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## EAST LEE COUNTY NEWS | DANIELS CORRIDOR

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### Who Holds The Levers Of Power In Lee County?

Katrina Salokar | Roar | EastLeeNews.com

#### APPOINTMENTS, POWER, AND THE 2026 RECKONING: HOW LEE COUNTY GOT HERE AND WHAT VOTERS DECIDE NEXT

The appointment of Trish Petrosky to the Lee County Commission's District 5 seat has drawn attention not only to one vacancy, but to the systems that quietly shape who governs Lee County, and how much influence voters ultimately have in that process.

While the appointment followed state law after the death of Commissioner Mike Greenwell in October 2025, the timing of the appointment and the structure of county governance have prompted questions that extend beyond a single seat. Those questions touch on recurring appointments, the effects of at-large voting, long-standing approaches to budget oversight, and a 2026 ballot measure that could fundamentally change how commissioners are elected.

What emerges is less a story about one appointee than a broader look at how process, structure, and continuity interact, often long before voters ever cast a ballot.

#### A VACANCY, AN APPOINTMENT, AND AN UNEXAMINED PROCESS

The District 5 seat became vacant following the death of Commissioner

Mike Greenwell. Under Florida law, the Governor is authorized to appoint a replacement to serve until the next election.

Public records show that the Petrosky family listed their San Carlos home for sale on September 25, 2025, and entered into a contract to purchase property in Alva, within District 5, days before Greenwell's death. The transaction closed on October 29, less than three weeks after the vacancy occurred.

On December 13, Governor Ron DeSantis announced Petrosky's appointment. The Governor's office did not release a list of applicants, interview schedules, or selection criteria.

Petrosky has stated publicly that her move to Alva was coincidental and that she had long been interested in public service, despite having no prior elected or appointed political experience. While the timeline alone does not establish intent, it raised questions among some residents about how the appointment decision was made and who was considered.

#### DISTRICT VOTES VS. COUNTY-WIDE OUTCOMES

The appointment reopened debate over representation in District 5. In the most recent election, Amanda Cochran won approximately 65 percent of the District 5 vote and led countywide Election Day totals. She ultimately lost after absentee and mail-in ballots were counted.

ed under Lee County's at-large voting system.

For many residents, the contrast highlighted a recurring concern: that district-level voter preference can be outweighed by countywide dynamics, particularly in rural areas where land-use and infrastructure decisions have long-term effects.

#### FROM APPOINTMENT TO INCUMBENCY: HOW STRUCTURE SHAPES OUTCOMES

Appointments are not unusual in Lee County government, and their influence often extends well beyond the moment a vacancy is filled.

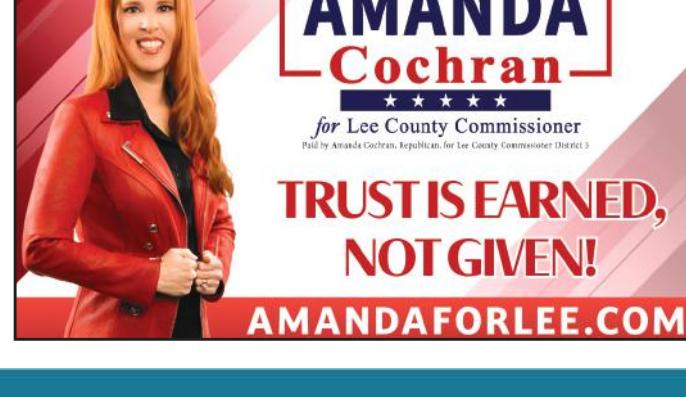
Commissioner Mike Greenwell entered office through appointment in 2022 following the death of Commissioner Frank Mann, then went on to win election in 2024. That sequence reflects a broader pattern in which appointments function not just as temporary bridges, but as entry points to incumbency.

had been serving as Undersheriff, later ran for the position and won election in 2020.

Critics argue that appointments followed by elections provide structural advantages, including early visibility, institutional familiarity, and the authority of office before voters have an opportunity to compare candidates in a contested race. Supporters counter that appointments promote continuity and stability, particularly in complex organizations such as county government and law enforcement. In each case, the process itself is authorized under state law.

Lee County's at-large voting system amplifies these effects. Because all county voters participate in district commission races, perceived incumbency and countywide name recognition can outweigh district-level familiarity. Appointed officials appear on the ballot as sitting officeholders, with visibility established before voters ever cast a vote.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



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## A DOCUMENTED WEB OF POLITICAL CONSULTING AND INFLUENCE

Public records reviewed by East Lee News show that several key actors involved in land-use policy, electoral politics, and the District 5 appointment share a common political consulting firm.

Neal Communities has retained TM Strategic Consulting for lobbying related to utilities and development issues in Lee County. State Representative Tiffany Esposito has also retained TM Strategic for political consulting services. Campaign finance records further show that members of the Lee County Board of County Commissioners have engaged the firm for campaign-related work in recent election cycles.

TM Strategic is led by veteran political consultant Terry Miller, who authored the political biography used to publicly introduce Commissioner Trish Petrosky following her appointment and has served as a primary public voice describing her priorities.

In January 2025, Rep. Esposito sponsored legislation creating the Duke Farms Stewardship District on behalf of Neal Communities. The special district encompasses nearly 1,100 acres in rural Alva and authorizes long-term assessments and bonding authority to finance infrastructure. Despite organized opposition from residents, the bill passed, and the district was established.

Critics argue that overlapping roles among developers, elected officials, appointed officials, and shared political consultants raise questions about how influence operates in Lee County, particularly when appointments, land-use decisions, and campaign infrastructure intersect. Supporters counter that the use of experienced political consultants is common in Florida politics and does not, by itself, indicate improper conduct.

## BUDGET POWER, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND REAL-WORLD COSTS

Petrosky's public positioning includes strong support for law enforcement, a stance widely shared among county officials and one that carries significant political weight in Lee County.

In media interviews following the appointment, Miller described Petrosky as "a good team player" who supports law enforcement and would "do a good job" on the commission, emphasizing familiar themes such as keeping taxes low, cutting wasteful spending, and backing public safety. That messaging aligns with a long-standing political consensus in the county.

That consensus exists alongside concrete fiscal and safety outcomes.

Public budget records show that the

Lee County Sheriff's Office represents one of the largest components of county government spending, exceeding most other departments combined. Year after year, Sheriff's Office budgets have been approved by the Board of County Commissioners largely as presented, with few substantive amendments and limited public discussion linking funding levels to measurable outcomes such as traffic enforcement effectiveness or crash reduction.

Critics argue that this pattern functions as a de facto rubber-stamping of one of the county's most powerful agencies, not necessarily out of malice, but because questioning law-enforcement budgets has become politically risky in a county where "support for law enforcement" operates as a near-universal litmus test.

At the same time, Lee County continues to rank among Florida counties with the highest numbers of fatal and serious traffic crashes. In recent years, roadway deaths have averaged roughly one every few days. Traffic safety advocates note that enforcement visibility in many parts of the county, particularly in fast-growing and rural areas, remains inconsistent despite rising budgets and staffing levels.

The consequences are not abstract. Fatal and serious crashes carry direct human costs for families and long-term financial costs for the broader public. Florida consistently ranks among the states with the highest auto insurance premiums in the nation, and crash severity is widely recognized as a major driver of those rates. Residents ultimately absorb those costs through higher premiums, medical expenses, lost income, and long-term disability impacts.

Some residents argue that the combination of rising law-enforcement budgets, limited outcome-based scrutiny, and persistent safety failures reveals a structural disconnect between spending and results. Others contend that factors such as population growth, road design, and tourism complicate enforcement efforts.

What remains clear is that sustained political consensus around "supporting law enforcement," reinforced through campaign messaging and consultant framing, has made it difficult to have a frank public conversation about whether existing strategies are saving lives at a rate commensurate with their cost.

## A STRUCTURAL CHOICE ON THE 2026 BALLOT

Voters will have an opportunity to address these underlying dynamics directly in the November 3, 2026, general election.

A countywide ballot question authorized by House Bill 4001 (HB 4001), approved by the Florida Legislature and signed into law, will ask whether Lee County should transition from at-large county commission elections to sin-

gle-member districts beginning in 2028.

Lee County is currently one of only two Florida counties with populations over 500,000 that still elect all commissioners at large.

Supporters argue that single-member districts would allow each district to elect a representative with direct knowledge of local challenges, improve accountability, and reduce pressure for municipal incorporations driven by perceived lack of representation. Opponents maintain that at-large elections promote countywide cohesion.

The decision will rest with voters.

## THE LARGER QUESTION

As of publication, Neal Communities and Rep. Esposito have not issued public responses addressing concerns raised by residents regarding the appointment and the broader political context. Commissioner Petrosky has stated publicly that the timing of her relocation to Alva was coincidental, but has not provided further detail addressing questions about the sequence of events surrounding her move and appointment.

For many residents, the central issue is not whether any single appointment complied with the law, but whether the systems governing appointments, elections, land-use policy, and budget oversight operate transparently, and whether voters are given meaningful opportunities to evaluate those systems before outcomes are effectively set.

## WHEN PROCESS SHAPES OUTCOMES

In Lee County, how decisions are made often matters as much as the decisions themselves.

Appointments place individuals in positions of authority before voters have a say. At-large elections spread account-

ability across the entire county rather than anchoring it within individual districts. Budgets, including those tied to public safety, are approved year after year, often without sustained public discussion about whether spending is producing measurable results. Each of these practices is lawful on its own. Together, they form a system that can move major decisions forward with limited public friction.

For voters, the challenge is not a lack of information. It is that the information is scattered. Appointments, land-use legislation, campaign consulting, and budget approvals move through separate processes, even when their impacts converge in the same rural communities and neighborhoods.

As a result, residents are often left to evaluate outcomes after the fact, rather than being part of a transparent conversation before decisions are made.

That dynamic will come into sharper focus in 2026, when Lee County voters are asked to decide whether to retain at-large elections or move to single-member districts. The outcome of that vote will shape not only future appointments, but how accountability, representation, and decision-making function across the county in the years ahead.

## EDITOR'S NOTE:

This article examines the intersection of appointments, election structures, budget practices, and political consulting in Lee County. It does not allege wrongdoing by any individual. Instead, it focuses on documented processes and systems that shape representation and accountability, particularly as voters prepare to decide the future of county governance in the 2026 election.

East Lee News welcomes factual corrections, documentation, and responses from readers and public officials. 



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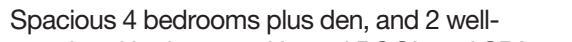
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The 14th Annual Smoke Under the Oaks Rib Festival returned to Barron Park this January, bringing together rib teams, local businesses, and families for a day of barbecue, live music, and small-town celebration beneath LaBelle's iconic oak trees.

Hosted by the LaBelle Downtown Revitalization Corporation, the long-time community tradition continues

to serve as both a friendly cook-off and a fundraiser supporting downtown revitalization efforts.

Congratulations to the 2026, 14th Annual Smoke Under the Oaks Rib Festival Winners:

- **1st Place:** Sweet Sugar Swine
- **2nd Place:** Papa Paul's Backyard Bar-B-Que
- **3rd Place:** Dirty Ernie's Almost

- Famous BBQ
- **People's Choice:** T-Rex Rub

With strong turnout, competitive teams, and broad community support, Smoke Under the Oaks once again highlighted what makes LaBelle special: good food, good people, and a town that shows up for itself.

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1st Place - Sweet Sugar Swine



2nd Place - Papa Paul's Backyard Bar-B-Que



3rd Place - Dirty Ernie's Almost Famous BBQ



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# What's Brewing in Alva? A New Local Business

James Kennedy | Roar | EastLeeNews.com



A long-vacant building along State Road 80 is getting a new lease on life, and with it, Alva is preparing to welcome a new locally owned business.

Anarchy Aleworks is preparing to open at 21450 Palm Beach Boulevard, in a building that owner John Ford admits "used to look much different" than it does today. The space, once divided into multiple businesses, has since been remodeled and reconfigured into a brewery and taproom.

Ford, who has spent his career as a pharmacist, said brewing has been a long-time passion. "I've been home brewing just for a hobby for about 30-something years," he said. After selling the specialty pharmacy and infusion business he and his wife built in Fort Myers, Ford said he was ready for a new chapter. "I wanted something to do and felt too young just to sit around, be retired," he said. "I thought, well, we'll start a brewery... I could get paid for it."

Ford said he initially debated whether to buy or lease, eventually choosing to rent to avoid bank loans and investors. "For me to buy property, I'd have had to go to the bank and get a loan. And I didn't wanna do all that," he said. The opportunity came through a personal connection made at a beer festival in Gainesville, which led him to the Alva property owner.

While Alva initially felt "kind of out of the way," Ford said traffic counts and nearby growth helped change his mind. "There are 23,000 cars a day that go past this place," he said, pointing to surrounding communities such as Babcock Ranch, Portico, River Hall, and Verandah. "You've got a lot of people that are out here that haven't really had anything to do. They had to go into Fort Myers to do it."

The brewery's name, Anarchy Aleworks, is one Ford has held onto for years. "I've had that name registered with the state... since '09, I think," he said. While acknowledging that the word "anarchy" can raise concerns, Ford said it reflects a personal philoso-

phy rather than chaos. "A lot of people think it means chaos and disorder, but it just means no government. That's all it means," he said. "I'm not changing the name. I've had it for 17 years now."

Ford said the brewery's goal is simple. "Just to be a place that people wanna spend time at," he said. Rather than operating a full restaurant, Anarchy Aleworks will host food trucks. "I didn't wanna run a restaurant because a restaurant's a hard business to be in," he said.

Live music is also part of the plan. Business manager Tia Ford said she is booking local musicians for the weekly schedule, with performances primarily planned for weekends. Music will be staged on the outdoor patio when possible, with flexibility to move inside if weather requires. "We're trying to support local as much as possible," she said.

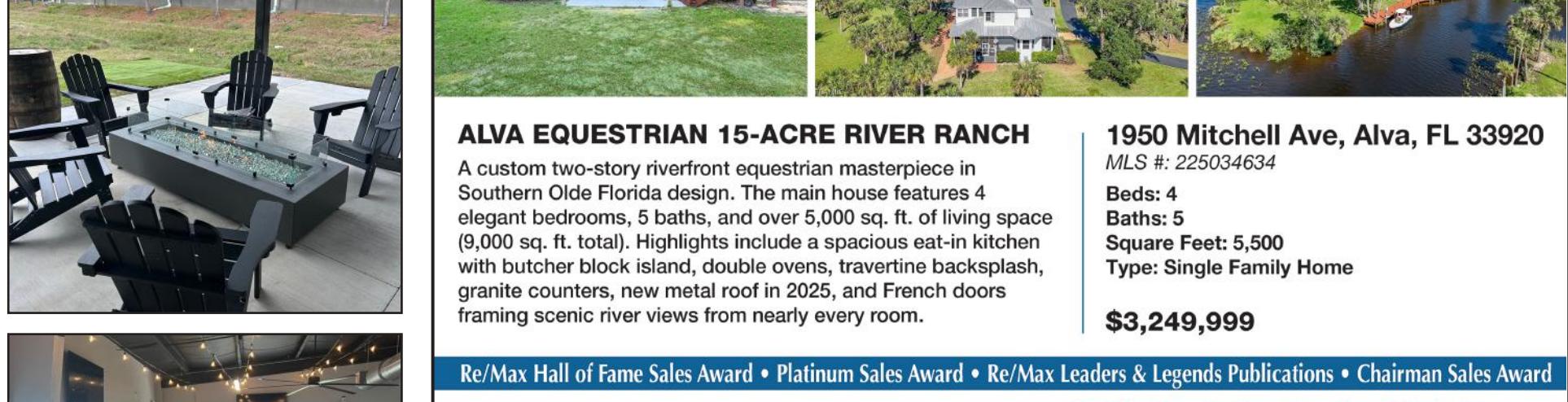
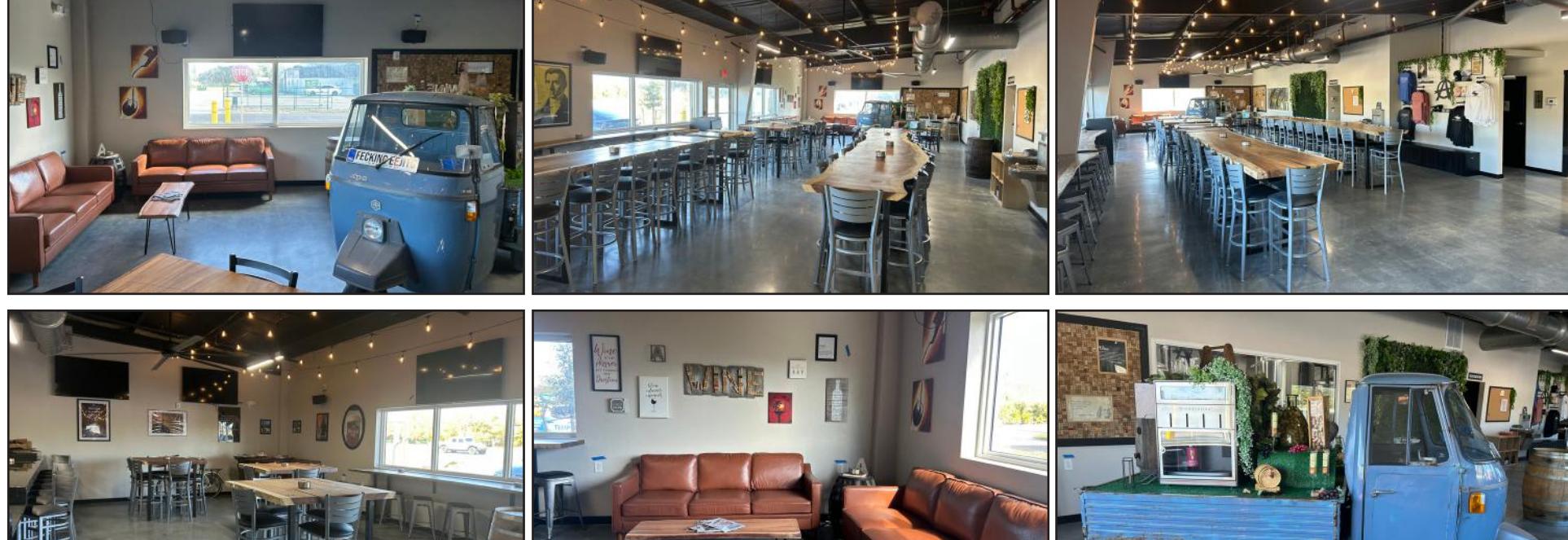
The space is designed to be welcoming to families. "I wanna make this place where it's dog-friendly, kid-friendly," Ford said. "We'll have

games for the kids... I wanna make it a place where people come and hang out and feel like this is better than sitting at home."

Anarchy Aleworks will feature 22 taps, with Ford planning to open with 14 house-brewed beers, along with guest taps, cider, and other options. Wine will be served using preservation dispensers. "We wanted to do dispensers just because of the quality," Ford said. "Once you open that bottle of wine, it's gonna be good until it's gone."

Much of the build-out has been hands-on. "We built this bar," Ford said. "Blake and I built that. We finished the whole bar." He emphasized that the business has no investors and no bank loans. "I just need to be profitable. That's it."

While an exact opening date has not yet been announced, the family said renovations are nearing completion, with initial plans calling for a Wednesday-through-Sunday schedule and hours that may adjust as demand becomes clearer. 



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# The Artists of Florida's Cowboy Tradition: Eldon Lux

James Kennedy | Roar | EastLeeNews.com



Last year, an unexpected post surfaced in my social media feed, not as a distraction, but as an invitation. The Okeechobee Main Street Gallery was advertising work by Hobby Campbell, Brad Phares, and Eldon Lux. What stopped me was not just the quality of the paintings. It was the subject matter: Florida's cracker cowboys and the rural landscapes that shaped them.

These are subjects deeply rooted in Florida's history and too often ignored in Florida's present.

Most Floridians are at least passingly familiar with the Highwaymen. Their story matters and deserves its place. But that is not the story being told here. What I found instead was a quieter, largely under-recognized group of artists documenting both the history and the present-day reality of Florida's working cowboys, cow hunters, and cattle culture.

These are not romanticized figures. They are working people, descendants and continuations of a cattle tradition that stretches back more than 500 years and forms the bedrock of Florida's agricultural identity. Spend time around real ranch country and you learn quickly that Florida's cowboy tradition is not a costume. It is work.

That realization led me to sit down with Eldon Lux.

Eldon and his wife, Lynn, met me at the Okeechobee gallery, where we

talked for more than an hour. We later continued the conversation over lunch, talking for another hour. It was easy, unguarded, and full of stories. They are down-to-earth, humble people, deeply engaged with the world around them. But our focus was Eldon's art: how he came to Florida, why he paints what he does, and what it means to create work that carries both responsibility and reverence.

Eldon is originally from Nebraska. He grew up in ranch country, earned an animal science degree, and lived a life shaped by cattle, horses, weather, and land. Like many ranchers of his generation, he lost everything during the economic upheavals of the 1980s. Ranching ended, but the work did not. Leatherwork, saddle repair, farrier work, and training horses were not side jobs. They were continuations of a way of life.

Art was never separate from that world. It grew out of it.

Florida became home not by accident, but by recognition. Eldon saw in places like Okeechobee, Osceola County, and the Kissimmee Prairie a working landscape that mirrored the life he knew and respected. The cattle were different. The dogs were different. The land and the tactics were different. But the rhythm of the work and the bond between people, animals, and place felt familiar.

At one point he said something that stuck with me: everything that is normal changes about fifty miles. If you have spent time in rural Flori-

da, you know exactly what he means. North Florida is not ranched the way central Florida is. Osceola is not Okeechobee. Even within the same region, what works on one place might get you run off the next. You learn by watching, adapting, and keeping your mouth shut long enough to understand how things really work.

That philosophy carries straight into Eldon's paintings.

He does not paint nostalgia. He paints what he knows and what he has lived. His work is grounded in experience and careful observation, shaped by memory and informed by respect. He talks about other artists, including Hobby Campbell, Sean Sexton, and others, with genuine admiration. There is no posturing and no need to elevate himself by diminishing anyone else. His work exists as part of a broader, largely under-recognized body of art created by people who know this life firsthand.

He is also blunt about the craft itself. Eldon rejects the idea of being "self-taught." Like every serious artist, he learned by studying others, by looking closely, borrowing freely, and figuring things out through persistence. Over time, his style has loosened. Detail has given way to mood. What matters now is not painting every palm frond, but capturing what a moment feels like, the tension at a water's edge, the awareness of unseen danger, and the quiet weight carried by a working cowboy.

One of the strongest examples of that approach is a piece called Watchful Eye, a moment at the water where dogs drink, horses stand, and the cowboy's attention does not drift. The scene is not about the background. It is about what you cannot see. It is about why Florida cow work is different. It is about why a man watches the water like it might reach up and take something.

Eldon also paints with a long view of Florida's cattle story. One major piece, 500 Years, traces the continuity of Florida's cattle culture, from early Spanish arrival through the evolution of the working cow hunter and into the present-day cracker cowboy. It is part realism and part memory, and that blend is the point. It is not heritage as decoration. It is history as lived experience, rendered by someone who respects what the work costs.

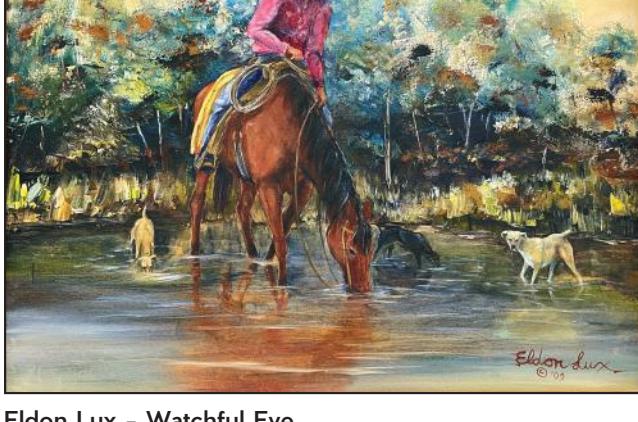
At its core, Eldon's work functions as a living record. His paintings preserve moments that are disappearing, not as relics of the past, but as realities that still exist if you know where to look. In doing so, they hold onto something essential, not just how Florida once was, but how it continues to be shaped by land, labor, and people who work with humility and resolve.

This is not loud history. But it is real history.

And if we do not pay attention now, we will be left pretending we did not watch it disappear. 🐾



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# Why A Nobel For AI Signals A Turning Point For Lee County

Katrina Salokar | Roar | EastLeeNews.com

On October 8, 2024, the world of physics was caught off guard when the Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded not for discoveries about black holes or subatomic particles, but for work connected to artificial intelligence. Specifically, the prize recognized mathematical models inspired by how the human brain processes information.

For many physicists, the reaction was immediate and uneasy. For decades, the Nobel Prize in Physics honored breakthroughs in matter, energy, space, and time. Awarding it for research tied to neural networks raised an uncomfortable question: had physics run out of fundamental discoveries, or was it being forced to confront something deeper?

That question matters because the award did not simply recognize a new technology. It marked a broader shift already underway inside science itself.

For much of the last century, physics occupied a privileged position within the sciences. If researchers could uncover the most fundamental laws governing particles and forces, many believed everything else, from chemistry and biology to human behavior, would eventually fall into place. That assumption shaped education, medicine, and technology alike. Today, physicists themselves are increasingly acknowledging that this view, while enormously successful, is no longer sufficient on its own.

## THE DISCOVERY BEHIND THE DECISION

The prize was awarded jointly to John J. Hopfield of Princeton University and Geoffrey E. Hinton of the University of Toronto. The Nobel committee cited them "for foundational discoveries and inventions that enable machine learning with artificial neural networks."

Modern artificial intelligence is built largely on neural network models, systems whose behavior emerges from large-scale interaction rather than explicit, step-by-step programming. At first glance, the work appeared to belong to computer science. However, the Nobel committee emphasized that the underlying ideas came directly from physics, specifically statistical mechanics, which studies how large numbers of interacting components behave collectively.

That distinction proved essential. Hopfield demonstrated how networks of simple units could store and retrieve memories without any central controller. His models showed that memory could emerge from the system as a whole rather than from any single component. Hinton later expanded this work by developing learning methods that allow such networks to discover patterns in data on their own, adjusting internal connections through experience.

These systems work not because they are programmed instruction by instruction, but because complex behavior emerges from interaction among many simple parts. For physicists, this was the critical insight: the most important behavior appears at the system level, not at the level of individual components.

## WHY THIS FORCED A RECKONING

The broader scientific meaning of the Nobel decision was explored in a December 2024 essay in *The Atlantic* titled *The Truth Physics Can No Longer Ignore*, written by astrophysicist Adam Frank. Frank argues that physics is confronting the limits of reductionism, the long-dominant idea that breaking systems into smaller and smaller pieces would ultimately explain everything.

Reductionism remains essential, but its limits become clear when applied to systems that learn, adapt, and reorganize themselves. Neural networks made those limits difficult to dismiss because they are built using the mathematics of physics, yet their behavior cannot be understood by examining any single element in isolation.

## WHAT SCIENTISTS MEAN BY EMERGENCE

This realization brings science face-to-face with the concept of emergence. Emergence describes situations where a system exhibits properties that do not exist in its individual components. A single neuron does not think. A single car may not cause traffic congestion. Yet networks of interacting parts can produce memory, intelligence, resilience, or collapse.

Living systems make this unavoidable. The atoms in a human body are constantly replaced, yet the organism persists through organization, feedback, and self-repair. Life uses information for its own continuation by seeking nutrients, avoiding danger, repairing damage, and reproducing. Emergence does not violate physical laws; it operates on top of them.

The Nobel Prize winners did not invent intelligence. It clarified the principles by which complex systems, biological and artificial alike, already organize, learn, and persist.

## WHY THIS MATTERS BEYOND SCIENCE

This recognition reflects a methodological reality scientists now encounter across disciplines. In medicine, complex diseases are increasingly understood as network failures rather than single causes. In climate science, tipping points arise from cumulative interactions. In engineering and infrastructure, resilience depends on system-level behavior rather than isolated optimization. These are practical concerns, not abstract ones.

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## WHY THIS MATTERS IN LEE COUNTY

Lee County is not struggling because it lacks plans, studies, or expertise. It is struggling because many of its challenges now behave like complex systems rather than isolated problems.

School siting decisions affect traffic patterns, emergency response times, housing density, and water infrastructure. Stormwater management is shaped not only by rainfall and canals, but by development patterns, permitting timelines, and coordination across agencies. Emergency preparedness depends as much on information flow and feedback as it does on equipment and staffing. These issues rarely fail all at once. They fail gradually, through accumulation.

Traditional governance approaches tend to treat each challenge separately, assigning responsibility to individual departments, committees, or plans. That model worked when growth was slower, and systems were simpler. As scale increases, however, the interactions between decisions begin to matter more than the decisions themselves.

This is where the Nobel Prize for AI becomes locally relevant. The work recognized by the Nobel committee formalized something scientists have long observed: when systems grow complex enough, their behavior cannot be understood or managed by optimizing individual parts in isolation. What matters is how information

moves, how feedback loops function, and how systems adapt over time.

Applied locally, this does not mean replacing human judgment with algorithms or letting AI run the government. It means acknowledging that many of today's civic challenges require system-level thinking, earlier feedback, and coordination across institutional boundaries that were never designed for the county's current scale.

In this sense, the Nobel decision signals an opportunity to leapfrog. Rather than repeating the long learning curve other regions experienced as growth overwhelmed their institutions, Lee County can draw lessons from systems science now. Planning processes, data sharing, and governance structures can be designed to better reflect how complex systems actually behave.

The shift is not technological. It is conceptual.

## THE TAKEAWAY

The controversy surrounding the 2024 Nobel Prize revealed something subtle but consequential. Physics is not abandoning its foundations. It is adjusting its lens. The question now is whether our institutions will do the same.

*Source: Adam Frank, "The Truth Physics Can No Longer Ignore," The Atlantic, December 2024.*

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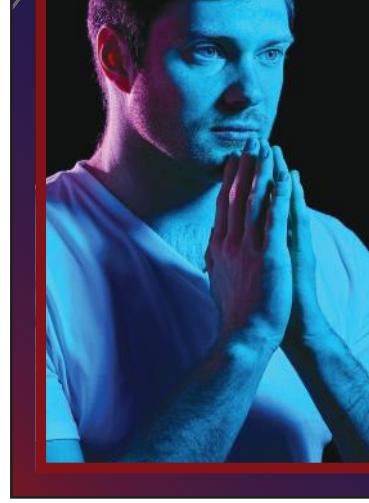
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# January Brings A Full Month Of Community Events To Lehigh Acres

Lehigh Acres will be buzzing with outdoor activity, music, and community connection this January, as three major events invite residents and visitors to gather, celebrate, and support local causes.

# WINGS OVER WATER FESTIVAL RETURNS TO HARNS MARSH

The popular Wings Over Water Festival returns to Harns Marsh Preserve on Saturday, January 24, 2026, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., offering a free, family-friendly day focused on nature, education, and outdoor fun.

Hosted in partnership with local environmental and community organizations, the festival highlights the importance of water management, conservation, and outdoor recreation. Attendees can enjoy guided tram tours, scenic nature walks, and interactive exhibits featuring environmental partners from across the region.

Children and families will be drawn to the popular Touch-A-Truck experience, showcasing fire trucks, tractors, airboats, and other equipment, along with games and hands-on activities. The festival also includes a farmer's market and vendor area, offering local honey, fresh produce, lemonade, crafts, candles, and more.

The day begins with the 14th Annual Kids Fishing Derby, presented by the Rotary Club of

---

# **HURNS MARSH 5K TRAIL RUN HELD SAME DAY**

Also on January 24, runners will lace up for the Harns Marsh 5K, a scenic trail run through one of Southwest Florida's most important filter marshes. The race offers participants a rare opportunity to experience the preserve's marsh-lined trails, wide-open skies, and abundant birdlife.

The chip-timed race features age-group awards and overall male and female divisions. All participants receive a commemorative finisher's medal and race T-shirt.

Marsh 5K serves a broader purpose, with proceeds supporting Unite Lehigh and its mission to foster community events, economic growth, and local engagement. Runners are encouraged to stay after the race and enjoy the Wings Over Water Festival, creating a full day of community celebration at Harns Marsh.

## FESTIVAL CLOSES OUT THE MONTH

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Digitized by srujanika@gmail.com

Lenihan Acres, followed by the ROCK, Blue

Rock, Blues & Brews Festival on Saturday, January 31, running from 2 p.m. to 11 p.m. This free-admission event brings live music, food, and fellowship to Lehigh Acres while supporting local food pantry efforts.

canned goods are encouraged to benefit the local food pantry.

Vendors and non-profit organizations interested in participating may reserve a booth or tent by contacting Debra at 239-770-0549 or Ed at 585-455-5894. Event organizers note that coolers and pets are not permitted; service animals are welcome.

From nature and fitness to live music and giving back, January's lineup reflects the growing energy and community spirit of Lehigh Acres, and offers something for everyone to enjoy. 



An advertisement for Gateway Mini Spa & Salon. The top left features the spa's logo with a stylized green and pink leaf design, followed by the word "Gateway" in a large, flowing cursive script, and "MINI SPA & SALON" and "THERAPEUTIC MASSAGE CENTER, LLC" in a smaller, sans-serif font. Below the logo is the website "GatewayMiniSpa.com". The central image is a woman with dark hair tied back, lying on a massage table and smiling while receiving a massage on her shoulder and neck. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color. The bottom half of the ad features the text "New Year, RENEWED YOU" in large, elegant, dark brown script and bold, sans-serif capital letters respectively. Below this, a pink banner contains the text "Your NEW YEAR SELF-CARE begins with the BEST MASSAGES in town! Gateway Mini Spa is here to help relieve chronic muscle pain and tension. BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT (239) 561-1150 13120 Westlinks Terrace, Suite 9 • Fort Myers, FL 33913". A decorative pink flower graphic is in the bottom right corner.

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# Youth Baseball Momentum Builds As Alva Season Nears

Katrina Salokar | Roar | EastLeeNews.com

The return of youth baseball to Alva is no longer just an announcement, it is taking shape on the ground.

Buckingham Youth Baseball League officials report strong participation as the inaugural Alva season approaches, with local teams filled across multiple age divisions and families once again gathering at the Alva Fields. Practices are underway, volunteers have stepped forward, and community interest continues to build ahead of Opening Day.

According to league president Dan Brophy, demand for spring baseball exceeded expectations.

"All of our fields are filled for the spring season, and we actually had to turn kids away because we didn't have

enough coaches," Brophy said. "That's a great problem to have, but we need more guys and gals to step up and get involved this fall so we can meet the demand and keep kids playing."

Organizers say the response confirms what longtime residents already knew, baseball has deep roots in Alva. For parents and grandparents who once played on the same fields, the league's return represents both continuity and renewal for the community.

The Alva program operates under the Buckingham Youth Baseball League as part of Babe Ruth Baseball, supported by partnerships with Lee County Parks & Recreation and Alva, Inc. While spring registration has closed, fall registration opens June 1st, and league leaders are actively en-

couraging new coaches, volunteers, and sponsors to help sustain growth.

Opening Day for the Alva teams is scheduled for February 23rd, marking the official return of organized youth baseball to Alva after several years away.

More information about fall registration and ways to get involved is available through Buckingham Youth Baseball.

president@buckinghamyouthbaseball.net

• Alva Program Director: Dustin Tindall, alva.league@buckinghamyouthbaseball.net

• Sponsorships: sponsorships@buckinghamyouthbaseball.net



## CONTACT & INFORMATION

- Website: [www.buckinghamyouthbaseball.net](http://www.buckinghamyouthbaseball.net)
- Facebook: Buckingham Youth Baseball | Fort Myers
- League President: Dan Brophy,



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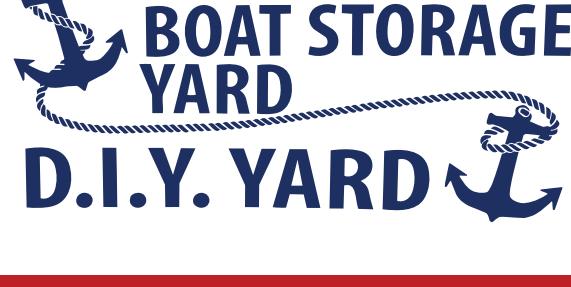
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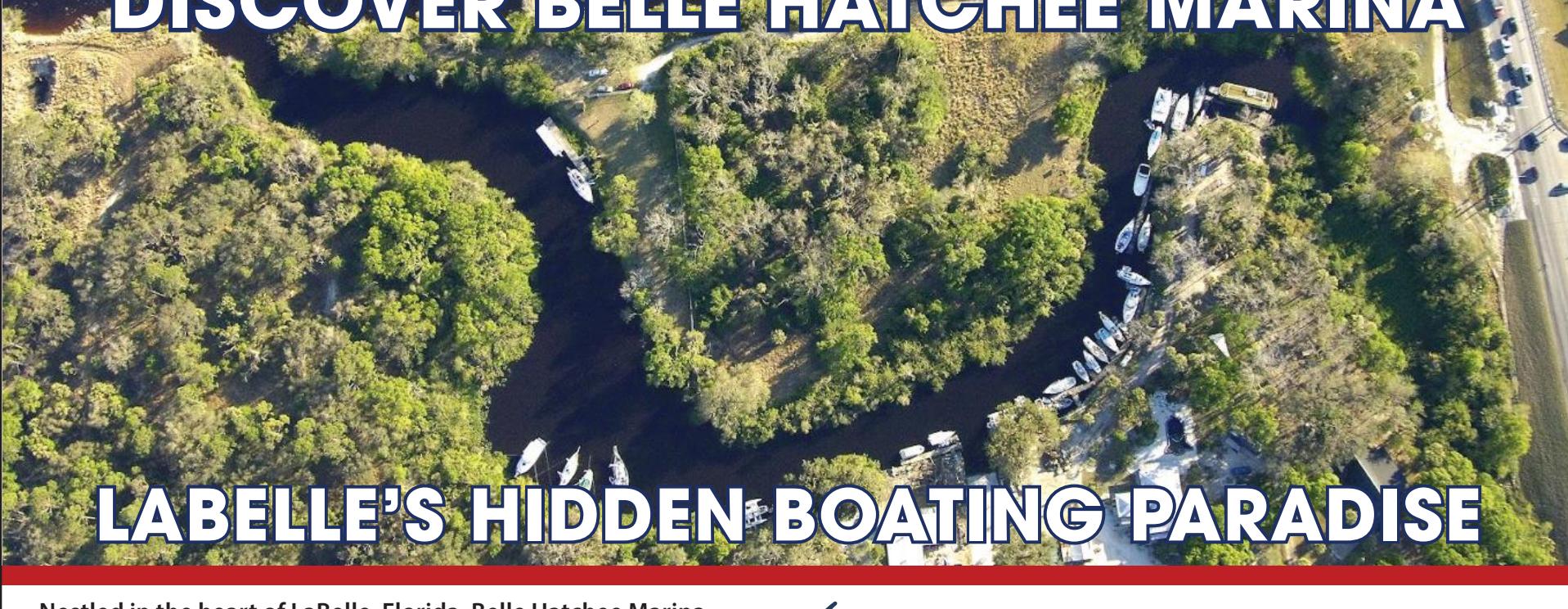


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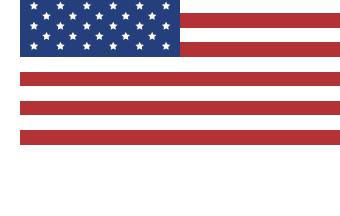


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## Belle Realty And Coldwell Banker Celebrate Merger

East Lee County News Special

A grand opening and ribbon cutting were held on January 8 in LaBelle to commemorate the merger of Belle Realty with Coldwell Banker Preferred Properties, formally bringing the long-established local brokerage into the Coldwell Banker network.

Belle Realty, a fixture in the LaBelle community for nearly two decades, now operates as Coldwell Banker Belle Realty, expanding access to residential, commercial, agricultural, and investment real estate services throughout Hendry and Glades counties.

The LaBelle office has also ex-

panded its offerings to include full-service rental property management and tenant placement services, addressing growing demand in the local housing market.

The event was hosted at the Coldwell Banker Belle Realty office on Hickpochee Avenue and was held in conjunction with a LaBelle Chamber of Commerce After Hours gathering, welcoming community members, business leaders, and guests.

For more information, contact Fred Elliott, Broker/Co-Owner, at 239-357-7877 or [BrokerFred@yahoo.com](mailto:BrokerFred@yahoo.com).



Chris Hernandez, Realtor, Coldwell Banker Belle Realty, President of the Chamber Leads Coldwell Banker Belle Realty Ribbon Cutting



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Terri Banky, former Broker of Belle Realty Co. and new Broker Fred Elliot of Coldwell Banker Belle Realty

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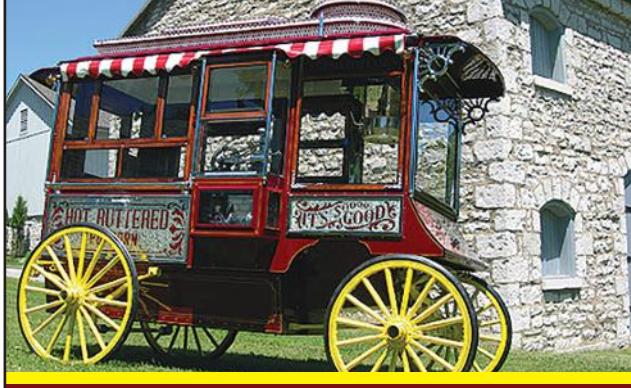
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## Charlie Bonacolta

Broker/Salesman

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www.charliesold.com

**Charlie Bonacolta**



**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.....\$295,000**

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

### 3/2 + DEN IN TOWN LAKES 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, workspace, or even a 4th bedroom, huge backyard with beautiful views of the lake and nature, walk in closet, ensuite primary bath with dual sinks with newer faucets, new commodes and tiled walk in shower, newer granite top in the guest bathroom with new commode as well, indoor laundry area with full size washer and dryer, plenty of room in the screened double garage with pull down stairs for storage and laundry tub, screened front entry door as well, screened from the front to the rear for excellent cross ventilation on those nice days. NO AGE RESTRICTIONS. Pets OK. NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED. LEHIGH IS THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LEE COUNTY.

**Offered At.....\$311,900**

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

## Nick Bonacolta

Salesman



E-MAIL ADDRESS  
nbonacolta@gmail.com

Facebook.com/  
NickBonacoltaRW

**239-887-0468**



**Nick Bonacolta**

**NICK BONACOLTA**  
**239-887-0468 • nbonacolta@gmail.com**

### POPULAR 2/2 + DEN VISTANNA VILLA



Popular Vistanna Villa 2 bedroom 2 bath with den that may be used as a THIRD BEDROOM, EXTENDED LANAI IN THE REAR 12 x 19 overlooking the golf course with plenty of privacy, common resort style pool plus a playground area, gated entry, excellent location just minutes to SR 82, I-75 and Ft Myers, newer luxury vinyl plank floors throughout, solid surface countertops in the kitchen with breakfast bar, pantry and stainless steel appliances including a French door refrigerator and brand new built in microwave. CENTRAL HEAT AND AIR NEW IN 2017 AND NEW WATER HEATER NEW IN 2017, primary bedroom in the rear with plenty of natural light, large walk in closet, ensuite primary bath with dual sinks with newer faucets, new commodes and tiled walk in shower, newer granite top in the guest bathroom with new commode as well, indoor laundry area with full size washer and dryer, plenty of room in the screened double garage with pull down stairs for storage and laundry tub, screened front entry door as well, screened from the front to the rear for excellent cross ventilation on those nice days. NO AGE RESTRICTIONS. Pets OK. NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED. LEHIGH IS THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LEE COUNTY.

**Offered At.....\$224,000**

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

### 3/2 - NEW ROOF IN 2025



NEW DIMENSIONAL SHINGLE ROOF IN 2025, NEW CENTRAL HEAT AND AIR IN 2020, affordable 3 bedroom 2 bath home located in West Lehigh just minutes to I-75, Ft Myers and SWFL International airport, excellent neighborhood atmosphere, screened front porch and screened porch overlooking the backyard BOTH UNDER TRUSS, nice oak tree for shade, cathedral ceilings, plant shelves, ceramic tile floors in the main living area, all kitchen appliances with breakfast bar and pantry, indoor laundry room, primary bedroom with walk in closet and ensuite private bathroom, guest bedrooms on the other side of the home for privacy, sliding doors to the porch in the rear, double garage, in need of some minor cosmetics but priced accordingly. NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED. LEHIGH IS THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LEE COUNTY.

**Offered At.....\$265,000**

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

### AFFORDABLE 3 BEDROOM 2 BATH HOME



Affordable 3 bedroom 2 bath, NO AGE RESTRICTIONS HERE- PETS OK, NEW DIMENSIONAL ROOF IN 2018, NEW SQUARE D ELECTRICAL PANEL BOX IN 2025, NEW WATER HEATER IN 2017, freshly painted interior in 2025, large 3 BEDROOM addition in the rear of the unit with a walk in closet and separate entrance, screened front porch, LUXURY VINYL PLANK FLOORS WITH CERAMIC TILE FLOORS, vaulted ceilings in the living room, large formal dining room with built in cabinets, newer vanities in the bathrooms, covered carport parking with small storage room off of the carport, walking distance to stores and bus stop, low monthly maintenance fee of \$60 per month includes grass cutting, indoor laundry area with full size washer and dryer off of the kitchen, NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED. LEHIGH IS THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LEE COUNTY.

**Offered At.....\$185,000**

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

### 2/2 GROUND FLOOR GOLFSIDE VILLAGE CONDO



Affordable 2 bedroom 2 bath GROUND FLOOR CORNER UNIT in Golfside Village, common POOL and tennis courts just steps away, COVERED CARPORT PARKING, NO AGE RESTRICTIONS HERE AND PETS ARE OK, NEWER LUXURY VINYL PLANK FLOORS THROUGHOUT, new cabinets and GRANITE COUNTERTOPS in the kitchen with breakfast bar, EXTRA LARGE SINK WITH NEWER FAUCET, open tray ceiling in the kitchen with newer LED lighting throughout the condo, newly remodeled bathrooms as well with all new tile in the tub and shower areas, NEW CENTRAL HEAT AND AIR IN 2021, primary bedroom with walk in closet and ensuite bathroom, access to the screened lanai with extra storage cabinet and laundry area, plenty of privacy overlooking the nicely landscaped yard and GOLF COURSE, easy maintenance living with the exterior all covered by the monthly condo fee, located within walking distance to stores etc., I-75, Ft Myers and SWFL International airport just a few minutes away. NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED. LEHIGH IS THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LEE COUNTY.

**Offered At.....\$133,000**

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



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### AFFORDABLE 3 BEDROOM 2 BATH + DEN



Affordable 3 bedroom 2 bath home with a large den that may be used as a 4TH BEDROOM, ALMOST 1800 SQUARE FEET OF LIVING AREA, NEW DIMENSIONAL SHINGLE ROOF IN 2023, NEW CENTRAL HEAT AND AIR IN 2019, NEW WATER HEATER IN 2025, CENTRAL WATER AND SEWER, quiet low traffic community in neighborhood atmosphere, ceramic tile and newer luxury vinyl plank flooring in the bedrooms and den, cathedral ceilings and plant shelves, breakfast bar and pantry in kitchen with all appliances, LED lighting throughout, newer entry door with pocket screen, primary bedroom with private access to the lanai, walk in closet, private ensuite bathroom with shower and separate water closet, indoor laundry room with washer and dryer, 16 X 9 screened lanai overlooking the nicely landscaped yard with two oak trees for shade. NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED. LEHIGH IS LOCATED IN THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LEE COUNTY.

**Offered At.....\$245,000**

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

### 3/2 DOUBLE GARAGE - CENTRAL WATER & SEWER



Affordable 3 bedroom 2 bath DOUBLE GARAGE located just south of Lehigh off SR 82, CENTRAL WATER AND SEWER, NEW DIMENSIONAL SHINGLE ROOF IN 2020, NEW WATER HEATER IN 2024, NEW CENTRAL HEAT AND AIR IN 2022, freshly painted interior, cathedral ceilings and plant shelves, NEW LUXURY VINYL PLANK FLOORS in the eat in kitchen with breakfast bar and pantry, two sets of French doors lead out to the spacious backyard with Oak tree for shade and plenty of room to play and entertain, primary bedroom with walk in closet and ensuite bathroom, built in desk in the guest bedroom hallway, new light fixtures in the bathrooms, indoor laundry room, low traffic street in an excellent neighborhood atmosphere located just minutes to SR 82, I-75, Ft Myers and the SWFL International airport. NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED. LEHIGH IS THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LEE COUNTY.

**Offered At.....\$265,000**

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

### BRAND NEW 3 BEDROOM 2 BATH DOUBLE GARAGE



BRAND NEW- READY TO MOVE IN- C.O. HAS BEEN ISSUED. Affordable 3 bedroom 2 bath with DOUBLE GARAGE, UPGRADES GALORE, 24 X 24 porcelain tile floors throughout, QUARTZ COUNTERTOPS in the kitchen with waterfall, soft close doors and drawers, pendant lighting over the breakfast bar, oversized pantry, stainless steel appliances, large fixed glass window in the dining room with plenty of extra natural light, impact resistant windows and doors, quartz tops in bathrooms with frameless glass shower doors, lighted mirrors, porcelain tile showers and soft close doors and drawers, primary bedroom with transom window for extra natural light, ensuite bath and walk in closet, LED lighting throughout, covered lanai with tile floors overlooking the oversized backyard with a canal in the rear for privacy, extra long driveway with plenty of parking for multiple cars, MOVE IN READY HOME. C.O. HAS BEEN ISSUED, quiet low traffic street located just minutes to SR 82, I-75, Ft Myers and SWFL International airport. NO FLOOD INSURANCE REQUIRED- LEHIGH IS THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN LEE COUNTY.

**Offered At.....\$295,000**

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

### 3/2 POOL HOME IN MARBLE BROOK



THREE BEDROOM TWO BATH POOL HOME BUILT IN 2019, located in an excellent neighborhood atmosphere of Marble Brook, CENTRAL WATER AND SEWER, sidewalks, secure gated entry, walking distance to common clubhouse with resort style pool, fitness center and playground. Private Pool on the home was built in 2020 with spacious open deck with light grey pavers, electric heat pump for pool, 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, HEDGES ARE ALLOWED ALONG THE FENCE LINE FOR PRIVACY, 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 ensuite 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 is 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.....\$345,000**

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

### 3/2 POOL HOME ON HALF ACRE



Beautifully maintained 3 bedroom 2 bath pool home on a nicely landscaped half acre lot, oak trees for shade, storage shed, quiet low traffic dead end street, metal roof, pavers on oversized driveway and multi level pool deck, new central heat and air in 2019, brand new tankless water heater in 2025, screened front entryway with tile floors, tray ceilings in the living room and master bedroom, ceramic tile floors throughout the entire home, granite tops in kitchen with breakfast bar, large walk in pantry and all appliances, master bedroom with sliders to the pool area, spacious private bath with long vanity, walk in shower and 2 walk in closets, guest bedrooms each with a large walk in closet, guest bath with pool access, indoor laundry room, screen enclosed in ground pool with electric heat pump, plenty of deck space for entertaining, electric roll down storm shutters, excellent location in the Lake Camille area.

**Offered At.....\$409,900**

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