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Your Lee County Legislative Delegation Is Meeting Soon To Discuss Placing Two Referendums Before The Voters In 2024

By Matt Caldwell, Lee County Property Appraiser



Photo: Matt Caldwell, Lee County Property Appraiser

The issue of single-member districts (SMD) has a long history in Florida. Most voters moving to Lee County are shocked to learn that currently everyone votes for their district County Commissioner, even if they do not live in that district. Litigated repeatedly, the courts have established that SMD were eliminated in cities, counties, and school boards following Reconstruction with the express purpose of disenfranchising voters. Considering that of all Lee County Commission races since 1980, the local districts have been denied their choice about 40% of the time, it is easy to see how this system does just that. Lee County is radically out of the mainstream, as the seven counties larger than ours in Florida all have embraced reforms to their county structure, including SMD. In fact, from Marco Island to Clearwater, we are one of only two counties to not have SMD county commissions and over 2/3 of all Florida voters live in a SMD county. Representatives being chosen only by the voters from the district where they live is how we elect the State House, State Senate, and US Congress. It works for them and it will work for our County Commission.

The County Mayor question is much simpler. Lee County government is or-

ganized in 6 parts, 5 of which are led by an elected executive officer (Sheriff, Tax Collector, Property Appraiser, Clerk/Comptroller, and Supervisor of Elections). The 6th part (roads, parks, trash, water/sewer, etc.) is overseen by an executive manager, appointed by the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC). Many people mistakenly believe that we still have a traditional model for the BoCC, wherein the Board exercises both legislative and executive authority, but after repeated scandals the voters in 1996 adopted the Lee County Charter that took executive power away from them. Once they make their appointments, they are forbidden from directing the actions of the executive branch. So, as Lee County approaches 1M full-time residents, should the 6th part of the county executive branch also be made directly accountable to the voters? To put that in perspective, Lee County is already larger than Wyoming, Vermont, and Alaska, as well as the counties that are home to Nashville, Tulsa, Oklahoma City, and Kansas City!

Some opponents to these reforms will point to the fact that the Lee County Charter Review has repeatedly not presented these questions to the voters. Bluntly, the Lee County Charter Review process has failed. It is the weakest structure of all Florida charters with all members being appointed only by the BoCC. It has met five times in 28 years, and after debating these questions every time, nothing has been sent to the voters. In fact, I served

on the 2006-08 cycle, and despite having 10 of 15 members reject the status quo of a 5 at-large BoCC, they failed to propose an alternative, partly due to BoCC interference. Today, Commissioners opposed to change have made it clear that a nominee's stance on these issues is a prerequisite for appointment; don't look for Charter Review to do anything more than what it has accomplished since 1996: basically nothing.

Ultimately, you may decide that you differ from me in seeing the wisdom in these reforms. But does that mean that you and your neighbors should never even have the chance to voice your opinion? That is what the opposition to these ideas is demanding of your legislators, claiming that these ideas are too "dangerous" for simple citizens to decide for themselves. They will cry "Home Rule!", but what is the Lee County Legislative Delegation if not "home rule"? They live in Lee County, are elected by Lee County voters, and empowered by them to consider just such questions as these! It's really just a kind of political NIMBYism that opposes allowing voters to even hear these questions.

The irony is that voters have actually already had their say on these two questions when it came to the Lee County School Board. Voters approved moving to a 5 single-member/2 at-large board in 2014, by a vote of 55%-45%. Then they voted in 2022 to bring back an elected superintendent (executive) by a vote of

62%-38%! This is exactly why the opposition is so frightened, that it has even led some of them to threaten to "punish" these upstart legislators politically; they know that if voters get a chance to weigh in, these changes will become a reality. When your opposition starts freaking out, it's a strong sign that you are on the right course.

This debate is not new to the Legislative Delegation either; then Rep. Bruce Kyle brought forward bills to create SMD in 2003, but the bill was killed by opposition in the State Senate. Thankfully, this time five members of the delegation have already publicly stated that the voters should have their say, but they are still under enormous pressure from the opposition. That is why you need to act! The Legislative Delegation is meeting the morning of November 30 at the FSW Fort Myers Campus to take public testimony on these issues. But if you cannot make it, then contact your local Representative and Senator regarding your support of these issues. Visit www.leedelegation.com to find details of the meeting and contact information today!

ABOUT MATT CALDWELL

Matt Caldwell served as the State Representative for northeastern Lee County from 2010-2018, was the Republican nominee for Florida Commissioner of Agriculture in 2018, and was elected Lee County Property Appraiser in 2020.

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Hanlon's Razor

By Butch Swank - butch@goodladandswank.com



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

I imagine you've heard of Occam's Razor (not a typo, hang in there with me), but if not, here goes: "The simplest explanation is usually the best one." I find this observation an incredibly helpful tool to help me navigate life. All day and every day, we are faced with choices and challenges. As society and technology become more complex, so will the choices and challenges we face. In deciding which direction to take, if two options are presented, then going with the simplest path is typically the best path. Using this mental tool is freeing because we're so used to things being complicated that it seems we sometimes make things more difficult than needed.

In business (and as a Dad), I've learned repetition is necessary. If you want to share a new idea with someone, it seems you must present it multiple times for it to sink in. There are just too many things competing for everyone's attention nowadays to expect your idea to be accepted and understood on the first try. The old saying "The more things change, the more they stay the same" is really no longer the case, and that's also what makes modern life at times so confusing. We simply have no past historical events to use for guidance on the best path forward. Social media, 24-hour news, how connected we are across the world, and how people have access to you wherever your location are all things humans have never faced before. We are navigating new waters in how we, as a society and as individuals, manage these new tools and our subsequent new behaviors. So, to get any point across today, you must be persistent. Life might move faster now, but oddly, it takes longer to make a point.

I'm a huge fan of agency. Yes, you're 100% right; our insurance agency is truly awesome, but I am

talking about human agency here. By agency, I mean your ability to have a sense of control in your life and your own ability to influence the direction your life takes. By contrast, learned helplessness is the exact opposite of agency. Learned helplessness is defined as "a psychological state that occurs when someone believes they are unable to control or change a stressful situation. This can cause a person to stop trying to prevent bad things from happening in the future."

The news, our politicians, social media, the movies, and current books all seem to paint this picture that we're all just leaves floating down a river with no say in our own lives. They all seem to say: Just drift along, dear soul, and place all trust the river wherever it takes you. I wholeheartedly reject this line of thinking. I believe this message of helplessness is deliberate simply because it is so consistent across all media platforms. See, Occam's Razor is helping me with my point, and if you pause for a moment, wouldn't you agree? So, my first point is to recommend you repeat to yourself as often as necessary: "No matter what I'm hearing, I DO have agency and am in control of my life." This can be scary because now that means you're responsible for the things occurring in your life. You can't blame it anymore on anything outside of your own two ears now. But that's also the beautiful part: You ARE in control and can make things better. Of course, there are outside events we cannot control, but don't for a minute let those make you think that, ultimately, you are not the one fully responsible for your life. It's all on you. By embracing this and living that way for some time, your life can feel totally different and exciting versus the learned helplessness we're being programmed to feel this very day.

On to Hanlon's Razor. My Dad taught me this one, and I clearly remember laughing at myself when he said it. For context, I'm not sure of the exact situation,

but we were in the car, and I was passionately complaining to him about a situation and how there must be an elaborate scheme being used against me to explain it all. Then, my Dad, who is far less chatty than I am, dropped Hanlon's Razor on me: "Never attribute to malice that which is better explained by stupidity." In short, it means stop fooling yourself. There's no clever scheme against you, and whatever you're facing is likely just some silliness which, if you have agency, you should be very able to navigate on your own. Again, we can manufacture all these ideas in our heads on why things are going the way they're going, but all that accomplishes is that nothing really changes to be in your favor. Instead, if you approach life with agency,

your perspective then becomes, "Ah, I've identified the challenge, and now I begin to work on the solution."

We've all been effectively trained that someone else is in control. Stuff just happens, and that's how it goes. Again, you are just a leaf floating down the river. No, I emphatically say no to that, and I suggest you consider doing the same. By using Occam's Razor to find a solution to a challenge and Hanlon's Razor to help you correctly identify the true underlying issue, you can make a tremendous difference in the direction your life goes. Life is hard. You now have two new tools to make it easier. Take your agency back. After all, who else but you can fix that? 🍎



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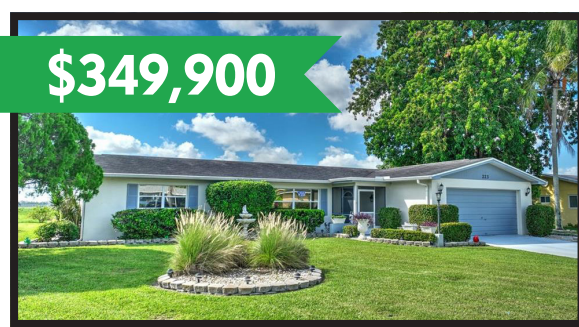
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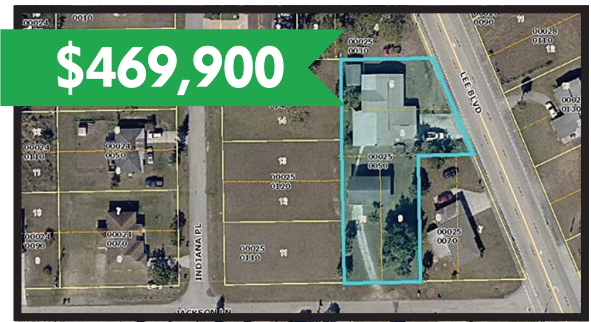
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Avoid Tapping Into Retirement Savings Early

Submitted By Michael R. Meunier

If you want to make a big purchase, such as a new car or a piece of property, or you were faced with a large, unexpected expense, such as a major home or auto repair, would you have the funds readily available? If not, you might look at what may be your biggest pool of money — your 401(k) or IRA. But should you tap into these accounts well before you retire?

Maybe not and here's why:

- **LESS MONEY IN RETIREMENT** – The more money you invest in your retirement accounts, and the longer you keep it invested, the more you'll probably have when you need it most — when you're retired. Consequently, taking out sizable amounts from these accounts before you retire could be costly, as it would disrupt the benefits of compounding that can be achieved by holding investments for the long term.
- **POSSIBLE BUMP INTO HIGHER TAX BRACKET** – The

money you take out from your traditional IRA and 401(k) is taxable in the year of withdrawal. So, if you withdraw a significant amount of money at once from your traditional IRA or 401(k), you could be pushed into a higher tax bracket, at least for one year.

- **TAX PENALTIES** – If you take money out of a 401(k) or traditional IRA before you turn 59½, you could face a 10% tax penalty, although some exceptions exist. Penalty-free withdrawals can be made for several reasons, including for education and medical expenses, first-time purchase of a home (up to \$10,000), after the birth or adoption of a child (up to \$5,000) and more (see irs.gov/taxtopics/tc557). With a Roth IRA, which is funded with after-tax dollars, you can withdraw contributions — but not earnings — at any time, for any purpose, without incurring penalties.

Given these issues, how can you avoid dipping into your retirement accounts when you're faced with a financial need?

One possibility is to take out a loan from your 401(k). Unlike a 401(k) withdrawal, a loan is neither taxable nor subject to tax penalties. Also, the interest you pay on a 401(k) loan goes back into your account. Still, a 401(k) loan has its drawbacks. If you leave your job, you'll likely have to repay the loan in a short period of time and if you don't have all the money to repay it, the loan will be considered in default, so you'll owe taxes and the 10% penalty if you're younger than 59½. But even if you don't leave your job and you do repay the loan, you'll still have taken away money that could have potentially kept growing within your tax-deferred account. As mentioned above, as your money compounds, you'll want to minimize disruptions.

Building an emergency fund is another way to gain access to cash. Such a fund should contain


at least six months' worth of living expenses, with the money kept in a liquid, low-risk account. It can take time to build a fund of this size, so it's never too soon to start putting away money for it. To avoid the temptation of dipping into your emergency fund, you'd ideally keep this fund separate from your daily spending accounts.

Explore all your options before tapping into your IRA or 401(k) early. Keeping these accounts intact as long as possible is one of the best moves you can make to help build your future retirement income.

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Lee County Mosquito Control District Review

Submitted By Jenifer McBride

An in-depth, independent review of the Lee County Mosquito Control District, (LCMCD), praised the district's fiscal responsibility and successful work ensuring the safety of residents and visitors. Contracted by the state, the report prepared by the Florida-based Balmoral Group said LCMCD is "managing its resources in an efficient and effective manner."

With nearly 1,200 square miles and more than 800,000 people in its coverage area, LCMCD is the state's largest in size and scope.

The critical need to control mosquitoes and the deadly diseases they carry was evident this year with malaria, West Nile virus and Dengue infections tracked around the state.

The professional and scientific approach to preventing the spread of diseases in Lee County is a key to ensuring visitors and residents can safely live, work and explore our region.

"Mosquitoes kill more humans in any given year than any other animal on earth," said LCMCD Executive Director David Hoel. "Pestiferous numbers of mosquitoes were in large part responsible for the delayed development of Florida until the end of WWII. Today, the robust mosquito control programs throughout Florida allow our citizens to enjoy our natural resources while greatly curtailing the threat of yesteryear's deaths and illnesses due to mosquitoes."

The report praised the district for "effectively and efficiently" providing a wide range of mosquito control practices, noting LCMCD's deployment of an airplane, helicopters, boats, more than 100 trucks, 68 pieces of lab equipment and more - including nearly 300 chickens who act as early detectors of

mosquito-borne illness.

LCMCD is the largest "in the state in size and scope and in staffing levels, which appear appropriate given the wide variety of complex issues the district must manage," the report says. "The district provides a broad array of mosquito control services and continually researches and pursues technological innovations to address the complex challenges created by the combination of rapid development and growing population, meteorological conditions, and environmentally sensitive areas in the district."

The report also shares that, "among its peers, Lee County MCD is considered a leader in effective mosquito control ... Representatives of other MCDs interviewed ... routinely commented (without prompting) on Lee County MCD's effectiveness and leadership in mosquito control. They have achieved this level of quality and respect while controlling costs in an aggressive manner."

The Lee County Mosquito Control District was established in 1958 by an act of the Florida Legislature as an independent district and has been providing uninterrupted mosquito control services to the citizens of Lee County for over sixty years. During those years, the district has remained at the forefront of mosquito control, helping to develop control technologies that are effective and sensitive to Florida's unique natural habitats and wildlife.

"LCMCD is a robust district that works for the public, and we take our job seriously," said LCMCD Assistant Director Aaron Lloyd. "We work every day to protect Lee County citizens from mosquitoes and the diseases they may carry. If you are experiencing mosquito problems, call our office and we will respond within 24 hours."



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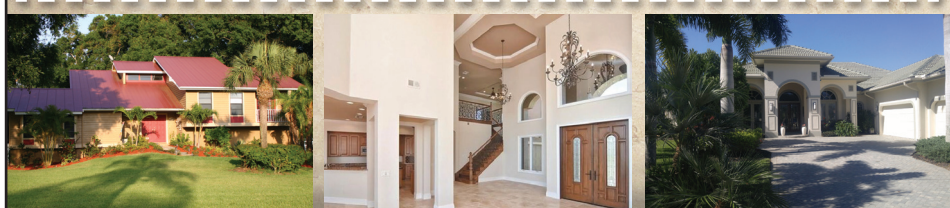
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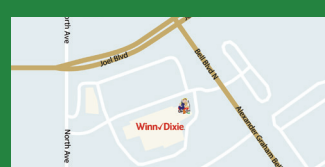
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U.S. Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg Recognizes Auxiliarist Of The Quarter

Submitted By Daniel Eaton

Fort Myers Beach Flotilla Member Receives Recognition Sector St. Petersburg stands as one of the Coast Guard's largest commands, overseeing a vast area of responsibility that spans over 400 nautical miles along the west coast of Florida. It encompasses the third-largest U.S. port for domestic trade. The Port of Tampa, within this jurisdiction, holds the national rank of 12th in total trade volume, combining both domestic and foreign trade activities.

Within this expansive region, Sector St. Petersburg manages five multi-mission small boat stations, six patrol boats, two aids to navigation cutters, and one aids to navigation team. These units are dedicated to five primary operational missions: Search and Rescue, Marine Safety, Maritime Law Enforcement, Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security, and Living Marine Resources.

Annually, the personnel of Sector St.

Petersburg are engaged in a significant number of operations, averaging over 2600 rescue cases. These efforts result in the assistance of more than 7000 individuals and the preservation of property valued at 39 million dollars. The integrated Coast Guard team responsible for executing these operational missions comprises over 825 Active Duty and Reserve Military Members, 27 Civilian personnel, and 950 Auxiliary members. Sector St. Petersburg receives support from five Auxiliary Divisions, housing 31 local Flotillas.

Recognizing exemplary service and commitment, the Auxiliarist of the Quarter award is a prestigious honor bestowed upon an Auxiliary member supporting Sector St. Petersburg. This individual is one who exemplifies the Coast Guard's core values and is acknowledged by their peers for outstanding performance and unwavering support of the Coast Guard and its missions.

In a formal ceremony, Captain Michael P. Kahle, Sector Commander, presented the Auxiliarist of the Quarter award to Lin McCaffery, a Fort Myers Beach Flotilla 91 Member. Captain Kahle expressed gratitude, stating, "For recognition and appreciation for your valuable service to the Coast Guard and to the Auxiliary." The Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard was also present to personally acknowledge McCaffery's achievements and mission report, emphasizing, "You are a credit to the Auxiliary and a proud representative of Flotilla 91 District Seven, Ft. Myers Beach." McCaffery's service extended to deployments in the South China Sea and the Gulf of Alaska, where she served with distinction as an interpreter in support of Coast Guard missions.

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is the lead agency in recreational boating safety, protecting America's seaward frontier. Created by Congress in



Photo: Captain Michael P. Kahle, Sector Commander, presented the Auxiliarist of the Quarter award to Lin McCaffery, a Fort Myers Beach Flotilla 91 Member.

1939, the Coast Guard Auxiliary is the uniformed civilian component of the U.S. Coast Guard, supporting the Coast Guard in nearly all mission areas. Every day, vessels and aircraft deploy across the U.S. to aid or save countless boaters and dollars in property damage. Learn more about the Coast Guard Auxiliary at www.cgaux.org, and the Fort Myers Beach Flotilla at www.Aux91FMB.org or by calling 239-690-6780.

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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 Club at Pelican Preserve, 9802 Pelican Preserve Blvd, Fort Myers 33913 (community entry off Treeline Avenue between Colonial Blvd and Daniels Pkwy).

Activities begin at 10:30 a.m. with a short social period, a business meeting at 11:15 a.m., followed by lunch at Noon, and normally an informative speaker program, ending at 2:00 p.m. Within the organization are vari-

ous 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 early (due to the Christmas holiday) on Thursday, December 14, and our planned program will feature Maestro Andrew Kurtz, Music Director and CEO, Gulf Coast Symphony, along with a small ensemble of symphony musicians. The Gulf Coast Symphony is the second-largest non-profit performing arts organization in Lee County.

Luncheon fee is \$28.00 and the planned regular menu will be a grilled breast of chicken with natural jus farro, garlic, walnuts, raisins and green onion, served with Chef's choice of both seasonal vegetables and dessert. The plant-based/vegan meal will consist of stuffed delicata squash with farro, garlic, walnuts, raisins, cranberries and green onion, along with a bed of spinach and seasonal vegetables. Dessert will be fresh berries topped with coconut whipped cream. Fresh rolls and butter are always served.

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 cut-off to attend this meeting is Noon, Thursday, December 7.

Photo: Dr. Andrew M. Kurtz, President & CEO/Music Director, Gulf Coast Symphony



Continental Women's Club

By Liz Paul

The Continental Women's Club will hold its monthly luncheon meeting on Thursday, January 4th at 11:30 a.m. at The Hideaway Country Club.

Our January program will feature a presentation by Haley Volcy, Membership and Community Out-

reach Organizer for The Alliance for the Arts. You are invited to attend and learn how this vibrant nonprofit visual and performing arts center is fulfilling its mission to transform lives and improve our community through the arts.

Continental Women's Club is a

social, cultural, and philanthropic organization established in 1975, and membership is open to women living in Lee County. We have many special events and interest groups within our Club that you can participate in for social and educational purposes. Meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at

11:30 am at The Hideaway Country Club, 5670 Trailwinds Drive, Fort Myers 33907. The cost to attend the luncheon is \$25. Reservation deadline for January 4th is Tuesday, December 26th. Please call Liz Paul at 239-691-7561 for additional information or to make a reservation.



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Keeping Pets Safe During Holiday Celebrations

By Dr. Veja Tillman, DVM

The Holidays can be a joyous time for the family. But it can be an extremely dangerous time for your pets. Cats with their curious nature and dogs with their strong sense of smell, cause them both to get into holiday decorations, food, drinks, and other folly. Nothing spoils holiday cheer like a trip to your local veterinary emergency clinic during a holiday party or in the middle of the night.

Here are some holiday tips to help keep your pets safe and out of harms way during this holiday season.

1. Keep "people or table" foods and sweets (especially those containing chocolate, xylitol, grapes/raisins, onions or other toxic foods) out of the reach of your pets and ask your guests to do the same. Emergency veterinary visits increase 20-30% due to gastrointestinal disorders during and after the holidays.
2. Keep ALL cannabis (THC) products away from your pets. While Marijuana use has been

legalized for use in humans, this is not so for animals. Pets can be negatively affected by ingestion or exposure to cannabis of many forms. Signs from drooling, vomiting, and shaking to seizures, coma and death have been documented. Pets are also at risk of developing severe long-term disorder secondary to cannabis exposure including serious respiratory issues like bronchitis, pulmonary emphysema, and even lung cancer.

3. Don't leave your pet alone in an area with lit (open flame) candles, a decorated tree, or open decorations.
4. Keep holiday plants (especially Holly, Poinsettia, Amaryllis, Mistletoe, pine needles and all Lilies) out of reach of pets by keeping the plants and any dropped or dried plant parts out of your pets' reach.
5. Place lights, tinsel, ribbons, plastic bags, wires, and batteries out of reach of your pets to avoid ingestion, choking and

electrical shock and burn hazards from chewing on these items. Consider leaving the tinsel off your tree completely if you have a cat.

6. Secure your Christmas tree to keep it from falling over just in case your dog bumps it or your cat decides to climb it. Hanging lemon-scented car air fresheners in the tree may deter your cat from climbing it.
7. Plan a pet safe holiday gathering by setting house rules for your guest in case they would like to give your pets a little extra attention (table food, treats, etc) and exercise.
8. Put all medications behind secured doors and ask your guests to keep their medications securely stored and packed away. This will help to decrease your pets access to medications.
9. Provide a safe place for your pet(s) to escape the excitement and noise of holiday parties (such as a kennel, crate, perching place, scratching post shelf

or hiding place in a quiet areas of the home) if you're entertaining guests. If your pet is anxious, excitable, or scared, consider putting your pet in another room with their favorite toys and a comfortable bed to snuggle into. Consider speaking with your veterinarian to see if your pet may benefit from mild anxiety medications to help them cope with the activity of the holiday season.

10. Keep your veterinarian's phone number handy in case you have any questions about your pet(s) health during the holiday season or in the event of an emergency.

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.

Dunkin's Diamonds Donates \$43,000 In Jewelry To Animal Refuge Center's Starlight Auction

Submitted By Betty Hughes

The Animal Refuge Center is excited to announce the 29th Annual Starlight Auction will feature \$43,000 in diamond jewelry generously donated by Dunkin's Diamonds. Both items will be available for bid during the live auction fundraiser on Saturday, November 25th at the Sanibel Harbor Marriott Resort and Spa.

"Dunkin's Diamonds has been an avid supporter of the Animal Refuge Center through the years but this year they have really outdone themselves," said Board Treasurer Betty Hughes. "We are honored to

be able to offer these amazing items to our Starlight Auction guests for their bidding pleasure."

The first item available for auction is an 18K white and yellow gold bracelet with five carats of 13 radiant cut yellow diamonds and nine brilliant cut white diamonds. The retail value is \$37,000. Also, up for bid is a \$6,000, 18 carat white gold triple eternity pendant with 144 natural round brilliant cut blue sapphires in two circles and 72 natural white diamonds in one circle.

Tickets for the Starlight Auction are available for \$125 and sponsorships start at \$500. They can be purchased on the Animal Refuge Center's website at <https://animalrefugecenter.com/all-upcoming-events/the-starlight-auction>.

Other items up for bid include vacation packages to Antigua, Barbados and South Africa, weekend getaways in Southwest Florida, and a Myra Roberts original painting. The silent auction will have more than 100 baskets of artwork, hotel stays, golf outings, cat and dog items, gift

certificates, entertainment packages and more. All proceeds support the Animal Refuge Center's mission to care for the dogs and cats in its care as Southwest Florida's largest no-kill shelter.

ABOUT ARC

The Animal Refuge Center is a 501c3 Non-Profit animal welfare society. We are a non-euthanasia organization dedicated to caring for all owner surrendered cats and dogs we've received into our care.



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East Lee Heads Into The Season Of Lights – Happy Hanukkah! Merry Christmas! Blessed Kwanza! By Mike Welch



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

As our communities settle into our version of the winter season December calls to mind the past year and our personal reflections of 2023 with the blessings, challenges and transitions. It also affords us the time to look beyond the darkness of these times be it war, division, struggle or simply the negative. Beyond

darkness is the Light and that's why so many in our community.

Major Brenda from the Salvation Army in Lehigh once again sends out the call for donations and participation in the Kettle and Angel Tree Programs. Please see her article and if you can – give her a call. The Lehigh Service Office is available for assistance for those in need of help. The Office is open at 25 Homestead Road #42. Give Brenda a call at 239-491-6071.

Our community hospital – Lehigh

Regional Medical Center – 1500 Lee Blvd. will host its annual Holiday Tree Ceremony on December 1 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Santa will make a visit with music and holiday treats. Open to all.

The East Lee Chamber once again as well as Landex at the Lehigh Town Centre is open for donations for the Salvation Army Angel Tree Program. Give the Chamber a call at 239-369-3322 and speak to Melissa or Peg. So many children in our area are asking for even the basics as clothes, shoes and toys.

The East Lee Chamber of Commerce – Located under the Clock Tower at the Lehigh Towne Centre (25 Homestead Road #9) is moving to a new website:

www.eastleechamber.com – info@eastleechamber.com – chairman@eastleechamber.com The Chamber's website will be new and improved that will also include monthly newsletters, advertising space with an active marketing specialist for our area's business.

Wishing all a happy holiday season and the blessings of a prosperous New Year! 🎄

Thoughts For Vacationers By Sheriff Carmine Marceno



Photo: Sheriff Carmine Marceno, Lee County Sheriff

The year has certainly flown by! It's November, Thanksgiving is weeks away and many of us are beginning to make plans for holiday vacations.

While our focus is on family gatherings, purchasing airline tickets and reserving hotel rooms, please include home security as a component of your planning.

Before we address residential security practices, it would be prudent to take a moment to discuss the sharing of vacation plans on social media prior to leaving, as well as the posting of photos and narratives while out-of-town.

These practices alert wrong-doers

of the fact that your residence will be or is vacant and vulnerable. Consider postponing social media posts until after your return. Use past-tense verbiage to ensure that those monitoring your posts are aware that you are no longer away from home.

Prior to leaving your home, take a few extra moments to ensure that all windows and sliding doors are both closed and locked. Cooler mornings have prompted many of us to unlock and open windows for increased air circulation. While you may have remembered to close these windows, ensure that they have been locked, as well.

Consider adding motion-activated lighting and security cameras. A first line of defense against burglary, lights and visible cameras are deterrents to would-be thieves.

Home security systems, now being

wireless, are easily installed and are available in a range of price points. Implementing 24/7 central station monitoring will ensure a quick response during emergency circumstances.

Utilizing timers and/or Bluetooth smart plugs/outlets to activate lighting and electronics make it appear that you are at home. Vary the times and the lighting that you select to operate.

Blinds, curtains and shutters should be closed making it difficult for potential intruders to look into your home.

Remove your garage door opener/remote from any vehicle that will be unattended during your time away. Ensure that valuables, including firearms, are removed from these vehicles and secured within your home.

Never leave spare keys hidden on your property. Experienced criminals can

locate "faux rocks" and sprinkler-head lookalikes, will look inside of and beneath lawn statues, potted plants and outdoor electrical outlet boxes/covers, beneath and inside bird houses and under door mats...you name it.

Accumulated mail notifies would-be burglars that your home is vacant. Consider asking a neighbor to retrieve your mail or take advantage of the United States Postal Service "Hold Mail Service." Additional information, regarding this postal program, can be found at www.usps.com/manage/hold-mail.htm.

The Lee County Sheriff's Office offers Vacant House Checks. Visit our website or call 239-477-1000 for additional information.

Let's all take proactive measures to protect our homes and property while enjoying our time on vacation! 🎄

The Holidays Are Upon Us!!!

CHRISTMAS

There, I said it!! We are already into the Christmas mode here at The Salvation Army in Lehigh. As we shared above, we would also like to be able to supply a few families with Christmas Dinner. We would like to have the same items as listed in the above paragraph. Turkeys, Hams, Pork Roast, these would

be amazing for a family to sit down to on Christmas day. We need your help to make that happen. We will be providing several hundred children with toys and it would be wonderful to make the holiday complete with a lovely dinner as a family. Can we count on you to help us make that happen?? I know we can. We look forward to seeing many of you as you stop by to drop off the items requested.



Photo: The Salvation Army Bell Ringers Manning the red kettles

By Major Brenda Lane

BELL RINGERS

We are currently looking for Bell Ringers to man our Red Kettles. If you are interested, please call or come by our office to apply. 25 Homestead Rd N #42

33936, Lehigh Acres. You may reach us at 239-491-6071.

Blessings for a wonderful Holiday Season to all!! 🎄

General Women's Club

By Connie Puzevic

The General Woman's Club of Lehigh Acres, FL will hold their monthly meeting on Friday, December 8th, 2023 at 1:00 pm at the Rise Christian Church at 50 Bell Blvd. North, Lehigh Acres, FL.

The women in the club have been busy making cookies to be

distributed at the Lehigh Community Services' Christmas Party to be held December 8th, 2023 at the Lehigh Senior Center.

New members are always welcome. Anyone desiring further information may contact Betty Smith at (239) 850-6617. 🎄

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|-----------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| BLANKET | COLD | MITTENS | SNOW |
| BLIZZARD | DECEMBER | SCARF | SNOWFLAKE |
| BOOTS | FIREPLACE | SEASON | SNOWMAN |
| CANDLE | FREEZE | SHOVEL | SNOWSTORM |
| CHILL | FROST | SLED | SWEATER |
| CHRISTMAS | HAT | SLEIGHBELLS | WINDY |
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More To Celebrate!

Dates & descriptions provided by www.holidayinsights.com

December 7 National Cotton Candy Day

Cotton Candy is a popular summertime treat. That being the case, why do we celebrate this day in the middle of December? Good question. The Cotton Candy machine was patented in 1899 by William Morrison and John C. Wharton. They brought it to the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904, where it was quite popular. Cotton Candy is a favorite at amusement parks, circuses, fairs, and sports venues. We suggest you create a carnival atmosphere today, as you celebrate National Cotton Candy Day!

December 9 National Pastry Day

National Pastry Day is a fun day, created to encourage you to make, and of course eat, your favorite pastries. Celebrate this day by making pastries. Don't make just one. Creativity is big in the world of pastry making. Be sure to try your hand at creating a new pastry.

December 13 National Ice Cream Day

When you get the urge for a snack on a hot, humid summer night, what's the first thing that comes to your mind? That's right...Ice Cream! Therefore, it's only fitting that ice cream be given its own special day. On this day, we hope you enjoy an ice cream cone, a sundae, or a milk shake. Set the diet aside and splurge a little...have one of each!

December 21 Crossword Puzzle Day

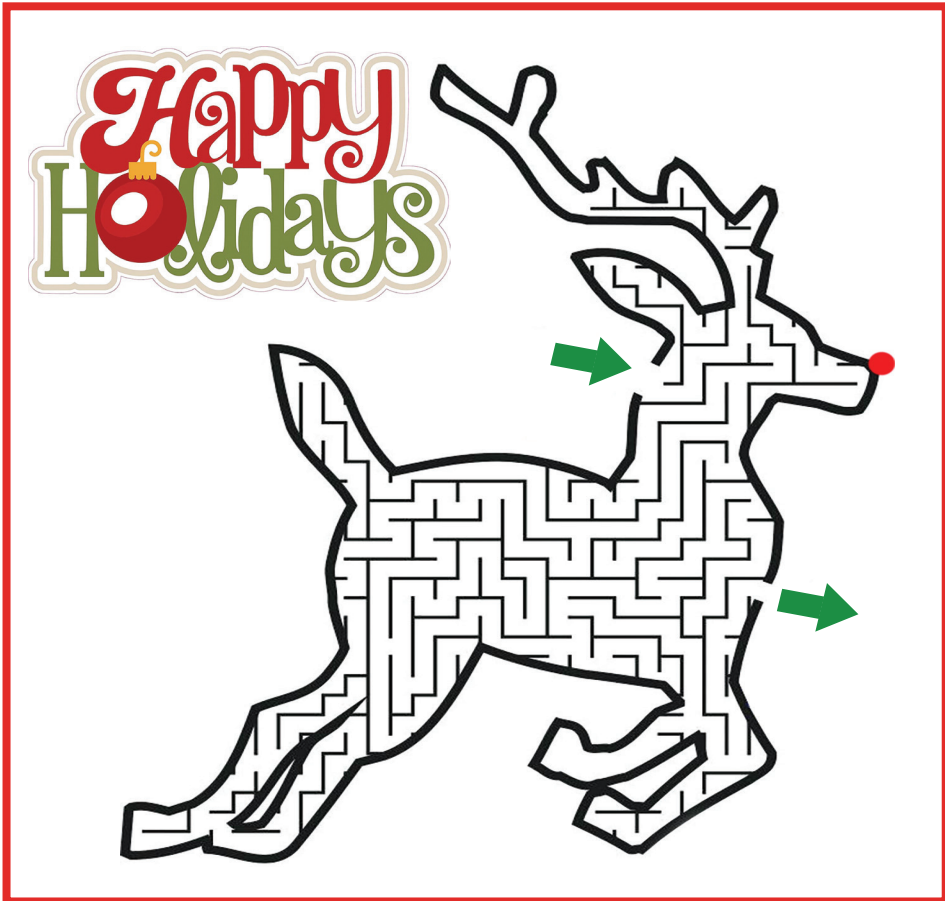
Crossword Puzzle Day is today! We sure hope you find some time this busy holiday season, to complete a crossword puzzle today and every day. It just so happens that crossword puzzles were created and published on this day in 1913. It was published in the New York World newspaper. Arthur Wynne is credited with creating the modern crossword puzzle. These puzzles became so popular, that competitions were held, to see who was the fastest to complete them correctly. Did You Know? Doing crossword puzzles daily is good for memory and mind health.

December 28 Card Playing Day

Card Playing Day is the perfect time to spend an hour or so playing cards with family and friends. Spend the day playing cards with family and friends. If you have kids, make sure to play some age appropriate card games with them. You'll find its quality time with the kids that will create many warm memories. Happy Card Playing Day. Now "go fish", "hit me", "double", and "I'll raise you two!"

December 30 Bacon Day

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 recommended that you enjoy bacon today in social gatherings. So, go ahead, and have a bacon party!! Everything tastes better with bacon!



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

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

THE ROAR
EAST LEE COUNTY NEWS

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