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Where the School Gets Built Matters: The Urgent Case for Lehigh Acres

Lee County Residents Urged to Take Action on East Zone High School Site Decision

Katrina Salokar | East Lee County News

THE STUDENTS ARE IN LEHIGH. THE SCHOOL SHOULD BE TOO.

More than 90% of the approximately 2,000 high school students projected to attend School NNN live in Lehigh Acres. Alva, by contrast, is expected to contribute fewer than 100 students. Despite this overwhelming data, the School District is proposing to force Lehigh students onto long, unnecessary bus rides across rural terrain to a school that would sit miles from where they live—past a shovel-ready site already owned by the District.

This plan undermines not only fiscal logic but also the District’s own Elementary Proximity Project, which was designed to reduce long-distance busing. That policy, purchased with millions of taxpayer dollars, is being blatantly reversed—at the cost of over 64,000 student bus hours per month.

THE JOEL/DAVID SITE IN LEHIGH IS READY. ALVA IS NOT.

The District already owns 46.5 acres of fully prepped land at 201 Joel Blvd. in Lehigh Acres:

- Water, sewer, sidewalks, broadband, and public transit access are all in place.
- The site is surrounded by five feeder schools and is fully integrated into the existing community.
- Emergency response capacity and road infrastructure already exist.

The Alva site, by comparison:

- Lacks all essential infrastructure—no water, sewer, sidewalks, broadband, or lighting.
- Sits on environmentally sensitive land, within a 20/20 Conservation corridor.
- Threatens habitats of Florida panthers, black bears, scrub jays, and gopher tortoises.
- Is surrounded by active gun ranges and narrow, unsafe rural roads.
- Will require years of environmental mitigation and massive public investment to make viable.

THE TRUE COST OF A BAD DECISION

The school was initially budgeted at \$140 million. That number has already ballooned to \$162 million—and could climb to 180–220 million due to concurrency requirements, offsite infrastructure, road expansions, and environmental compliance at the Alva site.

This comes at a time when:

- The district’s capital budget has been slashed from \$2.3 billion to \$1.4 billion.
- A \$400 million bond may be required to make up for growing shortfalls.
- Impact and sales tax revenues are falling.
- Lee County already faces \$423 million in unmet school construction and maintenance needs.

Vital projects in Lehigh and across the county will suffer if the Tuckahoe site is forced forward. Drainage, public safety, and classroom expansions could be delayed or canceled altogether.

ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION AND LEGAL RAMIFICATIONS

The Alva site lies within a vital conservation corridor and is dangerously close to the Caloosahatchee River, risking water pollution, habitat disruption, and long-term environmental consequences.

Additionally, community leaders are preparing a federal Title VI Civil Rights complaint on the grounds that the site selection process discriminates against low-income and minority students in Lehigh by burdening them with excessive travel and ignoring proximity-based planning.

THIS ISN’T JUST ABOUT A SCHOOL—IT’S ABOUT TRUST, PRIORITIES, AND THE FUTURE

The School Board’s decision threatens to:

- Strip Lehigh Acres of vital funding and local control.
- Shift infrastructure and growth planning away from communities that need it.
- Undermine years of community engagement, planning, and promises.
- Further erode public trust in how major educational decisions are made.

Residents of Alva themselves are also opposed to the plan, noting that it threatens the rural character of their community and provides no direct benefit to local families, most of whom are already bused elsewhere.

WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW

A Community Action Toolkit has been released to guide residents in taking immediate action. Here’s how you can help:

- Email or call your School Board members and demand that School NNN be built at the Joel Blvd. site in Lehigh.
- Share the facts with neighbors, on social media, and in your local organizations.
- Attend School Board meetings and ask for transparency, accountability, and equity.
- Report concerns to the press at: press@eastleenews.com

Lee County School Board Switchboard: 239-337-8243

Board Member Emails:

- Armor Persons (Chair, Dist. 5): ArmorDP@leeschools.net
- Melisa Giovannelli (Dist. 2): MelisaWG@leeschools.net
- Debbie Jordan (Dist. 4): DebbieJ@leeschools.net

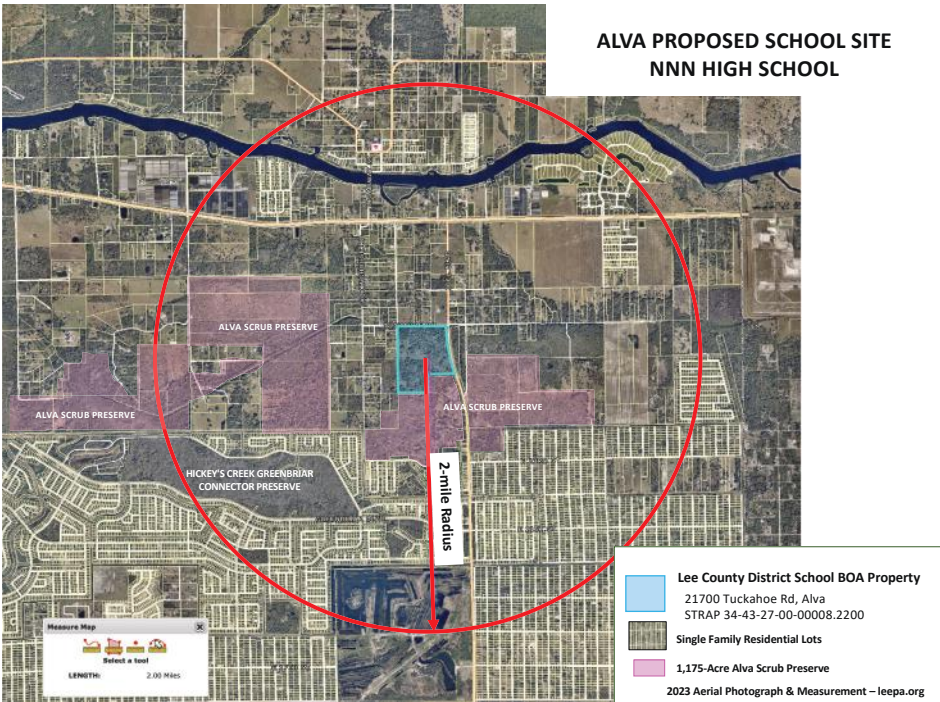
- Jada Langford-Fleming (Dist. 6): JadaNFL@leeschools.net
- Samuel Fisher (Dist. 1): SamuelJF@leeschools.net
- William Ribble (Dist. 3): WilliamFRI@leeschools.net
- Vanessa Chaviano (Dist. 7): VanesaMC@leeschools.net
- Superintendent Denise Carlin: DeniseMC@leeschools.net

This decision will shape education, infrastructure, environmental policy, and tax spending for decades. The Joel/David site offers a fiscally sound, community-aligned, and environmentally responsible solution.

Build where the students live. Protect where the wildlife thrives. Spend taxpayer money where it makes sense.



FINAL THOUGHT: DECIDE NOW—OR LOSE CONTROL FOREVER





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Alva’s Own CHRIS MOON: The Man Who Created Prince and Never Stopped

Katrina Salokar | East Lee County News



Chris Moon doesn’t call himself a genius, but his story reads like one long creative explosion. He discovered Prince — yes, *that* Prince — and developed him as a major act and created the entire package that launched the artist’s career. But that was only the beginning. In this interview, Moon talks about artistic instincts, wild experiments, AI, frequency healing, and why failure is the best teacher. What follows is a story of someone who believed in himself enough to try everything, and got just enough right to change music history.

Q: Let’s go back to the beginning. How did you come in contact with Prince Rogers Nelson? What was it about Prince that grabbed your attention?

Moon: I owned a recording studio in Minneapolis, and I was growing increasingly frustrated with the challenges of working with bands. Honestly? He was the shortest musician I could find. *[laughs]* But seriously — people expect me to say it was his musical genius. But I was already surrounded by great musicians. What made Prince stand out was that he played every instrument himself — guitar, drums, keyboards, you name it. And at the time, I had been thinking: maybe I only need to work with one person who can do it all and show up on time. That’s what drew me in.

Q: And that’s when you gave him the keys to the studio?

Moon: Yep. I hadn’t said two words to him before that. He stayed behind when the rest of his bandmates went on break. He was jumping from musical instrument to instrument, and I just walked up, handed over the keys, and said, “Wanna write some songs? I’ll build a package around you and try to make you famous.” He just kind of shrugged. Prince was never a man of many words.

Q: He was what, sixteen at the time?

Moon: Yeah. And unless you’d seen him with those instruments, you wouldn’t have noticed him. He didn’t stand out in the room — Morris Day and Andre Cymone were bigger personalities. Prince didn’t even make it under the radar. He was shy, withdrawn, barely spoke. No ego to speak of. Hard to imagine now, right?

STUDIO ALCHEMY: THE YEAR THAT CREATED PRINCE

Long before the platinum albums and sold-out tours, Prince was a 5-foot-1 teenager from North Minneapolis with raw talent and no track record. Chris Moon saw something extraordinary—and together, they dove into a fearless, year-long experiment that would transform music history. In the studio, they didn’t just craft songs—they created an identity, building the foundation for one of the most iconic brands in pop culture. From the artist’s name and lyrical style to the concept of implied sexuality and the color purple, this was more than music—it was pure alchemy.

Q: So what happened in that studio for a whole year?

Moon: He walked in one guy and walked out another. I’m not saying I made him, but there was definitely a caterpillar-to-butterfly thing going on. He could barely sing above a whisper at first—it didn’t even move the needles. I laid next to him in the dark, humming melodies until he found his voice. We sat on stools, face to face, falsetto to falsetto, writing songs no one else ever heard. Just him and me, in the dark, building a world from scratch.

Q: You’ve said the studio was a playground. What kind of experiments were you running?

Moon: One day, I walked in holding a vacuum cleaner. Prince was baffled. I told him, ‘This is for you.’ He thought I wanted him to clean. Nope. I pulled off the hose, started swinging it around my head to create this swirling sound—like a Leslie speaker from a Hammond organ. We were going to do vocals that sounded like that. That’s what it was like—completely off-the-wall, no rules, just curiosity.

Q: So it was really about removing judgment?

Moon: Exactly. I told him from day one—we’re going to do things nobody else does. And we don’t judge anything. If it’s dumb or crazy, we try it anyway. I even had him record and mix blindfolded—normally you’d watch for distortion, but I wanted him to trust his ears, not the gear.

Q: What was your creative relationship like?

Moon: We were two very different minds. His talent was musical genius. Mine was concepts, soundscapes, branding. I couldn’t do what he did—but I could create a space where he could do it without fear. No audience, no critics, just full freedom. We were building something that had never been done.

Q: You also helped build his brand, right?

Moon: Absolutely. The name “Prince” wasn’t even his idea. He didn’t want to use it because girls in school would call him Princess.— he wanted to go by “Mr. Nelson.” And I just couldn’t get behind it. We had a three-month knockdown, drag-out over that one. I told him, “Look, I’m putting in the time. I’m covering the costs. And when this is done, I can’t walk out and say, ‘You’ve got to hear Mr. Nelson.’ I just can’t do it.”

Eventually I gave him the ultimatum: either we go with Prince or we fold it up. He asked if I was serious. I said I was. He finally said, ‘Fine. We’ll go with Prince.’

Q: And then came the idea for a color — how did that happen?

Moon: I was working at an ad agency, doing campaigns for big names like Pillsbury and General Mills. One day I saw 15 people in a

room debating which shade of yellow to use on a cereal box. They were spending hundreds of dollars on that one decision. And it hit me — color matters.

So I went back to the studio and said, ‘We need a color. I’ve never seen a recording artist who had one. Let’s create one so that when people see it, they think of you.’ I said, ‘We’ve got two real options: royal blue or purple.’ Royal blue felt ordinary. Purple was different. Unusual. He agreed — purple it was. And years later, cities around the world lit up purple in his honor. No one had ever done that for an artist before.

Q: How did you decide on the themes behind his first songs?

Moon: Look, we were trying to turn a 5’1” guy with no track record into a pop star. We needed an edge. I’d seen how suggestive sexuality was used in advertising — it’s a strong current for young people. I didn’t want it to be vulgar, but it had to be bold enough to get the point across.

So I wrote lyrics that were double entendres — implied sexuality. That’s how ‘Soft and Wet’ was born. It had enough cover that if someone asked… Well, two years later my proper British mother heard it on the radio. She came up to me and said, ‘I love your song, but I just have one question…’ And I knew what was coming. She asked, ‘What is Soft and Wet?’ I looked her straight in the eye and said, ‘Mother, it’s about a kiss.’

Q: And all this tied back into the artist package you created?

Moon: Exactly. Everything had to connect — the name, the lyrics, the image, the sound. I wrote three of the four songs on the demo tape. That tape got him the largest contract Warner Bros had ever offered a new artist. It was all part of a bigger picture — we weren’t just making music, we were crafting an identity.

FORGING THE MINNEAPOLIS SOUND: CHRIS MOON ON CREATING A NEW GENRE

In a small studio in Minneapolis, long before the world knew his name, Prince and producer Chris Moon were crafting more than just music. They were unknowingly giving birth to a new genre. In this segment, Moon reflects on how their creative experiments sparked what would become known as the Minneapolis sound — a fusion of funk, synth, and fearless innovation.

Q: You’ve said what happened in the studio with Prince led to the creation of a whole new genre. Can you talk about that?

Moon: Yeah — what happened in that studio wasn’t just about making songs. It was the creation of something entirely new. Prince and I — just the two of us — we developed a sound that ended up changing the music industry. What later became known as the *Minneapolis sound* really started right there. You’ve got to remember, Minneapolis was

known for Bob Dylan. That folk tradition. So going from Dylan to Prince? That’s a massive leap. A total transition. And we didn’t just ride a wave — we built it.

Q: What made the Minneapolis sound different? What were you doing that no one else was?

Moon: We were experimenting in ways no one else was. We were using Oberheim synthesizers, which at the time hadn’t really shown up much in pop or funk music. We mixed that with this very funky, syncopated beat — tight, unpredictable, and different from what you’d hear on the radio.

That blend — gritty funk and futuristic synths — just wasn’t being done yet. And it wasn’t polished. We were experimenting, pushing boundaries. Some of it worked. Some of it didn’t. But it all moved us forward.

Q: So the sound evolved naturally in that space?

Moon: It really did. I mean, we were just writing. We’d tracked three or four songs — had the bass, guitar, keyboards, drums laid down — and this was early. I made mistakes. I still do — ask my wife. But that’s part of the process.

There were no rules. That studio became a sandbox, a lab. And Prince was the perfect collaborator because he didn’t just accept that — he thrived in it. The sound we made — that was the Minneapolis sound. It didn’t exist before us.

Q: After all that success, did you think, ‘Let me do it again?’

Moon: Someone told me I just got lucky. That lit a fire. I opened my studio for 24-hour walk-in auditions. Grandmas, babies, it didn’t matter who. Then this big guy walks in — Alexander O’Neal. I worked with him for a year. Handed him off to Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, Janet Jackson’s producers. He went double platinum. So no, it wasn’t luck.

A NOD FROM PRINCE: CHRIS MOON ON ‘UNDER THE CHERRY MOON’

Long after their early studio experiments, Chris Moon received an unexpected call from Prince that hinted at a subtle, personal tribute. What followed was a surprising revelation involving a movie, a pen name, and a romantic rivalry — all woven into Prince’s iconic post-Purple Rain work.

Q: Did you ever hear from Prince again after he made it big?

Moon: Yeah, I did. A few years after *Purple Rain*, he calls me out of the blue. He says, ‘Hey, just wanted to let you know — I made a movie about you.’ I said, ‘You must’ve been bored.’ But he was serious. The movie was *Under the Cherry Moon*. He plays a character named Christopher — that’s me. The opening credits

CONTINUED ON PAGE 05



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even say: “This movie’s about Christopher. Christopher cares about two things — girls and money.”

He left out music, of course. But that was Prince — playful, mysterious. He was always good at leaving things open to interpretation.

Q: And the name Christopher Tracy — where did that come from?

Moon: That’s where it gets funny. Back when I was producing Prince, my girlfriend at the time was named Tracy. And Prince didn’t love that — he was always kind of annoyed when I’d go out with her. He’d say, ‘Don’t go out with Tracy.’ So there we were, Christopher and Tracy, sitting in a tree. Then later, when he wrote ‘Manic Monday’ for The Bangles, he used a pen name: Christopher

I always thought that was his little nod to me — his thank you, maybe. He never paid for the studio time, and I never sent a bill. But in his own way, I think that was it. A movie, a song credit, and a subtle wink. Nobody really knows that story. But for me, it was kind of heartwarming.

Q: Did Prince ever ask for any favors after that?

Moon: Just one time, he calls and says, “I want you to do for my dad what you did for me.” So his dad shows up with an accordion. I had to tell him, “Look, you’re talented, but I don’t know any famous accordion players. I’m not your guy.”

CHRIS MOON ON REINVENTING HIMSELF IN TECH AND GLOBAL MARKETING

After his early success launching Prince’s career, Chris Moon didn’t settle down — he reinvented himself entirely. In this segment, Moon shares how he unexpectedly broke into the tech world and built a global marketing software empire, serving clients like IBM, Apple, Intel, and the Olympics — all without formal training in programming.

Q: What did you do after working with Prince?

Moon: I thought I did a good job — I got the job done, accomplished what I wanted to. But I wanted to see if there was anything else in me, any other talent worth exploring. So I switched gears and started a computer marketing and programming company.

I ended up doing marketing for IBM, Intel, Apple, the Olympics, the Super Bowl, Wells Fargo — the world’s biggest companies. And I wasn’t just consulting. I was writing the software myself — building programs they would use to market themselves globally.

Q: How did you land clients like IBM and Apple?

Moon: I sold IBM on letting me build their software marketing tool when they launched a new operating system. I wrote the entire program myself, put my own phone number on it for tech support, and they sent it out — millions of copies — all over the world.

The trick was, I was the only guy in the world who figured out how to make a multi-lingual program — ten languages — fit on a single floppy disk. Nobody else could do it. I had never taken a computer class in my life. Still haven’t. But somehow I figured it out.

Q: And Apple hired you too?

Moon: Yeah, Apple came to me and said, ‘We don’t know how you’re doing it, but it’s amazing — and we’ll hire you.’ So I went from being broke in the music world to doing high-level marketing software for Fortune 500 companies. And honestly, that was part of the appeal — working with people who could actually pay me.

I did that for years, worked with most of the largest companies in the world. Eventually, I thought, okay — done that. What’s next?

CHRIS MOON: FROM PBS TO LIONS IN AFRICA TO JUNGLE MISSIONS AND THE SEARCH FOR AMERICA’S LOST HEROES

After blazing trails in both music and marketing, Chris Moon turned to filmmaking. In true Moon fashion, he pursued it without credentials, armed only with a bold idea — and

a shark cage. This is the story behind his PBS documentary, *Father of the Lions*.

Q: So how did you get into filmmaking after working in tech and music?

Moon: Well, I remembered I still had something on my bucket list: make a film. So I walked into PBS and said, ‘I want to make a film for you.’ They said, ‘Have you ever made a film before?’ I said, ‘No.’ They said, ‘We’re not going to hire you to make a film if you’ve never made one.’ I said, ‘Yes, you will.’

Q: What made you think they’d go for it?

Moon: I told them I had an idea unlike anything they’d ever heard before. I said, ‘I’m going to Africa, with a shark cage. I’m going to put that cage in the middle of the jungle, hang meat on it, and film wild lions up close from inside.’ PBS said, ‘That’s the dumbest thing we’ve ever heard.’ I said, ‘Told you you’d like it.’ They did — and they greenlit it.

Q: You actually went to Africa with a shark cage?

Moon: Yep. The film’s called *Father of the Lions*. I flew to Kenya with the shark cage in tow, not even knowing how to work the camera. I stayed with George Adamson — the man made famous by the *Born Free* films. He looked at me and said, ‘Why the shark cage?’ I told him what I planned to do. He said, ‘That’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard.’ I said, ‘That’s what PBS said too.’

Q: And the lions?

Moon: George had a camel leg hanging on a tree. He handed it to me and said, ‘Come with me.’ We drove 20 miles into the bush, pulled up to a riverbed. He pulled out a bullhorn and called out, and from 500 yards away, six wild lions came running. I was standing there in sandals, shorts — no gun, no protection. I turned to him and asked, ‘Is this safe?’ He says, ‘Only if you don’t get scared. If you get scared, they’ll smell your fear. You’ll end up dead — or in the hospital, like the last film crew.’

Q: What happened next?

Moon: I hand-fed the lions. Got it all on film. That was part of the documentary. It aired on PBS and has played for decades. After that... I found my wife. I’d already found the wildest cats I could. She came next. Good training, Africa. She does have claws too.

Q: What inspired your work in Papua New Guinea?

Moon: Well, my father and I decided one week—because it was kind of a slow week—to start a nonprofit organization. The idea? We’d go to the middle of the jungles of Papua New Guinea and live among tribes of headhunters. Why? To find lost American MIAs from World War II—pilots who had crashed in the jungle. Most people don’t realize it, but Papua New Guinea was the front line, the beachhead for America fighting Japan. It was as close as we could get.

Q: That sounds incredibly dangerous. What were the conditions like?

Moon: Extremely inhospitable. Horrible weather; massive mountain ranges, and about a thousand different dialects spoken. Planes were crashing constantly during the war, and so many pilots were never found. Wherever we went, they had never seen white people before. We would go out into the jungle with these headhunters—they’d guide us to the crash sites.

Q: What did you do when you found these crash sites?

Moon: We’d get GPS coordinates and identify the planes. Then we’d transmit those to the U.S. military. They had a forensic unit that would go in and recover the bodies. We did that for years. We never charged the families anything. It was our way of honoring those who never made it home.

Q: What drove you to take this on?

Moon: I was never in the military myself. I was around during the Vietnam era but never went to war. And even though I’m a British citizen, I’ve lived in America a long time. So I always felt like I owed a little something back. That was my way of giving back—helping bring these guys home. We found hundreds and hundreds of lost Americans.

Q: Is the work still going on?

Moon: The website is still up—MIAhunters.com. And another site, Wildlifeforpeace.com, is still active too. That one ties back to the lion work in Africa. Tony Fitzjohn, who took over for George Adamson, passed away recently, but his family is continuing the conservation work.

The ‘Voice of America’ Project – A National Anthem of Equality

Q: Is there one project that really broke your heart but taught you something?

Moon: Yeah — One of my favorite failures: I created a musical project called Colors after 9/11, — 50 states, 50 artists, every genre, all performing one song with different arrangements. Sent it to all the major outlets with a coordinated national release. I thought, this is it.

It started when I wrote this song called “Colors.” It was about unity, equality — how we’re all the same no matter our color. I had this wild idea to bring together a band from every state — not famous people, just regular, real artists. I wanted all genres: jazz, reggae, country, rap, blues, Spanish — you name it. I spent a year pulling it together. I wrote the lyrics and sent them out. Each band created their own music to it.

Every day, Dona and I would go to the mailbox and find a new version waiting. It was like Christmas. Each one sounded totally different, totally fresh. It was so cool. We put it all together into a red, white, and blue CD collection. The idea was, on the one-year anniversary of 9/11, every artist would launch a coordinated press campaign in their local markets. I pre-wrote the press releases, got everyone lined up — even had national press ready: Oprah, Time, Newsweek, Rolling Stone. It was brilliant. Never been done before.

Then — the week of the launch — the anthrax scare hit. Same exact week. Suddenly no one would open unsolicited mail. I got calls from Time and Rolling Stone saying they were throwing everything away. A year of work — all gone, just like that. But I’ll tell you what — I still believe in what that project stood for. And it was a hell of a ride. That failure was a bigger education than any success I’ve ever had.

Q: Your family life must’ve been pretty unique with all these adventures. How did your son react growing up around that?

Dona Moon: Oh, we’ve got a great story from when our son Sterling was in first grade. He went to school telling his teacher that we were off living with headhunters and that his dad had discovered Prince and was finding crashed airplane sites. So we go into our first parent-teacher conference and the teacher says, “Your son has the most vivid imagination I’ve ever seen.” And I just looked at her and said, “Well, has he ever told you his dad vacuums?” She said no, and I said, “That would be the lie. Everything else? Totally true.”

We’ve learned not to share too much because it just sounds so unbelievable. But that’s just been our life.

WHAT CHRIS MOON IS WORKING ON NOW

Q: What are you working on right now that excites you the most?

Moon: Right now, I’m neck-deep in some really exciting projects that bring together everything I love — science, music, technology, even a little bit of magic. I’m building advanced AI tools — not the off-the-shelf kind, but original software that composes, arranges, and generates new ideas across disciplines. It’s where tech meets creativity.

But what I’m really passionate about these days is frequency healing. I’m using sound therapies to potentially regenerate tissue, break down amyloids in the brain — treatments that could help with Alzheimer’s. I’ve also developed a device that restructures fluids — like medicine or supplements — at the molecular level so they’re more bioavailable. That means you take less, and it works better. Nobody’s commercialized it yet, but they will. In ten years, frequency healing won’t be fringe — it’ll be frontline.

Q: And you’re still writing music?

Moon: Constantly. I’ve written thousands of

songs over the years — I probably crank out a few albums worth of material every month. Some tracks sit in my vault, some get picked up. I just had a song recorded by Snoop Dogg. He called me a week after I sent it and sent me his vocal track 14 days later. Still trying to do a little something-something after 20 million in music sales, you know?

And recently, I was asked to send a song for someone named “Marshall Mathers.” I said, “Yeah, I can find something for her.” They go, “Do you know who that is?” I didn’t. Turns out, it was Eminem. [laughs]

Q: With such a massive catalog, how are you using it now?

Moon: Last week, I launched an internet radio station — airradiohits.com — featuring all original music across every genre. It’s a playground for my catalog, and I’m also talking with people about film licensing. Plus, we’ve still got the original piano lyric sheets — the songs Prince would pick from back in the day.

Honestly, I’ve never stopped creating. It’s just evolved. Now I get to play with sound, light, molecules, and still — always — music.

CHRIS MOON – REINVENTION, RESILIENCE, AND WHAT HE’S WORKING ON NOW

Q: That kind of reinvention seems rare. What drives it?

Moon: Curiosity. I’ve never thought of myself as particularly smart. I barely got through high school. No college degree to speak of. I just believe in myself wildly and jump into things I have no business doing. That’s the secret. And I’m not afraid to fail.

Q: That’s something you talk about often — failure.

Moon: Absolutely. You learn nothing from success. When something works, you just keep doing it the same way and never grow. But failure? That teaches you everything.

Q: So how do you keep going after setbacks like that?

Moon: That’s the difference. Most people think failure is the end. I think it’s just another tool.

Q: What keeps you going today?

Moon: I stay up until 3 a.m. every night. Our motto is: ‘You can’t reach the Moon before noon.’ I run companies, help my son launch his own, still invent, still write, still build. People say I work too much. I say, I play too much.

Q: For anyone out there who’s dreaming of something wild, something out of reach, what would you say?

Moon: Don’t wait for permission. Don’t wait for the right credentials. Just start. Fail hard, and keep failing until something clicks. If you believe in yourself, even when it’s unreasonable, you’ll end up somewhere remarkable. I mean, look at me — I’m just a guy who thought a 16-year-old kid from Minneapolis with no voice could change the world. And he did.

QUALITY OF PLACE - CHRIS MOON ON DISCOVERING ALVA, FLORIDA

Q: You’ve lived in cities most of your life. How did you end up falling in love with Alva?

Moon: Yeah, that surprised even me. I mean, when we first moved here, I looked around and said, “There’s just a gas station out here.” I told my wife, “Give me two years. If I’m not happy, we’ll move.” That was over a decade ago. And we’re still here. Turns out, she was right. Again.

Q: What changed?

Moon: I’m a tech guy — I like my fiber optics, fast connections, overnight shipping. Back then, I was stuck with copper internet lines. Couldn’t ship anything easily. It felt like I’d moved to the moon — and not in the good way. But we’d done life my way for a long time. So I said, “Let’s do it your way.” And you know what? It was the better way.

Q: So what is it about Alva that got to you?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 06

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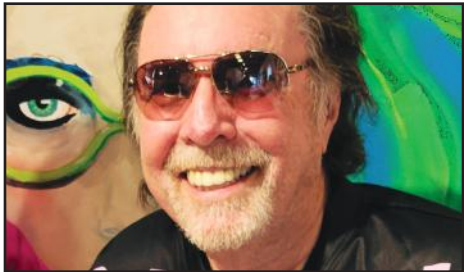
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Moon: There’s a tranquility that just takes over when you drive past cows, open fields, canopied roads. There’s elbow room here — literal space to breathe. It reminds me of living in Africa, actually. That same raw naturalness, that same quiet. It sparks creativity in a different way. You can’t understand the value of a natural life until you step away from the synthetic one.

Q: You once said you could go anywhere in the world from your backyard. What did



Moon: We live on the Caloosahatchee River. If you’ve got a boat, a canoe, even a paddleboard — you can go anywhere. That river connects to the Intracoastal. It’s open ocean to the Gulf, the Atlantic, the world. It’s a metaphor, but it’s also literal. That sense of freedom, that ability to launch from right here — that’s rare.

Q: That’s a powerful image.



Moon: Yeah. You don’t hear people talk about that. But this is one of the only places in the country where a river runs east to west. Most go north to south. Here, we’re tucked in the bottom of the country, and that waterway stretches out — one continuous ribbon. You can look out from our elevated backyard and think: I could be in Cuba, France, or the Keys if I wanted. And that’s not just poetic. It’s real. Try that in California.

Q: Sounds like you’ve found more than



just a home here.

Moon: Alva’s the gateway to the world. Peaceful, creative, connected in ways people don’t expect. Took me 70 years to say something original — but I think that’s it.

Visit this article online for a list of recorded artists. 🐾



Preserving What’s Left: Real Options for Landowners

James Kennedy | East Lee County News



In the May 2025 edition, I wrote about the importance of growing what matters here in East Lee County—our land, our local food, and the legacy that makes this place different from anywhere else in Florida. Since then, the conversations haven’t stopped.

From Alva to Olga to Buckingham, folks are asking the same question: Is there anything we can do besides sell to developers?

There’s a rising sense that if we want to keep what’s left of rural Lee County—if we want our kids and grandkids to grow up with clean rivers, cattle pastures, and the space to run and ride—we’ve got to act. And not just resist—we need to get creative.

This isn’t about stopping growth. It’s about protecting what makes us us. And thankfully, there are real, working alternatives for landowners who want to do right by their property and their community.

1. WATER FARMING: HELP THE RIVER, KEEP YOUR LAND

The Caloosahatchee has taken a beating, but landowners can be part of the solution. The South Florida Water Management District now pays people to hold water on their land through the Dispersed Water Management Program. It reduces runoff, protects water quality, and creates a new income stream—all without concrete or condos.

It’s the kind of win-win that reminds us: solutions don’t always come from the top down. Sometimes they come from your own back forty.

What to do:
Visit: <https://www.sfwmd.gov/our-work/water-storage-strategies>

2. WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY STEWARDSHIP: MAKE ROOM FOR TORTOISES, GET PAID

Florida’s gopher tortoise program rewards landowners who agree to serve as recipient sites for this keystone species.

These properties stay wild—scrub, pasture, or pine flatwoods—and in return, you get paid for preserving habitat that supports biodiversity.

It’s not just about saving tortoises. It’s about keeping your land open and ecologically valuable while holding onto what’s yours.

Visit: <https://myfwc.com/license/wildlife/gopher-tortoise-permits/recipient-sites/>

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission: myfwc.com or contact East Lee Wildlife Stewardship Group at: eastleewildlife.com/contact

3. RETHINK AGRICULTURE: MORE THAN CITRUS AND COWS

We need to expand our thinking about what agriculture looks like. Across Florida, people are turning small plots into profitable ventures—gourmet mushrooms, medicinal herbs, bamboo, heritage poultry. These aren’t boutique fads. They’re real businesses, and they keep land in family hands.

Landowners can lease parcels to beginning farmers, start small ag enterprises, or tap into university programs that offer support every step of the way.

Start with:
UF/IFAS Lee County: <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/lee/>
USDA NRCS: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>
USDAFSA: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/>

4. AGRITOURISM & EQUESTRIAN LIFE: INVITE FOLKS IN, KEEP YOUR LAND OUT OF A BINDER

We’ve got history here. Cattle drives, cracker houses, backroad watermelon stands. What if we celebrated that?

Florida law supports agritourism, and many landowners are turning their acreage into destinations: farm-to-table dinners, U-pick fields, ranch tours, even equestrian boarding and clinics.

Not only do these ventures generate revenue, they reinforce rural identity—and help folks fall in love with what we’re fighting to keep.

Get started:
• **Florida Agritourism:** <https://www.followfreshfromflorida.com/>
• **Lee County VCB:** www.leevcb.com

5. TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (TDR): SELL DENSITY, KEEP DIRT

One of the most effective and underutilized tools for land conservation and smart growth is the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. It allows landowners to sell the right to build on their property—often rural or environmentally sensitive land—to developers who want to increase density in areas more suited for growth. The result? The landowner gets compensated, the buyer gets to build more elsewhere, and the original land remains permanently protected. Lee County has an established TDR program in place, and local advocates are working to expand its use as a win-win solution for both conservation and development.

Lee County has a program in place, and advocates are looking to expand it.

To learn more, visit:
<https://www.lee.gov/dcd/planning/tdr>

6. EASEMENTS, TRUSTS & COMMUNITY PRESERVATION

Land doesn’t have to be lost to be protected. You can preserve it yourself through conservation easements, land trusts, or programs like Florida Forever and Conservation 20/20. These tools let you pass on your land’s character—and sometimes its value—without surrendering it to the bulldozers.

You can also explore adopt-an-acre programs or community land trusts that keep land local, sacred, and intact.

Resources:

- **Conservation 20/20:**

- <https://www.lee.gov/parks/conservation2020>
- **Florida Forever:** <https://floridadep.gov/lands/environmental-services/content/florida-forever>
- **Alachua Conservation Trust (as a model):** <https://www.alachuaconservationtrust.org/>

WHAT WE CAN DO NOW—NOT SOMEDAY

We don’t have to wait for Washington or Tallahassee. The tools are in reach—but they mean nothing if we don’t pick them up.

Here are four things we can do this year:

- **Host a Rural Stewardship Summit** – Bring together landowners, agencies, nonprofits, and experts to put real solutions on the table.
- **Launch a Community Land Stewardship Task Force** – Connect neighbors to resources that fit their land and goals.
- **Start a Farm Incubator or Agritourism Pilot** – Let one success story inspire a dozen more.
- **Advocate for smarter zoning and local incentives** – Expand Conservation 20/20, explore TDRs, and reward stewardship.

JOIN US: BUILD A FUTURE THAT’S WORTH DRIVING THROUGH

Imagine this: your grandkids driving down North River Road, waving at cows and horses, not cranes and concrete. A river that runs clearer, not browner. A region where rural still means something.

We don’t have to imagine it—we just have to work for it. And we can.

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- **Call:** 239-470-5611

Let’s grow what matters. Let’s keep it growing into the future. 🐾

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Readying Your Pets For Hurricane Season In Florida

Dr. Veja Tillman, DVM | Owner of Just 4 Pets Veterinary Wellness Center

Hurricane season in Florida runs from June 1 to November 30, and it's vital to include your pets in your emergency preparedness plan. Storms can escalate quickly, leaving little time to act. This guide will help ensure your pets are safe before, during, and after a disaster.

PET IDENTIFICATION AND RECORDS

In chaotic conditions, pets can easily get lost. Ensure your pets have:

- **ID tags** with your current Florida contact info
- **Photos** of your pets (ideally with you)
- **Vaccination records** and 3–6 months of **medical history** (digital or paper)
- A **description** of each pet (breed, color, size)

Tip: Microchip your pets and make sure the registration is up to date. Most Florida shelters and vets have universal readers to help reunite you with your pet.

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

Prepare and store this contact list in

both your phone and your pet's kit:

- Your mobile number
- An out-of-state emergency contact
- Veterinarian and 24-hour emergency clinic
- Pet's pharmacy or refill provider

EMERGENCY PET SUPPLY KIT

Pack a **7–14 day supply** of essentials in a waterproof tote:

- Food, water, and bowls
- Medications and instructions
- Leashes, carriers/crates, and waste bags
- Litter and box (for cats)
- Vaccination records, ID copies
- Toys, a blanket, and comfort items

Store the kit in a cool, easy-to-access spot and let all household members know where it is.

PET FIRST AID KIT

Prepare for injuries from debris, heat, or pests. Include:

- Bandages, antiseptic wipes, gauze
- Flea/tick treatment, pet-safe disin-

- fectant
- Any regular medications
- Tweezers, scissors, and an emergency muzzle

Check with your vet to tailor the kit for your pet's specific needs.

EVACUATION PLAN

Never leave pets behind. If it's unsafe for you, it's unsafe for them. Most public shelters don't allow pets, so plan ahead:

- Visit **FloridaPetFriendly.org** for hotels that accept pets
- Contact your county's emergency management office for **pet-friendly shelters**
- Arrange with friends, family, or boarding facilities outside the evacuation zone

Know your **evacuation zone** and keep a list of safe places along your route.

KEEP IT CURRENT

Review and update your emergency plan and kit **twice a year:**

- Check food and medication expira-

- tion dates
- Update contact and ID info
- Make adjustments based on your pet's changing needs

Use **June 1 and November 30** as reminders to refresh your preparations.

JUNE AND JULY ARE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS & MICROCHIP YOUR PET MONTH!

Now's the perfect time to schedule a microchip appointment and confirm your registration info. It's one of the best ways to help reunite with your pet after a disaster.

ABOUT DR. VEJA TILLMAN, DVM

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

Hung Up on Snags

The Cocoloba Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

When The Cocoloba Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society began managing River Oaks Preserve in Estero, the tasks were mostly cleaning and cutting the overgrown forest. There were years of unchecked invasives, some of which strangled out the native trees. In addition to outcompeting natives, the invasive plants reproduce faster than the cottontail bunnies. So, as we felled and mulched invasive trees and uprooted invasive shrubs, we were left with many standing wood corpses.

Generally speaking, some plants died despite our best efforts. Whether it was from hurricane damage or invasive pests or root disruption from clearing operations, or from old age or simply injuries, both seen and unseen, they simply did not survive. We were left with dead trees. So, what do you do?

As we restored the natural area and cleaned up after hurricanes in Estero, we tried to keep the dead native trees. You may ask "Why the heck would you do that?" We keep them because they are highly valuable to wildlife. Yes, that's right! While dead trees in a suburban setting are generally considered unsightly, in a conservation setting they are a welcome addition!

A dead native tree, or snag, will generally stand upright for many years. This is certainly true with our south Florida slash pines and cabbage palms. These monument specimens will be productive for a very long time, even in death. The pines will catch airborne airplanes like Spanish moss on their now-bare branches. Seeds from the giant and cardinal airplanes will catch in the bark. As these plants grow harmlessly on their hosts, they in turn, host many of their own beneficial insects and microbes.

Mother Nature's clean-up crew will also move in. Decomposer insects will start to work

on the dead wood, boring under the bark and tunneling through the wood. They put out the welcome mat for fungi and bacteria to help break down the tree. Woodpeckers and other birds will hunt these woodboring insects and feast on them. It's a smorgasbord!

The now bare branches are perfect for our biggest birds of prey to rest or scout out rabbits, snakes, rats or any other delicacy needed for the birds' survival. Osprey will land there with their freshest sushi leaving a pile of fish bones on the ground below as the only evidence.

Two years ago, at River Oaks Preserve, the volunteers were building native plant nursery space toward the entrance to the property. There was a headless cabbage palm within about ten feet of the nursery, towering above a newly planted area. The native palm was likely strangled by an invasive fig that was still growing at the base. Who knows for sure, but it was surely headless and very dead. There was no chance it could fall or damage anyone or anything, so we kept it.

Soon enough, red-bellied woodpeckers started pecking away to create a nesting cavity. Over the following weeks, we watched the male and female woodpeckers feverishly hunting and bringing essential morsels to the babies. The Cocoloba Chapter volunteers watched, enthralled, hoping for a glimpse of a baby. Before long, the house was empty. Nesting season ended.

Last year, as the "front door" was enlarged over time, there was a flurry of activity. Woodpeckers, screech owls and starlings were spotted during "Open House" times.

These days, the Preserve volunteers watched as the red-bellied woodpecker parents pecked a new nest in this old, dead tree.

Then, volunteer Brian Poelker captured the perfect Kodak moment as he toiled in the propagation area beside this most amazing snag that most people would have cut down. A screech owl face peering out of the old woodpecker abode with the red-bellied woodpecker peeking out of the modern 2025 "crib."

Mother Nature's perfection!

When you visit River Oaks Preserve and see volunteers staring at dead trees, now you'll know why.

So, although some might find dead trees "unsightly," their beauty is more than skin deep. They are a wonderfully important part of a functional ecosystem in Florida as they provide for so many species until they are completely recycled into the earth.



Feel free to stop by River Oaks Preserve, 9541 Broadway Ave E, Estero, FL 33928 to see our fabulous dead trees! We have living ones, too. Please note that mapping software works best if you use "River Oaks Preserve" instead of the address. Also, the Preserve is open to humans on Sundays and Tuesdays from 9 to 1. Other times are for bobcats, coyotes, owls, woodpeckers, hawks, spiders, snakes, rabbits, gopher tortoises and more to enjoy the land. 🐾



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Frustrated and 50: The Dating Dilemma in Southwest Florida

Katrina Salokar | East Lee County News

If you're over 50 (even over 40), single, and living in Southwest Florida, you're not alone—but you may very well feel that way.

Conversations across local venues, networking events, and dinner tables echo the same growing frustration: dating in midlife feels like a rigged game. The rules have changed, the playing field is uneven, and many of us are wondering if anyone is truly playing to win—or if they even showed up.

THE MODERN MIDLIFE DISCONNECT

For men over 50, the outlook can be cautiously hopeful at best. Many want intimacy and companionship, but after decades of working, raising families, or navigating divorces, they feel invisible or irrelevant in today's dating scene. The fear of rejection or being taken advantage of—emotionally or financially—can keep some from even trying again.

On the flip side, women over 50 are more empowered than ever. They've built lives of independence and self-worth. But they're tired—tired of being pursued for the wrong reasons, tired of men their age chasing younger women, and tired of dating apps that feel more like scams than solutions.

And somewhere in the middle, everyone's asking the same question: "Where do I meet someone who just gets me?"

MORE BAGGAGE, LESS PATIENCE

Let's face it—by the time you hit 50, everyone has some baggage. But what used to be quirks or past experience now feels like

hurdles: guarded emotions, deeply ingrained routines, children still at home, aging parents, complicated finances, or just plain fear of doing it all wrong again.

Men say women are too picky. Women say men are mentally and emotionally unavailable. Both feel like the other has unrealistic expectations. And while the desire for connection remains strong, many have built such full, independent lives that fitting another person into the picture feels nearly impossible.

FAITH, WORLDVIEWS, AND COMPATIBILITY

Another wedge? Differences in belief systems. Secular singles often prioritize autonomy, equality, and companionship without traditional gender roles. Faith-based individuals, meanwhile, may look for spiritual alignment and long-term commitment in their next chapter.

These core differences shape how people view love, gender roles, and intimacy—and in an already limited dating pool, finding someone on the same wavelength spiritually, emotionally, and practically can feel like hunting for seashells in a storm.

DATING APPS & EXHAUSTION

Then there's the digital world—where some report luck on platforms like SilverSingles or OurTime, while others feel burned out by swiping, scammers, and ghosting. Even those with solid tech skills often find themselves emotionally drained by the process.

For many, online dating feels more like a chore than an adventure. Add to that the con-

stant guessing game—"Are they who they say they are?" "What do they actually want?"—and it's no wonder singles over 40 in SWFL are checking out before they even check in.

THE TRUTH? IT'S NOT TOO LATE

And yet... there's something beautiful about starting over at this stage. You know yourself. You know what matters. And if you can push past the discouragement, connection is still possible.

Love over 50 doesn't look like it did at 25—and thank goodness. It's wiser, more intentional, and often more deeply rooted in friendship, respect, and laughter over wine or weekend road trips. It's about showing up whole, not waiting to be completed.

But we need better spaces to find each other.

Introducing a New Way to Connect: SWFL Singles Night for Business Professionals

If you're over 40 and tired of surface-level dating, come join others who feel the same.

- Every third Thursday of the month
- 6PM to 8PM
- Escondido, 1617 Hendry St #102, Downtown Fort Myers

Whether you're a small business owner, professional, or simply looking to connect with others who are grounded, mature, and open-hearted—this night is for you. No apps. No pressure. Just real people having real conversations.

SWFL Singles Night is hosted by the Southwest Florida Business Alliance. This and other

exciting networking events can be found online at www.swflba.com.

You've lived enough life to know what matters. Maybe it's time to find someone who sees the world the same way.

WHERE ELSE TO MEET PEOPLE LIKE YOU

If you're not quite ready for a singles event or want to expand your chances of meeting someone organically, there are other great ways to connect:

- **JOIN HOBBY-BASED GROUPS** like local wine tastings, pickleball clubs, book circles, or cooking classes. Many are specifically geared toward the 50+ crowd.
- **VOLUNTEER** with local nonprofits or causes you care about—it's a great way to meet others who share your values.
- **ATTEND MATURE ADULT EVENTS** like wine walks, festivals, or speed dating mixers hosted by community or faith organizations.
- **RECONNECT** with former classmates, neighbors, or old friends—you might be surprised who else is newly single.
- **TRY DATING SITES STRATEGICALLY**, especially ones geared toward your age group like OurTime, SilverSingles, or Match. Just be honest, use real photos, and don't be afraid to reach out.
- **USE SOCIAL MEDIA THOUGHTFULLY**—local Facebook groups or apps can help expand your social network.
- **MIX UP YOUR DAILY ROUTINE**—visit new venues, parks, or community events where casual conversations can naturally spark. 🐾

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On the Ground at Sebring: Racing, Innovation, and Human Spirit

Katrina Salokar | East Lee County News

On May 16, 2025, I visited Sebring International Raceway on the first day of an exciting weekend-long series hosted by SRO Motorsports Group, one of the premier organizers in global sports car racing. This day served largely as a prep and practice day for most teams—offering a rare opportunity to speak with instructors, drivers, and crew members before the adrenaline of race day fully took over.

From the classrooms of the Skip Barber Racing School to the pit crews of BMW's BimmerWorld team, I met with individuals who represent the past, present, and future of racing in America. Each conversation gave insight into what makes motorsports not just a competition, but a culture driven by passion, innovation, and resilience.

Q&A WITH SKIP BARBER RACING SCHOOL'S CARTER FARTUCH



While attending the SRO Motorsports event at Sebring International Raceway, I had the chance to speak with Carter Fartuch, Chief Instructor and Director of Instructors for the renowned Skip Barber Racing School. Here's what I learned about the school's legacy, its impact on professional racing, and the future of motorsports in America.

Q: Where is the Skip Barber Racing School based today?

A: Originally, the school was founded in Connecticut, but our newer operations are based out of Long Island, New York, and our main shop is now located at Virginia International Raceway (VIR). It's a 50,000-square-foot facility where we build and maintain our cars, but we still travel nationwide—from California to Sebring—hosting racing schools.

Q: How many racing schools do you host annually?

A: We're looking at around 30 to 40 different schools just this year.

Q: Are these schools tied to events like today's race at Sebring?

A: Some are, especially when we support professional race weekends like this one. But most of our schools are private track rentals held Monday through Friday. They're dedicated sessions where students can learn without distractions.

Q: Who do you train? Is it just aspiring professionals?

A: We work with everyone—from complete beginners who've never seen a racetrack to seasoned pros. Our one-day school is perfect for newcomers, but our bread and butter is the three-day racing school. We also offer a two-day advanced school for more experienced drivers. On top of that, we run the Skip Barber Race Series for drivers who want to advance to IndyCar or Formula 1. We've even trained about 50 of today's top NASCAR drivers.

Q: Would you say you're the premier racing school in the U.S.?

A: Absolutely. I went through Skip Barber myself before going pro. Around 80% of the current IndyCar field are Skip Barber grads. It's where drivers come to learn the craft.

Q: Who was Skip Barber, and what's his legacy?

A: Skip is still alive, though he's not as involved now. He raced professionally—including in Formula One—and introduced new driving techniques like trail braking. In 1975, he founded the school to teach these methods, and it's grown from there.

Q: Is urban development threatening the future of racetracks?

A: Definitely. We often see tracks shut down because new homeowners complain about noise—even though the track was there first. Many tracks survive by being located far from cities, but development is creeping in.

Q: Are there any places doing it right?

A: Circuit of the Americas (COTA) in Austin, Texas, is a great example. It's close to the city and the airport, creates jobs, and is well-supported by the community. They're even adding an amusement park there. It's a model of how racing can coexist with urban growth.

Q: How's the economy affecting motor-sports?

A: It's a mixed bag. Costs are rising across the board, which makes it harder for new drivers to break in. But fan interest is growing, especially thanks to the Netflix Formula 1 documentary. We've had so many people tell us it inspired them to attend races like this.

Q: What's happening at Sebring today?

A: We're participating in the SRO Motorsports Group's event. It's one of the top global sports car series. Today is mainly a prep day for most, but our Touring Car (TC) America group has two races today and one tomorrow. These are street cars—like Honda Civics or Toyota Corollas—transformed into race cars. They're relatable because fans can drive a version of the same car.

Q: Are the drivers in your cars students?

A: They were. Most of our current drivers started with our three-day school, then advanced. The Garcia brothers and James Climus are great examples—they progressed from beginners to full-time professional racers within our program.

Q: I also met a young man from England with the Aston Martin team. Can you tell me about that?

A: Manufacturers like Aston Martin send factory reps to support their cars at races. The gentleman you met is part of their engineering team. He came from Coventry to help teams with data analysis and performance tuning to make sure the cars are race-ready.

Skip Barber Racing School continues to be a cornerstone in American motorsports. Whether you're a curious beginner or a driver with big dreams, it's a launchpad to greatness—and a powerful example of how racing education can shape the sport's future.

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE TRACK: MEET THE GARCIA BROTHERS



As the Skip Barber Racing School proves, many of today's professional racers are home-grown on American asphalt—trained, tested, and launched by the school itself. Two such racers are brothers Alex and Michael Garcia, both of whom were racing at Sebring during my visit.

Q: Can you introduce yourselves?

A: Alex: I'm Alex Garcia, 24 years old.

Michael: And I'm Michael Garcia, 29.

Q: What are you racing today, and how's it going so far?

A: Alex: We're sharing the number 7 car for Full Pace Racing with Skip Barber. Sebring is our home track, so we're really excited to put in a strong performance here. We had some great practice runs yesterday, so we're feeling confident.

Michael: Yeah, the car's getting better each time we take it out. We've had some solid showings—Sonoma went really well. COTA was a bit tricky, but we've been dialing the car in and building our confidence each race.

Q: So you both live close to the track?

A: Michael: Yep, we're based in Orlando. About two hours from here.

Alex: We've been coming to Sebring for years, so it's kind of like our backyard.

Q: What series are you racing in today?

A: Michael: We're competing in Pirelli GT4 America.

Alex: It's an hour-long race—we split the time evenly. I'll start the race, drive for 30 minutes, then we do a driver change, and Michael finishes the last 30. Total teamwork.

These two young drivers are living proof of the Skip Barber pipeline—starting in the school's three-day and two-day advanced programs, then graduating to full-fledged professional competition. Now, on their home track, they're putting it all on the line in front of a crowd that includes friends, family, and fans of the sport.

BREAKING BARRIERS: JAMES CLIMUS ON RACING WITH ONE ARM



In a sport where precision, speed, and endurance matter most, James Climus is re-writing the narrative—proving that physical limitations don't define a racer's potential. I caught up with James at Sebring International Raceway, where he was preparing to compete in the Touring Car America racing series.

Q: What's your name and where are you from?

A: My name is James Climus. I'm from Middletown, Connecticut.

Q: What brings you to Sebring this weekend?

A: I'm racing in the Touring Car America series with my Toyota GR Corolla. It's my first year driving this vehicle in competition.

Q: I heard you've got an incredible back-story. Can you share your journey into racing?

A: I raced in the GR Cup last year as one of the few disabled drivers. Since I only have my right arm, Toyota worked with me to modify the car—specifically the sequential transmission—to a paddle shift setup that I could control. That support allowed me to jump into real racing for the first time, and I think I did pretty well for a rookie.

Q: Did you train with Skip Barber Racing School?

A: Yes, I started with them. Because of my disability, I used my own modified car—a GR86 with paddle shifters. I completed both the three-day beginner school and the two-day advanced program.

Q: What series are you competing in today, and what's its significance?

A: It's the TC America series—Touring Car America. It features multiple car brands like Toyota, Hyundai Elantra N, and Acura Integra. Each brand brings its own strengths to the track, and this is Toyota's first year in the series. We're still developing the cars and are a bit underpowered right now, but we're expecting performance upgrades during the summer break ahead of the Virginia race.

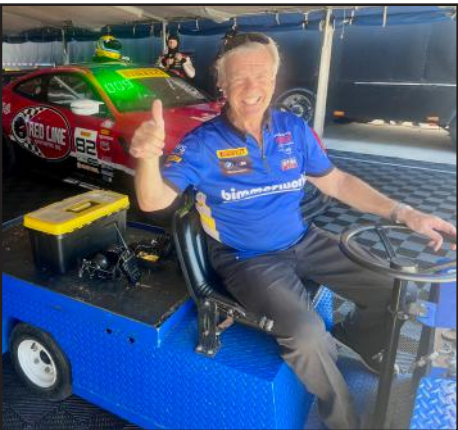
Q: What's unique about the car you're driving today?

A: It's a Toyota GR Corolla. Mechanically, it's nearly identical to the production model you'd find at a dealership. Same engine, same drivetrain, even the same Toyota Direct Automatic Transmission. The only major differences are upgraded brakes, suspension, and safety features for the track.

Q: What message do you hope your story sends to others?

A: That no matter your circumstances, if you love something and you're willing to adapt and work for it, there's a place for you—even in professional motorsports.

FUELING PERFORMANCE: A CONVERSATION WITH BIMMERWORLD'S DAVID WOLLMAN



As part of the Pirelli GT4 America series at Sebring International Raceway, I spoke with David Wollman, head of fueling operations for the BimmerWorld race team. With decades of experience in motorsports, David shared insights into BMW's presence in the sport, the economic impact of racing, and the evolving landscape of track competition in the U.S.

Q: Can you introduce yourself and your role?

A: I'm David Wollman, head of the fueling operations for the BimmerWorld race team.

Q: What is BimmerWorld, and what does the company do?

A: BimmerWorld was founded by James Clay and focuses on providing aftermarket performance enhancements for BMWs—everything from improved drivability on the street to full-on racecar transformation.

Q: What event are you racing in this weekend?

A: We're here as part of the SRO Motorsports America series, racing two BMW M4 GT4s in the Pirelli GT4 Challenge. This is the third event of the season following races at Sonoma and Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas.

Q: How would you compare GT3 and GT4 classes?

A: GT3 is the more advanced class—higher horsepower, more sophisticated suspension, and overall faster performance. GT4 is a step below but still highly competitive and exciting.

Q: How is your team structured?

A: BimmerWorld owns the vehicles. Each car has two drivers and races in different class pairings—some are amateur-amateur, others are pro-amateur. We field both types.

Q: How long have you been involved in racing?

A: I've been with BimmerWorld for 13 years, and I started track driving in 1996. I also compete in other race series myself.

Q: What's the economic impact of tracks like this on their communities?

A: It's significant. Racetracks bring in a lot of money—not just from teams, but also from support personnel and fans. People stay in hotels, eat at restaurants, and shop locally. Like airports, tracks are often built far from town centers, but as development expands, complaints about noise sometimes follow. Many tracks try to compromise with noise limits and racing curfews.

Q: Is motorsports fan interest growing or declining?

A: It's definitely growing. NASCAR has a huge following, especially in the southern U.S., and sports car racing is also gaining popularity. More people are attending schools to learn performance driving, and more organizations are renting tracks for weekend driving experiences. Even streetcars today are getting more powerful to meet rising interest in performance.

Q: Are there advocacy or industry associations for racing like this?

A: Not an overarching one that covers all motorsports. Each series like NASCAR or IndyCar likely has its own advocates. For amateur drivers, the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) is a significant organization, though not tied to professional series like this.

My day at Sebring offered more than fast cars and roaring engines—it was a window into a deeply rooted industry that continues to evolve. Florida, in particular, has a long and rich tradition in motorsports. From the iconic Daytona International Speedway to local tracks like Sebring, racing in Florida isn't just entertainment—it's an economic engine. According to industry data, motorsports contribute billions to state economies annually. Events generate tourism revenue, fuel job creation, and boost local small businesses from hotels and restaurants to fabrication shops and car service operations.

With a year-round climate and a passionate fanbase, Florida is uniquely positioned to expand its presence in the motorsports world. Whether through education, inclusive racing opportunities, or trackside innovation, the Sunshine State continues to lead the charge—on and off the course. 🐾







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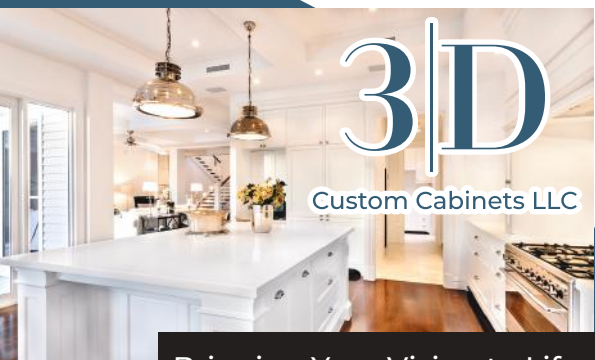
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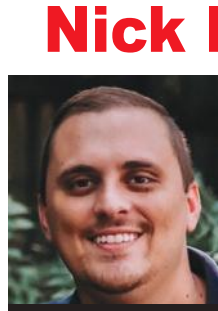
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2/2 PARKWOOD VILLA - NO AGE RESTRICTIONS



Popular Parkwood Villa, low monthly maintenance fees with a common pool and walking distance to stores etc., NO AGE RESTRICTIONS HERE. TWO BEDROOM TWO BATH, NEW TILE ROOF IN 2018. 18 X 12 screened lanai with seal coated floors overlooking the open park like setting leading to the HEATED COMMON POOL, covered carport parking, ceramic tile floors throughout, large breakfast bar in the kitchen, primary bedroom with sliding barn door leading to ensuite bathroom, walk in closet and newly remodeled walk in shower, guest bedroom doubles as dining area with a BUILT IN MURPHY BED that pulls down, full guest bath with newer vanity, newer insulated windows, screened front entryway leads to entry foyer, spacious living room with plenty of room for an office desk, front load full size washer and dryer under the kitchen counter, storm panels for openings are located on the lanai behind the small storage container that will convey, furnishings available for sale separately, excellent location within walking distance to all of the stores, banks, etc. on Homestead Rd yet minutes to I-75 and Ft Myers. Affordable carefree living at it's best with NO AGE RESTRICTIONS.

Offered At.....\$189,900

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

BRAND NEW HOME ON HALF ACRE IN NE LEHIGH



Brand New Home located in Northeast Lehigh on a HALF ACRE LOT at the end of a QUIET DEAD END STREET, MOVE IN READY 3 BEDROOM 2 BATH WITH A DEN with a closet that may be used as 4TH BEDROOM. C.O. HAS BEEN ISSUED, double door entry to the den for privacy, 32 X 32 POLISHED PORCELAIN TILE FLOORS THROUGHOUT

THE ENTIRE HOME with 5 inch baseboards, impact resistant windows, covered front porch leads to large great room, high ceilings throughout with tray ceilings in the living room and master bedroom, shaker cabinets with soft close doors and drawers, pendant lighting over breakfast bar, QUARTZ TOPS in kitchen and baths, stainless steel appliance package, pantry, large dining area off of the kitchen, spacious master bedroom with walk in closet, private bath with dual sinks and tiled walk in shower, indoor laundry room, covered porch in rear overlooking the HALF ACRE backyard with plenty of privacy, double garage with auto opener, extra long driveway with plenty of parking, excellent location just minutes to SR 80, I-75 and Ft Myers.

Offered At.....\$355,000

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

2 + DEN / 2+ BATH TOWNHOME IN GATEWAY



Popular Villages of Stoneybrook, NO AGE RESTRICTIONS HERE, PETS OK, 2+Den/2+ Bath 1400+sf Townhome in GATEWAY. Enjoy all that Gateway Living has to offer! Huge HEATED POOL w/Wading Pool for Kids, Soccer, Playgrounds, Basketball, Walking/Biking/Running Trails, Shops, Dining, Sports. The association put NEW TILE ROOFS ON IN 2024. Impeccable Condition: HVAC new in 2015* New 1st Floor LUXURY VINYL PLANK FLOORS 2019* New Sparkling Stainless Steel Appliances 2019* New Washer/Dryer 2019* New Disposal 2020 - Thousands of \$ in Beautiful updates/upgrades The Village of Stoneybrook is a Gated Community with Pool/Play Area/Pet Friendly. This condo has in-Home 2nd floor Washer/Dryer, private ensuite bath in primary bedroom with Great Flex Space: Den/Office/loft/ Extra Guest Area. Third half bath located on the first floor for guests, Enjoy Morning Coffee or Sunset Cocktails on the Western-Facing Screened Lanai with Private Landscaped Preserve View. Super low HOAs include water and sewer. Golf Memberships available @nearby "The Club at Gateway". LOCATION? Quick to I-75, SWF International Airport and FGCU. Speaking of SCHOOLS? Choose from Charter, Public & Private Schools nearby. HEY SPORTS FANS! JetBlue Park at FENWAY SOUTH is "just around the corner." NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED.

Offered At.....\$210,000

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

4 BEDROOM 2 BATH IN TOWNLAKES COMMUNITY



Large 4 bedroom 2 bath home on a quiet cul-de-sac in popular Town Lakes community with gated entry, sidewalks, central water and sewer, low HOA fee of \$90 per month, NEW ROOF IN 2018, large lot overlooking the intersecting preserve canals in the backyard, tiled throughout, cathedral ceilings, breakfast bar in the kitchen, pantry, indoor laundry room with Samsung Washer and Dryer included, large master bedroom with wood laminate floors, walk in closet, dual sinks in master bathroom, shower tub combo, pull down stairs attic entry, Quiet neighborhood with sidewalks and gorgeous views of the intersecting canals, located just minutes to Lee Blvd, I-75 and Ft Myers and walking distance to the newly renovated Williams Ave Community Park. NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED HERE. LEHIGH IS THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LEE COUNTY.

Offered At.....\$325,000

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

2 BED 2 BATH + FAMILY ROOM - CENTRAL WATER & SEWER



Affordable 2 bedroom 2 bath with a FAMILY ROOM, beautifully landscaped FENCED BACKYARD, plenty of privacy in the front with colorful landscaping and plenty of room in the oversized backyard, FRESHLY PAINTED INSIDE AND OUT, CERAMIC TILE FLOORS throughout the entire home, CENTRAL WATER AND SEWER, NEWER TANKLESS WATER HEATER, NEWER INSULATED WINDOWS, NEW DIMENSIONAL SHINGLE ROOF IN 2023, NEW CENTRAL HEAT AND AIR IN 2017, newly remodeled kitchen with new cabinets and GRANITE COUNTERTOPS, STAINLESS STEEL APPLIANCES, full size washer and dryer with extra cabinet and counter space, newer vanities and toilets in both bathrooms with a new walk in shower in the primary bathroom with ensuite access from the primary bedroom, newer interior doors, new mirrored closet doors, 19 X 13 covered porch overlooking the backyard, auto irrigation system on a well, storage area off of the covered carport, excellent location within walking distance to the stores and bus stop, and minutes to I-75 and Ft Myers. NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED. LEHIGH IS THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LEE COUNTY.

Offered At.....\$215,000

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

3 BEDROOM 2 BATH COACH HOME- NO AGE RESTRICTIONS



Affordable 3 bedroom 2 bath coach home with an oversized double garage, NO AGE RESTRICTIONS HERE, PETS OK, second floor unit with screened in balcony with tiled floors, spacious primary bedroom with access to the balcony, large walk in closet and private ensuite bathroom with large walk in shower, new light fixtures, faucet and toilet, spacious guest bedrooms, NEWER CENTRAL HEAT AND AIR IN 2023, NEW WATER HEATER IN 2023, NEW SCREENING ON THE BALCONY IN 2023, EXCELLENT VIEWS OF THE SUNSET FROM YOUR BALCONY, breakfast bar and pantry in large kitchen with solid surface countertops, newer stainless steel appliances with French door refrigerator, dishwasher and built in microwave, tile wall under the breakfast bar, CROWN MOLDING THROUGHOUT, newer ceramic tile floors in the main living area, dining area with new light fixture, guest bathroom with new fixtures and toilet as well, new hinges and handles on the interior doors, double garage with opener and laundry tub sink, washer and dryer located in the garage but there is also a hookup on the main level in a closet off of the guest bathroom, CENTRAL WATER AND SEWER, LOW QUARTERLY HOA FEES INCLUDE THE ROOF, excellent location just minutes to SR 82, I-75 and Ft Myers. NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED HERE. LEHIGH IS THE HIGHEST POINT IN LEHIGH.

Offered At.....\$225,000

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BRAND NEW 3/2 IN NE LEHIGH



Brand New Home located in Northeast Lehigh bordering ALVA, MOVE IN READY, AFFORDABLE 3 BEDROOM 2 BATH NEW CBS HOME. C.O. HAS BEEN ISSUED, 32 X 32 POLISHED PORCELAIN TILE FLOORS THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE HOME with 5 inch baseboards, impact resistant windows, covered front and rear porches with large open concrete patio 12.6 X 18 overlooking the backyard, excellent for grilling and parties, high ceilings throughout, upgrades galore in the kitchen with shaker cabinets, soft close doors and drawers, LED pendant lighting over breakfast bar, QUARTZ TOPS in kitchen and baths, stainless steel appliance package, glass tile backsplash, large dining area off of the kitchen, master bedroom with private bath, tiled walk in shower with frameless glass doors, indoor laundry area, garage with grey seal coated floors, extra long driveway with plenty of parking, excellent location just minutes to SR 80 bordering ALVA I-75, Ft Myers and the International airport.

Offered At.....\$274,900

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

3/2 POOL HOME STEPS AWAY FROM CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER



Newly refurbished POOL HOME just feet from the CALOOSAHATCHEE 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 PLANK 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.....\$280,000

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

BRAND NEW 3/2 + DEN IN NW LEHIGH



Brand New Home located in Northwest Lehigh on an oversized corner lot, MOVE IN READY 3 BEDROOM 2 BATH WITH A DEN that may be used as 4th bedroom, C.O. HAS BEEN ISSUED, UPGRADED IMPACT RESISTANT DOUBLE DOOR ENTRY IN FRONT, French doors to the den for privacy, WOOD PLANK PORCELAIN TILE FLOORS THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE HOME with 5 inch baseboards, impact resistant windows, covered screened front entry lanai leads to large great room, cathedral ceilings, shaker cabinets with soft close doors and drawers, pendant lighting over breakfast bar, GRANITE TOPS in kitchen and baths, stainless steel appliance package, glass tile backsplash, pantry, large dining area off of the kitchen with upgraded lighting, spacious master bedroom with dual walk in closets, private bath with dual sinks and tiled walk in shower with frameless glass doors, indoor laundry room, GRANITE WINDOW SILLS, covered screened lanai in rear with upgraded panoramic view screening overlooking the backyard, double garage with auto opener, extra long driveway with plenty of parking, dual tank water treatment system, excellent location just minutes to I-75 and Ft Myers. NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED HERE. LEHIGH IS THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LEE COUNTY. PREVIOUS FHA APPRAISAL FOR \$335,000 ATTACHED TO LISTING IN MLS.

Offered At.....\$329,900

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

3/2 + DEN IN TOWNLAKES COMMUNITY



Pristine move in ready 3 bedroom home with a large den in the popular Town Lakes gated community! NEW ROOF in 2023, tile throughout, kitchen was updated in 2024 with new stainless steel appliances, backsplash, and underneath lighting on the cabinets, exterior of the home was painted in 2024, property is one of the largest lots in Town Lakes with close to half an acre of land, central water and sewer, both a formal living room and a family room gives you plenty of space in this over 2,200 sq ft home! Large den that can be used as a home office, playroom, workout space, or even a 4th bedroom, huge backyard with beautiful views of the lake and nature, walk in closet in Master bedroom, master bathroom has been updated with a newly retiled shower and new vanities, dual sinks, indoor laundry room with washer and dryer included, located just minutes to Lee Blvd, I-75 and Ft Myers and walking distance to the newly renovated Williams Ave Community Park. NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED HERE. LEHIGH IS THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LEE COUNTY.

Offered At.....\$339,900

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

3 BEDROOM 2 BATH POOL HOME



Three bedroom two bath POOL HOME with a den that can easily be used as A FOURTH BEDROOM, ALMOST 2200 SQUARE FEET OF LIVING AREA, NEW DIMENSIONAL SHINGLE ROOF IN 2022, NEW CENTRAL HEAT AND AIR IN 2024, NEW GUTTERS IN 2024, excellent COUNTRY CLUB ESTATES LOCATION (NO HOA) ON A BEAUTIFULLY LANDSCAPED OVERIZED LOT, CANAL VIEWS, PLENTY OF PRIVACY, CENTRAL WATER AND SEWER, quiet low traffic street, SCREEN ENCLOSED IN GROUND POOL with plenty of covered and open space for entertaining, separate pergola on the pool deck, built in cabinets and countertops, plenty of room for outdoor TV etc., double door screened front entry leads to entry foyer, cathedral ceilings in the formal living room with SKYLIGHT and faux fireplace (was a working fireplace and may be opened up again) large formal dining room, open kitchen with large breakfast bar with QUARTZ tops, pendant lighting, oversized sink with disposal, newer cabinets with pull out shelving, all appliances, eat in kitchen/dinette area with pocket sliders to the pool area, upgraded wood laminate flooring with tile in the bathrooms, newly remodeled bathrooms with new vanities, QUARTZ tops, new commodes and fixtures including VINTAGE MOEN FAUCETS AND FIXTURES, primary bedroom with ensuite private bathroom featuring dual sinks, walk in shower with newly tiled floor, large walk in closet with plenty of built in custom shelving, formal living room leads to the family room under air with built in shelving, access to the pool area, French doors to the separate den/office/4th bedroom, custom wood molding, crown molding in guest bedroom, new interior doors throughout, oversized indoor laundry room with plenty of storage cabinets, full size washer and dryer and built in ironing board, oversized double garage with plenty of storage, one workbench will convey along with storage shelving, FRESHLY PAINTED EXTERIOR, 8 X10 storage shed in the yard, excellent move in condition with upgrades galore in a excellent location. This is a definite must see. NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED. LEHIGH IS THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LEE COUNTY.

Offered At.....\$400,000

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