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EAST LEE COUNTY NEWS | DANIELS CORRIDOR

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Nostradamus

By Butch Swank | butch@goodladandswank.com

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



My wife always gives me the business about how, when I speak with my old buddies, we mercilessly make fun

of each other. It's 100% true, we tear into each other something fierce. One of my all-time favorites that I, sadly, was on the receiving end of was from my Korean friend David, who lived in New York. We got to know each other because he was one of my first customers at my first "real" job. He liked the

Giants. I liked the Buccaneers. I was a redneck. He was a Yankee. Two different worlds, but we got along famously. Each fall, we'd make bets on NFL football games. If I lost, I'd send him something like a Guy Harvey fishing shirt (which he found too tacky to wear). If I won, he'd send me a bottle

of wine. One time, he sent me what he called a Blockbuster Cabernet, which to me really only meant that it was expensive. He would go on and on about how remarkable that one Cabernet was. The week after it had arrived, he asked what food I paired this precious cabernet (Continued on Page 4)

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Introducing Mike Hollow, a Write-In Candidate for Sheriff

By Mike Hollow | Write-In Candidate for Lee County Sheriff

I am Mike Hollow, running to be your next Sheriff of Lee County. As a tenured Deputy with the Lee County Sheriff's Office for nearly 17 years, with experience in Patrol, Criminal Investigations, K9, and Internal Affairs as the unit's Commander, I plan to lead with the integrity and expertise that the Sheriff's Office and the taxpayers deserve.

My candidacy is far from self-serving. After the last six years of the current Sheriff and his administration stripping every fiber of the strength and flourishing morale of the Lee County Sheriff's Office, I have decided to be the voice for many who cannot speak to the widespread issues within the agency. Many current employees see monumental failures at the agency's administrative levels but will inevitably face retaliation if they speak up or vote against the current administration. They want change, and the taxpayers need better, more professional results.

I am proposing significant changes to the agency, each leading to a strengthened law enforcement agency to protect Lee County. It will take an aggressive approach to restructure the tangled-up agency, starting at the top. The Sheriff HAS to go, and his administration needs to leave with him. Sheriff Marcano is a true RINO—he has bled the agency of its funding on awful and irresponsible purchases totaling millions of dollars. Marcano is utterly inept in

running the largest agency in county government. By all reports, Marcano has needlessly restructured numerous systems and processes within the agency, costing valuable workforce and resources, and altered the landscape that allowed the agency to function normally and maintain strong employee morale for decades.

I know the citizens of our county and the agency's employees deserve better, and these are just a few ways I will keep my promise of making the Lee County Sheriff's Office great again.

FORENSIC AUDIT

The Taxpayers of the County fund the Lee County Sheriff's Office budget. It totals approximately \$300 million this year. The current sheriff has increased this budget each year since taking office, and we all have seen the foolish ways he spends it.

—He opened a petting zoo, costing the taxpayer a million dollars. Construction and maintenance likely cost tens of thousands more per year. It generates ZERO revenue.

—He purchased THREE food trucks and turned them into ice cream trucks, which hands out ice cream for free. It is great marketing for him, but it costs the taxpayer thousands. He uses sworn deputies to operate them; the lowest-paid sworn deputy's salary is \$62,000 plus healthcare and retirement, making

these the highest-paid ice cream shop employees, ever.

—LCSO's fleet of vehicles is REQUIRED to be serviced externally at a dealership; the single most expensive way to have your vehicle serviced. Meanwhile, the agency still employs an entire staff and maintains a facility equipped to service the fleet.

—He bought an AIRPLANE. It cost the taxpayer over \$1.5 million. It does not serve any tactical purpose. Fuel, maintenance, pilots, storage, you do the math.

These are just a few examples of how the current Sheriff loves to spend money. There is much more wasteful spending. The Sheriff will tell you that he didn't use taxpayer funds, which is simply untrue. Wherever the money came from, the sheriff should have used it more wisely, and I worry about the money we don't see.

TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT

Before the current Sheriff decimated it, the Lee County Sheriff's Office had nearly 40 Deputies assigned to the Traffic Unit. Today, there are less than 15 members. The current Sheriff constantly applauds the agency's efforts related to traffic enforcement. Still, I know his assertion that he has the traffic problem under control is a pitiful attempt to cover up his inability to manage this issue properly. Our population here in Lee County has increased drastically, as has the traffic enforcement problem. It has reached a breaking point. Every day, we see motorists ignore red lights, reckless and aggressive driving, including significant speeding, increased traffic accidents, and, most importantly—DUI's. If he had never been given the power to SIGNIFICANTLY SHRINK the size of the traffic unit, there would have been sufficient manpower to address this issue.

I will make this change. We will have a strong and well-trained Traffic Unit. The members of the traffic unit will be empowered to enforce the law to the letter to combat the problems that the current Sheriff has allowed to grow out of control.

REALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

Currently, the agency has 18 people ranked Commander or Higher within the Law Enforcement Bureau (only one-half of the agency), creating the epitome of the "too many Chiefs and

not enough Indians" scenario. Many of these are high-paid middle management who are back at headquarters or behind a desk, not assigned to the units performing the work the citizens need most. When I started as a deputy in 2004, with a population of 520,000, we had five to six deputies working at night per district. Today, with over 820,000 people in Lee County, only seven and eight deputies work at night per district. The result is longer response times and more time-consuming calls for service. Also, this results in decreased morale and the deteriorating mental health of those deputies who have to carry an impossible workload with no additional support.

The Lee County Sheriff's Office is one of the largest entities within Lee County as a whole, not just within the government. It is home to almost two thousand employees. The people love their mission of public service. Within the last six years, they have watched it deteriorate into a dictatorship riddled with low morale and favoritism benefiting those who bow to the Sheriff's administration. I understand the citizens and taxpayers of the county may not understand the effects of the agency's inner workings. However, I can promise you that fostering a toxic work environment like this current Sheriff has managed most definitely translates to unhappy employees and reduces their passion and excitement for the job.

I want a more secure Lee County; Marcano's current rhetoric regarding crime statistics doesn't reflect the reality of the citizens' feelings. I want our deputies to be tenacious and passionate in combating crime, not just used as pawns in the current Sheriff's endeavor to be the most popular politician. I want a fiscally responsible agency; the excessive spending and needless purchases must stop. Finally, I want true transparency. Elected officials are supposed to be there as representatives of the people who elected them to serve. The voters and residents of Lee County deserve an honest Sheriff who won't cover up his wrongdoings but rather lead with honesty and integrity every day.

Remember my name. I'm Mike Hollow. Write my name on your ballot for Sheriff on November election day.

I look forward to serving you. For more information, follow Mike at Write Mike Hollow for Sheriff on Facebook.com. 🐾

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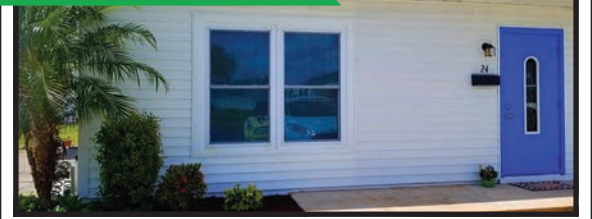


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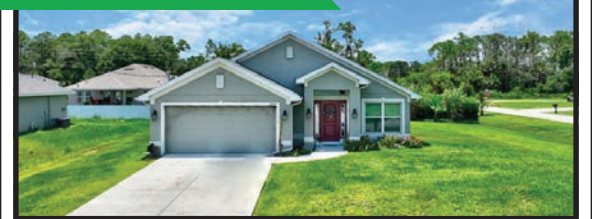


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Nostradamus (Continued From Page 1)

with for dinner. I was happy to reply, “Grilled hotdogs and baked beans.” Man, he did not appreciate hearing that! Back to the NFL, we made a bet on the Super Bowl that year, and I was sure my team was winning and was not shy about sharing it. Well, the dreaded Monday after arrived, and I had been 100% wrong about which team was going to Disney World. So, I was, um, we’ll call it, crabby. My buddy, of course, called that very morning all bright and cheerful. He opened the conversation with: “You’re so good at picking football games that I will now only refer to you as Nostradumbass.” (I added the “s” after “b” because this is a family show) Anyhow, after hearing this opener, I paused a second and then uncontrollably laughed. It was pure genius! Right when I was the most down, at the perfect moment, he swooped in and dropped one of the world’s most perfect zingers on me. I could not help but laugh and appreciate his flawlessly performed jab. This was around 2000, so there was no internet to provide you with a good joke. That humdinger was totally from his brain, which was another reason it was so damn funny. I guess

in modern times, if dudes no longer physically battle each other, we’ve had to find a different method and switch to mental battling. We do tear into each other, and we like it. It’s how we vent and make each other laugh, and, yes, chicks just don’t get it.

Guess what? That is perfectly fine. Men and women are not the same, despite what some would like you to believe. In this modern day, I know it sounds like heresy to say that, but how about some objective truth to back up my point? Teens raised without fathers represent 71% of high school dropouts. 90% percent of homeless and runaway children come from fatherless homes. 85% percent of all children who show behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes. The facts clearly show that having a father in the home tremendously improves a child’s odds of success later in life. Man, I started with that joke and now have totally bummed you out. Fear not! I have a cool quote by Charles Kettering to provide some optimism: “A problem well stated is a problem half solved.”

The problem is that we, as a society,

have basically gone to war with masculinity, and its effects are seen everywhere. Clearly, it impacts kids but it’s also affecting our future. Young men have heard for their whole life that they’re toxic. It’s no wonder more and more are essentially dropping out of society since their society doesn’t want them. Would you remain part of any group for long if you were told you’re toxic by that group? No, you wouldn’t. Here’s a thought experiment if you’re still on the fence: Think of a TV show with a fit, healthy, strong, and well-adjusted dad. I sure can’t come up with one. The dad from Modern Family is as close as I can get, but most often, he’s portrayed as a dithering idiot—which is not exactly a good fatherly role model. Current society seems to favor this new phrase: Boys can’t be boys.

How exactly is all this affecting America’s future? In April of this year, the CDC stated that the general fertility rate in the US decreased, again, by 3%, which means America is now at a historic low for making babies. Sad, truly sad. I think most have heard this maxim: “Hard times create strong

men, strong men create good times, good times create weak men, and weak men create hard times.” Well, we are living in this exact situation. Something’s got to give to turn this around, and I have a simple solution in mind. Let’s get back to celebrating both masculinity and femininity and stop pretending we’re the same. We’re not. It’s that simple. We should also stop glorifying the divisive and truly toxic members of our society. Instead, we should elevate the best examples of America’s men and women so our kids can have true role models to emulate. It really is that simple, and you can help. For example, if we take time to commend a young man for doing something challenging, even if it ended in failure, the effort should be commended, nonetheless. If you see a boy or young man venturing out and trying to achieve anything of difficulty, praise them. Trust me, that confidence-boosting shot in the arm will go a long way. Let’s face it: guys don’t get many compliments, nor have we historically needed them. But, these days, if we can shower enough positive encouragement on our young men, we can get this ship righted. 🐾

The Elusive Big Cypress Fox Squirrel

By Kara Tyler-Julian | Biologist

Have you ever seen a small mammal running through the woods and wondered to yourself, “Was that a fox? A squirrel? A badger? Chupacabra?” Well, if that furry friend looked like a very large squirrel with a long bushy tail, chances are it was the elusive fox squirrel. In Southwest Florida, there are two subspecies of the fox squirrel that you may be lucky enough to see, the Southern (or Sherman’s) fox squirrel, *Sciurus niger shermani*, and the Big Cypress fox squirrel, *Sciurus niger avicennia*.

South of the Caloosahatchee River, if you happen to spy one of these large, fluffy rodents, it is most likely the Big Cypress fox squirrel, which is a state-threatened species. These striking creatures come in a variety of different colors such as gray, buff, reddish-brown, black, or somewhere in between. This subspecies is only found at the southern end of Florida. Like other species of squirrel, the fox squirrel builds its nests in trees, but otherwise spends much of its time on the ground foraging for food. These squirrels feed on a variety of food items such as acorns, pine seed cones, cabbage palm fruit, saw palmetto berries, and many more native plant fruits and seeds. Ad-

ditionally, biologists in the Big Cypress Natural Preserve conducted a study on the diet of this species and also documented the lubber grasshopper as an important food source for this species. Another reason to love the much-maligned insect featured in last month’s article.

The Big Cypress fox squirrel prefers open woodland habitats such as pine forests, cypress swamp forests, mangrove swamps, and other similar habitats that feature an open tree canopy and sparse understory. Such habitats are examples of natural Florida habitats maintained by fire, which are becoming more and more rare as they are destroyed and fragmented by the rampant development destroying much of our beautiful state. Habitat loss and destruction is one of the main threats to this and other native species.

If you want to help preserve this charismatic species and others like it, the best



thing to do is support policies and organizations that prioritize the conservation and management of native habitats in this area. If you would like to encourage this species in your own yard, rather than putting out feeders full of unnatural food items, try plant-

ing more native plants in your yard that produce some of their favorite fruits: saw palmettos, cabbage palms, slash pine trees, oaks, wax myrtles, pond apples, and more, and don’t forget to keep the lubbers around for this squirrel to snack on. 🐾






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The Evolution of the World-Famous Buckingham Blues Bar

By Tommy Lee Cook

When I closed on the Buckingham Blues Bar property on August 1st of 2002, the establishment had recently been voted the “Number One Louisiest Bar” in the five counties of Southwest Florida. Local biker groups had compiled a list of the twenty biggest s**holes in May 2002, and it had been on that list as well. Deservedly so, and I was a patron for many years, going back to the early 80s.

The building had fallen into disrepair: poor plumbing, a failing AC system, a leaking roof, a jungle of a backyard on two acres—a mess in every way for almost anyone to undertake reviving. As a general contractor, we jumped on it and, within three and a half months, had completed a total renovation. Inside, outside, and our cool backyard was completed, too. That’s when the evolution began to shake off the image and reputation that the biker group had so crowned number one.

I have been a musician and singer-songwriter for decades, releasing a vinyl album in 1985 of my own music, Southern Soul/Tommy Lee Cook. I was still playing and writing at the time I purchased the bar, so an inside and outside stage was built with the dream of hav-

ing a cool Blues club in the middle of nowhere, a place for original music, primarily Blues. Blues is a broad category—it’s slow, fast, happy, sad—it’s the Mama and Daddy of modern music, that’s the Blues, and I felt it would be a perfect fit.

The first original act I booked was a harmonica player and singer/songwriter, Pat Ramsey, one of the best in the business. Next was a young East Coast guitar slinger and singer/songwriter, Albert Castiglia, formerly with Junior Wells. Pat has since passed away, and Albert has become one of the top names internationally in the Blues world. In fact, Albert has a Billboard Top 10 album out right now and a catalog of some of the best original music in the world. In the almost 23 years since we opened the doors over 4,000 shows have been done inside and out with the best original acts in the world. Delbert McClinton, Selwyn Birchwood, Damon Fowler, JP Soars, Victor Wainwright, and Leroy Parnell, to name-drop a short list.

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Southern Hospitality August 15, 2024

On August 15th, we will be hosting a super-group formed from some of the members listed above, Southern Hospitality, for what will be a sold-out show.

Buckingham Blues Bar Event Calendar: www.buckinghambar.com



Blues Fest at the Buck with Selwyn Birchwood



Out Back at the Buck with Tommy Lee

In December, JJ Grey and Mofro, another huge international act, will wow 1,000 people in our backyard, another show that will sell out quickly.

The Buck, as we call it, caters to people of all ages and walks of life. It has become a magical place for music lovers to meet and relax with some of the most talented acts in the world sharing their original music show after show. Now, a search for Florida Blues bars will find us at “Number One” or close, only this time it’s a list we are proud to be on. 🐾



The Famous Backyard '49 (Photo by James Kennedy)

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Car Insurance in Florida Continues to Increase

By Terri Lewis, BSEE, MBA | Director of Planet Connected

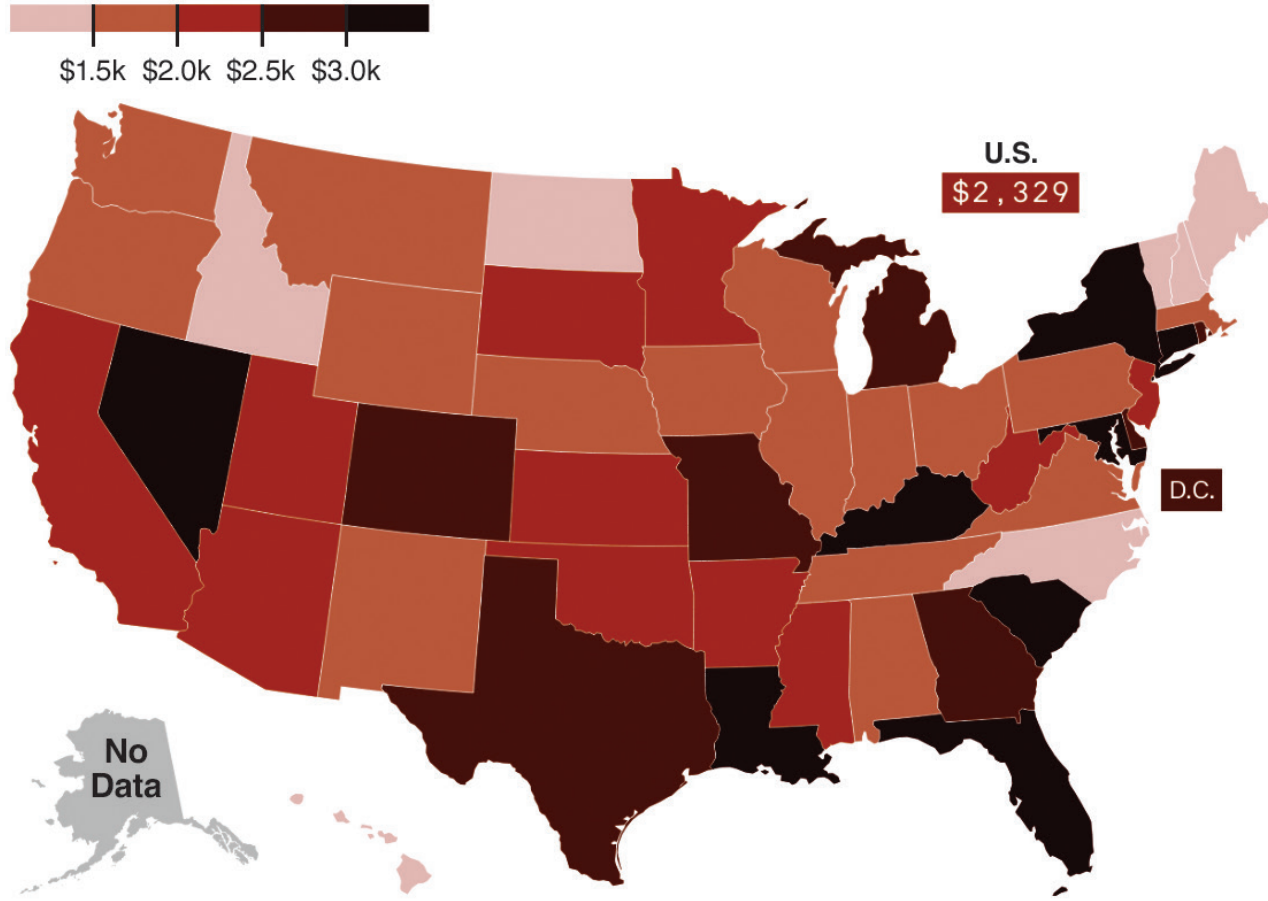
Recent data has positioned Florida as the 7th most expensive state for car insurance in the US. However, if Florida were to match the US average, it could potentially save residents a staggering \$1.65 billion.

Recently, Insurify updated the data from June 2022 to June 2024 for drivers aged between 20-70 with a clean driving record and average or better credit. The US average for full coverage is \$2,329. For Florida, the aver-

age car insurance is \$3,200. Data from the Insurance Research Council in 2021 showed that Lee County residents pay even higher insurance on average than other Floridians.

Average Annual Cost of Full-Coverage Car Insurance

Average between June 2022 and June 2024 for drivers between 20-70 with a clean record and average or better credit.



Data: Insurify; Map: Alice Feng/Axios

While housing costs continue to be a challenge for many, there are signs in Lee County that housing prices may have peaked. A reduction in interest rates could provide added relief. However, there is no relief in sight for car insurance.

It's Time for Action: historically, rates in Florida are driven by three critical factors;

- Frequency and Severity of Accidents
- Uninsured Motorists
- Legal Climate

The frequency and severity of accidents need to be addressed by Florida Department of Transportation, local officials, and in partnership with law enforcement. Safer road designs are long-term investments with the most significant returns.

State legislatures must address uninsured motorists and the legal climate. Other states have addressed the issues, providing an opportunity to benchmark and adopt logical policies. Heck, if we'd get to the US average, who would say no to a \$1.65 billion cost reduction for residents of Florida? Even more important, it would also mean that many more people would not lose their lives on our roads. 🐾

Terri Lewis, BSEE, MBA, is the Director of Planet Connected, an Industrial Technology Consulting organization based in Fort Myers. She is currently pursuing a Master's of Science in Civil Engineering—Smart Cities from the University of Central Florida.

New High-Speed Broadband Options Coming to Alva and Lehigh



By Joseph Maguire
PHOTO: Joseph Maguire

Exciting news for Alva and Lehigh Acres! In 2023 and 2024, Lee County received several significant Broadband grant awards. These awards, part of the Broadband Opportunity Grant Program, will play a crucial role in bringing high-speed broadband options to our community.

Why is broadband critical?

Broadband, with its transformative power, offers opportunities to participate in online education and distance learning. From elementary-age students learning about earth sciences to working adults taking courses towards a new certification, bachelor's, or master's degree, the impacts, outcomes, and possibilities are enormous.

However, the benefits of broadband access extend beyond education. They also have a profound impact on healthcare and social services. From receiving care virtually through a Telehealth encounter to participating in communities of care, broadband opens up a world of opportunities. 🐾

In 2023, the State of Florida awarded over two million dollars to add 68.31 miles of fiber optic cable to provide 1,196 unserved locations within Lee County with symmetrical download and upload speeds of 1GB.

The areas targeted for the grant are Olga, Alva, and Lehigh Acres. Comcast, in collaboration with local community leaders and organizations, is actively working through its project cycle (permitting, construction) to deploy services in these areas.

For more information, visit:

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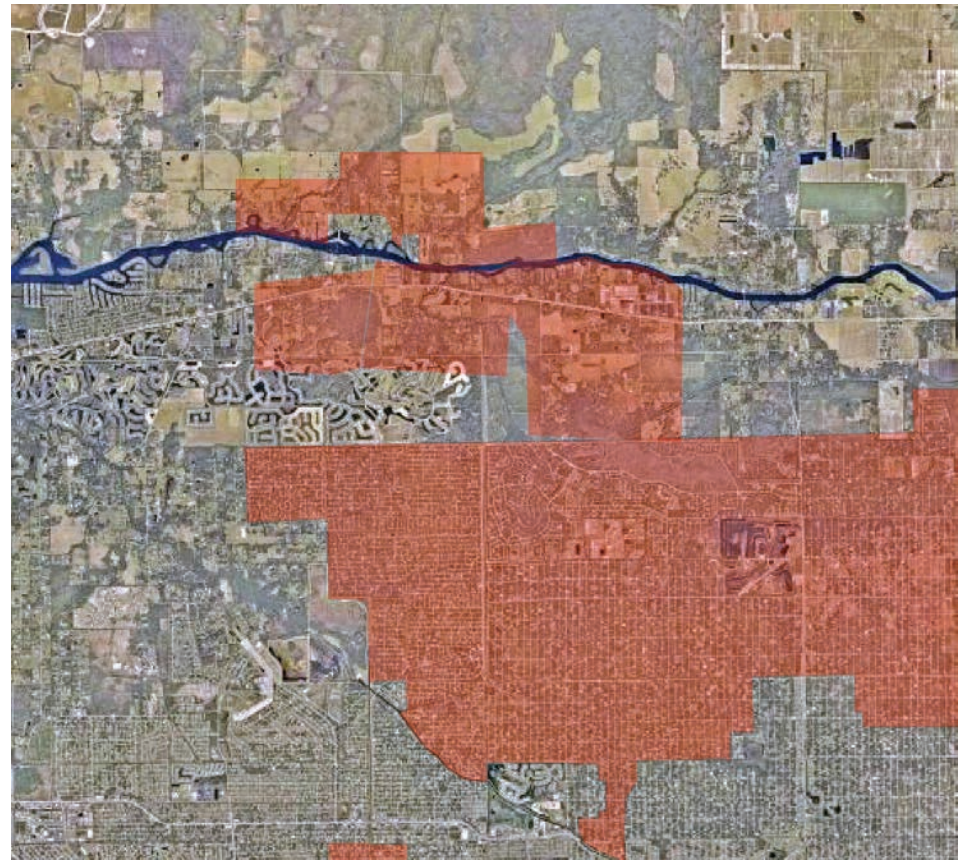
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The Bert Harris Act—What It Is and What It Isn't



By Nathan Cochran

PHOTO: Nathan Cochran, Student at the University of Florida Levin College of Law, Class of 2025

Who is Bert Harris, and why is everybody talking about him? Bert J. Harris, Jr. was a farmer, a rancher, and a state representative. Among his many achievements, he is most well-known for championing private property rights in Florida. His legacy continues to influence local planning commission meetings and is frequently invoked to explain land use decisions.

The year 1995 was a momentous turning point in Florida's land use law. That year was responsible for delivering the most significant property rights legislation in the country, the so-called "Bert J. Harris, Jr., Private Property Rights Protection Act," commonly known as the Bert Harris Act. This landmark legislation aimed to safeguard private property owners from excessive governmental interference. It provides a mechanism for property owners to seek monetary compensation when government actions place an undue burden on their property's value or use. Specifically, the Act gives a private property owner the right to make a claim for monetary damages when a governmental entity inordinately burdens an existing use of real property or a vested right to a specific use of real property. Fla. Stat. § 70.001(2). The Bert Harris Act quickly established itself as a critical component of Florida's overall land use scheme, one of the most elaborate in the nation.

Specifically, the Bert Harris Act permits landowners to recover money against state and local entities when the government unduly interferes with their property. It is a method by which private property owners can recover if their property experiences a significant reduction in value due to government action. This body of law is separate and distinct from the takings law, which

entitles landowners to just compensation when the government takes their land outright for public use. The Bert Harris Act compensates property owners for government action that does not amount to a complete constitutional taking. Fla. Stat. § 70.001(1).

Who was responsible for pushing such property rights legislation? Large, institutional property owners and politicians from both parties who were concerned about unprecedented land use regulations that threatened landowners' established (vested) rights. While the Act has undoubtedly done some good, many feel disenfranchised by its effects, including several communities in Lee County. In retrospect, Bert J. Harris, Jr. himself expressed doubts about the legislation's impact. Despite the Act being originally intended to protect property owners from the government, Harris, Jr. clarified that he never contemplated the Act being a weapon for developers.

So, what is the Bert Harris Act? It is intended to protect property owners who are treated unfairly by government officials, whose vested property rights are confiscated by an overreaching government. To put it bluntly, the Bert Harris Act does not apply to property owners attempting to "upzone" their properties by increasing the existing density, intensity, or uses permitted under existing law. The Act was aimed at protecting property owners so that they could

maintain the existing use of their properties and pursue any foreseeable use.

What the Bert Harris Act is not—despite apparent cries to the contrary and noticeable misconceptions, neither the Bert Harris Act nor the U.S. Constitution provides property owners with a guarantee of maximum profits or an unassailable right to approval of all development proposals. Local decision-makers are not bound to approve developments simply because a property owner invokes the Act. Unfortunately, some county commissions and planners across the state have erroneously claimed that their hands are tied, using the Act as a reason to approve developments they might otherwise scrutinize more thoroughly. With hands up and shoulders shrugged, these decision-makers have urged their disgruntled constituents that there is nothing they can do but to approve certain de-

velopments. This defensive declaration misses the mark.

In reality, the Bert Harris Act is meant to protect property owners, not to grant developers the power to coerce local governments into approving projects. It is essential for local planning commissions to understand that the Act was never intended to be a blanket endorsement for all development proposals. Instead, it was meant to balance property rights with reasonable land use regulations, ensuring that property owners are compensated for undue burdens, without undermining local land use authority. This Act has undoubtedly had a chilling effect on land use regulations and innovation. However, local planning commissions are not permitted to abuse land codes and processes by taking refuge behind the Bert Harris Act. It was simply never intended to assume such a role. 🐾



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By Michael Colombo, Esq. | www.colomboforjudge.com | facebook.com/mikecolomboforjudge
PHOTO: Michael Colombo, Esq., Candidate for 20th Judicial Circuit Court Judge

Hello, Southwest Florida! My name is Mike Colombo, and I am running for Circuit Court Judge in the 20th Judicial Circuit.

I am 52 years old and decided to run for Circuit Court Judge because I believe I have the proper qualifications, including legal and life experience. I am a trial attorney with over two decades of legal experience, including completing over 100 trials to verdict. My experience includes representing plaintiffs, defendants, and the State.

I would like to share some of my background with you, the voters:

I was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut, to Italian immigrant parents. My mom, Lydia Colombo (now deceased), was a famous seamstress in the late 1960s, constructing custom dresses in New York City for celebrities Jacqueline Kennedy, President Lyndon B. Johnson's daughters, Happy Rockefeller, Ben Gazzara, and Natalie Wood. My mom's stunning custom-made wedding dress for Lynda Bird Johnson in 1967 has been seen by millions. I know the value of family, as my mom left behind her celebrity clients to raise myself and my sister in Connecticut. My father was also a trade worker, installing and fixing furnaces in neighborhoods throughout the Fairfield County, Connecticut community.

I grew up watching my parents work long hours, well into the night, to put food on the table and send me to school. My humble upbringing taught me family values, loyalty, hard work, integrity, and character.

I received a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Scranton (PA), with a concentration in criminal justice, in 1994. I went to Quinnipiac University School of Law in Hamden, CT., graduating in the top 1/3 of my class in May 2000.

I have dyslexia, and many school professionals advised me that being a lawyer would never happen. However, I proved them all wrong. I passed the Connecticut bar in July 2000. I quickly began a noteworthy career as a trial attorney, working for the State Attorney's Office in Connecticut, never losing a jury trial in 4 years. I then wanted to learn and absorb other areas of the law, working as a criminal defense attorney and civil plaintiff's attorney for several years. I argued in front of the Connecticut Supreme Court in 2008 on a civil law issue, where I was the lead counsel against an insurance company.

I also represented a firefighter against the City of Stamford (Connecticut) re-

garding employment discrimination, where my work created a new precedent for firefighter promotional testing. Early in my career, I demonstrated a proven track record of fighting for justice against opponents who were considered "legal giants" in the community. Size does not matter to me, as the legal profession is solely about JUSTICE, which MUST be blind.

In June 2009, I worked as a Special Agent with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). After going through their rigorous background screening and gaining Top Secret Clearance, I dedicated the following years to public service. I was stationed on the Northern Border and handled a wide variety of criminal cases as a Special Agent, including human trafficking, terrorism, child exploitation, immigration, and drug trafficking. My skills were recognized, as DHS made me one of the lead collateral case agents on the 2010 New York City Times Square Bombing case.

During this time, I was also sworn into the Florida Bar. Injuries forced me to return to being a trial lawyer and brought me to Southwest Florida to be near my wife's family.

In May 2012, I began working in Southwest Florida as an Assistant State Attorney. Over the next 10+ years, I handled thousands of cases as a prosecutor in the 20th Judicial Circuit, affecting the lives of hundreds. My work over the years ranged from low-level misdemeanors to multiple life sentences. I took on any challenge I was given, including years of working in the Special Victim's Unit.

I joined private practice at Suarez, Rios, and Weinberg in January 2023, handling civil and criminal matters for clients. Our firm defends the rights of the accused, from misdemeanors to citizens facing life in prison. Our firm represented individuals (i.e., J6ers) charged in the January 6th event in Washington, DC. Our law firm believes in fighting for everyone's rights, as enumerated in the U.S. Constitution and the State of Florida. I believe integrity and transparency are vital to the practice of law. I am also proud to serve on the Florida Bar Professional Ethics Committee.

On a personal note, I have three boys playing baseball in the community. My wife, Susan, serves on the San Carlos Babe Ruth Baseball Board, where I routinely volunteer my time. My hobbies include fishing and going to the ballpark with my boys.

One last thing: when real-life experience matters, VOTE COLOMBO on or by AUGUST 20th!

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VOICES of LEHIGH

Leadership Change at the Sheriff's Office—East Zone



By Mike Welch | voicesoflehigh@gmail.com—We Want to Hear From You!
PHOTO: Mike Welch

At this writing, I was introduced to the new District Commander for the East Zone of the Sheriff's Office. Captain Mark Mallard, who has served our district over the past several years has been transferred to the west in the County. He has been an involved and enthusiastic law enforcement officer who has always been available 24/7, and his leadership is a credit to public service. As of now, the Sheriff has chosen wisely and out of concern for the communities of East Lee County with the appointment of Captain Ryan Lowe. Captain Lowe is a seasoned and dedicated servant leader, and I had the opportunity to meet him recently. He has a good understanding of eastern Lee County and shares the concerns our community has with aggressive and dangerous driving, as well as the long list of criminal activity that is upon us in these times. Captain Lowe can be reached at the Sheriff's Eastern District headquarters at 1301 Home-

stead Road N. The District Office phone number is 239-477-1820.

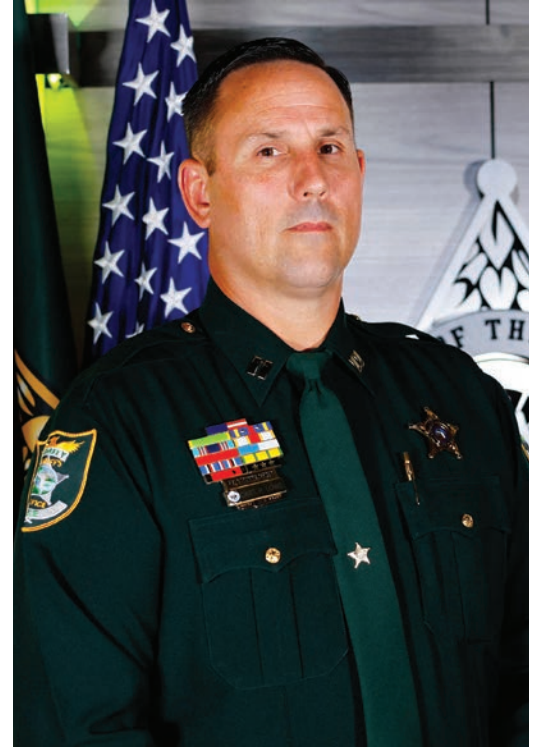
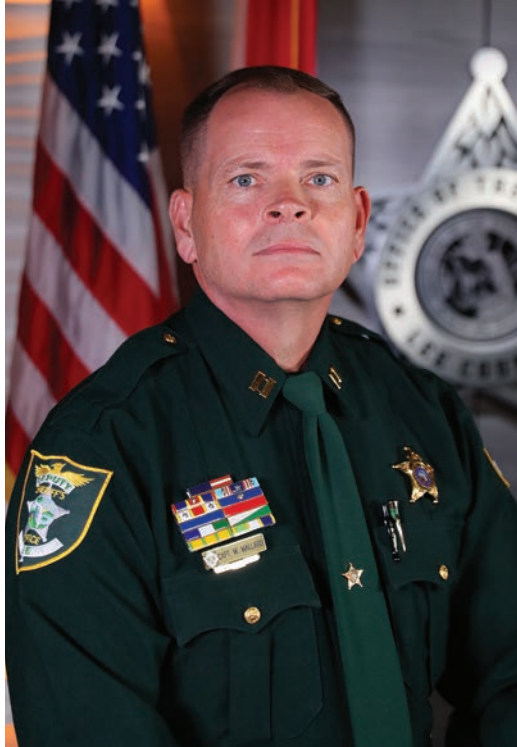
Again, all the best to Captain Mallard, and welcome Captain Lowe!

Continuing Issues With Aggression

Speaking of the Sheriff... Sheriff Carmine's article on the on-line version of East Lee County News notes that hotter temperatures increase even more aggressive behavior during this time of the year. As such confrontations and violence can easily be avoided by recognizing this condition. Needless to say, aggressive driving is a continuing deadly scourge on our communities. Bad behavior needs to be punished. Unlicensed and uninsured drivers need to come off the roads, and accountability and responsibility need to be enhanced. Many suspect that a

good percentage of aggressive driving, bullying, deadly speeding, and the like come at the hands of those who lack a driving license and therefore lack insurance. This then adds another level of vic-

timization of those who are responsible drivers and citizens. Our deputies and other law enforcement agencies work hard and need our support and thanks. 🐾



Captain Mark Mallard (left) and Captain Ryan Lowe (right) (Photos: Lee County Sheriff's Office)



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Creating a Quality Outdoor Kitchen

By Joshua Yates | Valor Construction

Southwest Florida has so much to offer, but many fail to appreciate and take full advantage of it. Floridians have the benefit of daily sunshine, mild winters, fantastic landscaping, and welcoming communities. There are so many reasons to enjoy Florida and all the values of living here! Here at Valor Construction, we enjoy enhancing this living experience by creating the highest-quality outdoor kitchens. Not only do our kitchens provide a unique space for cooking, but they will also increase the value of your home, expand your living area, and enhance your lifestyle.

Over the past several years, the growing popularity of outdoor living spaces has proven that outdoor environments are

no longer a temporary trend—they are here to stay! This lifestyle choice offers many benefits and creates an ideal space for social gatherings. Whether you are hosting a family barbeque, a casual dinner, or a themed party, your backyard can be the new hub of your home.

Who doesn't want to keep their indoor kitchen cleaner and cooler? Cooking outdoors moves the heat and mess outside and gives guests a more inviting indoor space, especially during the stickiest months in Southwest Florida. Many food enthusiasts are starting to experiment with new grilling, smoking, and cooking techniques, and we encourage them to keep those lingering smells where they belong—outside!

Added living space is certainly one of the top reasons to invest in an outdoor kitchen. 300+ days of Florida sunshine allows for outdoor activities year-round, so an outdoor kitchen effectively increases the usable square footage of your home. This extension of your living space is sure to turn your backyard into a flex area for cooking, dining, entertaining, and relaxing. A well-thought-out outdoor kitchen might include a grill, sink, refrigerator, countertops, or even a pizza oven. These inviting elements can ease the idea of going from inside to outside, making your backyard a desirable new living space.

Investing in a quality outdoor kitchen that can withstand the effects of a coastal environment is a smart financial decision. Homes with well-designed outdoor living spaces and built with high-quality materials have an increased market value. High-end appliances, durable materials, and thoughtful design elements that complement your home's style will put an exclamation point on the value of your property and set it apart from others. This trend towards outdoor living continues to grow each year, mak-

ing this investment more appealing to future buyers.

Creating a high-quality outdoor kitchen in Southwest Florida is not only a wise investment, but it is FUN! It enhances your lifestyle by providing a unique and pleasurable cooking experience, expands your living space, and adds value to your home. This new space allows you to fully enjoy our beautiful communities and enhances both your daily life and the market appeal of your property. An outdoor kitchen by Valor Construction is the perfect addition to any Southwest Florida home! 🐾



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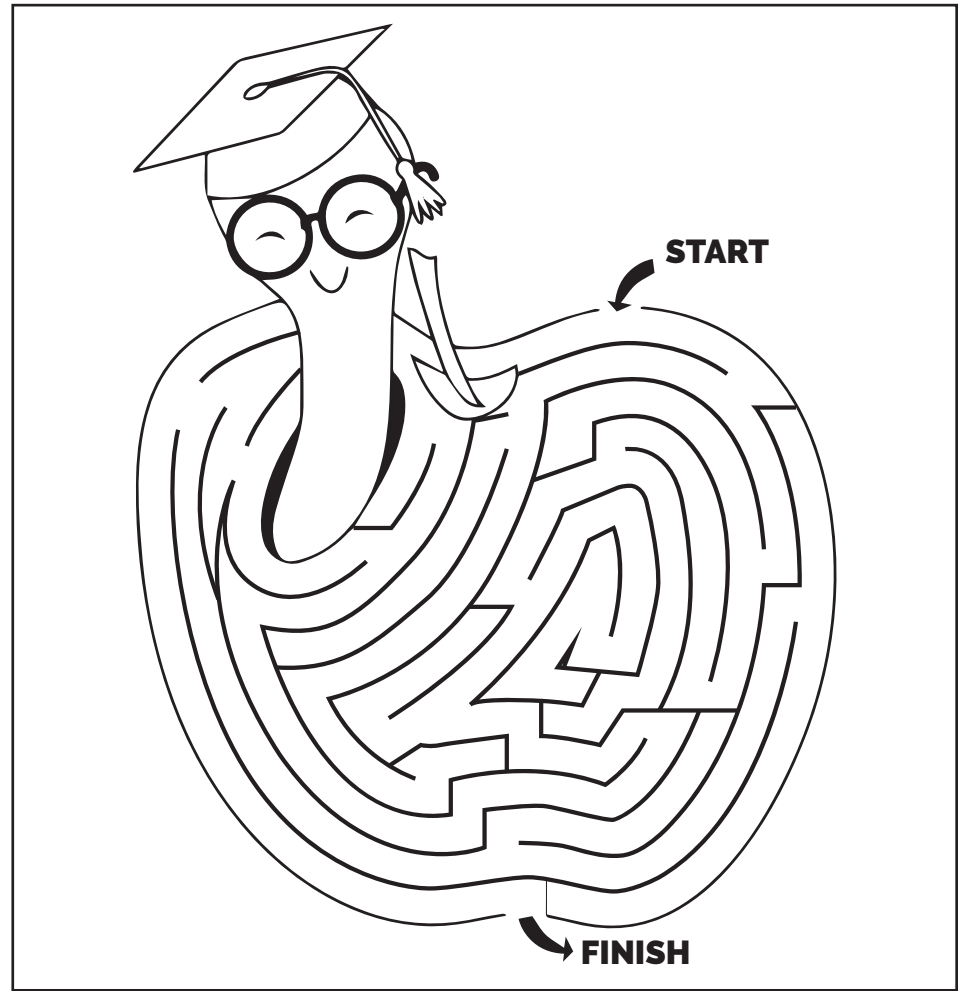
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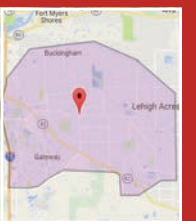


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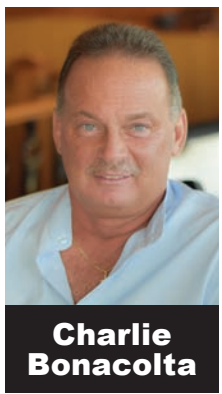
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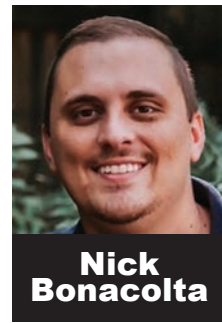
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Nick Bonacolta



CHARLIE BONACOLTA

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NICK BONACOLTA

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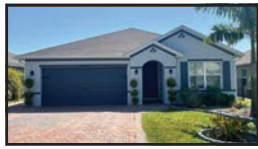
3 BEDROOM 3 BATH 2-STORY POOL HOME-UPGRADES GALORE



UPGRADES GALORE IN THIS 3 BEDROOM 3 BATH TWO STORY POOL HOME with 2715 SQUARE FEET OF LIVING AREA, NEW CENTRAL HEAT AND AIR IN 2021, ceramic tile and real wood floors, porcelain wood plank tile floors in the den and family room, crown molding throughout, five inch baseboards, formal living room and dining area plus den that could be a possible 4th and 5th bedroom with use of the spacious loft on the second floor with built in shelving, spacious kitchen with granite countertops, island counter, plenty of cabinet and counter space with decorative plant shelving above the cabinets, large pantry, stainless steel appliances, wine rack, guest bath on first floor with granite tops in all bathrooms, indoor laundry room with plenty of cabinets and built in laundry sink, SOARING HIGH CEILINGS, wooden stair case lead upstairs with Roth iron/wood railing, master bedroom with walk in closet and in suite bathroom with dual sinks, separate garden tub and walk in shower, all guest bedrooms are extra spacious with walk in closets, guest bath on second floor as well with tub/shower, screen enclosed in ground heated pool/spa with electric heat pump, plenty of covered and open deck space for entertaining, beautifully landscaped for privacy, pavers on the pool deck as well as the front driveway and walkway leading to the side entry double garage, covered front porch, elegant lighting throughout, quiet gated community with CENTRAL WATER AND SEWER, very low monthly HOA fees of \$110 per month covers the use of the community's expansive amenities including a large swimming pool, fully-equipped exercise room, playground and interconnected sidewalks throughout the neighborhood. Ideally situated minutes away from Veterans' Park, grocery stores, shopping/dining, and schools, convenience is at your doorstep. A definite must-see in excellent move-in condition. **Offered At\$525,000**

Charlie Bonacolta 239-994-1062 charlisold@gmail.com

3 BEDROOM 2 BATH POOL HOME IN MARBLEBROOK



THREE BEDROOM TWO BATH POOL HOME BUILT IN 2019, located in an excellent neighborhood atmosphere of Marble Brook, Very low HOA fees, CENTRAL WATER AND SEWER, sidewalks, secure gated entry, walking distance to common clubhouse, fitness center and playground, Pool was built in 2020 with spacious open deck with light grey pavers, electric heat pump, salt water system and Baja deck in pool for sunning, BUILT IN FIREPIT overlooks the FENCED BACKYARD with excellent views of the lake in the backyard as well as plenty of privacy by not having another home in the yard, pavers in double driveway and walkways, NEWLY REMODELED KITCHEN WITH GRANITE TOPS, breakfast bar, BARNYARD DOOR over pantry with custom built in shelving and drawers, SAMSUNG STAINLESS STEEL KITCHEN APPLIANCES, decorative stone tile wall accents on the kitchen wall, backsplash, under breakfast bar and around entry way, spacious living room with decorative wood accent wall overlooks the pool area, ceramic tile floors throughout with newer LUXURY VINYL FLOORS IN THE BEDROOMS with 5 inch baseboards, CROWN MOLDING, master bedroom located in the rear of the home with pool and lake views, private en suite master bath with walk in closet, separate water closet, dual sinks and walk in shower, guest bedrooms located in the front of the home with upgraded vanity and fixtures in the guest bath, indoor laundry room with accent wall, built in cabinets and shelving with full size washer/dryer, double garage with auto opener, storm panels for openings, quiet low traffic street. The home's located near schools, Veteran's Park, and minutes to Downtown Lehigh for shopping, etc., yet minutes to I-75, SR 82, Ft Myers, and the airport. NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED HERE. HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LEE COUNTY. **Offered At\$380,000**

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POOL HOME OVERLOOKING GOLF COURSE



Affordable POOL HOME overlooking the GOLF COURSE. Pay as you play. NO HOA FEES OR MEMBERSHIPS HERE. NEW DIMENSIONAL SHINGLE ROOF IN 2015, NEW CENTRAL HEAT AND AIR IN 2023, NEW POOL PUMP AND EQUIPMENT IN 2023, NEW WATER HEATER IN 2023, NEW STAINLESS STEEL APPLIANCES IN 2023, freshly painted interior, ceramic tile floors throughout, skylights in the formal dining area with mirrored wall, eat-in kitchen with nook area and pantry, PRIVATE IN GROUND POOL WITH GREAT VIEWS OF THE GOLF COURSE, roll down storm shutters, NEW SCREENS ON POOL CAGE, master bedroom with access to the pool area, private bath with dual sinks, shower and walk-in closet, enclosed porch with tile floors may be used for a den or office, vaulted ceilings in the living room, quiet low traffic street with CENTRAL WATER AND SEWER. **Offered At\$269,900**

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POOL HOME JUST FEET FROM THE CALOOSAHAATCHEE RIVER



Newly refurbished POOL HOME just feet from the CALOOSAHAATCHEE RIVER, quiet low traffic street, 3 bedroom 2 bath on an oversized lot, FENCED YARD, SCREEN ENCLOSED INGROUND POOL with new diamond brite finish, 22 X 12 covered screened lanai plus plenty of open deck space around the 35 X 41 pool area, oversized driveway for plenty of cars, boat or RV, covered carport plus 20 X 17 storage/utility room, freshly painted interior, new luxury vinyl floors throughout the entire home, newly remodeled kitchen with QUARTZ countertops, new lower cabinets with soft close doors and drawers, newly remodeled bathrooms with new vanities, fixtures, commodes, soft close doors and drawers on the bathroom cabinets, master bedroom with large walk-in closet, private bath with newly tiled shower, glass tile accents, QUARTZ tops in the bathrooms as well, new ceiling fans in the interior with new LED lighting, TRANE CENTRAL HEAT AND AIR NEW IN 2020, NEW METAL ROOF IN 2016. **Offered At\$290,000**

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METICULOUS 3BR/2BA + DEN-FULLY FENCED



Meticulously maintained 3 bedroom 2 bath home with a den, great location close to stores and easy access to Ft. Myers and I-75. This home has been well maintained and boasts a Newer roof in 2018, Newer central heat and air, New water heater, 4 new impact resistant windows, and newer well equipment. Updated stainless steel kitchen appliances, large breakfast bar, and a pass through window from the kitchen to the den. Cathedral ceilings make the home feel more spacious and inviting, tile floors throughout with wood laminate floors in the bedrooms, indoor laundry room with washer and dryer included, updated vanities in both bathrooms, large walk in closets in all 3 bedrooms, oversized 2 car garage with built in cabinets and counterspace, pull down stairs to the attic, inviting screened front porch, fully fenced backyard for privacy, home is located on an oversized lot with vacant lots to the left and behind the property. NO FLOOD INSURANCE NEEDED! **Offered At\$309,900**

Nick Bonacolta 239-887-0468 nbonacolta@gmail.com

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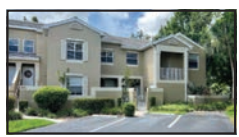
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GROUND FLOOR 2/2 CONDO IN GATEWAY



Convenient ground floor 2 bedroom 2 bath Condo located on the 5th hole of Gateway Greens Championship golf course. Located right next to the community pool and mailboxes, Just Minutes to JetBlue Park and SWFL International Airport! Breakfast bar in the kitchen, as well as a nook for a table, split bedroom layout for privacy. The master bedroom has a beautiful golf course view with access to the lanai, a large walk-in closet, dual sinks in the master bathroom, an indoor laundry room with a washer and dryer included, a newer water heater in 2021, Summerwind has the luxury of being close to Daniels Pkwy by utilizing the Westlinks Dr Entrance. Gateway is a beautiful serene gated community and offers a soccer park, dog park, bike and jog path, and more. Included in the HOA fee: Comcast cable, High-Speed WIFI, Water, Sewer, Garbage, Landscaping, Exterior Pest Control, Roof & Paint Reserves, Building Insurance, access to the pool, Etc. Owners just pay FPL Electric! **Offered At\$249,900**

Nick Bonacolta 239-887-0468 nbonacolta@gmail.com

2 BEDROOM PINWOOD CONDO



Popular Pinwood Condominium located in the last phase of Pinwood with stucco exterior, quiet low traffic Cul de Sac with plenty of privacy, covered carport with a 26.10 X 12 screened lanai with access from the kitchen door directly to the screened lanai, largest screened lanai in Pinwood with built-in storage cabinets and drawers and extra counter space, NEW CENTRAL HEAT AND AIR IN 2020, ceramic tile and wood laminate floors throughout, mirrored walls in the living room, newer front and side doors both with screens for those nice days to let the fresh air inside, newer insulated windows for energy efficiency, stack washer and dryer inside unit, walk-in closet in the guest bedroom, bathrooms have ceramic tile in the bathtub and shower areas, blinds on the windows, 55+ community within walking distance to stores, etc. on Homestead Rd, PETS OK. THE ROOF AND EXTERIOR IS MAINTAINED BY THE CONDO ASSOCIATION. No Flood insurance required here. Highest elevation in Lee County. **Offered At\$139,900**

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3BR/2BA-CENTRAL WATER & SEWER-NEW ROOF



A NEW DIMENSIONAL SHINGLE ROOF IS BEING INSTALLED AT THE SELLER'S EXPENSE BEFORE CLOSING. Affordable three bedroom two bath with an oversized double garage, screened garage door for when you are working in the garage, oversized corner lot, nicely landscaped with oversized streets and curbs, CENTRAL WATER AND SEWER, NEWER LUXURY VINYL PLANK FLOORS THROUGHOUT, NEWER INSULATED WINDOWS FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY, breakfast bar and pantry in kitchen with newer appliances, plenty of cabinets and counter space, pass thru to lanai, living room with decorative wood accents on the walls as a backdrop for your flat screen TV, master bedroom has a private bathroom with newer vanity with vessel sink, LED lighting, guest bathroom has also been updated with new vanity, fixtures and new tile in the tub/shower area, 30 X 14 enclosed lanai in the rear with accordion storm shutters, quiet low traffic street, excellent neighborhood atmosphere and minutes to SR 82, I-75 and Ft Myers. Highest elevation in Lee County-No flood insurance required here. **Offered At\$290,000**

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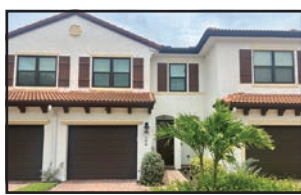
3 BEDROOM 2 BATH - FENCED YARD - NEW ROOF IN 2023



NEW DIMENSIONAL SHINGLE ROOF IN 2023, NEW WATER HEATER 2024, affordable three bedroom two bath with a beautifully landscaped FENCED BACKYARD with a double gate and 50 amp hook up for RV, firepit, canal in the rear for privacy, manicured backyard with a black olive tree, mango and avocado trees, covered front porch plus a 16 X 10 screened lanai under truss overlooking the backyard, cathedral ceilings, plant shelves, newer wood like porcelain plank tile floors throughout the entire property, QUARTZ COUNTERTOPS in the kitchen with breakfast bar, pantry and all appliances including a French door refrigerator, indoor laundry room with washer and dryer, master bedroom with walk in closet and private bath, newer dual tank water system, air conditioned double garage with auto opener and plenty of storage and room for the cars, central heat and air new in 2014, excellent location in SW Lehigh just minutes to SR 82, I-75 and Ft Myers, quiet low traffic dead end street. **Offered At\$300,000**

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3 BEDROOM TOWNHOME IN BEAUTIFUL VILLA MEDICI

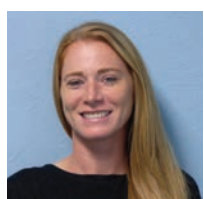


Well maintained townhome in beautiful Villa Medici, excellent location just minutes to Ft Myers Beach, Lakes Park, I-75, restaurants, etc., common clubhouse featuring heated pool and fitness center just steps away, gated community, ceramic tile floors on the first floor with living room, dining room and kitchen featuring granite countertops, breakfast bar and pantry, stainless steel appliances, eat-in nook area as well as a larger dining area, upgraded LED lighting, half bath on the first floor for guests, sliding doors to the lanai in the rear, roll down storm shutter for the lanai as well as panel shutters for the rest of the windows, attached garage parking with storage, luxury vinyl plank flooring going up the stairs to the second level with luxury vinyl plank throughout the entire second floor with tile in the bathrooms, master bedroom with large walk-in closet, private bath with separate tub and shower and dual sinks, two guest bedrooms and laundry room with stacked washer and dryer. **Offered At\$325,000**

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