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Home Insurance Has Fallen And Can't Get Back Up

By Butch Swank



Photo: Butch Swank, President of Southwest Florida Business Alliance; Owner of Goodlad & Swank Insurance, LLC

I'd like to take a departure from my recent articles that have mostly not been business related. There are some important changes coming up for the home insurance marketplace that I want to share. After the November elections our governor, Ron Desantis, has informed the Florida state legislature that he is setting up a special session this December. The legislature normally would not meet until their scheduled session that runs from March 7th to May 5th. The point of this urgent special session is to address our collapsing home insurance industry.

As almost everyone knows, home insurance rates have skyrocketed, and I am telling you that rates will continue to go up. We help clients daily with new home policies and see where things are going. We have also had six home insurance carriers go out of business so far this year - fewer carriers also means less competition. It is perfectly reason-

able to question why they are going out of business if rates are so much higher. The answer is simple: lawsuits. Florida accounts for only 8% of insurance claims filed in all of the United States. Even with our hurricanes, fires, floods, etc - we only account for 8%. However, we account for 80% of the lawsuits in the United States. Our legislators have created an environment that 100% legally allows attorneys to sue home insurance companies at will. They have also, in my very biased opinion, kept it this way for far too long. When a lawsuit is filed against you there is no alternative other than to defend yourself. Attorneys are expensive. You know what else is expensive? Roofs. So, in our current system, the attorneys and roofers have joined forces and they file lawsuits against home insurers for roofs that were old (sometimes even pretty new ones) or ones that have simply worn out from our good old Florida sun.

Imagine this scenario: Someone knocks on your door. In my example, let's assume you own a Ford F-150 that is 8 years old. The person that knocks on your door says, "Hey, I noticed you have a dent on your rear bumper and the paint is scratched on your door. Plus,

your tires look pretty worn. If you sign here, I can file a claim (lawsuit) against your auto insurer and get you a brand-new truck lickety-split." Sounds kind of nuts and more than a bit irresponsible, right? We all know trucks and cars wear out and we expect that. Also, it is our responsibility to maintain our vehicles. Clearly, roofs wear out, too, but under our current laws, this insane truck scenario applies to roofs and is totally legal. Can you imagine what would happen to auto insurance rates if my example were allowed to happen? Well, that is exactly what is happening to home insurance. Insurance carriers do all kinds of complicated math to calculate risks to homes from normal things like hurricanes, floods, or some crazy Florida man story that involves beer, fireworks, and a few gas cans in the garage. They use these calculations to figure out what the year's expected claims costs will be and then file home insurance rates with the State. They do this in the hopes of eking out a profit so they can actually stay in business for the next year. Their calculations nowadays simply cannot keep up with the lawsuits even though they have repeatedly asked the State for price increases. Rates go up but the cost of the lawsuits is always higher. No business

can survive in this scenario.

So, our legislature will meet in December with the intention of fixing this. We're very lucky to live in the great state of Florida. It is so beautiful, has so many amazing people, and barring the random and terrifying hurricane, our weather is amazing. The sad part is that if this does not get fixed, our home insurance and then the home real estate markets will collapse. In my agency, we have had numerous clients have to sell their houses and move out of state because they can't afford their insurance premiums. I am telling you that it's a miserable feeling when a widow on a fixed income tells you that's why she has to move - and it's happening more and more often. I am, quite frankly, beyond angry that this has been allowed to get this bad. I urge everyone reading this to speak with their legislators right after the election and demand things get fixed. No other states allow this insanity to occur, and our elected officials need to stop the talk and take action. If you've read my previous articles, you know that I am at heart an optimist. That's why when you hear this you know I mean it: Please call or email your legislators and demand this gets fixed, or we're in for a bleak future. 🐔

Grumpy Goat Coffee Launches SWFL STRONG Coffee To Raise Funds For Hurricane Recovery

Submitted By Randy Mitchelson

Grumpy Goat Coffee roastery in Bonita Springs has launched SWFL STRONG coffee. Profits from sales of SWFL STRONG coffee will be donated to Hurricane Ian recovery efforts. The specialty grade, single origin, high altitude coffee is fully traceable and features tasting notes including chocolate, coffee cherry and cocoa flavors and finishes clean with a smooth mouthfeel. SWFL STRONG coffee is available in 16 ounce bags both in person at the

roastery and also at grumpygoat.com where free shipping is available on orders of \$35 or more. Grumpy Goat Coffee roastery is located at the Causeway Commerce Park, 28280 Old 41 Rd., unit 11 near historic downtown Bonita Springs. The coffee will also be available for sale at Grumpy Goat Coffee's next tasting event on Thursday October 27, 4:30 - 7:30 p.m., hosted by Pansardo Coffee Shop & Italian Food Specialties in Bonita Springs. The

event is open to the public. For more details subscribe to email alerts at grumpygoat.com and follow Grumpy Goat Coffee on major social media channels including Nextdoor and Yelp.

and makes fresh roasted, fully traceable, single origin gourmet grade coffee both exciting and approachable. Brian Abernathy is the founder and master roaster who selects a wide variety of coffee origins from the world's top, high altitude growing regions. Brian's collaborations with chefs, brewmasters and food industry partners have resulted in multiple award winning Grumpy Goat coffee inspired flavors and recipes. Learn more at grumpygoat.com. 🐔

ABOUT GRUMPY GOAT COFFEE

Grumpy Goat Coffee Company, located near historic downtown Bonita Springs, Florida was founded in 2016

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The Healing Power Of Arts Is Underway

By Maru Lanao

Dancers from around the world will offer a special benefit performance for Hurricane Ian relief, compliments of the region's newly formed professional ballet company, which expedited its public launch to help a community in need.

The performance, **ARTS HEAL**, will take place on Friday, Nov. 18, at 8 p.m. at Artis—Naples. The organizers are Iliana Lopez and Franklin Gamero, the artistic directors of Gulfshore Ballet School in Fort Myers and founders of Florida Gulfshore Ballet, which will hold its inaugural season in 2023-24.

Community recovery in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian is a crucial challenge for Southwest Florida. At a local, state, and federal level, decision makers must remember that the arts and creative workers are crucial to the successful economic and emotional reconstruction of communities devastated by disasters—but are often as profoundly impacted by these events as other small businesses and have a more difficult time receiving funding and resources to both rebound and participate in community recovery in the aftermath.

"We knew we couldn't wait until the company officially starts next year," Lopez said. "The need is right now."

The long-term effects on the local economies of Collier and Lee Counties—particularly on the cultural tourism sector—is real and will negatively impact the community unless arts and culture rebound in concert with housing and jobs. While it is always paramount to assist in survival when disaster hits, after the basic needs of health, food, and shelter are met, the cultural and civic assets of a community must come into focus, and their preservation and recon-

struction are just as paramount and deserve just as much attention and support. Proceeds of **ARTS HEAL** will go to special funds at the Collier Community Foundation and the Fort Myers-based Collaboratory designated for performing and visual artists and arts organizations that were impacted by the storm.

"The arts illuminate the human condition, bring people together, and provide a crucial vehicle for healing. Disaster recovery includes addressing the emotional and spiritual healing of the community in addition to material necessities such as food and shelter; research shows that arts-based therapies in the aftermath of earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, and other disasters reduce rates of distress, depression, and anxiety and increase hope, feelings of well-being and safety, and overall confidence. The arts make recovery more possible, more quickly, for those affected," said Gamero.

"The arts heal," Lopez said, explaining the show's impetus. "Disaster recovery includes addressing the emotional and spiritual healing of the community in addition to providing for material needs. Arts organizations play a critical role in that process."

The arts will play a vital part in the region's economic recovery as well, Lopez and Gamero said. The arts sector employs hundreds of Southwest Floridians and pumps millions of dollars into the local economy. With beachfront attractions offline, the arts may have even broader appeal during this year's tourism season.

In the days following the storm, the couple began calling fellow dancers from around the world asking for support. The response was overwhelming. Performers from Switzerland, Peru, Spain, and France will

join those from around the country and Florida. Young dancers from Gulfshore Ballet School, which Lopez and Gamero have led for a decade, will open the show performing the directors' original choreography.

"We are so excited to welcome these world-class dancers to our community and grateful that they agreed to donate their time and talent to help Southwest Florida recover," Gamero said.

In addition to the dancers, organizations such as Artis-Naples, Gulf Coast International Properties, Life Law Planning, Gulfshore Life and Beasley Media Group have made the event possible. **ARTS HEAL** is among several initiatives Artis-Naples has undertaken, including free admission to the Baker Museum and free tickets to select performances for those impacted by the storm.

The audience will be treated to works ranging from the classics such as *Le Corsaire* to those by George Balanchine, who changed the face of American Ballet, to a work by pioneering modern dance master Martha Graham to pieces by former Miami City Ballet resident choreographer Jimmy Gamonet de los Heros.

Incidentally, the choreography of de los Heros will form the foundation of the new Florida Gulfshore Ballet's repertory once the company gets underway. **ARTS HEAL** gives



Photo: Ballet de Barcelona

dance aficionados who are unfamiliar with his work a sneak preview, as well as a sampling of the range of choreographic styles the company will feature. Florida Gulfshore Ballet's first performance is tentatively scheduled for April 2023.

ABOUT ARTS HEAL

ARTS HEAL is the first initiative of newly founded Florida Gulfshore Ballet, which is the first and only professional ballet company in Southwest Florida, delivering excellence on stage, as well as a commitment to the widest possible public audience through touring, educational programs, and community engagement.

Tickets to **ARTS HEAL** can be obtained through Artis—Naples (<https://artisnaples.org/events/>). Donations to the Collier Community Foundation's Arts Heal Fund and Collaboratory's Fund for the Arts can be made by contacting those organizations.

For more information about the performance or to get involved, call Florida Gulfshore Ballet at 239-451-3088 or visit fgballet.com.

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Fort Myers Brewing's Chocolate Stout Earns Gold At Nation's Largest Beer Competition

Submitted By Emily Golden

Fort Myers Brewing Company's signature Chocolate Stout earned national acclaim with a gold medal at the 2022 Great American Beer Festival competition. Presented by the Brewers Association, the Great American Beer Festival is the nation's largest commercial beer competition and recognizes the most outstanding beers produced in the United States.

Fort Myers Brewing medaled in the chocolate beer category and was the only Southwest Florida brewery, and one of just 12 in Florida, to medal at the 2022 competition. Winners were announced Oct. 8 at the Great American Beer Festival awards ceremony in Denver, Colorado.

"Florida is home to a thriving craft beer market, so being one of just a handful of breweries in our state to be recognized is a proud accomplishment for our team," said Rob Whyte, who co-founded Fort Myers Brewing Company in 2013 with his wife, Jen. "Our Chocolate Stout has been a longtime favorite among our guests, and it means a lot to know an international panel of expert judges feel the same way."

The 2022 Great American Beer Festival competition winners were selected by an international panel of 235 expert judges from 9,904 entries, plus 94 Collaboration and 35 Pro-Am entries, received from 2,154 U.S. breweries.

"Each year the Great American Beer Festival showcases the best that American brewers have to offer," said Chris Williams, competition director, Great American Beer Festival. "With more than 9,900 entries, this year's competition was the most competitive to date. Congratulations to all the winners who truly demonstrated why the U.S. is the best brewing nation in the world."

The award-winning brew will be on tap at Fort Myers Brewing beginning Friday, Oct. 28 to celebrate the honor as well as for National Chocolate Day. The brewery is located at 12811 Commerce Lakes Drive, Suite 28, in Fort Myers.

About Fort Myers Brewing Company

Established in 2013, Fort Myers Brewing Company was the first mi-

crobrewery to open in Lee County and continues to lead Southwest Florida's surging craft beer movement. Founded by Rob and Jen Whyte, Fort Myers Brewing carries a signature line of flagship beers in addition to seasonal brews and small batch specialties. Its ales, pilsners, stouts, IPAs and hard seltzers are winners of multiple prestigious awards, including golds at the Best Florida Beer Competition, a silver at the 2018 World Beer Cup, a bronze at the 2019 Great American Beer Festival and Grand National Champion at the 2022 and 2021 U.S. Open Hard Seltzer Championship. Fort Myers Brewing was named "Best Large Brewery in Florida" in 2016 and received the Business Resiliency and Innovation of the Year Award at the Lee County Economic Development Office, Horizon Coun-



Photo: Fort Myers Brewing Co, Chocolate Stout

cil and Horizon Foundation's 2021 Industry Appreciation Awards. Its beers are poured at 1,041 locations, including 620 bars and restaurants, and are available for purchase in 421 retail outlets, including grocery, package and convenience stores. The brewery is located at 12811 Commerce Lakes Drive, Suite 28, in Fort Myers. For more information, visit FMBrew.com or call 239-313-6576.

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Caring For Your Pets After A Hurricane By Dr. Veja Tillman, DVM

Pets' lives are disrupted during a natural disaster just as much as our own. They can experience fear, anxiety and stress which may cause them to display abnormal behaviors and develop short term health problems. Here are a few conditions and behaviors that you may notice from your pets after a hurricane.

Pets can experience stress and anxiety during and after a disaster. These may cause your pet(s) to develop signs of gastrointestinal upset. This may appear as decreased appetite, vomiting and/or diarrhea. In some pets this will last only a brief period (24 hours). However, some pets will continue to show signs for longer periods and the signs may worsen and require hospitalization and advanced treatments. Should your pet show any signs of gastrointestinal upset contact your veterinarian immediately (at the first occurrence of signs) for recommendations for treatment and care for your pet.

Stress and anxiety may also cause your pet to react in unusual ways, such as spraying urine or urinating in the home, hiding, defecating on floors and outside of litter boxes, excessive licking/grooming, aggression, vocalizing or destruc-

tive behavior. These can be normal behaviors after a traumatic event. However, these behaviors may be signs of or lead to other problems for your pet such as hair loss, skin infections and ingestion of foreign material leading to an intestinal blockage. If you become concerned about your pet's behavior, seek advice from your veterinarian.

Animals are naturally curious and could get injured if they are brought back to a damaged home. Keep pets safe by avoiding walks in areas that contain storm debris. Do not walk your pet through or allow your pet to swim in flooded areas. Do not allow your pet to drink or ingest flood water or run off. These may contain toxins or bacteria or even wild animals that may cause harm to your pet or cause your pet to become very ill and require additional unexpected veterinary expenses.

Do not allow your pet to climb over debris piles. Debris may contain sharp objects that may cause injury to your pet which may result in a visit to the local emergency hospital for treatment. If possible, try to leave pets with a family member, friend, veterinarian or boarding facility while you are cleaning up your home. This will help to keep your pet



Photo: Little Boy Kisses The Dog In Nose On The Window

safe and out of harms way until the home is safe for them to return.

A scared animal may react by biting or scratching. Handle your pet(s) carefully and calmly. Use favorite toys, blankets or favorite human's unsoiled clothing to comfort pets while they are away from home.

When your pet(s) return to the home, try and comfort them. Speak calmly and take some time out to play with them. Give them lots of hugs and extra pettings and attention to reassure them that the storm has passed, and everything is ok. Do-

ing so can help you in your recovery, as well.

ABOUT DR. VEJA TILLMAN, DVM

Dr. Tillman is a 2002 graduate of Tuskegee University School of Veterinary Medicine. Her veterinary practice and work experience focuses on pet health and wellness. She is the owner of Just 4 Pets Wellness Center and can be reached at 239-270-5721. 🐾

Montage Women's Club

The Montage Women's Club is a social and philanthropic club open to all women residing in Lee County. We meet on the fourth Thursday of each month at The Landings Yacht, Golf, and Tennis Club (community entry off McGregor Blvd between Cypress Lake Drive and College Pkwy). Meetings begin at 11:30 a.m. with a short social period followed by lunch at Noon and normally an informative speaker program. Within the organization are various interest groups for members' participation. Membership is open to both year-round and seasonal residents. We welcome you to visit Montage for a luncheon.

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday, November 17 (a week early due to Thanksgiving), and our guest speaker will be Greg Longenhagen, Artistic Director of the Florida Repertory Theatre. The Florida Rep is Lee County's largest non profit arts organization and has reached over 100,000 this season with its professional live theater programming as well as its educational programming for youth. Greg's presentation will include:

- History of the Florida Rep
- Behind the scenes info on how a presentation comes together
- Details of upcoming productions and events
- Free ticket giveaway
- Audience Question & Answer

Luncheon fee is \$28.00 per person and the planned menu will be a Baby Spinach / Strawberries Salad with sliced grilled Chicken, dried



Photo: Greg Longenhagen, Artistic Director of the Florida Repertory Theatre

By Rita Artwohl

cranberries, mandarin oranges, Feta cheese, Bermuda onion and toasted almonds, served with Raspberry Vinaigrette Dressing, Rolls and Butter, and Chef's Choice Dessert. The Plant Based-Vegan option will be baked stuffed Portobello Mushroom Cap with spaghetti squash, spinach and caramelized onions on a bed of vegetable quinoa served with polenta cake and fresh fruit dessert.

tage meeting, need further information, or would like to make a reservation, please call Rita Artwohl at (239) 703-7787. Reservations cut-off to attend this meeting is Noon, Thursday, November 10th. 🐾

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Norman Love Confections Creates #SWFLStrong Florida Box, A Limited-Edition Chocolate Collection To Benefit Hurricane Ian Survivors Through Better Together

Submitted By Holly Boldrin

To support Hurricane Ian relief efforts, Norman Love Confections has created the #SWFLStrong Florida Box, with 50% of every purchase through early November going to Better Together, a local nonprofit dedicated to serving families and children.

“While Hurricane Ian has devastated parts of Southwest Florida, the people of our community are rising up to help one another in some incredibly moving and inspiring ways,” said Norman Love, founder and CEO of Norman Love Confections. “So many families lost everything, and Better Together is literally going door-to-door in the hardest hit areas distributing food, water and other relief supplies directly to families. In some cases, Better Together’s trained volunteer host families have invited these children and families into their homes, giving them a safe, secure place to stay while they get back on their feet. This is truly a shining example of how our community comes together in a time of crisis and it’s our honor to support Hurricane Ian survivors through sales of the Florida Box.”

The 25-piece specialty Florida Box includes seashell-shaped, ultra-premium chocolates featuring five flavors of Southwest Florida: Key Lime Pie, Florida Orange, Mango, Lemon and Coconut, as well as a special #SWFLStrong logo chocolate. The Florida Box sells for \$58 with 50% going to Better Together. This limited-edition, specialty box can be purchased through early November 2022 in-store or online at NormanLoveConfections.com.

Better Together is made up of two programs – Better Families and Better Jobs – that help parents who are going through a hard time to keep

their kids out of foster care, find work and address the root causes of their struggle so that they can reunite as a family with the tools and support system to thrive. The nonprofit is providing a variety of resources to families in response to Hurricane Ian, including temporary child care for first responders and families who need a safe environment for their children, distributing food and supplies to families in need and connecting displaced job seekers with resources and employment opportunities.

“This is a devastating time for so many, especially those who were already struggling to make ends meet. Families are in critical need of resources and a safe place for their children as they work to repair the damage, secure new housing and find work,” said Megan Rose, CEO of Better Together. “We are so grateful for this partnership with Norman Love Confections as we work to keep families together – every dollar will help further our efforts to serve families, children and underserved communities across Southwest Florida who have been heavily impacted by Hurricane Ian.”

To learn more about Better Together and its mission, visit BetterTogetherUS.org.

ABOUT NORMAN LOVE CONFECTIONS

Founded in 2001 by Norman and Mary Love, Norman Love Confections creates and distributes hand-crafted artisanal chocolates from its corporate headquarters at 11380 Lindbergh Blvd. in Fort Myers, Florida. The award-winning Fort Myers-based chocolatier has been lauded more than a dozen times by a leading consumer ratings magazine, including recognition six times for pro-

ducing the best ultra-premium chocolates in the nation. Forbes.com included Norman Love Confections BLACK line on its list of the nation’s top 10 truffles; The Huffington Post listed it among the six best U.S. destinations in its Chocolate Lover’s Travel Guide; and USA Today named Love as one of its top 10 entrepreneurs for 2014. Love was named the inaugural inductee of Dessert Professional Magazine’s Chocolatier Hall of Fame, partnered with local chefs to present a six-course meal at the James Beard House in New York and Norman Love Confections was ranked among the top 10 shops in the world for chocolate lovers by U.K. media outlet Daily Telegraph.

Norman Love Confections has Chocolate Salons in Fort Myers, Estero, Naples and Sarasota, including a pastry shop and café at Whole Foods Market in Fort Myers salon. Norman Love Confections’ chocolates, gift baskets, sipping chocolate and specialty items also can be ordered online at www.normanloveconfections.com. In addition, Norman Love Confections’ desserts are offered on 18 Princess Cruises’ ships through the “Chocolate Journeys” partnership and chocolates are available at independent retail locations throughout the U.S. For more information visit www.normanloveconfections.com or call 239-561-7215.

ABOUT BETTER TOGETHER

Better Together is a nonprofit

organization that helps parents going through a hard time keep their kids out of foster care, find work and address the root causes of their struggle so that they can reunite as a family with the tools and support system to thrive. A privately funded and professionally supported organization, Better Together is made up of volunteers who believe helping people help themselves is the best way to restore dignity and bring families together. Through the Better Families program, families are offered a preventive alternative to foster care while they get the help they need. To date, the program has kept 98% of children served out of foster care. The Better Jobs program was created to address the 76% of families that come to Better Together because of economic hardship tied to unemployment. In addition to community job fairs, the program offers job seekers coaching, guidance, support and encouragement through local church partners. For more information, visit BetterTogetherUS.org.



Photo: Norman Love Confections - Florida Box benefiting Better Together

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LAFCRD Youth Fire Cadet Program Prepares Young Adults for Future Careers; Former Cadet Shares Positive Impact

Submitted By Katie Heck

The Lehigh Acres Fire Control and Rescue District's Cadet Post 102 is focused on preparing young adults for a successful future in –and out – of professional firefighting. However, the Post Advisors do have a special focus; encouraging future professional firefighters to stay local and serve their hometown. Now, almost two years after re-launching the Fire Cadet Post after COVID, they are celebrating their first Cadet-turned-Firefighter for the District.

The District hired Firefighter/EMT Nate Luders, a graduate of Riverdale High School and member of the Cadet Post program, in August. Only a few months into his yearlong probation with the Lehigh

Acres Fire Control and Rescue District, Firefighter/EMT Nate Luders is ahead of most 19-year-olds when it comes to choosing and entering a career field. He says he owes a lot of his success to his

involvement with Cadet Post 102, the District's Youth Fire Cadet Program.

"I don't have any family involved in the fire service, but it is something I have always been interested in," Firefighter/EMT Luders said. "The Fire Cadet Program gave me a head start in my academic programs and hands-on experience related to both fire and EMS calls. The mentorship was invaluable as it came time to apply, and then inter-

view, for the job."

The Cadet Post Advisors are excited to see the Cadet Program flourishing in its second year. While the focus is on the vocational study of professional firefighting, the program is also open to youth who may not be interested in firefighting as a career. Cadets will build many different skill sets throughout their tenure in the program, building a solid foundation for a successful future in any field. Pride,

commitment, courage, leadership, teamwork, integrity, and self-discipline are applicable and useful life skills to develop for many professions.

"Our Fire Cadet Program will offer youth and young adults an opportunity to experience life as a firefighter and learn about our team," stated Chief DiLallo. "The program has many benefits, but most importantly gives cadets a feeling for what it's like to be a part of something bigger than themselves. Ideally, some cadets will choose to remain here and serve their community."

The program is open to participants between the ages of 14 and 20 years old, with meetings occurring weekly. Application information is available on our website: www.lehighfd.com/operations/page/cadet-post-102

A Message From A Lee County School Board Member

By Cathleen O'Daniel Morgan



Photo: Cathleen O'Daniel Morgan, District 7

As we enter our third week post Hurricane Ian, the School Board continue to acknowledge the significant loss and suffering experienced by many in the School District of Lee County community. District and school leaders, staff, students, families, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and the entire community, all were disproportionately impacted by Hurricane Ian. Despite the individual situations that everyone is facing, all have come together for the benefit of our students, staff, and community. Even employees of other Florida School Districts that have faced their own challenges post-storm, have gone to extraordinary lengths to support our educational community during our recovery from the devastation.

We are incredibly proud of the outreach efforts made by District leadership to staff and students' families pre and post hurricane Ian; the grace and compassion extended to staff and families managing personal recoveries while we worked swiftly to reopen schools; opportunities created for school staff to reunite and regroup and for families to rejoin their school community prior to reopening; access provided by our staff to local, state, and federal agencies providing resources for recovery; the relationships of our District leaders with others statewide who provided relief and additional hands to those working in buildings. We could not have recovered and reopened so quickly without impressive District leadership and strong community support and understanding.

While we are pleased to have students in all of our schools back into a learning environment just three weeks after the Hurricane, our recovery experience highlighted a

systemic weakness that has been under review by Superintendent Bernier's Cabinet and the Board since late spring—the District's current enrollment system. The process of getting students back to school post-storm was made unnecessarily difficult due to our current system of school choice. As we resume our planning for the 2022-23 school year, we will continue our reexamination of this system and school proximity plans, an initiative reintroduced to the public by Superintendent Bernier at community meetings this fall. Plans created twenty years ago for school assignment and transportation suitable for a much smaller student population are no longer sustainable.

Community meetings for public engagement in the assessment and planning process will be rescheduled soon. Please be alert to announcements asking you to participate in interactive assessment and planning meetings as we consider options for school proximity zones

along a continuum from highly permissive, as is the case today, to highly restrictive. With each movement on the continuum, compromises will be necessary; compromises between transportation cost savings and student and family conveniences such as grandfathering and multiple zone options. The Board and the Superintendent intend this exercise to be immersive, collaborative, and transparent for all members of the school district community. We look forward to working with our school community members and public on this complex and significant process.

We wish all of our students, staff, and community a healthy post-storm recovery.



Photo: Lee County School District Logo

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Chamber Reports On Post-Ian Activities

By Mike Welch



Photo: Mike Welch
Let Us Hear From You!
Contact Us At:
 voicesoflehigh@gmail.com

I hope that you and your families as well as co-workers are now well and safe. As you know other parts of our county and region have not fared as well as Eastern Lee County. As such we give thanks to God for His blessings and that compels us to turn to

our fellow citizens in solidarity as they cope with loss after this devastating storm.

Our Chamber has been working with the Salvation Army and other relief organizations. Our offices are also a storage area for vital food and cleaning supplies as well as water. In addition, our Chamber officers work closely with Lee County Government and in particular, the Office of Economic Development which is tasked

with working with business organizations for assistance and relief packages from the Federal, State and Local governments. Please visit the Chamber website at www.elccoc.org for up-to-date information. We are also fortunate to have on our Board of Directors Lee County Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass who has been a great resource for our needs.

As our community has been fortunate in the storm's aftermath our

Chamber officers have been involved in various activities and efforts with our neighbors closer to the coast. I also want to thank our past Chair Ed Moore and our officers for their work on a community BBQ for our responders and linemen who are working so hard for our damaged communities.

Please let us know if we can assist during these difficult times. SOLIDARITY! 🐦

The Salvation Army Needs Your Help

By Major Brenda Lane

Greetings from your local Salvation Army Service Center. I hope by now you and yours have reached a point where you can begin to settle in after the horrific storm that we all experienced a few weeks ago. While we in the Lehigh Acres area were hit with the hard winds and rain and many homes received some damage and had trees down, we were blessed that we weren't hit with the worst part of the hurricane. We at The Salvation Army, have been in Disaster-Responder mode since the start of the storm. As soon as it was safe to be out, our teams began loading up trucks and vans to deliver food and water to the First Responders and those in the areas that were ultimately destroyed. The wreckage was more than we could've imagined. From day one, The Salvation Army has been there for those who have been

traumatized and left with nothing to very little of what has been their life. We have offered a hot meal, a warm blanket, a hot cup of coffee, a hug, or just a listening ear. Face after face was nothing more than a blank stare. In spite of the challenges we faced, we at The Salvation Army leaned heavily on God and the strength He gave us to continue caring for those needing our help. It will take a very long time for the hardest-hit areas to recover and rebuild.

The Salvation Army will continue to serve and help in any way we can. All of us can play a part in the recovery process. You can support us by bringing canned goods and nonperishable food items to our office. We need financial support as well. It takes a village, right? We need to be the village for those who

have been touched by the storm and are now needing assistance. We are seeing a great deal more guests needing assistance with electric bills, food, help to apply for FEMA, and filing insurance claims. It has been necessary for us to add additional staff to our office to help handle the additional requests for assistance. This has added a bit of a financial burden for us. However, we want to be able to serve all who come to us for various needs. I know these are very difficult times as it relates to the cost of everyday living. We want to continue being present to assist the community of Lehigh Acres. However, the additional expense of added staff and the assistance we continue to offer in the way of food, water, tarps, and clean-up kits are not cheap. We need your help. Every dollar received, \$.93 goes back into serving

you the Lehigh family. So, if you can see your way clearly, we would appreciate your financial help in any way you can give.

Next month we will have our Red Kettles out and the Bells will begin ringing!! This is another way in which you can help. When you see a Red Kettle, be sure to drop your contribution in. We are hiring Bell Ringer now. If you or someone you know might be interested in making a little extra money for the holidays, please come by our office and fill out an application in the next couple of weeks. We are located at 25 Homestead Rd. N #42 and our phone number is 239-491-6071. Come join our team and help make this Christmas season a little brighter for those we will serve with toys and food for Christmas Day. 🐦

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Aggressive Driving

By Sheriff Carmine Marceno



Photo: Sheriff Carmine Marceno, Lee County Sheriff

In a short time, the county population will swell as visitors from the North migrate to sunny Southwest Florida for the winter months.

This influx of visitors and their vehicles make already congested roads a bit more problematic.

Aggressive driving makes traveling difficult and dangerous for us all. While patience isn't a virtue that we all possess, make an effort to be courteous and tolerant when behind the wheel. Deaths related to aggressive driving and speeding have increased dramatically in recent years

and, as your sheriff, your safety and well-being means a great deal to me.

Allow additional time when planning excursions and/or heading out for appointments. Follow traffic rules and regulations, avoid racing to beat red lights and don't allow the behaviors of other drivers to alter the manner in which you drive.

Aggressive driving is a disregard for safety...your safety and the safety

of those around you. The privacy of a vehicle makes some feel insulated and anonymous to those around them. They believe that they will not be held personally responsible for their driving behaviors and decisions. That anonymity ends when accidents occur.

Relax. Arrive safely. Drive responsibly 🍊

The Craftie Ladies Craft Fair: New Dates

Submitted by The Craftie Ladies of St. John XXIII Catholic Church

If you've been to one of our fairs before, you know we have a large variety of top quality, homemade items for sale. In addition to our well-known, exquisite quilts, afghans and hand-knit and crocheted items, there will be pillows, table runners, placemats/napkins, jewelry, mother/daughter aprons, tooth fairy pillows, novel baby items, lots of lovely holiday décor, including our fabulous wreaths, and so much more!

Besides our always fabulous raffle, this year on Saturday we will be joined by Viet Yum Food Truck just outside the Parish Life Center. On Sunday, be sure to enjoy the Knights of Columbus pancake breakfast after all Masses.

Come and join us on Saturday, December 10, from 9 am to 5 pm and Sunday, December 11, from 8 am to 1 pm.

The Craftie Ladies came together 13 years ago. The group has grown to nearly 40 talented and dedicated women. All proceeds go directly back into the community. Just a few causes we donate to are:

- St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church
- Hunger Walk
- Veterans Blankets
- Soles for Souls
- Special Equestrians

- Cystic Fibrosis
- Verity House Pregnancy Center
- Hope Hospice
- Hats for Cancer Patients
- St. John XXIII Villas
- Lung Cancer Research

We hope to see you at our craft fair at St. John XXIII, located on Palomino Lane, just north of Daniels Parkway. Stop by, have a chat and, just maybe you can get some early shopping done. 🍊

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MORE TO CELEBRATE!

Dates & descriptions provided by www.holidayinsights.com

November 6 National Nacho Day

Nachos are extremely popular both with a meal, and as a snack. They are in popular demand for parties of all kinds. We enjoy them while watching any sporting event, at home, at the stadium or in the arena. Celebrate with a fistful of nachos or a nacho supreme.

November 9 World Freedom Day

World Freedom Day is a U.S. federal observance, marking the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Berlin Wall was known as the "Iron Curtain". This special day also commemorates the end of communism in Eastern and Central Europe.

November 13 Care Giver Appreciation Day

This is a very important day of recognition for the tens of millions of Americans, who selflessly give their time to care for those who are ill, disabled, or elderly. This day of recognition is for both paid and unpaid care givers. We believe unpaid care givers, deserve even more special recognition. They silently go about the task of supporting someone in need, most often a family member.

November 16 National Fast Food Day

Americans are always fast moving, always in a rush. As a result of our fast moving lifestyle, we need to eat quickly, and are usually unwilling or unable to wait long for our food to be prepared. Participating in National Fast Food Day is easy. All you have to do, is eat or drink at a fast food restaurant today. To be a full fledged participant on this special day, eat in fast food restaurants for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

November 17 World Peace Day

World Peace Day encourages us to be kind to others, and teach others to be peaceful. Today we strive in making the world a better place. It starts with us. Teach our children and others, in ways to promote peace, and avoid war. Without peace, the consequences is tragic.

November 20 Beautiful Day

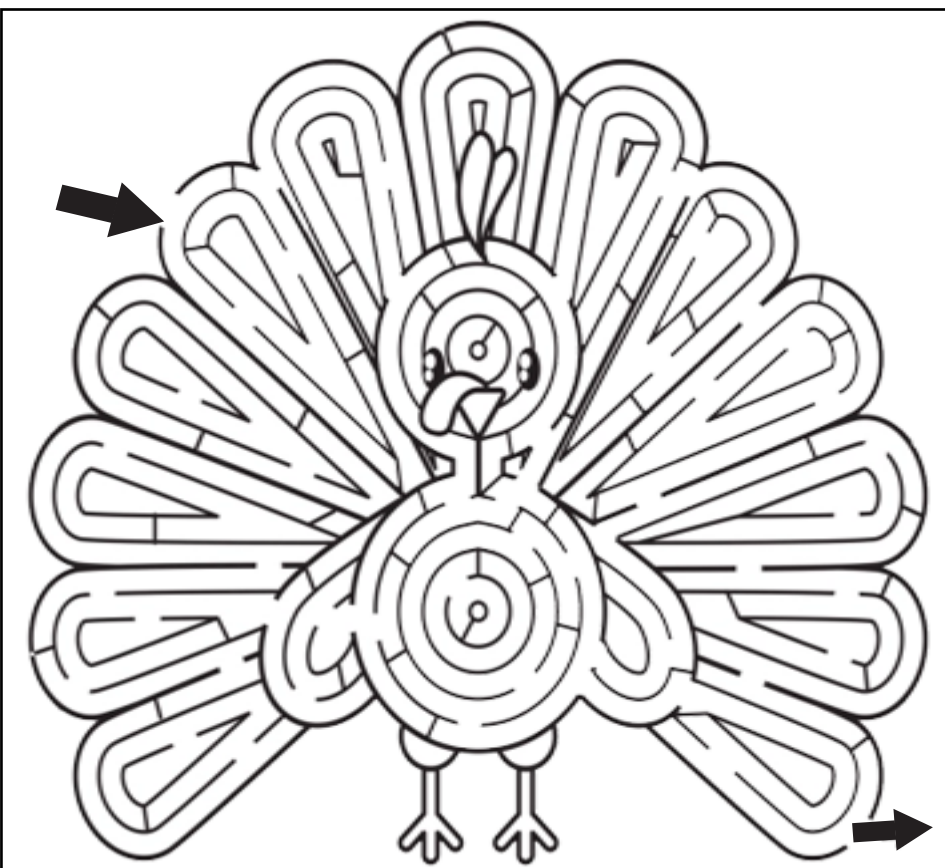
Today is truly a Beautiful Day in every way, shape and form. The world is filled with ugliness. So, as day like today is refreshing, and eye appealing. It's filled with beautiful sights, sounds and smells.

November 23 National Espresso Day

Looking for a quick caffeine high? Well, you are in luck because today is National Espresso Day, and a cup of espresso should do the trick. Walk or drive to your nearest coffee shop or cafe, and order one!

November 28 French Toast Day

Today is your opportunity to enjoy French toast, a delicious and tasty breakfast meal. Hold it right there! French toast can be enjoyed for any meal time: breakfast, lunch or dinner. Try French toast with maple syrup, sugar, cinnamon, whipped cream, or fruits. Better yet, use a combination of these.



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THE ROAR

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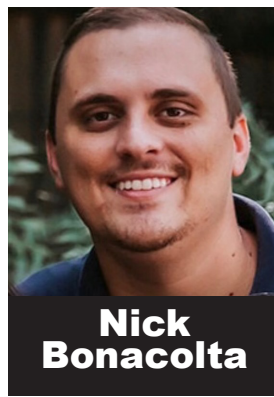
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