develop better referral relationships, and turn average salespeople and marketers into confident, consistent producers. Dick's coaching is built for companies that depend on relationships, local reputation, trust, referrals, and consistent outreach. He helps teams stop "just checking in" and start showing up with purpose, better questions, and a clear reason for every visit. His approach is practical, direct, and field-tested. Dick teaches salespeople and route marketers how to identify better prospects, have more meaningful conversations, follow up with intention, and become a valuable resource instead of just another person dropping off literature and hoping someone remembers their name. Dick is past president of the Society of Cleaning and Restoration Technicians and has served in nonprofit leadership and child advocacy roles in Florida. In 2010, he created AskDickWagner.com, featuring hundreds of articles on sales, marketing, referral development, route marketing, and business growth. Today, Dick coaches sales and marketing teams across the United States helping service businesses create better processes, stronger relationships, and more profitable growth. Dick has coaching clients all over the United States. and lives in Southwest Florida with his wife of 38 years.

Seven Service Dogs from page 1

Wolfhounds Legacy provides each service dog at no cost to the participant. The organization also covers veterinary care, training equipment, and high-quality dog food throughout the program. While these resources are essential, the greatest reward is witnessing the incredible bond that develops between the service dog and its handler.

"As the months progress, we watch both the dog and the handler grow together," the organization shared. "Seeing the confidence, trust, and independence that develop is what makes this program so rewarding."

The seven graduating dogs each have a unique story. Three were rescued from GulfCoast Humane Society, three came from Lee County Domestic Animal Services, and one was donated from an unexpected litter. By giving these dogs a second chance while helping veterans and first responders regain confidence and independence, Wolfhounds Legacy truly fulfills its mission of "Saving Two Lives."

For this graduating class, that mission meant changing the lives of 14 individuals – seven deserving people and seven rescued dogs who found purpose together.

Service dogs can provide invaluable assistance for veterans and first responders coping with physical disabilities, post-traumatic stress, anxiety, mobility challenges, and other service-related conditions. Beyond performing trained tasks, these dogs

offer companionship, emotional support, and renewed independence that can dramatically improve quality of life.

Wolfhounds Legacy is now accepting inquiries for its next Service Dog Training Program, which begins in October 2026. Veterans and first responders who believe they could benefit from a service dog are encouraged to contact the organization at (239) 601-6786 for more information about eligibility and the application process.

With every graduating class, Wolfhounds Legacy continues to demonstrate that a rescued dog can become a life-changing partner, proving that one successful match truly has the power to save two lives.

As a nonprofit organization, Wolfhounds Legacy relies on the generosity of individuals, businesses, and community partners to continue providing service dogs at no cost to veterans and first responders. Donations help cover veterinary care, professional training, food, equipment, and other expenses necessary to prepare each dog for a successful placement.

Those who would like to support the organization's mission can make a financial contribution, sponsor a service dog in training, volunteer, or donate supplies. Every gift helps transform the life of both a rescued dog and the person it serves.



For more information about the Service Dog Training Program, volunteer opportunities, or ways to donate, contact Wolfhounds Legacy at (239) 601-6786 or visit www.wolfhoundslegacy.org.

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The CAPE CORAL SUN

The Cape Coral Sun isn't just a newspaper – it's your newspaper. Our goal is simple: to be a reflection of the people, places, and passions that make Cape Coral such a special place to call home. But to truly do that, we need more than just reporters and editors – **we need you.**

We believe the best community news comes straight from the community itself. That's why we're inviting you to share your stories, photos, events, and ideas with us. Whether it's a neighborhood happening, a fundraiser, a special accomplishment, or even a beautiful sunset photo from your backyard – your contributions help bring our pages to life.

What You Can Submit

- Local event announcements
- Photos from community gatherings
- Human interest stories about friends, neighbors, or local businesses
- Creative writing, poems, or short stories with a local connection
- Photos of wildlife, scenery, or everyday Cape Coral moments

Why Get Involved?

By sharing, you help strengthen our sense of community. Your story might inspire someone, spark a conversation, or bring attention to a local cause. You'll also help preserve the little moments and big milestones that make up Cape Coral's history.

How To Share

Submitting is easy – simply email your story, photo, or event information to capecoralsuneditor@gmail.com. Please include your name, contact information, and any relevant details (who, what, when, where, and why). Photos should be high-resolution JPGs or PDFs whenever possible. While we welcome every submission and strive to include as many as we can, publication is at the discretion of the publisher and cannot be guaranteed.

Together, we can make *The Cape Coral Sun* a paper that truly belongs to the people it serves. Your voice, your photos, your ideas – they all matter here. Let's tell Cape Coral's story, one submission at a time.

REAL EXPERIENCE, REAL FIGHT, REAL RESULTS



Ola Hawatmeh is an unwavering America First patriot, accomplished business owner, designer, philanthropist, and dedicated conservative activist fiercely committed to President Trump’s MAGA agenda. Born in the United States to Christian immigrants from Jordan, who pursued the American Dream through grit and opportunity, Ola embodies the resilience Trump champions - fighting to secure our borders with his border wall and Remain in Mexico policy, ignite economic prosperity through tax cuts and deregulation that drove record-low unemployment before COVID, and dismantle the radical left’s assaults on our liberties.

★ I WILL FIGHT FOR PRESIDENT TRUMP’S AGENDA AND PUT SOUTHWEST FLORIDA FIRST IN EVERY VOTE.

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CD-19 SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Currently a Senior Policy Advisor for the U.S. House of Representatives, and had the privilege to help garner the final vote that helped pass the President's "One Big Beautiful Bill."
"We didn't know if we were going to have every vote, and she's working on the hill with other members, and she actually helped us get the bill across the finish line, so you can thank her for lower taxes, for deregulation, for energy production, all the things that we care about as Americans."
-U.S. Rep. Marlin Stutzman (R)



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- ★ Back Our Law Enforcement
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- ★ Keep Men out of Women's Sports
- ★ Bring Federal Funding Back to Florida District 19

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Real Estate Corner

Sellers Who Get The First 30 Days Right Walk Away With More

By Kirstin Moll

Only about 41% of price cuts in Q1 2026 actually generated more showings.

That's the number I want every seller in Cape Coral thinking about before they put their home on the market this summer.

A new report from Realtor.com shows that homes closing around the four-week mark sell for 1.8 percentage points above the monthly average for comparable homes, while homes that sit for 18 weeks close 1.3 points below it.

That means the first four weeks after listing your home are crucial to the outcome of your home sale. Here's what those four weeks actually look like, and how to set your sale up right from day one.

What The Data Says About Timing

The Realtor.com report tracked sale-to-list price ratios across the full listing lifecycle. The longer a home sits, the more leverage shifts to buyers.

- Homes closing at the four-week mark sell for 1.8 percentage points above the monthly average for comparable homes
- Top performers in that group go under contract within the first two weeks
- Homes sitting at 18 weeks close 1.3 points below the monthly average
- More than 3 full percentage points separates the best and



worst timing outcomes

Joel Berner, senior economist for Realtor.com, described what happens to overpriced homes:

"Price it right and buyers come to you. Price it wrong and you're chasing them. Four weeks in, the market has already delivered its verdict: you've either got competing offers or you're about to cut your price."

The current sale-to-list price ratio for Cape Coral, FL is 97%.

Week By Week: What's Happening With Your Listing

The first month on the market isn't one long waiting period. Buyer activity follows a predictable pattern and knowing what to expect at each stage helps you stay ahead of it.

Week 1

This is when buyer attention peaks. New listings get the most clicks, the most saves, and the most showing requests.

Serious buyers are actively watching for fresh inventory, and new listings rise to the top of their searches. Condition, photos, and price all get evaluated fast.

Week 2

The best-positioned homes are already under contract by now, especially when buyer demand is high. Buyers who toured in week one are making decisions.

If your home has had showings but no offers by the end of week two, that's information to keep in mind.

Weeks 3 And 4

This is when the market renders its verdict. Sellers who priced correctly are closing deals. Price reductions peak around week six in 2026, which means weeks three and four are still inside the window. But once you're past week four without an offer, the options get narrower.

Why Price Cuts Don't Always Fix The Problem

Only about 41% of Q1 2026 price reductions actually generated more showings. The majority didn't produce a meaningful change in buyer activity.

A few reasons explain why:

- A home that's been sitting already carries stigma. Buyers wonder what other buyers found wrong with it.
- A cut tells buyers the original price was off, which gives them more confidence to negotiate hard once they do show up.
- The reduction often isn't large enough to move the home into a new buyer pool, so it reaches the same people who already passed on it.

The goal going into a sale is to price in a way that makes the cut unnecessary. It's a lot easier to have that conversation before you go live than six weeks in.

How To Set Up A Strong Launch In Cape Coral

Getting the first 30 days right comes down to price, condition, and timing.

Price

Your list price needs to reflect what buyers in Cape Coral are actually paying for comparable homes right now, not what sellers are asking.

Recent sold comps from the last 60 to 90 days tell you what the market is actually willing to pay.

That's the number to build from.

- **Median days on market in Cape Coral:** 77 days
- **Median home sale price:** \$360,000

Condition

Buyers have more choices than they did two or three years ago. Homes that show well get more showings and more serious offers.

Think clean, decluttered, well-photographed, and priced to match conditions. A home that needs work and is priced like it doesn't will sit.

Timing

Listing activity in Cape Coral follows seasonal patterns. Going live when buyer demand is strongest gives you the best shot at that week-one attention surge.

Your Launch Window

The first 30 days are the window where the outcome gets set. If you're thinking about selling in Cape Coral, discuss the launch plan with your agent (and if you don't have one, reach out to me). Getting it right is a lot easier than trying to course correct after the fact.

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

- Median Sale Price:** \$360,000 | -1.50% 1Y Change
 - Price Per Square Feet:** 240 | -4.76% 1Y Change
 - Average Days on Market:** 77 days. | -7.23 1Y Change
 - Median Rent:** \$2,070/month | -6.76% 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.

Sudoku

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

Answer in this issue

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NEIL SIMON'S

The Star-Spangled Girl

OCT 20-NOV 8, 2026

WAIT UNTIL DARK

by Frederick Knott adapted by Jeffrey Hatcher

NOV 24-DEC 13, 2026

PLAID Tidings

A Special Holiday Edition of FOREVER PLAID

BY STUART ROSS

DEC 13, 2026-JAN 3, 2027

DAMES AT SEA

BOOK AND LYRICS BY GEORGE HAIMSOHN & ROBIN MILLER

MUSIC BY JIM WISE

JAN 5-24, 2027

SEXY LAUNDRY

BY MICHELE RIML

JAN 26-MAR 7, 2027

OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS

BY JOE DIPIETRO

FEB 9-28, 2027

NEVER CAN SAY GOODBYE

The 70s Beehive Musical

Arrangements & Additional Music by George Luton Book by Fred Stuart

MAR 16-APR 4, 2027

NOEL COWARD'S PRIVATE LIVES

APR 6-MAY 9, 2027

Cape Culture

Welcome To Cape Coral's Cultural Corner

By Amy Ginsburg,
CEO, Cut The Chord
Entertainment

Hello, my fellow Cape Corallions! I'm Amy Ginsburg, a new columnist with *The Cape Coral Sun* newspaper, but I've been a resident of Cape Coral for more than four decades. My family moved us here in 1980 from one of the oldest, most historically and culturally rich cities in the United States, Philadelphia. Even, or maybe especially, when you have access to the breadth of arts, culture, and entertainment of a city like Philly as a young person, you absolutely notice its absence when you don't have access anymore. When I arrived here, beyond the presence of a symphony orchestra that primarily served Fort Myers, there was virtually no cultural performing arts in the Cape. Slowly but surely, I've watched the cultural landscape change here, and I've even been fortunate enough to participate in working and volunteering in service of several cultural organizations, most of which are focused on our entire county.

Cape Coral is Florida's third largest city by land mass, and with almost a quarter of a million residents (and 10,000 more arriving each year), much more focus is necessary on developing a cultural identity in our beautiful home. When the city's Economic Development Office called a roundtable of arts and culture leaders throughout the county, we filled a conference room at City Hall to brainstorm, identify gaps in services, and ultimately assemble a group to steer the development of a cultural identity. From that conversation, Cape Arts Network, the city's first arts alliance, was born. Our wonderful board has spent our first year creating a corporate structure, and we've begun to work on a strategic plan to facilitate collaboration among arts organizations and arts-centric

businesses in the Cape, expand messaging for those organizations and businesses so our residents, snowbirds, and visitors know what's available to them already, and to cultivate a unique and beautiful cultural identity beyond outdoor recreation that will be quintessential Cape Coral. We already have a Parks & Recreation department that's second to none. It offers classes on **everything**, not just visual art, though their art class catalogue is also endless. We also have a spectacular theatre company, Cultural Park

Theatre, that is the most stunning hidden gem in this city. And as the owner of a boutique talent management and booking agency, Cut the Chord Entertainment, I place musical talent with orchestras and at performing arts centers around the country. I want my neighbors to have access to that talent, so I've launched the SoundsCape Concert Series, with its premiere concert happening in October at The Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village.

Each month, I'll highlight concerts, theater productions, exhibits, festivals, and other cultural experiences to explore right here on our side of the bridge, while also shining a light on the artists, organizations, and volunteers who make them possible. I also hope this column becomes something more than a calendar of events. I invite you to use this to engage in a civic conversation about other cultural infrastructure for our city beyond art, music,

dance, and theater. A college or university, museums, a multidisciplinary performing arts hall, digital laboratories ... what else can you think of? And certainly, the expertise to help transform an idea into reality, your wisdom and guidance are warmly invited. I would love to hear from you. You can reach me at aginsburg@cutthechord.live if you're interested in rolling up your sleeves to help. Great communities don't wait for evolution to happen. Its people, and the people of this city are exceptional, imagine something better and work together to build it.

Amy Ginsburg is the founder of Cut the Chord Entertainment, a boutique talent management and booking agency, and serves on the board of Cape Arts Network, the city's arts alliance. A Cape Coral resident for more than 40 years, she is passionate about strengthening the Cape's arts and culture identity through collaboration, community engagement, and live performance.



Salute To America from page 1

While visiting the exhibit, guests are encouraged to save the date for the museum's annual "Salute to Service and Sacrifice" celebration on Sunday, Nov. 1, from 12 to 3 p.m. at Cultural Park. The special event will honor active-duty service members, veterans, and their families with an afternoon dedicated to gratitude, remembrance, and community.



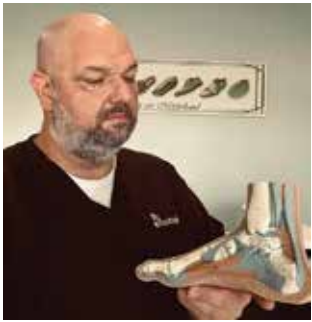
The Cape Coral Museum of History is located at 544 Cultural Park Blvd., Cape Coral. Museum hours are Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information, visit www.capecoralmuseum.org or call (239) 772-7037.



Footopic: The Art Of Custom Shoemaking Is Alive And Well In The Cape

By Ryn Gargulinski

The next time you're hankering for a pair of perfectly fitted shoes made out of, say, stingray leather, Footopic is the place to get them. In fact, you can dream up just about any shoe style or color and Footopic owner Chris Hoppenworth would be glad to do his best to create them just for you.



Chris Hoppenworth, owner of Footopic

A small handful of shoemakers may still exist throughout the nation, but Footopic is one of the few where everything is 100 percent handmade. Handed down through four generations, Chris's business opened in downtown Cape Coral in August 2024 – a mere month after his family of four moved from Hanover, Germany.

And it's not just the outer looks that make his shoes special. It's the high-quality materials, the skill, talent and experience that goes into making them, and, of course, the precise measurements and anatomical expertise that makes slipping on his custom shoes or insoles akin to slipping into a little bit of heaven.

"Seeing a smile on the customer's face from the pain-free feeling" is one of Chris's favorite aspects of his profession. By the time many of the customers get to his shop, they've been to four or five other places seeking relief from feet problems and pain.

"I was the guy who was able to help," says Chris, holder of a German Meisterbrief – the equivalent of a master's degree – in the field. The intense study ensured high-end knowledge of all the inner workings and functions of all the anatomical structures in the legs and feet.

Unlike the majority of today's one-size-fits all, subpar disposable items, the custom shoes and insoles from Footopic are crafted to be one-of-a-kind specifically for the dimensions and unique characteristics of your feet. They are also crafted to last.

His insoles come with a lifetime warranty and six months of free adjustments.

A typical visit starts with a 15 to 30-minute measurement and question session where Chris diagnoses the problem behind the discomfort. He then explains his proposed solution and, if the customer agrees, he creates the custom insoles in 72 hours or less.

The quick turnaround comes from his dedication. And the fact that he has a fully equipped workshop on the premises. The only shop Chris found in the United States that could do something similar was in California – and their turnaround time was four weeks or more because they had to send away the measurements for creation overseas.

Custom shoes take a bit longer to create, depending on the complexity and materials of the shoe. Seven of the main steps are illustrated in a poster behind the shop's front counter.

"It's really more like 50 steps," Chris explains, "but there wasn't room on the poster." Some steps can also take days if they require time for the hand-cut leather to dry and take proper shape.

Customers are apt to say the custom shoes are worth the wait, as are Chris's wife Julia and their two daughters, eight-year-old Viktoria and six-year-old Mathilda. Chris and Julia first met in 2009 after he finally met her through friends. The two moved in together three weeks later, marrying in 2012. (Yes, he made her shoes for the wedding.)

The family decided to move out of Germany as they watched its public schools decline and changes in the public health system policies impact the shoemaking business. Chris pulled out a map, put it on the table, and went through it with Julia using the process of elimination. The United States quickly became the desired location.

Florida beat out the West Coast for its lack of earthquakes. Cape Coral rose to the top as Chris had been a frequent visitor to his friend's house here. The city was also attractive for its low crime rates, good education, affordable cost of living – and absence of skyscrapers.

"I love that you can always see the sun," Chris says. The Cape also has a big enough customer base for the business to thrive.

First established in Hanover in 1925, the company's first owner was Mr. Emde. Mr. Schulze then purchased the business in 1963. Chris's father bought the company in 1992, selling it to his son in 2011.

While Chris was raised in a shoemaker's family, it wasn't something he had always been thrilled about doing.

"I hated it," he says of his first years working at the shoe shop with his father. As the boss's son, he was subjected to extra-long hours, extra-tedious tasks – and absolutely no favoritism. Chris left shoemaking for a spell to spend 10 months in the German army. He came back to dad's shop for two more years, until the two once again started bickering.

Chris then worked for other shoemakers but was drawn back to dad's business when mom contacted him to mend fences. Dad's health was declining. He couldn't work as long and hard as he used to.

By the time Chris was ready to make dad an offer for the business, he had already spent five years as a journeyman to earn a college degree in the shoemaking trade, along with another nine months as a full-time

student earning his German Meisterbrief.

Chris insisted on a full-out purchase of the business so his dad would have funds to retire, and Chris would have leeway to make the radical changes he wanted.

One of the first was to computerize all the prescriptions and other paperwork. He then made adjustments involving the suppliers and useful technology – like trading the 1980s-era cash register for a digital payment system.

He also updated the look and feel of the shop. "It looked like Walgreens," Chris says of his dad's shop with all the ready-made, off-the-shelf foot-related products that he eliminated to focus solely on custom insoles and shoes.

Of course, the move from Hanover to Cape Coral was another huge change in the business, especially since it took more than eight weeks for all the heavy shoemaking equipment to arrive on a cargo ship.

One thing that will never change is the hands-on care, dedication and craftsmanship that remains the heartbeat of the business.

"When I started out, I hated this job," Chris says. "But 10 years later, and after getting my master's degree, I realized my dad taught me so well. My passion now comes from doing it with such a high degree of knowledge. It became a passion, and I could not imagine doing anything else."

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Artificial Intelligence Is Reshaping The Construction Industry

By Shana Overhulser

A new tool is transforming the way projects are planned, managed, and delivered: artificial intelligence (AI).

AI is no longer a technology of the future – it is becoming an everyday advantage for construction professionals. From streamlining preconstruction planning and automating bid invitations to tracking job site progress and analyzing complex legal contracts, AI is helping companies work smarter, reduce costly mistakes, improve collaboration, and increase profitability. The result isn't replacing people – AI's empowering them to make faster, more informed decisions. The Cape Coral Construction Industry Association is committed to keeping our members informed about emerging technologies that improve safety, productivity, and business performance.

Builders And Developers

For builders and developers, AI dramatically improving project planning before the first shovel ever hits the ground.

AI is revolutionizing the bidding process by automatically analyzing blueprint sets, identifying trade-specific scopes of work, and sending customized bid invitations to qualified subcontractors. Real-time tracking provides instant visibility into bid coverage, enabling contractors to fill gaps quickly, reduce administrative tasks, and foster stronger competition – ultimately leading to better pricing. Scheduling is also becoming more intelligent with platforms that analyze millions of scheduling scenarios to create the most efficient construction timeline.



General Contractors

General contractors are using AI to simplify bidding and improve project oversight with reduction in administrative work while increasing subcontractor participation. Job site documentation has also evolved. Using AI-powered platforms that contractors can automatically capture 360-degree jobsite imagery that maps directly to floor plans, creating a visual record of construction progress. These tools help improve communication, verify completed work, and resolve disputes more efficiently.

Subcontractors

AI provides subcontractors with powerful tools to improve estimating accuracy and reduce contractual risk using a computerized version to analyze blueprint sets and instantly generate accurate quantity takeoffs, significantly reducing manual estimating time while minimizing errors. Contract review has also become more accessible. But when it comes to legal decisions, AI has limits. Consult an attorney when:

- You're involved in a lawsuit
- You're signing or negotiating a contract
- You need advice tailored to your specific situation
- Your rights, finances, or future are on the line

An attorney provides legal advice, strategy, and advocacy based on the facts of your case.

Suppliers

Material suppliers are leveraging AI to strengthen procurement and inventory management. Construction-focused platforms now help suppliers forecast material demand, automate purchasing workflows, monitor inventory, and compare material pricing across multiple projects in real time. The result is greater efficiency, fewer shortages, and improved customer service.

The Future Is Already Here

Artificial Intelligence is quickly becoming one of the construction industry's most valuable business tools. By automating repetitive tasks and providing deeper project insights, AI allows construction professionals to focus on what they do best – building exceptional projects and serving their clients.

While AI will never replace the knowledge, craftsmanship, and relationships that define our industry, it is rapidly becoming an essential partner for companies seeking to remain competitive in today's evolving marketplace.

As innovation continues to reshape construction, embracing AI today will help build a stronger, smarter, and more successful industry for tomorrow. CCCIA's commitment extends beyond the job site. Through workforce development, charitable initiatives, disaster preparedness, community partnerships, and programs that give back, CCCIA is investing in the future of Cape Coral and Southwest Florida while helping strengthen the communities we proudly serve.

Shana Overhulser is a 14-year veteran of Cape Coral and is seasoned in communications, marketing, and government relations. She has 27 years of experience in delivering strategic initiatives across the building industry, public sector, and community organizations. Known for her ability to unite diverse audiences around a common vision, Shana has built a reputation for creating innovative partnerships, advancing organizational goals, and leading high-impact initiatives that deliver lasting value for both the construction industry and the communities it serves.



Outages During Stormy Season

By Shannon Williamson,
APR – Manager of
Public Relations

Hurricane season is a reminder of how resilient Southwest Florida communities are and how preparation makes all the difference.

After every storm, utilities highlight areas to improve ensuring they are ready to take on the next challenge. Electric cooperatives are community built, community focused, and community driven to serve members.

Business and homeowners can also ensure they are prepared if a storm heads our way this season. Now is the best time to hold an annual storm drill, review storm plans and ensure supplies are ready for your family and employees. LCEC does the same to help minimize the time you are out of power if a storm hits. LCEC has agreements with crews and resources needed for an effective restoration and is constantly taking cost-effective steps to



harden the grid. This year alone, LCEC has been working to inspect electric poles, replace or upgrade poles where needed, and install technology that will help with restoration. LCEC has proactively trimmed miles of vegetation near power lines, limiting the most common cause of outages.

Visit FloridaDisaster.org for information about planning for your family or business and talk with your family and neighbors about your plan to stay safe when a storm threatens. Inspect potential weaknesses in your home or business and trim vegetation around your home.

Remember to stay connected with LCEC through social media channels for storm related news and updates. Visit www.lcec.net/stormcenter.

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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Health News

Growing With Cape Coral: How Lee Health Is Expanding Care

By Chief Operating Officer Ben Spence

Cape Coral has been growing at nearly seven percent per year, making it the fourth-fastest-growing city in the United States. As it continues to evolve into a major metropolitan hub, Lee Health is growing alongside it – listening to residents and investing in services that improve availability, convenience and capacity.

Recent additions reflect that commitment. A new Convenient Care/Urgent Care office in South Cape complements the Pine Island Road location, while Lee Health Bimini Square, which opened in late 2025, brings primary and specialty services to a central corridor at Palm Tree Boulevard and Cape Coral Parkway. Construction is also underway on a new outpatient facility along Veterans Parkway.

Together, these investments are helping reduce wait times and travel distances, making it easier for patients



across Cape Coral and the surrounding area to receive timely care.

Cape Coral Hospital’s Commitment To The Community

Since acquiring Cape Coral Hospital in 1996, Lee Health has remained focused on meeting the community’s changing healthcare needs. Today, the 303-bed hospital is one of Lee County’s largest and continues to grow with the population it serves.

Between 2023 and 2025, several key upgrades enhanced patient care, including new fast-track bays in the Emergency Department, expanded ICU capacity, a new dialysis unit, and a larger noninvasive cardiac lab. These improvements have strengthened both emergency and preventive services.

Cape Coral Hospital also plays an important role in training the next generation of physicians. As a clinical site for the Florida State University College of Medicine Internal Medicine Residency Program, nearly half of the graduates remain in the region to practice. A new OB-GYN Residency Program will welcome its first class in July 2026, helping meet the needs of growing families across Southwest Florida.

Investing In Community-Based Care

For nearly two decades, Lee Health has provided primary, specialty and outpatient care throughout Cape Coral. These services play a vital role in maintaining health, addressing urgent concerns and managing complex conditions locally.

This year, Lee Health broke ground on Lee Health at Veterans Parkway – the largest investment in Cape Coral in nearly 40 years.

Other facilities continue to evolve as well. The Surfside Outpatient Center, originally opened nine years ago, recently underwent a renovation that nearly doubled its size. Today, it offers orthopedics, rheumatology, primary care, outpatient rehabilitation and radiology in one location.

Lee Health Bimini Square further strengthens care in one of the city’s busiest areas, bringing adult and pediatric primary care services and a wide range of specialties, including cardiology, pediatric behavioral health, imaging, women’s services, and pediatric rehabilitation.

Once completed, Lee Health at Veterans Parkway, with over 100,000 square feet of medical space on a 10-acre site, will include cancer care services such as oncologist offices, an on-site lab, and a chemotherapy infusion center, as well as cardiologist offices, heart testing and catheterization, radiology, orthopedic surgeon offices,

and a surgery center. Additional development is planned along Pine Island Road and Burnt Store Road, further extending services across the city.

Innovations That Make Care Easier to Access

Lee Health is also expanding how care is delivered, offering flexible options that extend beyond traditional settings.

Hospital At Home

This program provides hospital-level acute care services in patients’ homes through advanced technology, in-home and virtual clinician visits, and remote monitoring. It allows certain conditions to be treated safely outside the hospital, often improving recovery, patient and family experience, and reducing the risk of infection.

Community Paramedicine Program

In partnership with Lee County Public Safety, specially trained paramedics deliver in-home support and follow-up care, helping patients avoid unnecessary emergency visits while improving overall health outcomes.

Vending Machine Medicine

At Convenient Care on Pine Island Road, patients can receive pharmacist-reviewed prescriptions on-site through VendRx. This allows them to begin treatment immediately without making an additional stop at the pharmacy.

On The Way Check-In

Through MyChart, patients can alert care teams when traveling to Lee Health Convenient Care, streamlining arrival and reducing time spent in the waiting room.

Meeting The Needs Of A Growing Community

As Cape Coral continues to expand, Lee Health remains focused on making high-quality care readily available. Through facility investments, physician training programs and innovative care models, the health system is strengthening services for both current and future residents.

By continuing to invest in infrastructure and new approaches to care delivery, Lee Health is helping ensure that Cape Coral residents – today and for generations to come – have timely, convenient and reliable access to the care they need.



“Your Account Has Been Compromised”

The Lee County Sheriff’s Office is warning residents about an increase in phone calls, text messages, and emails claiming that your bank account, Social Security number, or online account has been compromised.

Scammers often create a sense of urgency by saying: “Your account has been locked.” “Suspicious activity has been detected.” “You must verify your information immediately.” “A warrant has been issued for your arrest.”

Their goal is to trick you into providing personal information, banking details, passwords, or payment through gift cards, cryptocurrency, or money transfer apps.

Protect Yourself

- Never provide personal or financial information to unsolicited callers.
- Hang up and contact the company directly using a verified phone number.
- Do not click on links in unexpected emails or text messages.
- Enable multi-factor authentication on important accounts.
- Be cautious of pressure tactics that demand immediate action.

Remember: Legitimate government agencies, banks, and law enforcement will never demand payment by gift card, cryptocurrency, or wire transfer.

If you believe you have been targeted by a scam, report it to the Lee County Sheriff’s Office (239) 477-1000 and your financial institution immediately.

The Lee County Sheriff’s Office offers more than a dozen free crime prevention programs, discussing best practices for safety in public and online, and security in general. To schedule one for your community, business, organization or house of worship, please call (239) 477-1CRU (1278) or email us at CRU@sheriffleefl.org

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Cape Coral’s First Inhabitants: A Lasting Legacy

By Wendy Schroder,
Past president, Cape Coral Historical Society

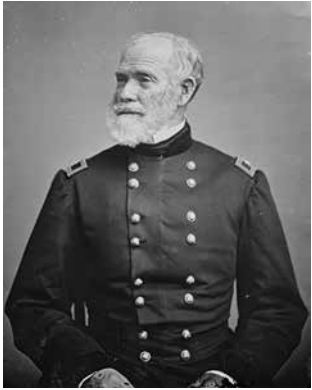
Southwest Florida was inhabited by several tribes connected to what is now Cape Coral, including the Calusa, Seminole, and Spanish Indians. While the Calusa and Seminole are widely recognized for their influence on the region, the Spanish Indians are less well known. The name “Spanish Indians” which was used in the early to mid-19th century to describe certain inhabitants in Southwest Florida.

Two Native American Tribes, the Calusa and the Seminoles named the Caloosahatchee River which borders on the northern and western banks of Cape Coral. “Caloosahatchee” means “river of the Calusa” and comes from the Seminole language, referring to the Calusa people. The Seminole word for river is “hatchee.”

The Calusa Tribe were a powerful, maritime society known as the “Shell People.” They built massive shell mounds and stilt-hut villages along the estuaries of Southwest Florida, including areas near modern-day Cape Coral. The Seminole emerged in Florida much later and were largely made up of Native American groups escaping conflict. They utilized the Fort Myers and Cape areas for villages and escape routes.

The Seminole Tribe remains strong and vibrant today and traces part of its heritage to the early Calusa. By preserving and adapting cultural traditions rooted in the region’s past, the Seminole people have maintained a lasting connection to their ancestral land. The Calusa, however, were devastated by European colonization, as diseases such as smallpox and measles sharply reduced their population, as they did for many other Native communities.

The Spanish Indians were a unique, mixed-heritage group of Native Americans and Hispanic-Latino settlers. Scholars believe that the Spanish Indians were likely descended from remnants of the ancient Calusa and Tequesta. They were closely associated with Spanish-Cuban fishing operations and were culturally distinct from the mainland Seminole



Colonel William Harney in his promotion photo as General.

tribes. They operated out of maritime fishing camps (ranchos) and were highly skilled sailors and fishermen.

A band of 160 Spanish Indians raided and attacked the Fort and Trading Post located on the Caloosahatchee River at four o’clock in the morning on July 23, 1839. The raid was led by Chief Chekaika of the Spanish Indians, 13 soldiers died and 14, including Colonel William S. Harney of the U.S. Army, in command of operations, escaped down river. Chekaika was active during the Second Seminole War and was known for leading resistance efforts against U.S. forces and settlers in Southwest Florida. A year later Colonel Harney returned and destroyed Chekaika in the Everglades.

A memorial plaque titled Harney’s Point is situated on the grounds of the Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce building in Bernice Brandon Park marking the site and honoring the complex and often violent history of the region during this period of conflict between Indigenous groups and the United States military.

The history of Southwest Florida is a story of continuity, change, and remembrance, and Cape Coral is part of that



U.S. Army camp during the Seminole Wars Encampment in South Florida

larger legacy. From the indigenous communities who first knew this land, to the settlers who followed, to the city’s modern development, each generation has left its mark. Together, these layers of history continue to shape how Cape Coral understands its past and imagines its future.



Harney’s Point facing downtown Cape Coral.



Harney’s Point with American flag facing bridge.



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Cape Coral Museum Of History Celebrated 46 Years! —

The Cape Coral Museum of History recently celebrated its 46th birthday with a community gathering that honored the city’s rich history and the volunteers who have helped preserve it over the years. Guests enjoyed birthday cake, refreshments, guided museum tours, and exhibits highlighting Cape Coral’s history and the people who helped shape the community. The event brought together residents, visitors, museum supporters, and local history enthusiasts for an afternoon of celebration and reflection. Museum staff and volunteers welcomed attendees, shared stories about the museum’s collections, and highlighted the organization’s ongoing commitment to preserving Cape Coral’s heritage for future generations. The celebration marked another milestone for the Cape Coral Museum of History as it continues to serve as an educational and cultural resource for the community.



Cape Coral Shows Off ... I Make It Unforgettable!

By Michelle Richard, Real Estate Broker, Lifestyle Expert, and American Dream TV Host

“Life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.” – Ferris Bueller



I love my life. Every day has the potential to introduce me to someone new, take me somewhere I’ve never been, or show me another side of Cape Coral I haven’t experienced yet.

Some mornings begin inside a spectacular waterfront home where every room reminds me why people dream about living here. A little later I’m getting a behind-the-scenes look at a new business before the doors open, celebrating a grand opening, or sitting across from someone whose dream has finally become reality.

I built that life intentionally. I’ve always been fascinated by what makes people light up. I love hearing how an idea became a business, what inspired someone to take a chance, why someone chose Cape Coral to build their future, or what inspired them to create something special. You can actually see the moment it all comes rushing back to them. Their eyes light up. Their excitement is contagious, and suddenly I’m every bit as excited as they are.

That’s the part I never get tired of. One conversation has a funny way of opening another door. Over the years, those conversations have introduced me to some truly fascinating people and led me to places I never imagined I’d experience. Relationships have always been at the center of my life. Everything else has simply become another way to build them.

Real estate gives me a front-row seat to beautiful homes, incredible neighborhoods, and the lifestyle that brings people here from all over the world. Hosting *The American Dream TV* opens doors to the stories behind the places, businesses, and people that make Cape Coral unlike anywhere else. Community involvement has connected me with builders, entrepreneurs, volunteers, educators, city leaders, nonprofit organizations, and neighbors who care deeply about this city and the future they’re helping create.

Somewhere along the way, something really special happened.

People started inviting me in. “Michelle, you’ve got to come see this.” “There’s someone I want you to meet.” “Wait until you see what we’re working on.”

Those invitations have become one of the greatest gifts of my life. They’ve taken me behind the scenes, introduced me to remarkable people, and given me the opportunity to experience Cape Coral from the inside out.

If you’ve spent any time with me, you’ve probably heard me say, “You’ve got to meet this person,” or, “You have to see this.”

I can’t help myself. When I find something incredible, sharing it becomes part of the fun.

Cape Coral has been showing off for years. It’s in the waterfront lifestyle, the beautiful homes, the favorite spots, the bold ideas, the celebrations, and, most of all, the people. The more I experience, the more I appreciate just how much there is to celebrate here.

That’s exactly what you’ll find here.

Every month I’ll take you behind the scenes, introduce you to fascinating people, explore beautiful places, celebrate exciting businesses, discover experiences worth putting on your calendar, and share the stories that make Cape Coral such an incredible place to call home.

Expect a little luxury, a little adventure, beautiful homes, favorite spots, unforgettable experiences, and introductions to some genuinely fascinating people.

If you’ve ever wondered what’s happening behind those doors, who’s creating the places everyone is talking about, or where to find your next favorite experience, you’re in exactly the right place.

Now it’s your turn to experience Cape Coral from the inside out.

Cape Coral has been showing off all along.

I’m just here to make sure you don’t miss any of it.

Cape Coral shows off. I make it unforgettable.



Cape Coral Re:MADE Volunteer And Entrepreneur Spotlight: Kelli R.

Cape Coral re:MADE is proud to shine our Volunteer and Entrepreneur Spotlight on Kelli R., a talented resin artist, dedicated volunteer, and valued member of our re:MADE family.



Born and raised in Florida, Kelli has no desire to leave the Sunshine State she proudly calls home. She and her husband, Ray, have built a beautiful family that includes three adult children and an incredible 16 grandchildren.

While Kelli may seem shy when you first meet her, it doesn’t take long to discover her infectious laugh, wonderful sense of humor, and generous heart for helping others.

Kelli first visited Cape Coral re:MADE after being referred to us for Dixie Belle Paint products. After receiving

a warm welcome from one of our volunteers, she was inspired by our mission of repurposing, remaking, and giving new life to donated items.

Today, Kelli shares her creativity as a resin art instructor at re:MADE. Through the connections she has made with fellow artists and makers, she continues to explore new resin techniques and designs to bring fresh ideas to her students. She enjoys spending time with volunteers and customers and values the sense of community she has found through re:MADE.

Kelli hopes to learn more furniture painting techniques and believes re:MADE is the perfect place to grow her skills while receiving encouragement and support. Be sure to stop by Cape Coral re:MADE to admire her beautiful resin creations and learn about her upcoming classes. Kelli also generously volunteers her time at Pineapple Picasso in Cape Coral.



Community Donates 40,000 School Supplies

A community-wide effort to help local students start the school year prepared exceeded all expectations as Cape Coral’s inaugural Stuff the Bus school supply drive collected more than 40,000 school supply items in just over two weeks.



The campaign, organized by Bahnam Builders, united local businesses, schools, churches, nonprofits, and residents with one common goal – ensuring area students have the classroom essentials they need for a successful school year.

The drive kicked off June 1 with a bright yellow school bus parked outside the Bahnam Builders Crawford Model Home on SW 17th Avenue, serving as a collection point for backpacks, notebooks, folders, pencils, crayons, markers, glue sticks, scissors, binders, and other school necessities. Throughout the campaign, donations poured in from community members eager to support local families.

The effort culminated with volunteers gathering to officially “Stuff the Bus,” loading thousands of donated supplies onto a school bus for delivery to Christian Life Fellowship Church, where the items will be organized for distribution to local students.

The idea for the drive grew from recognizing the increasing financial burden many families face when purchasing school supplies. Organizers noted that the cost of outfitting just one student with required classroom

materials can exceed \$200 before the purchase of a backpack. For families with multiple children, those expenses can quickly become overwhelming.

Back-To-School Bash Set For Aug. 1

Families in need of school supplies are invited to attend the Back-to-School Bash on Saturday, Aug. 1, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Christian Life Fellowship Church, 2301 Del Prado Blvd. S., Cape Coral.

The event will feature the distribution of the more than 40,000 school supply items collected during Bahnam Builders’ inaugural Stuff the Bus community drive. Backpacks, notebooks, pencils, folders, crayons, glue sticks, and other classroom essentials will be available while supplies last to help local students begin the new school year prepared for success.

The supplies were donated by residents, businesses, schools, churches, and community organizations throughout Cape Coral during the two-week Stuff the Bus campaign.

Organizers encourage families to arrive early, as demand is expected to be high. The Back-to-School Bash celebrates the community’s generosity while helping ensure local students have the tools they need to start the school year with confidence.

For additional information, contact Christian Life Fellowship Church or Bahnam Builders.

As donations continued arriving throughout the drive, organizers realized the community response had far exceeded expectations. By the end of the campaign, more than 40,000 school supply items had been collected, with additional donations still arriving as volunteers prepared to load the bus.

Bahnam Builders owner Alan Bahnam said the project was inspired by conversations with local teachers, many of whom regularly purchase classroom supplies with their own money. The goal of the initiative was not only to help students begin the school year prepared but also to reduce some of the financial burden placed on educators and parents.

For students, the donated supplies represent much more than notebooks and pencils. Having the proper classroom materials helps children stay organized, participate in lessons, and begin the school year with confidence.

The overwhelming success of the inaugural drive has already inspired organizers to make Stuff the Bus an annual Cape Coral tradition. What began as a simple community service project quickly grew into one of the area’s largest school supply drives, demonstrating the generosity of Cape Coral residents and businesses.

Community sponsors included Bahnam Builders, Oasis High School, LMCU, Staples, Christian Life Fellowship, the Cape Coral Construction Industry Association (CCCCIA), Integrity 1st Group, Jump Masters, Pop N Roll, and Cicis Pizza. Their collective support transformed a simple idea into a community-wide effort that will help hundreds of local students begin the school year equipped with the tools they need to succeed.

The Science And History Behind Fireworks

Fireworks have been a symbol of celebration for centuries, dazzling crowds with brilliant colors and booming explosions. Whether launched by licensed professionals at public displays or enjoyed by consumers during holidays, fireworks rely on one key ingredient: gunpowder.

The arrangement of materials inside a fireworks shell determines the patterns seen in the sky. By combining different chemical salts with varying types of gunpowder, pyrotechnicians create the vibrant colors, shapes, and special effects that have become a hallmark of celebrations.

In 2024, Americans used an estimated 322.7 million pounds of fireworks, with the U.S. Department of Defense and Disney among the nation’s largest purchasers.

A Tradition More Than 2,000 Years Old

Fireworks originated in Liuyang, China, which still produces approximately 70 percent of the world’s fireworks.

More than 2,000 years ago, people discovered that bamboo stalks would explode when thrown into a fire because air trapped inside the hollow stems expanded from the heat. Ancient Chinese believed these loud explosions frightened away evil spirits, making burning bamboo a popular tradition during celebrations and festivals.

For nearly 1,000 years, these simple firecrackers changed very little. Then, Chinese alchemists searching for an elixir of immortality accidentally discovered that combining saltpeter (potassium nitrate), sulfur, and charcoal produced a powerful explosion. Their accidental invention – gunpowder – would become one of the Four Great Inventions of ancient China.

Soon, bamboo stalks were packed with gunpowder to create louder blasts. Eventually, paper tubes replaced bamboo, giving rise to the first modern fireworks.

As knowledge of gunpowder spread throughout Arabia, Europe, and eventually the Americas, fireworks became a popular way to celebrate important occasions.

Even before the Continental Congress officially adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, John Adams predicted Americans would commemorate the occasion with “bonfires and illuminations” – the term then used for fireworks.

Colorful fireworks, however, did not appear until the early 1800s, when pyrotechnicians such as the Ruggieri

family began adding different chemical compounds to produce the brilliant displays we enjoy today.

How Fireworks Work

Every aerial fireworks shell contains four primary components:

- Lift charge: Launches the shell into the sky.
- Fuse: Carries the flame from the lift charge into the shell.
- Burst charge: Explodes once ignited.
- Stars: Small pellets surrounding the burst charge that produce the colors and patterns.

The stars are carefully arranged inside the shell to create specific designs. For example, arranging them in the shape of a flower produces a flower-shaped burst when the shell explodes.

Each chemical element emits a unique color when heated. By combining different compounds, pyrotechnicians create the familiar reds, blues, greens, golds, and purples seen during fireworks displays.

More elaborate shells may contain multiple layers of stars or several burst charges, producing spectacular multi-stage effects. The texture of the gunpowder also plays a role, as finer powder burns faster than coarser mixtures.

Professional displays are launched from mortars connected to computerized firing systems. These systems can precisely time each launch, allowing fireworks to synchronize perfectly with music and choreographed performances.

Designing The Perfect Display

A professional fireworks show is much more than simply launching shells into the sky. Months of planning often go into designing a display that tells a visual story and keeps audiences engaged from the opening burst to the grand finale.

Pyrotechnicians begin by selecting fireworks of different sizes, colors, shapes, and effects. Smaller shells are often used



early in a performance, gradually building excitement with larger and more complex aerial displays. The finale typically features dozens of fireworks launched simultaneously, filling the sky with brilliant colors and thunderous sound.

Weather conditions play an important role in every show. Wind speed and direction are carefully monitored to ensure fireworks drift away from spectators rather than toward them. Rain, lightning, or excessively dry conditions may delay or even cancel a display if safety cannot be guaranteed.

The launch site itself is also carefully chosen. Fireworks require a large, open area free of buildings, trees, and overhead power lines. Safety zones are established around the launch area to keep spectators at a safe distance, while emergency personnel remain on standby throughout the event.

Once the show is complete, the work is not over. Pyrotechnicians inspect the launch area for unexploded shells, spent casings, and other debris that could pose a hazard. Any unexploded fireworks are handled using strict safety procedures before the site is cleaned and restored.

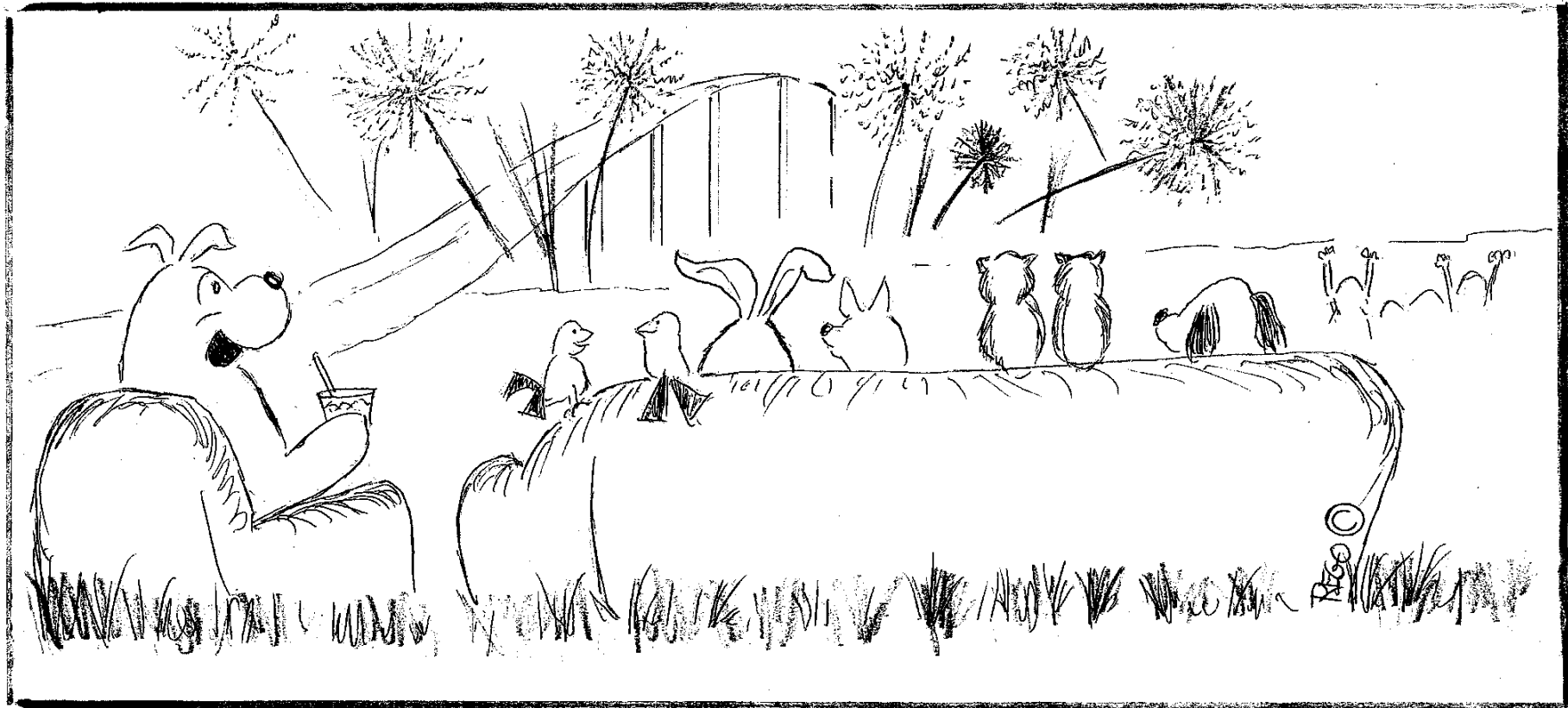
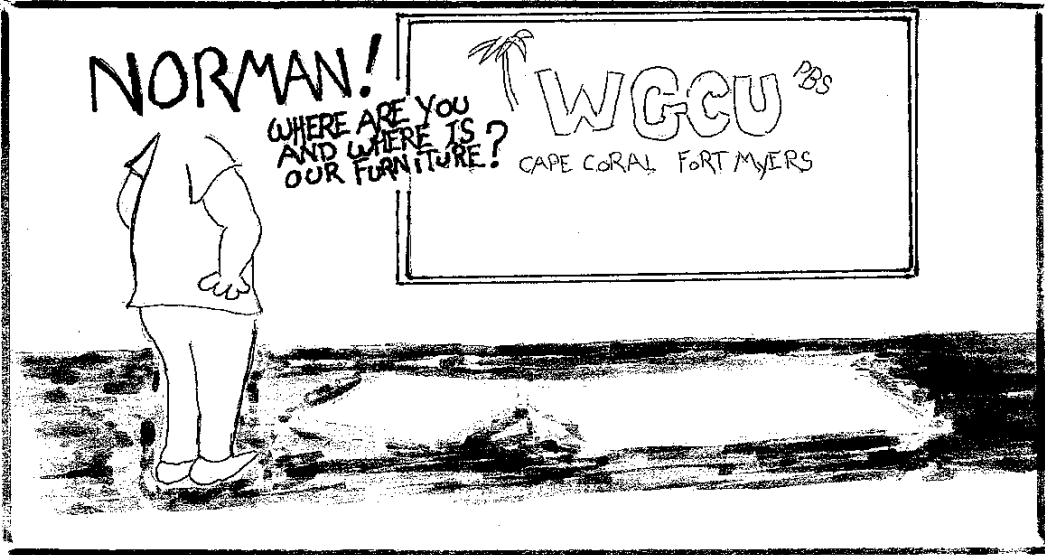
Although audiences experience only a few minutes of dazzling entertainment, each successful fireworks display represents the combined efforts of trained technicians, careful planning, precise engineering, and an unwavering commitment to safety. It is this behind-the-scenes expertise that transforms a collection of explosive materials into a memorable celebration enjoyed by thousands of people.

Health And Safety

Professional fireworks displays establish exclusion zones to protect spectators from falling debris, and pyrotechnicians collect shell fragments after each show.

Even with safety precautions, fireworks remain hazardous. Between 2014 and 2023, more than 112,000 fireworks-related injuries were reported in the United States. Injuries include burns, eye damage, hearing loss caused by loud explosions, and respiratory irritation from smoke and airborne particles.

As technology advances, some communities are turning to alternatives such as drone light shows and laser displays. These options reduce the risk of injuries, lessen environmental impacts, and still provide spectacular entertainment for audiences of all ages.



From The Desk Of Sheriff Carmine Marceno

Back-To-School Safety Starts With All Of Us

As another school year begins, I want to extend my best wishes to every student, teacher, administrator, and parent across Lee County. The first day of school is an exciting time filled with new opportunities, and the Lee County Sheriff's Office is committed to ensuring that every child has a safe and secure learning environment from the moment they leave home until they return each afternoon.



School safety remains one of our highest priorities. Our deputies work year-round to prepare for the start of each school year, partnering closely with the school district, school administrators, and community stakeholders to provide a comprehensive approach to campus security.

Our dedicated School Resource Officers (SROs) are more than law enforcement officers – they are mentors, protectors, and trusted members of each school community.

Every public school campus in Lee County is staffed with a highly trained deputy whose mission is to build positive relationships while remaining prepared to respond immediately to any emergency.

The Sheriff's Office also maintains a specialized School Threat Enforcement Team (STET) that investigates every reported school threat thoroughly and without exception. Whether a threat is made in person, online, through social media, or as a joke, we will investigate it. Threats against our schools are taken seriously, and individuals who make them will be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law. There is no such thing as "just a joke" when it comes to the safety of our children.

Transportation safety is another critical component of our mission. Through our Bus Patrol initiative, we work alongside Superintendent Dr. Denise Carlin and her incredible team at the School District of Lee County, to educate motorists and enforce traffic laws designed to protect students entering and exiting school buses. Drivers must remain alert, eliminate distractions, and always stop for school buses displaying a stop arm and flashing red lights. These laws exist for one reason, to save lives.

Parents also play an essential role in keeping our schools

safe. I encourage you to have ongoing conversations with your children about responsible social media use, reporting suspicious behavior, and speaking up if they see or hear something concerning. If you see something, say something. Prompt reporting allows law enforcement to investigate concerns before they become emergencies.

As students return to school, I also ask every driver to slow down in school zones, obey crossing guards, watch carefully for children walking or riding bicycles, and exercise patience during morning and afternoon traffic. A few extra moments of caution can make all the difference.

The Lee County Sheriff's Office remains committed to providing the highest level of service and protection to our schools and our community. Together, through vigilance, partnership, and shared responsibility, we can ensure that every student has the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed in a safe environment.



Book Review: Such A Perfect Family By Nalini Singh

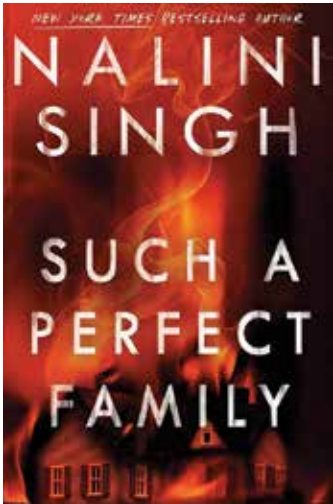
By Lillian Till,
Flutterbuy Books and More

What happens when a fairy-tale romance collides with a nightmare? In *Such a Perfect Family*, bestselling author Nalini Singh delivers a gripping psychological thriller that keeps readers guessing until the very last page. This is a novel built on tension, suspicion, and the unsettling idea that the people who seem closest to us may be hiding the most dangerous secrets.



everything. The result is a story that constantly shifts beneath your feet, making it nearly impossible to stop reading.

One of the novel's greatest strengths is its atmosphere of uncertainty. Tavish is a fascinating protagonist because readers are never entirely sure what to believe. Is he a victim of circumstance, or is there more to his story than he admits? Singh uses this ambiguity to excellent effect, creating a sense of unease that lingers throughout the book. The emotional stakes are high, and the tension between what is seen and what is hidden gives the story real depth.



Singh's writing is sharp and cinematic, creating vivid scenes and memorable characters. The pacing is excellent, balancing moments of intense suspense with emotional complexity. Readers who enjoy psychological thrillers filled with family secrets, unreliable appearances, and unexpected twists will find plenty to love here. The novel is both entertaining and thought-provoking, offering a satisfying blend of mystery and drama.

Such a Perfect Family is a compelling reminder that perfection is often an illusion. Beneath polished surfaces and picture-perfect lives can lurk secrets capable of destroying everything. Nalini Singh has crafted a smart, addictive thriller that will keep mystery lovers turning pages late into the night.

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For more information visit us at FlutterbuyBooksAndMore.com!

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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Did you miss an issue of the *Cape Coral Sun*? No worries! Visit our website to access archives of past issues, catch up on articles, and discover more about the community. You'll also find a wealth of exclusive online content, including extended ads from local businesses not featured in print.

Our online platform allows you to click on ads to learn more about our trusted advertisers, their services, and their special offers. Support local businesses by checking them out on our website today!

Visit us at www.mycapcoralsun.com and stay connected with Cape Coral!

New Business Burrito Shak

Cape Coral residents will soon have another dining option as Burrito Shak prepares to open its newest location at 1200 Solaris Dr., Suite 305, in Cape Coral.



Founded in 2015, Burrito Shak has grown from a single restaurant in North Carolina into a rapidly expanding franchise with more than 20 locations open or in development across multiple states. The Cape Coral location marks the brand's continued expansion into Southwest Florida.

Burrito Shak describes itself as "Quick. Crafted. Coastal." The fast-casual restaurant specializes in made-from-scratch, chef-inspired Baja-style cuisine featuring fresh ingredients, house-made sauces, salsas, and seasonings prepared daily.

The concept was created with a simple goal: to provide high-quality, flavorful food in a fast-casual setting while keeping menu options affordable for families. Combining fresh Mexican-inspired fare with a relaxed beach atmosphere, Burrito Shak has built a loyal following in the communities it serves.

According to founder David Longo, Burrito Shak is designed to be more than just a place to grab a meal.

"It's a beachy, coastal vibe," Longo said. "It's a place where friends and family can enjoy Baja-style food at affordable prices."

The Cape Coral restaurant will feature the brand's signature menu and laid-back atmosphere, offering guests a casual gathering place with fresh food and coastal-inspired surroundings.

As work continues on the new location, the Burrito Shak team says they are excited about the progress and look forward to their grand opening and becoming part of the Cape Coral community.

Burrito Shak, 1200 Solaris Dr., Suite 305, Cape Coral, FL 33909, (516) 236-3837, www.burritoshak.com.



No Veteran Left Behind He Could Jump Out Of Planes, But Asking For Help Was The Hardest Mission

By Fabian Flores

Roger is a Vietnam veteran. Before his wife passed, they did everything together. Losing her hit him like a freight train. To keep the memories at bay, he stayed busy.



The kitchen? That was never his turf. His job was coffee. Hers was everything else. Now his fridge is a museum of frozen dinners. His table tells the rest of the story: a row of pill bottles next to the TV remote, and the Patriots game always on in the background.

Us guys aren't great at reaching out. Add "stubborn veteran" to the mix and you get a recipe for loneliness. Not great when you've got heart failure.

One day the inevitable happened. Roger skipped his meds, ate something way too salty, and ended up on the floor. Thank God he was wearing that life-alert button. He pressed it just before he blacked out.

The Hospital Stay

Almost four weeks later, Roger was weaker, about to be discharged. A week before that, a social worker called me: "Can you help?" I drove to Cape Coral and met him. Turns out a stroke started the whole mess. His awareness was foggy, his left side was weak, and his balance was shot. Walking to the bathroom was now a major mission.

The First Hurdle: Pride

My job is to help veterans understand that life might have changed – maybe for a little while, maybe for good. That's hurdle No. 1. Roger? Proud, independent, stubborn. "I can handle my own business," he told me.

We'd have these incredible conversations about him jumping out of planes on missions I've only seen in movies. But the second I steered us back to home care through the VA, he'd dodge. "I'll be fine once I'm home."

The next day he wasn't feeling well. His doctor talked to him too, and you could see the wall starting to crack.

But basic stuff was still hard – even remembering to call his VA doctor. I asked about involving his kids. He shut that down fast: "They've got their own lives up in Massachusetts." I've heard that line a hundred times. He was hoping he'd bounce back in a few days. Luckily, he changed his mind right before discharge.

Filling The Gap: Home Bridge

This is where my nonprofit steps in. We run a program called Home Bridge. It lets me hire a home care agency for temporary help until the VA can set up long-term care. Donations from people and organizations who genuinely care about veterans make it possible.

Why does this matter? Medicare data shows 15 to 20% of older adults – especially those with heart failure or COPD – are readmitted within 30 days. The reasons are no surprise: meds get mismanaged, follow-up appointments get missed, physical limits get in the way, and warning signs get ignored. I won't go into the costs of going back to the hospital too soon – that's another article. But I will say this: I'm usually the first call if a veteran isn't feeling well. And honestly, I'm glad for that. Because in that time together, we build trust. Walls come down.

The Difference It Makes

Hiring a reliable home care agency means peace of mind. It means meds on time. A real home-cooked meal instead of another frozen dinner. A clean house. And for me, it means there's another human being in the room for Roger to talk to.

It's wild how we take the simple stuff for granted until we can't do it anymore.

Roger finally talked to his VA social worker. In about a week, the VA should have long-term services in place. Until then, I've got to thank the community partners who jumped in immediately, plus his caregiver –who, by the way, now knows exactly how to jump out of an airplane thanks to Roger's detailed lessons.

How You Can Help

If you or your organization cares about veterans and wants to support Home Bridge, let's talk. We fill that dangerous gap between hospital discharge and when the VA's long-term help kicks in. Our system takes time, and we respect the process. But that gap? It's often the difference between staying safe at home and ending up back in the hospital.

Slipaway Food Truck Park & Marina To Host Waterfront Wine Club

Slipaway Food Truck Park & Marina is inviting guests to stroll, sip and savor the night away at its Waterfront Wine Club, held once a month at 6 p.m.

Set along the boat docks, the event will feature a self-guided tasting experience that allows participants to explore, mingle and enjoy scenic waterfront views at their own pace.

The evening will include eight wines to sample. Each sample features two-ounce pours of select wines, along with four tapas pairing tables to complement the wine selections. Guests who visit each station and collect a stamp will have the chance to win a wine-themed gift basket.

Upcoming Waterfront Wine Club dates include July 29, Aug. 26, Sept. 30, Oct. 28, Nov. 25, and Dec. 30. Guests can also purchase dinner from one of Slipaway's resident food trucks and indulge in additional beverages from the venue's full-service bar.

Tickets are \$25 per person and are available at www.SlipawayCape.com/WineClub. Advance registration is required, and payment will be collected onsite. Events will be held rain or shine.

Visitors are

welcome to arrive by boat and tie up at one of the venue's 26 docks or arrive by car and park onsite for free. Overflow parking is available, visit www.SlipawayCape.com/contact for directions.

About Slipaway Food Truck Park & Marina

Slipaway Food Truck Park & Marina is a one-of-a-kind destination for family friendly outdoor fun and entertainment. Located at the base of the Cape Coral Bridge at 1811 Cape Coral Pkwy., E., the waterfront destination features 10 on-site food trucks, a full-service bar, shaded seating options, 30 boat slips, a fuel dock, Ship Store, unobstructed views of the Caloosahatchee River and more. Slipaway is a hot spot for festivals and events with daily live music and entertainment. For more information, visit SlipawayCape.com or email info@slipawaycape.com.



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Zerenity Spa, LLC, Salon and Day Spa, 814 SE 16th Place, Unit 1, Cape Coral, FL 33990, www.Zerenityspa.com, (239) 362-7959.



Kava Nirvana Speakeasy, Tea Room, 4720 SE 15th Ave., Suite 107, Cape Coral, FL 33904, www.kavanirvanaspeakeasy.com, (941) 875-7263.



United Way of Lee, Hendry and Glades, Nonprofit Organization, 7273 Concourse Dr., Fort Myers, FL 33908, www.unitedwaylee.org, (239) 233-5416.



Premier Home Builds LLC, Real Estate, 5237 Summerlin Commons Blvd., Fort Myers, FL 33907, (239) 898-1288.



The Cape Coral Real Estate Company, Real Estate, 4706 Chiquita Blvd., S., Suite 200 #E05, Cape Coral, FL 33914, www.TheCapeCoralRealEstateCompany.com, (401) 744-7721.



Buddha-Bachi Express, Restaurant, 2209 Santa Barbara Blvd., Unit 107, Cape Coral, FL 33991, www.buddhabachiexpress.com, (239) 360-8171.

You're Invited To Join The Cape Coral Chamber Of Commerce

Whether you're launching a new business, expanding an established company, leading a nonprofit, or simply looking to become more involved in the community, there's a place for you at the Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce. When you join the Chamber, you're joining a network of business professionals and community leaders who are committed to growing their businesses while making Cape

Coral an even better place to live, work, and visit. Chamber membership opens the door to valuable networking events, educational workshops, community programs, business referrals, and promotional opportunities that help you build meaningful relationships and increase your visibility. Beyond the business benefits, you'll have the opportunity to connect with fellow members, give back through community initiatives, and help shape the future of Cape Coral. Together, we're creating a stronger local economy and a vibrant business community. Membership opportunities are available for businesses of all sizes, nonprofit organizations, retirees, and

individuals who want to stay connected and engaged. We invite you to discover everything the Chamber has to offer. Join us, make new connections, and become part of a community that's dedicated to helping one another succeed. To learn more about membership, call (239) 549-6900 or visit www.capecoralchamber.com.



Friends Of The Cape Coral Library

Updates On Exhibits In Cape Coral Library Art Gallery
The library is located at 921 SW 39th Terrace, off of Mohawk Parkway. Changing art exhibits in the art gallery are sponsored by the Friends of the Cape Coral Library and are designed to afford local artists the opportunity to share their work in this public forum. For information contact Monica Rahman, Art Gallery Chairperson, at gallery@capefriends.org or visit www.capefriends.org. Follow “Friends of the Cape Coral Library” on Facebook.

Bayshore Elementary K-5 Students Exhibited “Save Our Seas,” A Plastic Pollution Project

The collaborative project was created in honor of June 8, World Ocean Day. The library display emphasized the importance of saving our seas by protecting the water, beaches and wildlife from plastic pollution. The sculpture in the Cape Coral Library included a big turtle and two sea birds that students made from found items such as bottles, caps, spoons and other debris.

Current Exhibit Of Children’s Winning Art Has Been Extended Until Aug. 24

If you haven’t yet had a chance to view the current exhibit in the Cape Coral Library art gallery, you’re in luck. The show has been extended, until its removal at 9 a.m. on Aug. 24, to allow more visitors to enjoy the winning artwork from the 20th Annual Children’s Environmental Art Contest, Coloring the Earth.

Visitors continue to be amazed how each of the twenty youngsters age 5 to 12 created their own unique illustration of this year’s theme: “Protect our Florida Black Bears.” In honor of the 20th anniversary of the art contest that’s been sponsored by the Cape Coral-Lee County Public Library and the Friends of the Cape Coral Library, the gallery hallway also features some examples of artwork, flyers and press clippings from previous years.

Dedicated Artists Of Southwest Florida (DASF) Will Exhibit – Sept. 10 Through Oct. 29

This marks the ninth time that artwork by the Dedicated Artists of Southwest Florida Inc. (DASF) will be featured at the Cape Coral Library! A huge array of beautiful two and three-dimensional creations by members of this local club will again fill the gallery walls and display cases of the library from Sept. 10 through Oct. 29. Since last year’s exhibit here, DASF members have been working on lots of brand-new of art to show. As always, the variety of their designs and the surfaces on which they paint will be extensive, so it’s no wonder that the club’s exhibit of latest artwork is eagerly anticipated.



At a DASF session, Carrol Gowan is totally involved in painting a pair of Laughing Gulls plus her fingers and her air!



DASF teacher Suzanne Mikulka, is a Certified Decorative Artist (CDA) and a prolific painter!



A gallery wall with some art contest winners

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The Dedicated Artists of Southwest Florida is a local club with over 60 members who are full or part-time residents of various cities within the local tri-county area. While learning and teaching the art of painting is integral to its mission, DASF also performs an impressive amount of community outreach.

As a 501(c)(3) public charity, the Dedicated Artists of Southwest Florida, Inc. philanthropic programs support the Harry Chapin Food Bank and an annual scholarship for a graduating Lee County student who wants to pursue the visual arts. The club also donates wall art for youngsters leaving the foster system at age 18, decorated suitcases for the Children’s Network of Southwest Florida, and hand-painted keepsake memory boxes given to various hospitals for grieving families to hold remembrances of a child lost. For more information about membership, meeting schedules, location, projects, and art seminars, visit www.DASFartists.com.



DASF members Cathy Crock, (left) and Deb Carlson, (right), show their coordinated quilts and suitcases for foster kids.



Save Our Seas Sculpture Turtle and Birds



Cathy Ressler of DASF (center) teaches a Blue Jay program to member Jeannie Beliveau. (left) and her guest Kerin Knowe.

All Are Welcome! - Saturday Morning July 25 Friends Of Cape Coral Library General Meeting

Everyone is invited to the Friends of the Cape Coral Library General Meeting (FOCCL) on Saturday, July 25. The morning will begin at 9:30 a.m. with coffee, tea, light snacks, and social time. The business portion will start at 10 a.m., and the program described below will follow. FOCCL general meetings, which take place in the large meeting room of the Cape Coral Library at 921 SW 39th



At 2025 July meeting round table, Dawn LaVacque kept track of the recommended books.

Ter., are free and open to the public. You are welcome to bring a guest or two.

Program For July Meeting: “Books We’ve Read”

Our traditional July meeting program has been one of our most popular. Attendees sit in a big round table set-up and take turns talking about books they’ve recently read and would recommend. Each person may describe a couple of books, or more if there’s time. (Are you shy about speaking in public? Don’t worry; everyone’s friendly, and you can also choose to just sit back and enjoy listening.) The titles and authors will be tracked as we go along. Then a list will be created and shared on the Friends of the Cape Coral Library website www.capefriends.org later that week.

Board Member Volunteer Dawn LaVacque Honored Upon Her Retirement

The Friends of the Cape Coral Library Board, as well as several long-time committee chairs who have volunteered beside Dawn LaVacque, invited her to lunch at Fathom’s on June 12. They took the opportunity to honor Dawn upon her retirement after a decade of dedication. She has taken on an incredible number of roles and responsibilities with our organization over the past 10 years that included serving as Chairperson of the Fundraising, then Nominations and then Membership committees. She has coordinated the FOCCL hotline, book donation intake process, and book sale fundraisers. Dawn has served terms on the Board of Directors as vice president, president and most recently as treasurer. As if she didn’t have enough on her plate, she somehow found time to assist with art gallery installations, the children’s art contest awards ceremony and our reading festival booth on occasion when help was needed. Dawn LaVacque is moving to a new home farther north in Florida and will be greatly missed here in Cape Coral!



Retiring board member Dawn LaVacque



Beautiful cake for Dawn's retirement



Dawn with cards, FOCCL memory book and lovely bracelet made by Anne K.



Lunch has been served and we’re ready to dig in.

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Catch The Action

July On The Water

By Capt. Bill Russell

July is the month summer weather settles in bringing hot humid days, often with little wind until early afternoon as a sea breeze kicks in, followed by thunderstorms. Most anglers opt for an early start to take advantage of calm seas and avoid the mid-afternoon heat and storms.

For those looking to bring home fish dinner, mangrove snapper is a good choice through the summer. No need to make a long run offshore, as snappers are caught throughout the inshore and nearshore waters. Fish for snapper under docks, bridges, piers, or any type of structure. Many anglers do very well from the shore without the expense of a boat. After several hurricanes, shore fishing locations are still limited, but there are piers and bridges open to fishing. From boat, fish under deeper mangrove shorelines, oyster bars, sand potholes, and rock ledges or structure in and near the gulf passes. Mangrove snapper is one of our tastier fish and fights hard for their size. They are a great summer target. Often leader and hook shy if the water is clear, it's necessary to lighten the tackle. Inshore, I go with three or more feet of 12- to 20-pound fluorocarbon leader and a 1/0 or smaller circle hook.

Redfish and sea trout are caught throughout the summer. High tides give the best opportunity for redfish as they are foraging under the shade of mangrove shorelines. Sea trout run in schools with the best bite coming over the morning incoming tides as cooler water moves over grass flats. Grass flats with clear or clean water in four-to-eight-foot depths are favored areas.

Calm summer mornings give good opportunities to run offshore. American red snapper season is open in gulf waters for recreational anglers through the month of July for those willing to spend the fuel money for a long run offshore. Other fish including mutton, mangrove, and yellowtail snapper, plus red grouper can help fill up the fish box. Check current regulations and seasons before heading offshore as they change often.

Closer in, within sight of land, reefs and wrecks can be productive with everything from snapper to goliath grouper. You will not catch a big red snapper, but you can fill a cooler



with tasty filets and save a lot of fuel money. Anchoring up current of structure with a fresh chum bag is preferred. A variety of bait is a good idea as well as an arsenal of rods rigged and ready from light to heavy action.

Keep a lookout for speedsters such as bonito, Spanish mackerel, and king mackerel harassing bait schools in depths from twenty to ninety feet. Small spoons or Tuna Jets in various colors can bring instant hookups around feeding activity. Watch for birds and surface commotion to locate the fish. If you have a live well full of baitfish, a little chumming may quickly get the action started. Artificial reefs are a natural attractant for bait fish followed by predators.

Catch and release snook fishing is strong throughout the summer. Large females are up and down the coast surrounded by smaller males as they are in their summer mating rituals. Often the best fishing happens in the surf along the beaches. Snook will swim parallel to the beach, often just a few feet from shore in search of their next meal. This offers great sight fishing possibilities for both conventional and fly anglers. They can be located anywhere along the beaches, but if you find some type of structure

in the water, such as a tree branch or rocks, they often congregate near it.

Sharks are another summertime favorite. Varieties of species both large and small are common catches inshore and off. While they are a nuisance for some, anglers target them for their fighting ability. Sharks play an important role in our ecosystem; please make every effort to quickly release them unharmed. Every kid loves to catch a shark of any size, now is a good time, just make sure and do it safely for both the angler and the shark.

Keep up to date with fishing regulations and seasons in the area you fish, as they change often. You can visit www.myfwc.com for all current state and federal regulations.

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.

Captain 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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Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre Presents

The Wizard Of Oz

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There’s no place like Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre as it brings the beloved classic *The Wizard of Oz* to life on stage, playing now through Aug. 8! Bursting with dazzling visuals, unforgettable characters, and cherished songs, this enchanting production invites audiences of all ages to experience the magic of Oz like never before.

Based on the timeless story by L. Frank Baum, *The Wizard of Oz* follows Dorothy Gale as she is swept from Kansas to the magical Land of Oz. Along the Yellow Brick Road, she meets a scarecrow, tin man, and cowardly lion, and together they journey to find the wizard – while evading the wicked witch of the west.

Audiences will be swept away by iconic songs including *Over the Rainbow*, *Follow the Yellow Brick Road*, *If I Only Had a Brain*, and *We’re Off to See the Wizard*. With vibrant costumes, imaginative staging, and plenty of heart, this production celebrates the enduring



message that courage, compassion, and friendship can be found within us all.

Perfect for families, theatre lovers, and anyone who believes in a little bit of magic, *The Wizard of Oz* is a joyful and visually stunning experience that continues to captivate generation after generation.

Performances are Wednesday through Sunday evenings with select matinees. Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre offers a complete dinner-and-show experience, pairing

exceptional live theatre with a delicious meal in an inviting and intimate setting – making it the perfect night out for family and friends.

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 Blvd., in Fort Myers. Don’t miss your chance to follow the yellow brick road – this magical journey is one you won’t want to miss!

Meet The Candidate

Amanda Cochran: Deep Roots, Conservative Values, And A Commitment To Lee County

Amanda Cochran is running for Lee County Commission District 5 because she believes public service should belong to the people – not political insiders or special interests.

As a sixth-generation Southwest Floridian, Cochran is grateful for her family’s longstanding connection to this community. Her great-grandfather helped move cattle through Southwest Florida during the horse-and-buggy days, long before the roads and neighborhoods we know today existed. Her grandfather met her grandmother in Fort Myers while serving at Buckingham Army Airfield during World War II. Her mother was crowned Miss Lee County in 1968. For Cochran, Lee County is more than a place to live – it is home, heritage, and a legacy she is honored to carry forward.

“Few things have shaped me more than growing up in a family that has been part of this community for generations,” Cochran says. “I love Lee County, and I want to ensure it remains a place where future generations can thrive.”

A lifelong conservative Republican, small business owner, and community advocate, Cochran has spent the past several years traveling throughout Lee County listening to residents, business owners, veterans, teachers, first responders, and community leaders. While every community has unique concerns, she says one message is consistent: people want a government that listens, communicates openly, and remains accountable to the citizens it serves.

Cochran’s priorities include improving infrastructure, addressing traffic congestion, supporting public safety, protecting water quality, and ensuring county government remains responsive to the needs of residents.

She is also a strong supporter of law enforcement officers, firefighters, EMS personnel, teachers, healthcare professionals, veterans, and local small businesses – people she describes as the backbone of our community.

At the center of her campaign is a commitment to transparency, fiscal responsibility, and citizen representation.

“The role of a County Commissioner is simple,” Cochran says. “To serve on behalf of the people – not in place of them.”

Every decision, she says, should be guided by one fundamental question:

“How does this impact the people of Lee County?”

Her campaign slogan reflects the principle that guides her candidacy: Trust is Earned, NOT Given.



Faith Generation Church Moves To The William “Bill” Austen Youth Center

Faith Generation Church has relocated its weekly Sunday services to the William “Bill” Austen Youth Center, located at 15 SW 2nd Ave., Cape Coral, FL 33991.

This move marks an important step in the church’s continued commitment to serving families throughout Southwest Florida.

Faith Generation Church is a growing, family-focused church in Cape Coral known for engaging worship services, practical Bible teaching, and a welcoming environment for children, students, and adults. The church’s mission is to help people experience real faith in a real God and build meaningful relationships within the community.

“This move represents a continued step in what God is doing through our church,” said Pastor John Solaroli, Lead Pastor of Faith Generation Church. “We are excited to provide a space where families can come together, encounter God, and experience community in a meaningful way.”

Weekly Sunday services will continue to include worship and a practical, relevant message for adults,

along with environments designed specifically for children and students ages 3 months through 18 years.

First-time guests are always welcome at Faith Generation Church. Families and individuals are encouraged to plan their visit in advance to help the church prepare for their arrival and provide the best possible experience.

To let the team know you’re coming, visit: www.myfaithgeneration.com/visit.

About Faith Generation

Faith Generation is all about real people, doing real life, experiencing a real God, in real ways. We believe that the church should exist for people. Faith Generation is a non-denominational church in Cape Coral with contemporary worship.

Community members are invited to attend Sunday services at 10 a.m., which include contemporary worship and children’s ministry.

For more information, visit the church’s website at www.myfaithgeneration.com or e-mail John Solaroli at info@myfaithgen.com.

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Casino In The Cape

Raises More Than \$30,000 For Local Nonprofits

The Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce’s Leadership Class of 2025 recently made a significant investment in the community by presenting individual checks of \$10,145 to three local nonprofit organizations: the Cape Coral Museum of History, PACE Center for Girls, and Guardian Angels Special Pops.

The donations were made possible through proceeds from the annual Casino in the Cape fundraiser, held March 27 at Sun Splash Family Waterpark. The popular event brought together community members, local businesses, and supporters for an evening of entertainment, all while raising funds to benefit organizations that make a lasting impact throughout Cape Coral.

Each year, the Chamber’s Leadership program selects nonprofit organizations to support through its class project. Participants spend months planning and organizing the fundraising event, developing leadership skills while giving back to the community through service and philanthropy.

The Cape Coral Museum of History preserves and shares the rich history of Cape Coral through educational

programs, exhibits, and community events. PACE Center for Girls empowers young women by providing academic, counseling, and life skills programs that help them achieve their full potential. Guardian Angels Special Pops enriches the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities through music, performance, and opportunities for community engagement.

The Leadership Class of 2025 expressed its appreciation to the many sponsors, volunteers, businesses, and attendees whose generosity helped make Casino in the Cape a success. Their support allowed the class to donate more than \$30,000 collectively, strengthening organizations that continue

to make a positive difference in the Cape Coral community.

The annual Leadership program, sponsored by the Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce, is designed to develop informed, engaged leaders by providing participants with an in-depth understanding of the community and opportunities to make a meaningful impact through service.



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From Slovakia To Cape Coral: The Exchange That Created A Family Forever

By Mavis Ibarra

When Lukas got on his first roller coaster at Universal, Dusty and Dennis weren't watching the ride – they were watching him. The mix of surprise, excitement and joy on his face was enough for both of them to understand that this moment – seemingly simple – symbolized something much bigger. It wasn't just a ride. It was the beginning of a bond that, over the months, would become family.



Lukas Sykora with Dusty and Dennis Shelton at the Junior Leadership Graduation.

Lukas arrived in Cape Coral from Žilina, a mountainous city in northern Slovakia, when he was 17 years old with a suitcase full of expectations. He had been selected by the Rotary Youth Exchange Program (RYE), one of the most recognized exchange programs in the world. His goal was clear: To learn English, experience another culture, and live an opportunity that only comes once in a lifetime.

"I knew this opportunity doesn't come twice," he says. "I wanted to open my mind, learn from different opinions, and see what life is like in a country so different from mine."

A New Home In Cape Coral

The program usually assigns three host families throughout the school year. But Dusty and Dennis Shelton weren't just one of them – they were the only ones. From the very first day, Lukas found something he didn't expect so soon: stability, affection, and a home.



Lukas sharing time at his host family's home during Thanksgiving dinner.

"Lukas has become a member of our family," Dusty says. "We will stay in touch with him for a lifetime."

The connection was immediate. And with that connection came the experiences that shaped his year.

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A Journey Through The United States ... And Through Himself

Dusty and Dennis own an RV, which meant Lukas had the chance to discover the country beyond the maps. Together they traveled through South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama during a Thanksgiving trip filled with nature, history, and long conversations on the road.



At Medieval Times, Orlando.



During a visit to St. Augustine, Fla.

"I learned a lot about the Civil War visiting battlefields," he recalls. "And I also discovered how different life is in each state."

But that was only the beginning.

Lukas experienced his first NBA game in Miami – a dream for someone who loves basketball – his first cruise, his first trip to the West Coast, and his first visits to parks like Disney and Universal, experiences that don't exist in Central Europe. He also participated in the Junior Leadership Program with the Chamber of Commerce, where he learned how a city's infrastructure works and how a community is organized.

He joined school clubs like Interact and Key Club, attended Kiwanis meetings, and volunteered with Rotary.

"These activities helped me understand how Cape Coral works, its characteristics, and even its challenges," he explains.

Lessons Transcending Cultures

For Dusty and Dennis, hosting Lukas was also an exchange in the deepest sense.

"We learned so much about communication, different cultures, and traditions," they say. "It opened our eyes to other ways of seeing the world."

The family highlights a special moment: Lukas's first roller coaster. "The excitement on his face brought us so much joy," Dennis recalls. "It was like watching a son experience something for the first time."

A Never-Ending Bond

The exchange year ended, but the story didn't. The family is already planning a trip to Slovakia next year for his graduation. Lukas, for his part, says Dusty and Dennis will be "parents for life."

"They showed me the United States, but they also showed me what it feels like to have a family far from home," he says.

An Exchange That Transformed Everyone

Lukas's experience is a reminder that exchange programs don't just teach languages or cultures – they create human bonds. They link cities, families, and generations. They transform those who arrive and those who receive. And they leave marks that never fade in time.

In Cape Coral, a Slovak student found a family – and that family found a son.



Visiting the movie theater to watch The Mandalorian movie.



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Culinary Adventurist

Two Meatballs In The Kitchen

By Ed Estes

Another, almost iconic, landmark on Cape Coral Parkway East is *Two Meatballs in the Kitchen* in the 1400 block, kind of across the street from the Holiday Inn Express; there is huge building sign exposure from the eastern approach, almost impossible to miss it. My first visit was three years ago when my wife, Nancy, and I were out doing a final inspection of our house before we closed the transaction. That visit was for dinner; my last two meals were for lunch. On my last trip, I was introduced to Wayne, self-described the “Senior Meatball,” by Lisa Barrella, membership director at the Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce. Lisa and I were meeting to go over leadership responsibilities on the Chamber Membership Development Committee. Funny, my meals at Two Meatballs always seem to be joined with another activity. My previous lunch followed a ribbon cutting with the Chamber crew at a neighboring cannabis dispensary ... it was my suggestion we go have lunch as I anticipated a case of “contact munchies” might infect us.

This visit was as enjoyable as the others. Lunch does not seem to be as busy as dinner, which is a good thing (well, not necessarily for Wayne) since dinners can be VERY crowded. I had my standard Italian go to lunch, a submarine sandwich, which was great. Earlier I had tried the pizza and the chicken parmigiana, both equally good. I am afraid I am not much of a salad eater, but Lisa is, and she enjoyed one of their special seasonal salads. Taylor was our waitress, she did a great job keeping my iced tea glass full.

The menu is varied, with a nice selection of appetizers, soups, salads and a full selection of Italian entrees featuring beef, chicken, pork, seafood and non-meat alternatives for those looking for a vegetarian experience ... and gluten free penne (personally, I’ve never met a gluten I did not like so I will have to defer to someone else on that). Oh, did I forget pizza? Yes, lots of suggested pies as well as the ability to customize your own pizza (a cauliflower crust is also available). The wine list is well represented with California and Italian wines, and a very nice wines by the glass selection which is appreciated since your dinner (or lunch) mate may not have the same taste



as you when it comes to wine and if you are drinking wine by yourself, well, a full bottle may place you in the crosshairs of “Cape Coral’s finest,” not a place anyone wants to be!

The restaurant is rich with red and dark brown wood, as you’d expect a good Italian eatery to be. A full bar and bar seating is available, along with high top table seating and regular booth seating, depending on your preference. The bar area is integrated with the restaurant, but I want to stress that the restaurant is family-oriented. And while you can enter from Cape Coral Parkway (road construction not to be withstanding), I strongly recommend entering from the back parking lot. The rear entrance has loads of parking accessing from 47th Terrace and that is where the hostess stand is located. I did not go upstairs, but I understand they do have a room available for special events and have a catering menu as well.

Located at 1403 Cape Coral Pkwy., Two Meatballs in the Kitchen is open 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily, (11:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday), phone number: (239) 347-3013 ... and I would recommend dinner reservations during the season.

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.



Meet The Candidate

Florida’s 19th Congressional District Candidate: Ola Hawatmeh

Ola Hawatmeh is an unwavering America First patriot, accomplished business owner, designer, philanthropist, and dedicated conservative activist fiercely committed to President Trump’s MAGA agenda. Born in the United States to Christian immigrants from Jordan, who pursued the American Dream through grit and opportunity, Ola embodies the resilience Trump champions – fighting to secure our borders with his border wall and remain in Mexico policy, ignite economic prosperity through tax cuts and deregulation that drove record-low unemployment before COVID, and dismantle the radical left’s assaults on our liberties.



Ola is running for Congress in Florida’s 19th District to advance Trump’s vision of putting America first, draining the swamp with term limits and ending endless foreign wars, and preserving the Judeo-Christian values, Second Amendment rights, and unapologetic patriotism that make our nation exceptional for future generations.

In 2004, she founded Mom Me Makeover, a company empowering Americans with transformative makeovers to shine inside and out, much like Trump’s tariffs safeguarded American workers from unfair foreign trade. Her success led her to establish Makeover for a Cause, a charity that donates makeovers to nonprofits nationwide, including veterans through Wounded Warriors and Hope for Heroes, empowering women via Dress for Success, supporting children through Friends of Kids with Cancer, and aiding communities via St. Patrick’s Center, embodying Trump’s commitment to uplifting those ravaged by failed Democrat policies and his push for school choice to empower families.

Ola has personally transformed the lives of countless teenagers battling cancer, providing shopping sprees and hair/makeup makeovers to restore their confidence. She expanded her vision with Ola Style, her thriving fashion design company, while hosting charity fashion shows across the country that celebrate American ingenuity, aligning with Trump’s “Buy American, Hire American” executive orders.

As co-founder of the Middle East Women’s Coalition, Ola has spoken on Capitol Hill, fiercely advocating for secure borders, energy independence, and peace through strength – core tenets of Trump’s Abraham Accords, which achieved historic Middle East peace without new wars, and his MAGA platform rejecting nation-building abroad. The coalition proudly endorses Trump’s reelection, recognizing his bold leadership in rejecting globalist threats like the Paris Climate Accord to prioritize American jobs.

For the past year, Ola has served as a Senior Policy Advisor in Washington, D.C., working with constituents, helping bills get co-sponsors, and addressing policy-related issues and on legislation. Ola plans to use her experience working in Washington to help address critical issues in Florida’s 19th District, such as clean water initiatives, tackling the rising cost of living, and reforming insurance policies to protect families – issues Trump has prioritized through infrastructure investments and economic relief measures.

LCEC Earns Chartwell 2026 Silver Award For Excellence In Customer Experience

LCEC has been recognized with Chartwell’s 2026 Silver Award for Excellence in Customer Experience for its implementation of a Natural Language Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system.

The award highlights the LCEC commitment to enhancing member experience through innovative technology and strong cross-functional collaboration. The upgraded system allows members to navigate calls more easily using natural speech, resulting in faster, more accurate responses to their needs.

Key outcomes of the implementation include:

- Improved member experience through easier, more intuitive call navigation
- Increased accuracy in understanding member intent
- Reduction in misrouted calls and repeat interactions
- Faster issue resolution and greater operational efficiency

“We’re focused on making every interaction easier and more meaningful for our members,” said Denise Vidal,

executive vice president and chief executive officer. “It’s about delivering more responsive, accessible service that meets our members where they are.” The recognition from Chartwell reinforces the strategic focus on LCEC has on advancing and strengthening member engagement through innovation and service excellence.

About LCEC

LCEC is Southwest Florida’s Electric Cooperative providing reliable, cost-competitive electricity to members throughout the region. The LCEC headquarters are in North Fort Myers, Florida, the same location where the cooperative originated in 1940. Approximately 450 skilled employees are positioned throughout the six-county service territory, including Immokalee, Cape Coral, North Fort Myers, Sanibel/Captiva, Pine Island, Useppa, Cabbage Key, Marco Island, Everglades City, Ave Maria, and parts of Lehigh Acres.

Unlocking Wellness With Thrive By K: ————— Harnessing The Power Of Evexias Hormone Pellets

*By Kristin Gustin, APRN/
Owner*

In today's fast-paced world, achieving optimal health and wellness is no longer just a goal – it's a necessity. Thrive by K understands this imperative and is committed to delivering advanced health solutions that truly make a difference. Central to its approach is the use of Evexias hormone pellets, a groundbreaking option in the field of hormone replacement therapy (HRT).

A New Era Of Hormone Health

Hormones are the body's chemical messengers that regulate numerous critical functions, including metabolism, mood, and reproductive health. Unfortunately, it's common for hormone levels to decline or become imbalanced as we age or encounter certain health conditions, leading to a host of symptoms such as fatigue, weight fluctuation, mood swings, and more. Fortunately, Thrive by K is pioneering a holistic approach to hormone balance with Evexias hormone pellets.

The Science Behind Evexias Hormone Pellets At Thrive

By K

At the core of Thrive by K's treatment philosophy is the belief that personalized care is essential for effective hormone therapy. Evexias hormone pellets are designed to deliver customized solutions that align with this belief:

1. Personalization: By working closely with medical professionals at Thrive by K, patients receive tailored treatment plans. Each Evexias pellet is custom-compounded to meet the unique hormonal needs of the individual, ensuring precise dosing and efficacy.

2. Biocompatibility: One significant advantage of Evexias pellets is that they use bioidentical hormones, which are chemically identical to the ones our bodies naturally produce. This reduces the risk of adverse effects and maximizes compatibility and safety.

3. Sustained Release: Unlike traditional hormone therapies, which can lead to erratic hormone levels, Evexias pellets provide a continuous release of hormones, promoting stability and balance. This steady delivery mimics natural hormone patterns and minimizes the roller-coaster effects associated with other treatments.

4. Convenience and Comfort: Once inserted, the pellets require no ongoing maintenance. By eliminating the need for daily pills, patches, or creams, they offer unmatched convenience and allow patients to focus on living their lives to the fullest.

Thrive By K: Beyond Hormone Therapy

Beyond the transformative power of hormone pellets, Thrive by K embraces a comprehensive approach to health. The clinic emphasizes lifestyle modifications, nutritional guidance, and stress management to enhance treatment outcomes, recognizing that true wellness stems from a holistic perspective.

Transforming Lives, One Pellet At A Time

Patients who have undergone treatment with Thrive by K frequently report a dramatic improvement in their quality of life. With balanced hormone levels, many experience renewed vitality, improved mental focus, enhanced mood stability, and enriched personal relationships.

Here is one of many happy patient reviews.

I am a 49-year-old male and I found Thrive By K after finally getting a diagnosis of hypogonadism known as Low T. For three years I went to my GP and it was the same story every year of 30% BMI, elevated lipids, blood pressure and being pre-diabetic.



I tried countless times to cut weight and found myself only getting back to what it was the previous year. Finally asked my GP to check my T. and the response I got was "I can think of 10 other things to check for but sure," and there it was: low T.

Realized that my GP care was going to create slow play, so I made the decision to take it out of network. Researched my options and did I get lucky finding Thrive By K.

I had an appointment within days, showed up quite disheveled with life stressors and some fear of what's to come. I was greeted with kindness and encouragement that things don't need to be this way and we will get you better:

So fast, literally that day I had labs drawn at the office and a week later had pellets inserted after we reviewed results. Just like that it was that easy! Beyond that they even helped me with stop byes to answer questions when I was in doubt. Of course, typically cautious, I came to realize that the baseline testing they did was really comprehensive putting my mind at ease.

I feel amazing and have never been so excited to go to Thrive By K. It's been 10 weeks and with the help of a small stack of a peptide I have lost 23 pounds. Even people I run into are in wow by the new me. Totally back in the game and life is back on. What a fantastic experience, best ever!

~ *Bryan Fugere*

False Contraindications – Myths Or Misconceptions

When discussing medical treatments such as bioidentical hormone pellets, it's essential to rely on accurate and evidence-based information. That said, it can be helpful to address misunderstandings or misconceptions surrounding the use of such treatments. Here are some common false contraindications—myths or misconceptions—that might surround bioidentical hormone pellets:

1. They Cause Cancer: One prevalent misconception is that all hormone replacement therapies, including bioidentical hormones, universally increase cancer risk. In reality, the relationship between hormone therapy and cancer is complex and varies depending on individual health factors, the type of hormones used, dosing, and monitoring. Bioidentical hormones can in fact decrease risk of cancer.

2. Suitable Only For Women: While hormone therapy is often associated with treating menopausal symptoms in women, bioidentical hormone pellets can also be highly beneficial for men, addressing issues like low testosterone and its associated symptoms.

3. They Cause Weight Gain: Some believe that hormone pellets lead to inevitable weight gain. However, when prescribed and monitored correctly, these hormones can help regulate metabolism and, for some individuals, assist in maintaining a

healthy weight.

4. They Are Not Safe: Due to a lack of understanding, there is sometimes a belief that bioidentical hormones are unsafe or unregulated. However, when prescribed by a qualified healthcare professional, compounded bioidentical hormones can be a safe option, and many providers choose FDA-approved hormone options when possible.

5. One-Size-Fits-All Dosing: A misconception exists that hormone pellets offer the same dose for everyone. In reality, hormone pellet therapy is highly individualized. Healthcare providers conduct thorough evaluations, including blood work, to tailor the dosing to each patient's unique hormonal needs correctly.

6. Immediate Results: Some expect immediate results with hormone pellet therapy, which can lead to early disappointment. In truth, it can take some time for the body to adapt to the therapy, and patients need to give it time for optimal effects to become apparent.

7. No Need For Follow-Up: Thinking that no follow-up is required after getting hormone pellets is a misconception. Routine monitoring is necessary to ensure hormone levels stay balanced and adjustments are made as needed.

It's important to approach such therapies under the guidance of a qualified healthcare provider who can offer personalized advice. As always, those considering hormone therapy of any kind should have an in-depth discussion with their healthcare practitioners to explore the benefits and risks based on their specific health profile and needs.

The Path Forward

Thrive by K, with its integration of Evexias hormone pellets, stands at the forefront of hormone health innovation. By providing tailored, effective, and convenient solutions for hormone imbalances, the clinic empowers individuals to reclaim their vitality and confidence.

For those seeking to enrich their wellbeing amidst the complexities of modern life, Thrive by K offers a promising path—one that blends science with compassion and commitment. As they continue to evolve and adopt cutting-edge solutions like Evexias hormone pellets, they remain dedicated to transforming health narratives, one patient at a time.

*Reprinted from The Cape
Coral Sun, April 2025*

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

Benchmark General Contractors Breaks Ground On Midpoint Gateway Retail Center In Cape Coral

Benchmark General Contractors held a groundbreaking ceremony Wednesday, June 17 for Midpoint Gateway Retail Center, a 7,500-square-foot multi-tenant retail development at 2675 Del Prado Blvd. S., in Cape Coral, marking the official start of construction.

The new retail center will offer space for five businesses, with leasing opportunities still available. GMA Architects and Planners is serving as architect on the project, with Moody Powell Structural Engineers as structural engineer. Construction is underway and is expected to be completed within eight months.

“Projects like this, they don’t get enough attention,” said Brad Nickel, president of Benchmark General Contractors. “It’s a small 7,500-square-foot strip mall, but what it represents is jobs staying local, building the



Are you Storm Ready?

Make a plan, be prepared and stay safe.

Visit the LCEC Storm Center for more information.



LCEC works year-round to harden the electric system and prepare for storms. 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 lcec.net to learn more.



community up, dressing up Cape Coral – the less people are driving across the causeway to get jobs, the better. I think projects like this are exactly what the community needs right now.”

Nickel said the project is moving quickly, with site work expected to begin within the next week, and the center positioned for tenants to begin leasing by the end of the year.

The groundbreaking comes as Benchmark expands its reach beyond Sanibel and Captiva, where the company has concentrated much of its work since *Hurricane Ian*. “Our last four years have really been focused on the rebuilding of Sanibel and Captiva,” Nickel said. “*Hurricane Ian* really took our attention and put it over there – that’s our hometown. But now we’ve built our team up to where we can start spreading our wings a little bit and hitting all the other local communities, and bringing what we do best, and that’s building, and building with quality.”

Cape Coral City Councilmember Bill Steinke attended the groundbreaking and praised the investment in the city’s commercial corridor.

“We’ve needed more business opportunity here for folks,” Steinke said. “There are businesses that want to start here, but we’ve just not had the space for them. For an entity to come and invest in our city and make available space for businesses and retail operators to be here is just a great addition to our city – a welcome sight to see a new business space being opened up.”

Steinke added that the project supports the city’s broader economic goals.

“Our quest has been to increase the commercial tax base in our area, and so we welcome those businesses that are willing to put up the infrastructure necessary to accommodate that,” Steinke said.

Benchmark’s project team leading Midpoint Gateway Retail Center includes Ryan Johnson as vice president of commercial and Doug Hrabik as senior project manager.

As Southwest Florida continues to grow, Benchmark General Contractors remains committed to delivering high-quality construction projects that serve businesses and communities across the region. Midpoint Gateway Retail Center reflects the company’s ongoing investment in the Cape Coral market and its broader effort to support local economic growth.

About Benchmark General Contractors

Benchmark General Contractors is a Southwest Florida-based construction firm specializing in commercial and luxury residential projects, with a strong presence in coastal communities including Sanibel and Captiva. Founded in 1984, the company is known for its expertise in complex coastal construction, delivering high-quality projects that meet the unique challenges of building in hurricane-prone environments. Benchmark combines craftsmanship, project management expertise and strong partnerships with developers and architects to deliver projects with precision, transparency and long-term value. As the region continues to grow and rebuild, Benchmark is helping shape the future of Southwest Florida through resilient construction and thoughtful development. For more information, visit Benchmark-GC.com or call (239) 466-1590.

Photo courtesy of Benchmark General Contractors



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.

Free Paint Along At Cape Coral Art Center Saturday, July 18 – 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

You're invited to the annual one-day paint along event at Cape Coral Art Center. Celebrate National Parks & Recreation Month with a fun and creative community event!

Personality Traits For People Born In July

Those born in July are often described as warm-hearted, loyal individuals who combine emotional strength with determination. With personalities rooted in compassion and confidence, July-born individuals naturally inspire trust, build lasting relationships, and bring positivity to the people around them.

Loyal And Devoted – July personalities are known for their unwavering loyalty to family and friends. They value deep, meaningful relationships and will go out of their way to support the people they love through both good times and challenges.

Compassionate And Caring – People born in July have kind hearts and a natural desire to care for others. They are thoughtful listeners, dependable friends, and often place the needs of loved ones before their own.

Confident And Determined – Once July-born individuals set their minds on a goal, they pursue it with persistence and dedication. They possess quiet confidence and are not easily discouraged when faced with obstacles.

Creative And Imaginative – Many people born in July have a strong creative streak. Whether through music, art, writing, cooking, or problem-solving, they enjoy expressing themselves and finding unique ways to share their talents.

Protective And Dependable – July individuals are often the ones others turn to in times of need. They have a strong sense of responsibility and take pride in protecting and supporting the people and causes they care about.

Optimistic And Inspiring – Although they experience emotions deeply, July-born people often maintain a hopeful outlook on life. Their encouragement, resilience, and positive attitude inspire those around them to keep moving forward.

Embracing life with compassion, determination, and unwavering loyalty, those born in July leave a lasting impression through their kindness, creativity, and strength of character. Their generous spirit and genuine concern for others make them valued friends, trusted leaders, and cherished members of every community they touch.



Join us for a free guided paint session with instructor Paul David Adamick where you'll create your own masterpiece to take home, no experience needed!

This year's featured painting is a 12-inch by 12-inch canvas depicting the scenic boardwalk at Four Mile Cove Eco Preserve, capturing the beauty of nature and one of Cape Coral's treasured outdoor spaces.

All ages welcome! Participants under 16 years old must be accompanied by an adult 18 years or older.

Space is limited, pre-registration required, secure your spot early!

Come get creative, connect with the community, and celebrate the arts with us!

For more information about the Cape Coral Art Center, including upcoming classes, exhibits, and events, please call (239) 574-0802.

Bird Walk At Rotary Park Saturday, July 18 – 8 to 9 a.m.

Join us for a free guided stroll through Rotary Park, 5505 Rose Garden Road, to explore the rich birdlife that calls this area home. Whether you're a seasoned birder or just beginning, this walk offers a great opportunity to connect with nature and discover the diverse avian residents of the park.

Ice Cream Social At Lake Kennedy Center Monday, July 20 – 1:30 p.m.

Open to all ages, we're turning up the sweetness with a good old-fashioned ice cream social! Bring your family, friends, and your appetite for fun as we scoop up some delicious treats together. This is a free event, but please don't forget to RSVP by calling (239) 574-0575.

Celebrate Parks & Recreation Month with us and let's make it a cool, sweet day to remember!

Health And Wellness Series At South Cape Community Center

Tuesday, July 21 – 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Wednesday, Aug. 4 – 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Lee Health is excited to announce their free wellness series at the

South Cape Community Center. Pre-registration is required; space is limited. Call (239) 574-0806 for more information.

Go Native! Program At Rotary Park Friday, July 24 – 6 to 8 p.m.

Go Native is a "how to" environmental program specifically focused on Cape Coral landscapes and reducing the negative impacts of our yards on water quality. Homeowners will learn actions they can incorporate to use less water and other lawn chemicals, prepare your landscape for storms, all while promoting more wildlife.

Native Plant Sale At Rotary Park Saturday, July 25 – 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Join us for the Summer Native Plant Sale at Rotary Park, 5505 Rose Garden Road, on Saturday, July 25, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Shop from a variety of native trees, shrubs, flowers, grasses, butterfly plants, and tropical edible plants, too. Plant experts will be on hand to answer questions and help you choose the right plant for the right place. Come early for the best selection.

Coming Up In The Cape on page 31

CAPE CORAL
Animal Shelter

TOGETHER, We Can Save Lives!

DONATE TO OUR PREMIER ONLINE AUCTION

Every bid gives animals a second chance.

LAST YEAR WE RAISED OVER
\$65,000!
LET'S GO EVEN BIGGER THIS YEAR!

AUGUST 17TH – 21ST

An interactive online event where every bid helps give animals a second chance.

WE ARE SEEKING UNIQUE ITEMS & EXPERIENCES SUCH AS:

- Luxury hotel stays
- Fine art & jewelry
- Concert & show tickets
- Boat charters
- Restaurant gift cards
- Golf packages
- Wine & spirits
- Pet grooming, spa & boarding services

All donors will be recognized throughout the auction and on our social media platforms!

3 Ways to Donate:

- EMAIL THE AUCTION FORM TO: liz@capecoralanimalshelter.com
- DROP OFF DONATIONS AT: 325 SW 2nd Avenue, Cape Coral, FL 33991
- NEED ASSISTANCE? We can arrange for pick-up!

Thank you for being a voice for animals in need!

Contributions are tax-deductible as in-kind donations.

We appreciate all support! This event focuses on NEW items— we cannot accept used, thrift store or yard sale items.

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LOCAL GUIDANCE NO COST PERSONAL SUPPORT PEACE OF MIND

Coming Up In The Cape from page 30

For more information, call Rotary Park at (239) 549-4606. This event is held in conjunction with the rain barrel workshop.

**Rain Barrel Workshop At Rotary Park
Saturday, July 25 – 10 to 11 a.m.**

Rain barrels are a great way to reduce stormwater runoff and save water for a dry spell.

Join us for a Rain Barrel Workshop at Rotary Park, 5505 Rose Garden Road, on Saturday, July 25, from 10 to 11 a.m. In this workshop led by Lee County Master Gardeners, you will learn how to make and install a rain barrel to use at home. The class fee of \$55 includes a pre-assembled rain

barrel and is held on the same day as the native plant sale.

Advance registration and payment are required as a limited number of barrels are available.

**Ribbon Cutting At Paul Sanborn Park
Friday, July 31 – 9 to 10 a.m.**

The City of Cape Coral invites residents and community members to attend a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the opening of the new Paul Sanborn Park playground.

The ceremony will take place on Friday, July 31, at 9 a.m. at Paul Sanborn Park, located at 2310 SE 3rd Street. The event is open to the public, and no reservation is required to attend.

Paul Sanborn Park is a three-acre neighborhood park featuring a large pavilion with BBQ grill, basketball

courts, covered playground area, and perimeter pathway for walking, exercising, etc. Extensive landscaping, including one of the only remaining banyan trees in Cape Coral, makes this an excellent place to stop and enjoy the great outdoors.

Visit our website www.capecoral.gov/departments/parks_recreation.

**Crafts And Coffee At South Cape Community Center
Friday, Aug. 7 – 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.**

Join us for crafts and coffee at the South Cape Community Center at 4544 Coronado Pkwy. This is an opportunity for seniors to use their creative minds, make friends, and enjoy coffee together. Call (239) 574-0806 to register.

SPIRIT NIGHT!
WITH CAPE CORAL FOR THE CHILDREN

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1

Cape Coral for the Children, Inc.

GATES 5 PM
FIRST PITCH 6:05 PM

FORT MYERS MIGHTY MUSSELS VS PBR

\$5 from each Mussels ticket purchased goes back to Cape Coral for the Children!

ENTRANCE GIVEAWAY!

GET TICKET NOW



AUGUST 1, 2026
5:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Feelin' Hot, Hot, Hot!

DINNER DANCE

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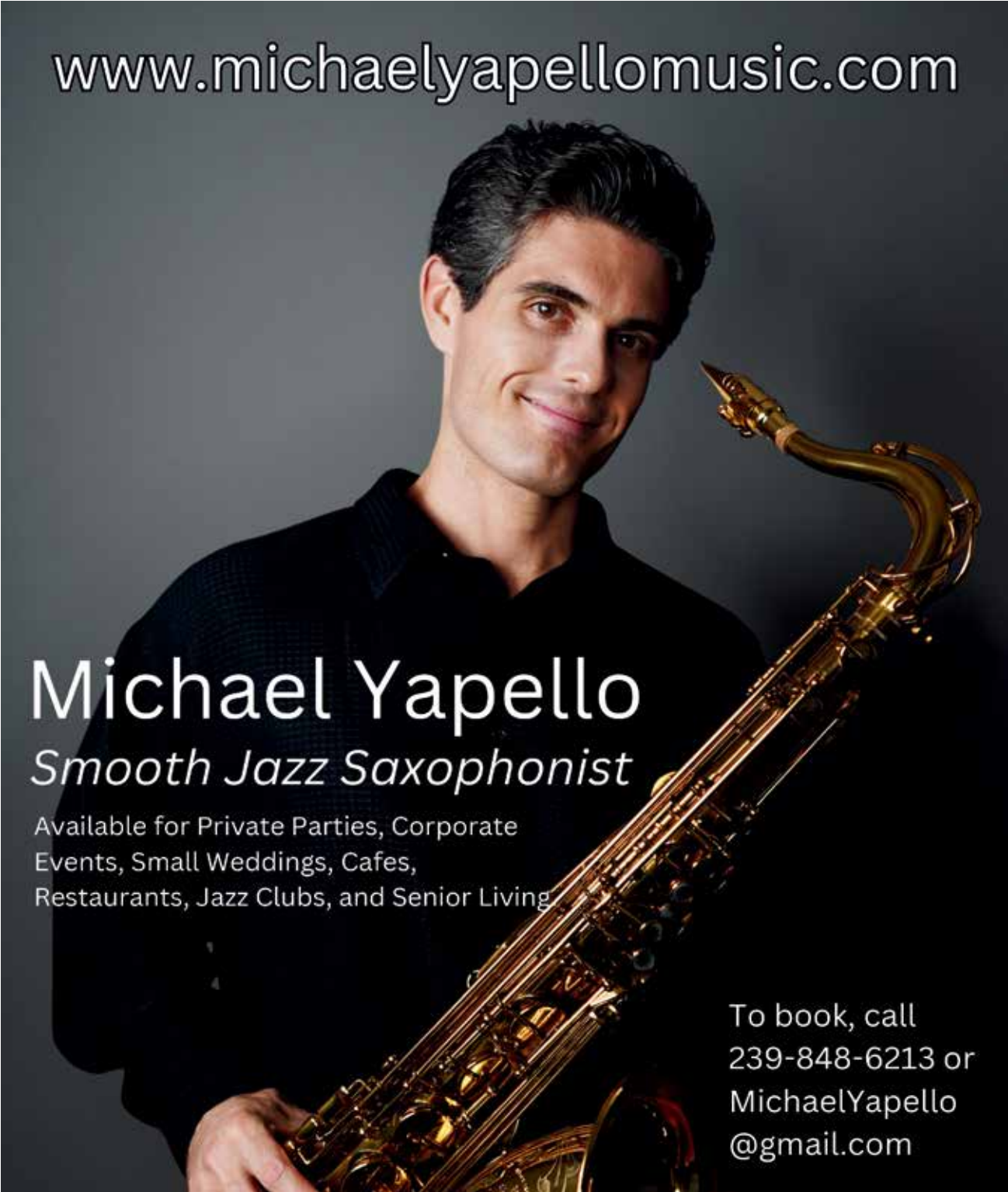
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**Mr. Romantico At Lake Kennedy Center
Saturday, Aug. 11 – 6 to 9 p.m.**

Join us for a night featuring Italian classics and dancing '50s, '60s and '70s at the Lake Kennedy Center, 400 Santa Barbara Blvd S. This artist performs a "Tribute to Legends" including Bocelli, Elvis, Mario Lanza, Sinatra, Tom Jones, Neil Diamond, Pavarotti, Dean Martin and more.

Perfect for lovers of harmony and great music, B.Y.O.B. Doors open at 5:30 p.m.

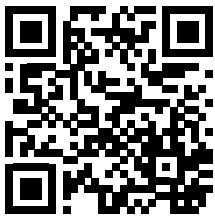
Cost: \$12 prepaid (deadline 4:30 p.m. day before), \$15 at the door

Don't miss this chance to dance and sing along to the timeless hits! Call for more information (239) 574-0575.

**Dog Days Of Summer Luncheon At Lake Kennedy Center
Thursday, Aug. 13 – 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.**

The Dog Days of Summer are here! Enjoy a laid-back luncheon at Lake Kennedy Center, 400 Santa Barbara Blvd S. on Thursday Aug. 13, starting at 1:30 p.m. The cost is \$10 per person. For more information call (239) 574-0575.

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



DON'T GET CAUGHT IN THE RAIN!

WEATHER ALERT!

TEXT 84483 AND USE THE MESSAGE CCSPECIALEVENTS TO SIGN UP FOR WEATHER ALERTS.

Cape Coral



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