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SEPTEMBER 2022 VOLUME 03 **ISSUE 09**

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ust Hang In There With Me



Photo: Butch Swank. **President of Southwest** Florida Business Alliance: **Owner of Goodlad &** Swank Incurance, LLC

This one will take a bit, but I promise there is a point to it. I was listening to a podcast the other day by Lex Fridman. He is an Artificial Intelligence researcher from MIT. Yes. I get that might be considered nerdy behavior, but I say it's not a dorky one. You see, nerds work out. Dorks don't. If they do, they instantly stop being dorks.

Those are the rules. You understand.

Back to Lex, he was having a discussion with a psychologist and their conversation turned to religion. The talk centered on Cain and Abel. It was interesting to me because I could relate. I have been going to church a lot more recently and have had a hard time feeling like an imposter sitting there in the pews. Despite that, there have been a few times during a service when I felt an overwhelming sense of beauty. I am not sure if it was the singing, the kind people around me, or the general positivity, but these moments were truly powerful. I was certainly not expecting them. I mean, it was so beautiful that I had tears running down my face. My wife and kids sit to the left and right of me during the service so, of course, I had no choice but to act like a dragonfly had just flown into my eye. Damned dragonflies. You understand.

Back to the podcast. They were discussing Cain and Abel. It seems that Cain was holding back his offerings and generally resentful at his lot in life. His brother Abel. on the other hand, could do no wrong and that really bugged Cain. It bugged Cain so much that he killed Abel. The psychologist was trying to make the point that while Abel's behavior was admirable, we should realize that we are all partly Cain and that, for some odd reason, made me feel better about the imposter thing. It also reminded me of one of my favorite quotes, "If you can't be a good example, then you'll just have to be a horrible warning." Like everyone, I hold myself to a set of standards and work very hard to meet them. However, I do get angry, I think bad thoughts, I curse sometimes, etc. Pffft...mavbe a bit more than "sometimes". Yet, I try to be better. The vast majority of us try to be better. Making matters worse is that the news all around us is so negative. There is an antidote, though. Simply making an effort to smile at someone or saying a kind thing could lift someone's spirits in desperate need of a lift, opening a door for someone, or picking up that piece of trash blowing around, all of these behaviors do two things. They not just help the recipient or your community, they help you. Helping others is a conscious decision and it feels good. It seems like we are bathed in negativity and people just accept that. I say no! Decide to do something genuinely good for someone else and watch what happens. You will be so proud of yourself and will be beaming the rest of the day. So, if we all have both Cain and Abel in us, then deciding to be kind is a choice, right? Deciding to work hard is a choice. Deciding that you control your life is a choice. Don't let others dictate your life for you. You are capable of good and evil. It's your choice and you do have that power. Despite all of the negative news, and, actually, because of all of the negative news, choose to empower your-

By Butch Swank - butch@goodladandswank.com self and choose good. It's impossible to always be good but the point is to

try. You understand?

Back to the church for a moment. It is a little church in Labelle called the Church of the Good Shepherd. Pastor Elizabeth there is so down to Earth and well, normal, that I feel very comfortable there, and I think that might be why the power of those moments sneaks up on me so. Everyone there is so nice. I don't realistically think I can ever be as nice as them. but I sure do like being there, and their good example certainly helps my own resolve to try.

I must mention one other church since we're on the topic. Pastor Larry from Victory Church in Lehigh generously offered the main hall of his church for our recent Southwest Florida Business Alliance meeting. That hall is amazing! There are speakers everywhere playing great music and they have a literal wall in the front for video presentations. Keep in mind that we've only had three meetings to date. Our first one had about 30 people, the second had 50 and this last one had 85! We literally had to move to Pastor Larry's church because our group outgrew the original meeting place. Our two speakers were billionaire George Schaeffer and Pastor Larry. They were both so compelling and had everyone on the edge of their seat listening, learning, and laughing. Side note - I recommend not to be a speaker at an event that has two of the most compelling speakers in Florida. Boy, I felt like a total doofus compared to those two. However, they are what made the event so amazing, and I am so grateful for them both and grateful for everyone that attended. The success of this recent meeting proves our original thought was right - Lehigh Acres really needed somewhere that business people of like mind could gather, exchange ideas, become friends, and help one another.

I finish with a pep talk. Momentum is a powerful thing. It seems like the past few years the momentum has been largely trending towards the negative. It is like a haze that just hangs around everywhere. But always remember we are American! We can take a bunch of hits and get knocked down, but we do as Americans have done for 250 years - we then get up, dust off, and get back after it. I feel like the momentum is slowly shifting back towards the positive, don't you? People are sick and tired of being bummed out and at each other's throats. We have so much more in common than what the news tells us. We do not hate each other, in fact, we take care of and look after one another regardless of the news. We are not all the same - that would be boring, wouldn't it? Our differences are what make things fun and keep us strong! And we all, at heart, believe in the American Dream and know this is the greatest place to live in the entire world. I ask simply that everyone make a conscious choice to try to be better. No one is perfect, we all screw up. Our revered ancestors made all kinds of mistakes, but they kept on going. If you try day in and day out, over time, you will find that goodwill builds up around you and you'll find yourself in a much better place than if you had not made that choice to focus on getting better. Hang in there, stay focused, and just work to be a better you today than you were yesterday. Understand? 😫



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THECOINSHOPSWFL.com

Southwest Florida Business Alliance Holds Successful Summer Luncheon By Ava St. Laurent

The SWFL Business Alliance was work with us and share his experiproud to hold our summer luncheon August 4th of this year in Lehigh Acres.

We are a professional alliance of vetted, trusted, performance-oriented business people which seeks to highlight and promote what's best about doing business in Southwest Florida. We focus on top talent with an outlook towards solutions for quality growth and continuous improvement. Our philanthropic arm leans towards assistance and support for fixes only. Southwest Florida Business Alliance is a place where the best and the brightest are supported and where progress has a new home. Every year, our luncheon serves as a perfect opportunity to meet with experienced professionals, speak on best practices, and grow each other's networks.

This year, we were especially grateful for our powerhouse guest speaker George W. Shaeffer, who came to net-

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ences.

George W. Shaeffer, founder of dominant global consumer brand OPI® offering nail polish, nail care, and nail art worldwide, and Chairman and CEO of People's Trust Insurance prepared and delivered a powerful speech regarding the key to success, best practices in the workplace, and habits for treating coworkers with the respect they deserve. He patiently shared his experiences across multiple business ventures while answering questions from other business owners and members so that they may have a greater understanding and appreciation for multiple business strategies. Any member of the alliance was more than welcome to ask questions they had for their business endeavors, expansions, treatment of employees, work/life balance, and more.

In the workplace, timeliness and

communication are key. Regarding styles of management, Shaeffer says that, "Everyone who is part of management is required to come in to work on their scheduled days." This ensures there is no horsing around and that their teams never miss a beat, whether they are working on an internal project or otherwise. Schaeffer is as much of a leader as he is a student. He works with his team of employees rather than above them to gain a greater understanding of his company and upand-coming ways of doing business.

Schaeffer is also an advocate for safety and strong health in the workplace. He highly encouraged his employees to receive their Covid-19 vaccinations and even gave them bonuses for doing so. Schaeffer holds their needs dear to his heart and is committed to learning from them as much as they learn from him. It's with this lesson in mind that he continues to learn and grow.

About working with other groups and individuals, Schaffer said, "I have a philosophy. I always try to hire people smarter than me... I treat people fairly. I want to treat my employees how I would like to be treated in life. I think that's a philosophy that's real easy to follow." Whether an employee or coworker is in need of further direction, a minute to themselves, or group collaboration, Schaeffer provides what is needed. He goes on to say, "Whether it's a cup of coffee, pizza - simple little things, that's it!"

The SWFL Business Alliance holds luncheons quarterly and welcomes you to come and network with us for any of our next events! For more information, please look to visit our website https://swflbusinessalliance. com/. You may also look to become a member via our website and expand your business horizons through meeting new people and pursuing countless opportunities. 🔬







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Lehigh Regional Medical Center And Lehigh Medical Group Are Participating In The Galenus Group's Biggest Health Fair

By Julie Lawrence

Lehigh Regional Medical Center and Lehigh Medical Group are proud to be among local health care providers in participation at the Biggest Health Fair in Lehigh Acres, brought to the community by The Galenus Group.

The community event will be held Saturday, October 8 beginning at 11:00 a.m. at 1530 Lee Blvd. Lehigh Acres. Renowned doctors will be participating including Internal Medicine, Cardiologist, Dermatologist, Family Medicine, General Surgeon. Eye exams, cholesterol and glucose exams, vascular circulation tests, skin evaluations, vaccines, vitals, blood pressure, liver test with fibro scan

and more! This community event is totally free to the public.

ABOUT LEHIGH REGIONAL **MEDICAL CENTER**

Lehigh Regional Medical Center, Member of Prime Healthcare is accredited by The Joint Commission

Submitted By Katrina Salokar

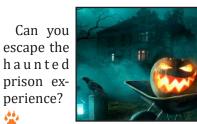
with the Gold Seal of Approval as a 53-bed acute-care facility. The stateof-the-art hospital provides specialty care services that include Emergency Services, Cardiology, Critical Care, Gastroenterology, General Surgery, Nephrology, and Orthopedics delivering patient-centered healthcare with dignity and respect for all. 😩

Haunted Prison Experience

Haunted Prison ... see you there... if you dare!

The Hendry Correctional Institution (Immokalee, FL) opened in 1977, housing the most extremist hardened criminals in Florida until the closure in 2015. With sentences of life without parole to death row, prisoners didn't make it out alive. The state closed the institution due to the unsolved murders taking place behind the walls. The shrills

and cries of the beaten and hopeless. the mental breakdown of the criminally insane, and vibrant spiritual energy has been experienced by those who survived a night. It has become the scariest place in Florida.



وفيفي

Sizzle Dining Event To Benefit Blessings In A Backpack 3-Weeks Of Local Dining Specials Will Help Feed Children In Need

Submitted By Josh Milton

Sizzle Dining is back! From September 8 – 28, enjoy dining specials at local restaurants while supporting Blessings in a Backpack SWFL, a program that feeds children in need on the weekends while they cannot access meals at school. The event includes specials at 48 participating restaurants across Lee and Collier Counties that will donate \$1.00 from each meal directly to Blessings in a Backpack. What a perfect time to try that new place you've been wanting to go to!

"We are thrilled to be the beneficiary of this wonderful event again this year," said Cecilia St. Arnold, Executive Director for Blessings in a Backpack SWFL. "We sincerely appreciate the generosity and support of the community and hope they enjoy taking advantage of this opportunity to dine in some of our best local restaurants knowing they are helping children in our community."

Held annually in September, the leader in the movement to end child-

event includes some of the best restaurants from Cape Coral down to Marco Island, and everywhere tasty in between! It's simple, go to sizzledining. com, pick your city and look through the menus of restaurants listed in that area. make reservations and enjoy! No passes, tickets, vouchers or coupons are required. Simply visit any one of the participating restaurants throughout the 21-day event and order from the Sizzle Dining menu. Use #Dine-WithPurpose to help spread the word and to share your Sizzle Dining experience!

Two-course lunches start at just \$19 or \$24 and three-course dinners start at either \$32 or \$42. Price depends on location, but a dollar from each meal purchased goes directly to Blessings in a Backpack SWFL.

During the week, many young students are fed by federal government programs through school meals. A

hood hunger, Blessings in a Backpack taurant, please visit sizzledining.com. ensures these children receive nutritional meals over the weekend during the school year. Every Friday afternoon, each child receives a backpack filled with nutritious, kid-friendly, ready-to-eat items. They return the backpacks on Monday, and each is filled and ready for the next weekend. A donation of only \$130 will provide meals for 36 weekends for one schoolage child. Blessings' goal this school year is to feed over 6,000 school children. For more information, please visit swfl.blessingsinabackpack.org.

Sizzle Dining highlights and strengthens our local destination's brand and culinary reputation. Attracting tourists to the area increases business for hotels, shopping centers, entertainment, and other local businesses. Everyone benefits from this impact and all the restaurants that participate see increased traffic and many new faces during the event. For more information, or to become a participating res-

BLESSINGS IN A BACKPACK HELPS PREVENT CHILDHOOD HUNGER

Blessings in a Backpack SWFL serves over 6,000 students through 27 school-based programs located throughout Lee and Collier Counties. In these schools, test scores, reading skills, positive behavior, general health, and school attendance have improved dramatically due in part to students receiving the nourishment they need throughout the week and the weekends.

Kids are our future; you can help secure theirs. A \$130 donation will feed a child for one full school year. Gifts of all sizes are welcome through the donations portal at https://swfl.blessingsinabackpack.org/ or via mail at P.O. Box 61402 Fort Myers, FL 33906. All contributions are tax-deductible. 🏰



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PAGE 4 | THE ROAR

Pet Obesity

Obesity is a very common problem crease your pet's lifespan. in pets and can lead to many health problems. A whopping 56% of cats and 60% of dogs in North America are classified as overweight or obese. That's more than 80 million pets at greater risk of serious health issues. However, only 10% of pet owners think their pet is overweight.

WHY IS PET **OBESITY A PROBLEM?**

Plenty of evidence now exists showing that excess fat deposits in dogs and cats are associated with many serious health complications. Obesity contributes to the risk of disease including diabetes, osteoarthritis, heart disease, hypertension, kidney disease, increased joint injuries and some forms of cancer. All these conditions can eventually de-

By Dr. Veja Tillman, DVM

SIGNS OF OBESITY **IN ANIMALS**

- Excessive weight gain
- No or little visible waistline •
- The collar becomes tighter
- Sagging belly
- Cannot feel the ribcage
- Lack of grooming
- Constipation or gassy
- A bigger, rounder face
- A reluctance to go for walks or lagging behind
- Excessive panting
- Tiredness
- Needing help getting in and out of cars
- Lack of mobility or struggle to stand, walk or jump

Refusal to move or play games

PREVENTION

There are many steps that you can take to help prevent obesity in your pets. Start by asking your veterinarian to help you choose the most appropriate food for your pet based on your pet's lifestyle and activity. Next consider portion control and mealtimes which can be critical in prevention of obesity. Finally, keep your pet active with regular exercise. Remember, consistency is key to maintaining a healthy weight for your pets.

If you think your pet may be obese, talk to your veterinarian about developing a weight loss plan specifically tailored to your pet. This plan should include regular exercise/playtime, a healthy and nutritious diet, less treats or a treat exchange and regular weight checks to monitor your pet's progress.

Photo: Portrait of a Dog

Maintaining a healthy weight for your pet helps to ensure they will live a long, happy, and healthy life.

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 health and wellness of pets in Southwest Florida. She is the owner of Just 4 Pets Wellness Center and can be reached at 239-270-5721. 🐏

The Craftie Ladies Annual **Craft Fair By The Craftie Ladies**

Join our Craftie Ladies at our Annual Craft Fair at St. John XXIII Catholic Church 13060 Palomino Lane, Fort Myers, FL 33912 on SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15 9am-5pm & SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16 8am-1pm for crafts, raffles and food!

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 wellknown, 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 fabulous raffle, on Saturday we will have Viet Yum Food Truck at 11am just outside of the

Parish Life Center. And be sure to enjoy the Knights of Columbus Pancake Breakfast on Sunday after all Masses!

We hope to see you at our craft fair! Stop by, have a chat and, just maybe you can get some early shopping done!

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, Hunger Walk, Veterans Blankets, Soles for Souls, Verity Pregnancy Center, Hope Hospice, Hats for Cancer Patients, St. John XXIII Villas.



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Montage Women's Club By Rita Artwohl

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 yearround and seasonal residents. We welcome you to visit Montage for a luncheon.

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday, October 27, and our guest speaker will be Scott Simmons, Editor at Palm Beach County Florida Weekly and Key West Florida Weekly plus the Florida Weekly in Fort Myers. His local column in our Florida Weekly is The Collector's Corner. Scott's presentation will be A Road Trip Through Florida's Arts and Crafts. He will utilize some of his personal collectibles associated with Florida's growth through the

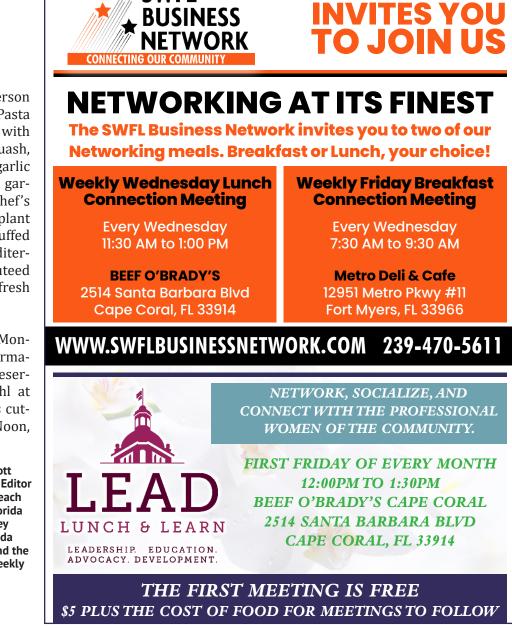
decades.

Luncheon fee is \$28.00 per person and the planned menu will be Pasta Primavera-Farfalle Pasta tossed with spinach, tomato, summer squash, caramelized onions, roasted garlic and Parmesan cheese w/grilled garlic plank, rolls and butter, and Chef's choice of dessert. The optional plant based/vegan menu will be stuffed Zucchini rolls nesting on Mediterranean tomato ragout with sauteed spinach and Polenta cake with fresh fruit for dessert.

If you would like to attend a Montage meeting, need further information, or would like to make a reservation, please call Rita Artwohl at (239) 703-7787. Reservations cutoff to attend this meeting is Noon, Thursday, October 20th. 挫



Photo: Scott Simmons, Editor of Palm Beach **County Florida** Weekly, Key West Florida Weekly, and the Florida Weekly



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Details On The Biden-Harris Student Debt Relief Plan

Submitted By Markham Norton Mosteller Wright & Co., P.A.

Joe Biden announced a threepart plan regarding student loan debt to help working and middle class families with federal student loans. Part one allows up to \$20,000 in student loan debt forgiveness if the taxpayer received a Pell Grant while earning their higher education. Taxpavers who did not receive a Pell Grant are eligible for \$10,000 of student loan debt forgiveness. This debt loan forgiveness applies to those who earn an annual income of less than \$125,000 for individuals, \$250,000 for married couples, or heads of household. In some cas-

On August 24, 2022, President be Biden announced a threeart plan regarding student loan ebt to help working and middle ass families with federal stuent loans. Part one allows up to 20,000 in student loan debt foriveness if the taxpayer received Pell Grant while earning their es, borrowers are eligible to have all of their student loans forgiven. Those working in non-profit, the military, or a federal, state, Tribal, or local government can see if they are eligible for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program by visiting www.PSLF.gov before October 31, 2022.

> The second part of this plan extends the pause on student loan repayments until December 31, 2022. This is said to be the final time a pause on repayment will be extended. President Biden feels this extension will allow a smoother transition back to repayment

and help prevent unnecessary defaults as taxpayers prepare to resume payments. No action needs to be taken at this time since the extended pause in repayment will occur automatically.

Part three of the plan will modify the income-based repayment plan rules. Taxpayers with undergraduate degrees or the Pell Grant repayments will be capped at 5% of their monthly income.

Nearly eight million borrowers may be eligible to receive relief automatically since the borrowers income data is already available to the U.S. Department of Education. If you are unsure that the Department of Education has your information, there will be a simple application made available in the coming weeks that you can complete for inclusion. This application will be released before the December 31, 2022, deadline for student loan repayments to begin.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. Our team works diligently to ensure that you have the most updated information possible so you can make the best plans and decisions for your household.



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East Lee Chamber Regional Gala Set For February 18, 2023 at Plantation Golf & Country Club By Mike Welch



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

Heads Up! Chamber members and

guest mark your calendar for the East Lee County Chamber of Commerce!

Each year the Gala event expands,

and calls have been coming in asking about this signature event. Our own Lee County Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass will be out Master of Ceremonies as we also welcome a great gathering of local and regional leaders to our area. Our Gala is also an awards gala as we also gather to honor our heroes in the education, public service, health care and small business professions.

Sponsorship

available. Call the Chamber Office at the Lehigh Towne Centre – (239) 369-3322.

WARNING FROM SHERIFF MARCENO PROPERTY AWARD ALERT

In a hectic and fast changing real estate market homeowners yet have to worry about another scam – Property Fraud. Please read the Sheriff's warning and register your properties and the Lee County Clerk of Courts System at: https://or.leeclerk.org/ LandMarkWeb/FraudAlert

Goodwill to Host Largest Job Fair in Southwest Florida – September 8 – 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. – Next Level Church, 11081 Gateway Blvd. Employers such as Arthrex, Lowe's, Walmart as well as over forty companies and organizations will be hiring! Visit www.goodwillswfl.org for more information.

East Lee County Chamber of Commerce's Yard of the Month!

By Ruth Anglickis

East Lee County Chamber of Commerce presented The Yard of the Month to Jarlath and Ann O'Brien of 32 Calvin Avenue, Lehigh Acres, Fl. Their beautiful home is decorated with a fountain, statutes and lovely landscaping. Their yard is an example of Love Lehigh, keeping our neighborhoods looking picturesque. The Garden Club of Lehigh Acres is encouraging membership to learn about Florida landscaping. Contact: vbwilliamson47@gmail.com

opportunities are

Yard of the Month applications can be obtained at ELCCOC.org and send to them at 25 Homestead RD, Lehigh Acres or emailed to ELCCOC.org.



Photo: Yard of the Month presented to Jarlath and Ann O'Brien of Lehigh Acres, FL

Salvation Army Gears Up For The Holidays! By Bren

Greetings from your local Salvation Army Service Center! I hope you all are keeping cool and staying out of the horrible heat!

Fall will be here soon!! (I can dream can't I). We are gearing up for the holiday season. We will begin accepting applications for Bell Ringers in our office on September 26th from 9:00am to 11:30am and again from

1:0 pm to 3:30pm. You will need to have a picture ID with you in order to receive an Application. We are excited and looking forward to a great Kettle Season and would love for you to be a part of it. Ring Bells and have a lot of fun greeting people as they donate and at the same time, you can make a little extra money for the holidays for yourself. So, come be a part of our Christmas Bell Ringer Team. You'll be glad you came!! 25 Homestead Rd. N #42 (facing Alabama Rd)

September also bring with it, the time when families can register for Angel Tree, to receive a little help providing toys and food for their families. The registration can only be done online for toys and food. It will begin on Monday, September 26th and will be open until the

By Brenda Lane

close of day Friday, September 30th at 4:pm. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to fulfill some of the wishes of your children from their List for Santa!! We will provide toys for your children and food for a Meal on Christmas Day. Mark these dates on your calendar now so that you don't miss out. When our quota is filled, the registration period will be closed out.



The Smith & Mitchell Agency (239) 603-8200 www.smithandmitchellagency.com



Property Fraud Alert By Sheriff Carmine Marceno



Photo: Sheriff Carmine Marceno, Lee County Sheriff

Property fraud has become an increasingly common criminal matter across the entire nation. As

most property owners are unaware of this growing concern, I am recommending that Lee County property owners consider registering for the free "Property Fraud Alert" offered by the Lee County Clerk of the Court.

Property fraud occurs when an unauthorized individual utilizes your identity to transfer your property into their name or fraudulently record documents related to your property. A counterfeit, forged document is created and then recorded into the county's official records. Property fraud can result in costly and complicated problems and, as these criminal acts are often undiscovered until attempting to sell or refinance your property, the fraud can result in irreparable damage.

Once registered, property owners receive notification, within 24 hours, when a deed, mortgage or other land record with their registered name on it has been recorded into the county's official records. Additionally, those who do not own property can also use this service so as to be notified of any documents being recorded in their name.

Property owners can register multiple properties, whether owned personally or commercially, by visiting https://or.leeclerk.org/Land-MarkWeb/FraudAlert

Southwest Florida Children's Charities Recognized As The Top Donor To Lee Health And Golisano Children's Hospital

Submitted By Holly Boldrin

Southwest Florida Children's Charities (SWFLCC) presented checks totaling \$1.7 million to Lee Health Foundation Aug. 18, making it the top donor at more than \$23 million to Golisano Children's Hospital and Lee Health in the organization's more than 100-year history.

"We are so grateful for the support of Southwest Florida Children's Charities," said Chief Nursing and Operations Executive of Golisano Children's Services Alyssa Bostwick. "Their donations have had a tremendous impact on our ability to start programs, continue programs and grow programs to support the needs and care of the children in our community."

The nonprofit holds the annual Southwest Florida Wine & Food Fest, a signature event to raise funds to improve pediatric health care services in the region.

"I think it's been great that we've been able to come together as a community, focus our efforts and give back to this area and know that it's going to benefit the children of our region and us as individual families," said Ed Bell, president of SWFLCC. Bell became involved with the nonprofit after his son was treated for liver cancer as a child at Golisano Children's Hospital. "Twenty-three million dollars in 14 years is phenomenal."

From the 2022 festival, the nonprofit at Golisano meant that his parents could

contributed \$1 million to Golisano Children's Hospital's new neurosurgical services. The new specialty provides immediate care for brain and spinal cord injuries and illnesses, so that children don't have to be transported to an out-of-area hospital when seconds count the most. Within a few months of starting, Dr. Theodore Spinks, pediatric neurosurgeon and chief of the neurosurgery program at Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida in collaboration with Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, has performed 50 lifesaving surgeries, 40 at Golisano and another 10 surgeries at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg.

One story shared by Dr. Spinks was of a complicated surgery for a very sick 8-yearold boy. Immanueli Kiema came to Golisano with a life-threatening brain infection. Spinks explained that the young man had been sick and lethargic, and upon arrival at the hospital, an MRI revealed that the infection had spread to his brain. Following surgery, Kiema spent nearly six weeks in the hospital recovering.

"His condition can result in seizures, stroke, even death, so time was of the essence," said Spinks. "Not only were we able to surgically treat him at Golisano Children's Hospital rather than transport him out of the area, but his family remained close to home. Being cared for at Golisano meant that his parents could be at his side while caring for their other child, continuing to work, and remaining close to home."

Additionally, a check was presented for \$700,000, the final payment of a \$3 million pledge made in 2020 to establish the SWFL Children's Charities Eye Institute of Golisano Children's Hospital, which ensures access to pediatric ophthalmology care in Southwest Florida. Before the institute opened, children were waiting six months to get an appointment with one ophthalmologist working out of two makeshift rooms. Now, three doctors work in 14 examination rooms, with two more doctors coming. Nearly 7,000 patients have been treated, reducing the waitlist of more than 1,500 patients over the past two years.

Trustees, hospital officials and supporters of SWFLCC celebrated the donation milestone with a check presentation, private reception as well as tour of the pediatric intensive care unit (PICU), Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) Oncology Lounge, and the child artwork created by patients for all the Southwest Florida Wine & Food Fest events. The AYA lounge, which was also made possible with support from SWFLCC, is a refuge with gaming, video systems and a coffee bar for young adults ages 18-29 receiving life-saving pediatric cancer treatment at Golisano Children's Hospital. Since 2008, SWFLCC has supported children's healthcare at Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida, including raising funding to build the only children's hospital in our region. In addition, fundraising has supported pediatric cancer, mental health, ophthalmology, neurosurgery and other children's-based causes. Throughout its history, the nonprofit has stepped up, supporting children's healthcare as needs are identified.

For additional information about the role of philanthropy at Lee Health or to donate, visit LeeHealthFoundation.org or call 239-343-6950.

About Lee Health Foundation

Lee Health Foundation raises philanthropic dollars on behalf of Lee Health including Cape Coral Hospital, Gulf Coast Medical Center, HealthPark Medical Center, Lee Memorial Hospital and Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida. The Foundation provides financial support for many service areas including the Lee Health Regional Cancer Center, Lee Health Coconut Point, The Rehabilitation Hospital, Shipley Cardiothoracic Center, Community Health Clinics and Golisano Children's Hospital Specialty Clinics in both Charlotte and Naples. For more information, please visit LeeHealthFoundation.org. 挫

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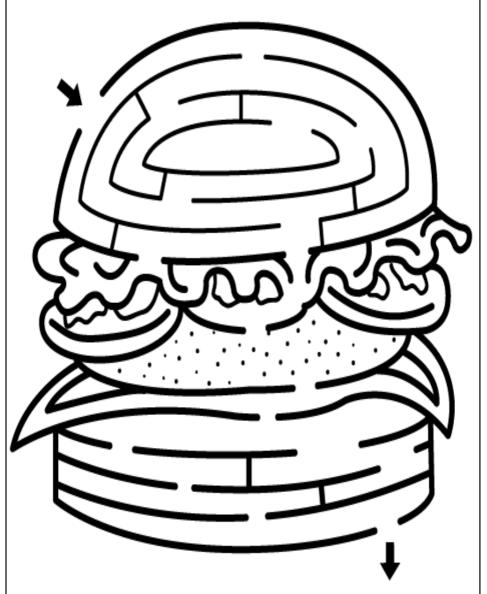
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MORE TO CELEBRAT

Dates & descriptions provided by www.holidayinsights.com

September 3 International Bacon Day

International Bacon Day celebrates crispy strips of salted pork...Bacon! This is a day to thoroughly enjoy bacon at every meal. Snack time, too. It is recommend that you enjoy bacon today in social gatherings. So, go ahead, and have a bacon party!!

September 12 National Chocolate Milkshake Day

National Chocolate Milkshake Day is an opportunity for chocoholics to savor and enjoy. The weather may have cooled off. But, our appetite for chocolate, specifically chocolate milk shakes, hasn't cooled off one iota. It's time to enjoy a cold, thick, frothy chocolate milk shake. Chocolate is the most popular milkshake flavor. For those of you who prefer other flavors, only a chocolate milkshake will do today. Did You Know? Among the ingredients of the original milkshake was whiskey! It also included heavy cream. It took more than a century to evolve into the milkshake as we know it today.

September 18 National Cheeseburger Day

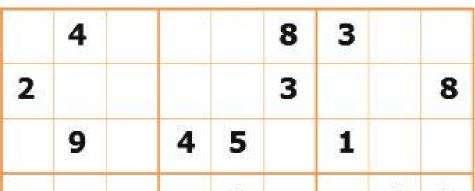
Celebrate National Cheeseburger Day by firing up the grill, and cooking cheeseburgers. You can do so for lunch or dinner.... or both! Any kind of cheese will do. Try a different cheese, if your adventuresome. For the carb conscious, eat your burgers without the buns.

September 25 National Comic Book Day

National Comic Book Day is a super cool day. Share a comic book with a friend today. We don't know of anyone who doesn't like a good comic book. Comic books are great reading. They either tell an ongoing story, provide humor, or offer intrigue and suspense. In all comic books, good eventually prevails over evil. So, comic books always make us feel good.

September 28 National Good Neighbor Day

Ah, Good Neighbor Day. It's definitely a good thing. Being good neighbors is an important part of the social fiber that makes this country so great. Therefore, it seems only fitting that one day a year honors good neighbors.



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