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Congratulations JOHNATHAN TOBLER CLASS OF 2026

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Dear Johnathan Tobler,

Congratulations on your outstanding achievements and the incredible example you continue to set for young leaders in your community. Your dedication, discipline, and commitment to excellence are truly inspiring, and you should be extremely proud of everything you have accomplished so far.

Maintaining a remarkable 4.12 GPA while balancing the demanding responsibilities of being a full-time dual enrolled student athlete at Dunbar High School and Florida Southwestern State College speaks volumes about your determination and work ethic. Excelling both academically and athletically requires focus, sacrifice, and perseverance, and you have demonstrated those qualities at an exceptional level.

Your vision for the future is equally impressive. Pursuing higher education at Morehouse College with plans to major in Civil Engineering and continue into Georgia Institute of Technology's prestigious dual-degree program reflects not only your ambition but also your desire to create meaningful change in the world. Your passion for building stronger communities through innovation, leadership, and service shows maturity far beyond your years.

One of the most admirable aspects of your journey is your commitment to giving back to others. As the Teen Construction and Installation Lead for Tobler Construction, Inc., you have already taken on leadership responsibilities that many adults strive to achieve. Your involvement in youth-driven projects such as The Johnathan Tobler Youth Engineers Lab, in partnership with The Legacy Center of Southwest Florida and Lydia-Joi's Little Libraries, demonstrates your dedication to empowering future generations through education, creativity, and opportunity.

Your technical skills and certifications in AutoCAD, Inventor, Fusion, CNC machining, and 3D printing further highlight your readiness to become a future leader in engineering and construction. These talents, combined with your strong character and leadership abilities, position you to make a lasting impact in your field and in communities everywhere.

In addition to your academic and professional accomplishments, your long list of scholarships and awards is a true testament to your excellence and the respect you have earned from organizations throughout the community. Receiving prestigious honors such as the Morehouse College Benjamin Elijah Mays Presidential Leadership Full Ride Scholarship, along with multiple educational and leadership scholarships, reflects the confidence others have in your future success and leadership potential.

Your volunteer service and extracurricular involvement are equally commendable. Whether serving through Jack & Jill of America, Omega Psi Phi Lamplighters, YoungLife, Hurricane Ian relief efforts, or community outreach initiatives, you consistently demonstrate compassion, leadership, and a genuine commitment to helping others. Your willingness to serve your community while continuing to excel academically and athletically is truly extraordinary.

Johnathan, your journey is already making a powerful difference, and this is only the beginning. Your leadership, vision, intelligence, and determination will continue to open doors and inspire countless others to pursue excellence. As you move forward toward your goals in engineering, higher education, and community leadership, know that your hard work and dedication are being recognized and celebrated by everyone who has had the opportunity to witness your growth.

Congratulations once again on all your accomplishments. The future is incredibly bright for you, and there is no doubt that you will continue to achieve greatness while positively impacting the lives of others along the way.

Wishing you continued success and blessings in all that you do.

The Entire Staff of The SWFL CHRONICLE

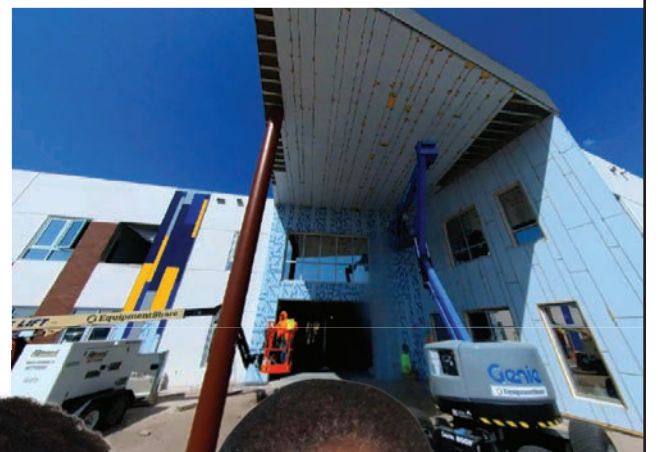


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BRIDGING THE GAP CENTER FOR THE ARTS PRESENTS

In Living Color: A Juneteenth Art Experience

at Historic McCullom Hall

Bridging the Gap Center for the Arts (BTG Arts) invites the community to experience “In Living Color: A Juneteenth Art Experience,” a vibrant pop-up art exhibit celebrating culture, creativity, and community on June 19 from 6:00–9:00 PM at the Historic McCullom Hall. This free, all-ages event will feature visual art, live music, and local vendors in a space deeply rooted in Fort Myers’ cultural history.

At the heart of the evening is Featured Artist Rich Bravo, whose work is known for its bold use of color, expressive style, and ability to capture emotion and movement. Bravo is a mixed-media painter and illustrator whose work melds pop impressionism, surrealism, and chiaroscuro to create evocative, emotionally resonant visuals. With a growing presence in the regional art scene, Bravo brings a dynamic body of work that reflects both contemporary influences and cultural storytelling, making him a compelling highlight of this year’s Juneteenth celebration.

The exhibit will also showcase a diverse lineup of artists whose work spans conceptual art, sculpture, fashion, and mixed media storytelling.

Michael Pinckney, owner of PlexiMedia Group, is a musician and recording artist who has expanded into conceptual art, using found objects, symbolic text, and layered folk-like imagery to explore deeper universal truths through storytelling.

Ryna Sands — dancer, vocalist, actor, and artist — will showcase fashion art through her line, Crochet Couture By Ju, a crochet-designed clothing collection dedicated to the artistry of handcrafted, custom apparel pieces.

Recent FGCU art graduate Cheyanne Lewis developed a passion for creating triangular metal sculptures that highlight the beauty, strength, and resilience of the Black experience in spite of adversity.

Recent FGCU art graduate Ke’Siah Parsons creates layered, sculptural compositions that explore bold color, materiality, and emotional expression while reflecting community, connection, and shared lived experiences.

Guests will enjoy music by DJ Red Dog and a curated selection

of art, food, and drink vendors, creating an immersive and engaging atmosphere for attendees of all ages.

This event is presented in coordination with the Lee County Black History Society, STARS Complex, Dunbar Festival Committee, and Florida Repertory Theatre, as part of a broader weekend of Juneteenth celebrations across the community.

Bridging the Gap Center for the Arts is committed to cultivating artists and enhancing voices by bringing accessible arts programming directly into underserved communities. Through initiatives in theater, visual arts,

and creative expression, BTG Arts works to remove barriers and create meaningful opportunities for connection, growth, and storytelling.

“Hosting this pop-up exhibit at McCullom Hall is especially significant,” said Sonya McCarter, Founder and Executive Director of Bridging the Gap Center for the Arts.

“Once a thriving center for arts, music, and community gatherings, the historic venue holds a legacy of cultural engagement. In Living Color reactivates that spirit—bringing art back into a space where creativity once flourished.”

The event also reflects a growing trend in the arts world: pop-up exhibits in nontraditional spaces. By transforming familiar or historic locations into temporary galleries, organizations like BTG Arts are making art more accessible, inviting, and embedded within the community—meeting people where they are and reimagining how art is experienced.

Sponsor opportunities are available. Those interested in supporting the event or BTG Arts’ ongoing programming are encouraged to contact info@btgart.org.

For more information, follow Bridging the Gap Center for the Arts on social media or visit www.btgart.org.

Media Contact:

Bridging the Gap Center for the Arts info@btgart.org

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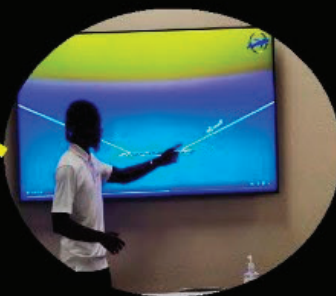
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John Gunter

MAYOR OF
CAPE CORAL

Mayor John Gunter
239-574-0436
jgunter@capecoral.gov

March 2025 Message
from capecoral.gov

Dear Cape Coral Residents,

As we move into May, Cape Coral continues to invest in the infrastructure that keeps our community safe, strong, and moving forward. From roads and drainage to public safety and parks, these efforts support our growing city and impact our quality of life.

I'm excited to share that Jaycee Park is officially open. This project brings new life to one of our most loved waterfront spaces and shows our commitment to recreation. Thank you to our residents for your patience during construction, and to our staff and those who made this project possible.

We are also looking forward to the opening of Tropicana Park, which is another waterfront park. By the time you read this, it may already be open. This new park in NW Cape Coral adds to our growing system of community spaces and gives individuals and families places to gather, play, and enjoy the outdoors.

As hurricane season approaches, being prepared is essential.

I encourage every household to review your plans, check your supplies, and stay informed. Please join us for our annual Hurricane Expo on Saturday, May 30 at 9 a.m. at the German American Club. It's a great way to get helpful information and make sure you're ready for the season.

In addition to parks and preparedness, we are continuing to improve stormwater systems, roads, and utilities across the city. Council aims to help reduce traffic congestion, maintain safety, and keep up with growth. These investments are part of our long-term plan to keep Cape Coral a safe and well-maintained community with the necessary infrastructure.

We are also working to update our Strategic Plan to create a shared vision for our city's future. Strategic Plans help guide decisions and ensure decision makers all moving in a similar direction as Cape Coral continues to grow.

As we begin planning for the Fiscal Year 2027 budget, we will continue to balance careful spending with the need to invest in infrastructure (transportation and utilities), public safety, and economic growth. Your input matters, and I encourage you to stay involved, attend meetings, and share your ideas.

It is an honor to serve as your Mayor. I remain committed to keeping Cape Coral safe and making smart investments that support our community now and for years to come.

Warm regards,

John Gunter

Mayor, Cape Coral Mayor



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Our Children Cannot Wait:

The Literacy Crisis in Lee County Schools

District 4 candidate Gigi Gentile draws on her special education experience to address one of Lee County's most urgent challenges.

Let me tell you about a student I once worked with. I will not use his name, but I will tell you this: he was in the fourth grade when I met him, and he could not read a single sentence independently. Not because he wasn't intelligent. Not because he wasn't trying. But because the early warning signs had been missed, the right interventions had never come, and by the time anyone paid close attention, he was already years behind.

That child's story is not unique. It plays out in classrooms across Lee County every single year.

Florida's literacy data tells a sobering story. And Lee County, despite real efforts and some genuine progress, has continued to struggle with reading proficiency — particularly in the early grades where the foundation is set for everything that follows.

"A child who cannot read by third grade faces an uphill battle for the rest of their education. That is not a statistic. That is a child's future."

As a special education teacher, I understand literacy challenges in a way that goes beyond test scores and data charts. I have seen what happens inside a child when they cannot keep up with their peers. The frustration. The shame. The slow erosion of confidence that, if left unaddressed, can follow a child well into adulthood.

I have also seen what happens when the right support arrives at the right time. It is transformational.

Here is what I will fight for as your District 4 school board representative:

First, full and faithful implementation of Florida's READ Act — the state's science-based, phonics-first literacy framework. The research is clear: structured phonics instruction works, and every Lee County school should be implementing it with fidelity and consistency.

Second, robust early intervention. We cannot wait until third grade to identify struggling readers. We need systematic screening in kindergarten and first grade, followed by targeted tutoring and support before children fall too far behind.

Third, real data transparency. Every family in District 4 deserves to know exactly how their child's school is performing — in clear, accessible, school-by-school information published regularly and publicly.

And fourth, we cannot forget our advanced learners. Academic achievement means raising the floor AND the ceiling. Gifted students deserve as much attention and investment as students who are struggling.

Every child in District 4 deserves to leave school able to read, write, compute, and compete. That is not an aspiration. It is a promise.

Gisele "Gigi" Gentile is a candidate for Lee County School Board, District 4. She is a longtime Lee County resident and former special education teacher. Learn more at www.Gigi4schoolboard.com.



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CHAMPS CAFÉ

SUMMER BREAK SPOT

Charlotte County Public Schools (CCPS) has announced the return of its Champ's Café Summer Break Spot program for 2026, ensuring that children throughout the community continue to have access to nutritious meals during the summer months when school is not in session.



Operating under the theme "Fueling Champions," the program reflects the district's ongoing commitment to supporting the health, well-being, and academic success of local students by providing free meals to eligible children and teenagers.

The Summer Break Spot program will offer complimentary breakfast and lunch to all children ages 18 and younger at participating locations across Charlotte County. Meal services are scheduled to run from June 8 through July 29, although some sites will begin serving meals earlier in June. Through this initiative, families can access healthy, balanced meals at no cost, helping to reduce food insecurity and ensure that children continue receiving proper nutrition throughout the summer break.

The program has proven to be a valuable resource for the community. During the summer of 2025, Charlotte County Public Schools served nearly 50,000 meals through the Champ's Café Summer Feeding Program. This significant number highlights the growing need for accessible meal services when schools are closed. The summer feeding initiative operates in accordance with federal program guidelines, which are designed to provide children with reliable access to nutritious meals during the months when regular school meal programs are unavailable.

One of the most notable additions to the 2026 program is the introduction of a seven-day bulk meal pick-up option. This new service is intended to provide families with greater convenience and flexibility by allowing them to collect an entire week's worth of breakfast and lunch meals in a single visit. The bulk meal option is especially beneficial for working parents, families with transportation challenges, and those who may find it difficult to travel to meal sites every day. By reducing the frequency of trips required to obtain meals, the district hopes to increase participation and improve access for families throughout the county.

To maximize community outreach and accessibility, meals will be distributed through a variety of service models. Families can receive meals through walk-in service at designated schools, public libraries, mobile feeding locations, and neighborhood bulk distribution sites. This broad network of service locations is intended to ensure that children from all areas of Charlotte County have opportunities to participate in the program.

A key component of the summer feeding effort is the Champ's on Wheels Mobile Feeding Bus. The mobile unit will operate Monday

through Friday, bringing meals directly into neighborhoods and community gathering spaces. While some service schedules will be adjusted on select dates during June, the bus will continue to provide an important connection between families and meal resources. Lunch-only service will be available at several stops, including the Port Charlotte Library from 10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., the Mid-County Library from 11:30 a.m. to noon, and Hampton Point Apartments from 12:30 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Several schools throughout the district will also serve as meal distribution sites. Neil Armstrong Elementary School, Charlotte High School, Myakka River Elementary School, and Port Charlotte High School will provide both breakfast and lunch services Monday through Thursday during June. These locations will not offer meal service on Fridays during that month.

Additional meal sites will begin operating on varying schedules. Meadow Park will start serving breakfast and lunch on June 3 and will operate Monday through Friday, including service on June 15. Meanwhile, Baker Center will begin meal service on June 1 and will provide breakfast and lunch Monday through Thursday, along with special Friday service dates on June 5 and June 12.

Families interested in utilizing the new seven-day meal package option can visit designated neighborhood distribution sites between 11:00 a.m. and noon. Weekly meal pack distribution will take place on Mondays at Alfred and Jones Loop Road and on Tuesdays at the Charlotte Fairgrounds. These locations have been selected to make meal pick-up more convenient for families residing in different areas of the county.

It is important for families to note that there will be no meal service on Friday, July 3, in observance of the Independence Day holiday period. Participants should plan accordingly to ensure they have adequate meals during that time.

Charlotte County Public Schools encourages all families to take advantage of this valuable community resource. The district recommends reviewing the latest operating schedules, site locations, and program updates through the official Champ's Café Summer Feeding website before visiting a meal site. By offering free meals at multiple locations and introducing innovative distribution options, the Champ's Café Summer Break Spot program continues to play a critical role in supporting children and families across Charlotte County throughout the summer season.

THE INNATE CIRCLE

by Monique Wooley



She Knows

Having gone through the trenches of unforgiving challenges, she now walks in wisdom, no longer seeking validation from others.

She knows how to speak, when to speak, and when to just listen.

She understands that the foundation of a house is the most valuable part of a home yet it is never seen. Meaning that not everything needs to be shared in order to be understood or appreciated.

When she moves, she moves with grace and without the need to attract attention, but without a word she commands respect. Because she knows that only the Queen has the full ability to move at all angles on a chessboard.

There's wisdom and discipline in her silence. Understanding that no explanation is ever needed. She knows her wisdom may not always be recognized by those who don't possess it or understand it so she stands tall and confident.

She's been compared to diamonds that are built to withstand tremendous pressure and pearls that comes from the ocean locked in the shell of an oyster and even gold that is only found in the depths of the earth. Because neither of these precious jewels is found on the surface, she knows the value is in its rarity.

She understands the complexities of her struggles, her battles, and her bruises because they gave her undeniable strength and are the very reason she's learned to be silent for hearing and healing. She knows that because of her quietness, she's viewed as cold, shy, or even unkind however, she knows her purpose is greater than the approval of mankind.

She doesn't live by societal limitations of being told that if you don't bear all, or all of your heart, your not trustworthy. Because she understands that no matter how much she tries to explain herself they will never understand the kind of wealth she has because her journey takes an unfamiliar path.

She realizes that most people see through reflective lenses therefore can't see beyond their own selfish perspectives.

So she's learned not to live for the understanding of people, but for the understanding of the Most High. She allows her steps to be guided not by hers but by those of the one who created she. She embraced that in the right season, for the right reasons, at the right place, and during the right time she would be granted a blessing. Gifted to her the one who will understand the depths of her soul, accept her flaws, and realize her true worth. The gift that found her knows that she is clothed in strength and in dignity, bound by determination, and rooted in faith.

You see, she patiently waited for the one who's meant to understand her journey and resonate within her testimony and will accept her and passionately, gently embrace all of her bumps, battles, and bruises that have become beauty marks to the one who affectionately captures all the corners of her heart.

To give up or to have settled was never an option because she knows, she knows, she knows Her Worth.



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Paradise Food Tours delivers fun, flavorful, and locally inspired culinary adventures throughout Naples and Bonita Springs. Founded by passionate foodie and guide Liz Valdez, the company began with the area's first taco tour and has grown into a collection of unique, story-driven food experiences that showcase the best of Southwest Florida's restaurant scene.

Guests can choose from a variety of signature tours, including the Naples Authentic Mexican Tour, Naples Pizza Wars Tour, Naples Italian Tour, Experience Bonita Springs, and the newest addition, Feast on 5th—a guided walking tour that highlights the beloved eateries and hidden gems along historic Fifth Avenue South. Each experience features a curated mix of locally owned restaurants, generous tastings, and the stories behind the chefs, cultures, and flavors that make this region special. Some tours include transportation between stops, while others are designed as relaxed walking journeys through Naples' charming neighborhoods.

Perfect for both visitors and locals, Paradise Food Tours offers public tours as well as customizable private outings ideal for celebrations, corporate groups, and team-building events. With a focus on authentic flavors and community connection, these tours are one of the most delicious ways to explore Naples and Bonita Springs.



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Restored Order

BY LISA ESWAY



The order which you build the house matters. What are you seeking first? There is a time and season for everything that's God ordained, There's an order to everything, just like creation... He didn't create man or the animals before there was a place for them to dwell. It would've been out of order.

There are seasons in life where everything feels upside down. Thoughts become chaotic. Emotions become unstable. Relationships become fractured. Spiritual clarity fades. And little by little, what was once meant to protect us begins to collapse under the weight of disorder. Not because God stopped loving us but because anything outside of divine order eventually breaks down under pressure.

Sometimes pain often becomes the leader. Impulses become louder than wisdom. Fear becomes stronger than faith. People or materials become idols. Control replaces surrender. And survival mode takes the throne where God was always meant to be. The destruction is not always immediate.

Sometimes it looks functional at first. But internally, the soul begins unraveling. Peace disappears. Identity becomes distorted. We search for relief in people, substances, approval, or escape, while our spirit quietly cries out for alignment. There must be a repentance... a turning from the things that hurt or destroy. A turning of the will... not my will Lord but Yours for my life. A surrender... an honest surrender. A restoration must take place then proper order will fall onto place.

It is God putting things back where they belong. It becomes first again, everything else begins to heal beneath Him. Your mind no longer rules your spirit. Your emotions no longer dictate your decisions. Your wounds no longer define your identity. Your past no longer has authority over your future.

The beautiful thing about God is that He does not merely repair ruined places. He rebuilds them correctly. I know by my own experience this is what happens... The same life that once carried confusion can become a life marked by peace. The same heart once led by addiction can become led by purpose and usefulness. The same person who lived in emotional chaos can become emotionally grounded, spiritually discerning, and deeply whole.

***"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."* Matthew 6:33**

There is something powerful hidden in this verse. When the first thing is first, everything else finds its place. God is a God of order, not confusion.

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A Man of Their Word

A person who is “a man of their word” is someone you build a level of trust with their character. The truth is can you “trust” they will do what they say they will do. Building a relationship is based on trust. The same is true with God. We can trust that He will do what He says He will do. You can stand on His word to come to pass. It is proven in the Bible with millions of people over the course of thousands of years. What He did for them—He will do for you! We need to be careful to not misplace our trust. We can’t trust government to provide for our needs. We can’t trust even in justice as we have seen many injustices. As a matter of fact, the Miranda rights remind you in part, “anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law”. We can’t trust money as it is constantly decreasing in value based on inflation which is about 3-4% a year. I want to remind you to place your trust in God. He is the only one that will not fail us. He is our provider, healer, protector, and the one and only true living God.

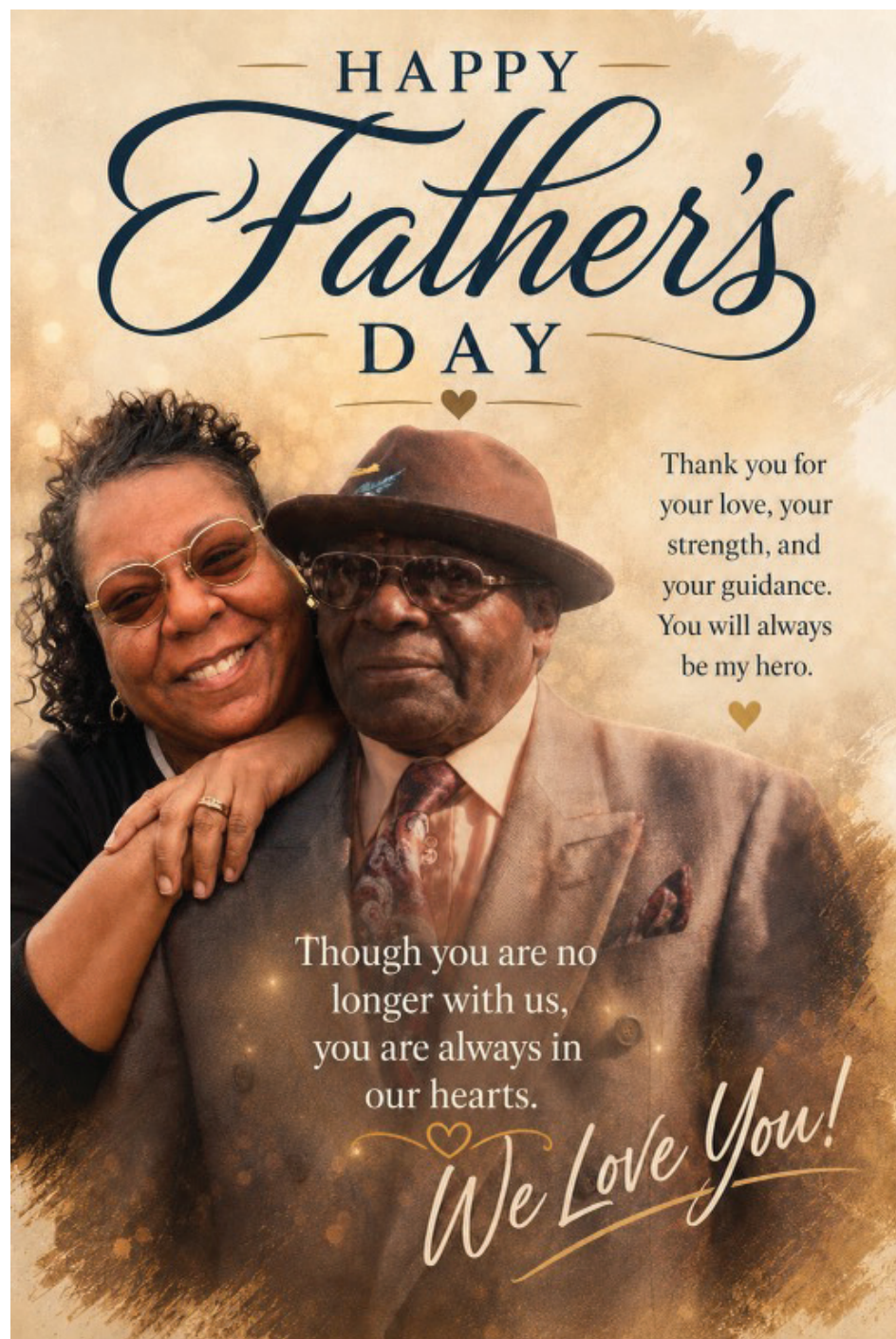
Since relationships are built on trust, we need to be careful of the “words” we say. If we constantly inconsistent with our words, we

may be seen as unstable (James 1:8). Let me remind you that every word we say is recorded in heaven (Job 16:19). Every prayer you pray is constantly in front of the Lord as they are described as incense to the throne of God and collected in bowls (Revelation 5:8).

As we have progressed technology and advanced in artificial intelligence (AI), we need to be even more careful. I have had loved ones that have been scammed for money with scammers using AI to copy a loved one’s voice to say—“I need money for bail, or to receive treatment at a medical facility, or even for college, etc.” AI has been used to even create false content like videos, photos and more. I want to state that AI, as a tool, is good. It can do amazing things like research, data gathering and more. However, I want to advise you about using it for spiritual matters. You may not know the spirit operating AI and therefore, use with caution. This tool is not vested in you personally. A messenger of the Lord is. Let me give you an example, when a messenger delivers a word of God, it is more than the words they are saying; but the spirit that is speaking through them. For example, it is often described as, “It felt like they were just talking to me!”

Words do matter. What you say and what people say to you—matter. Let your words be few (Ecc 5:20). “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh-Luke 6:45.” One way to understand this is that your heart is on parade when you speak. It is so important to be a person who speaks life and not death (Prov 18 21). If you don’t have anything nice to say—don’t say it. Trust can be broken or built with your words. Ask God to help you with your mouth or to bridle your tongue. Pray before you speak. Start practicing today to only speak positive. If you fail, practice again tomorrow and with time, you will start seeing changes, not only in your life--but in those around you. Ask God to come into your heart and to give you a new heart. Give Him control of your life and your mouth. You won’t regret it.

Love,
Pastor Dr. Deb Walsh



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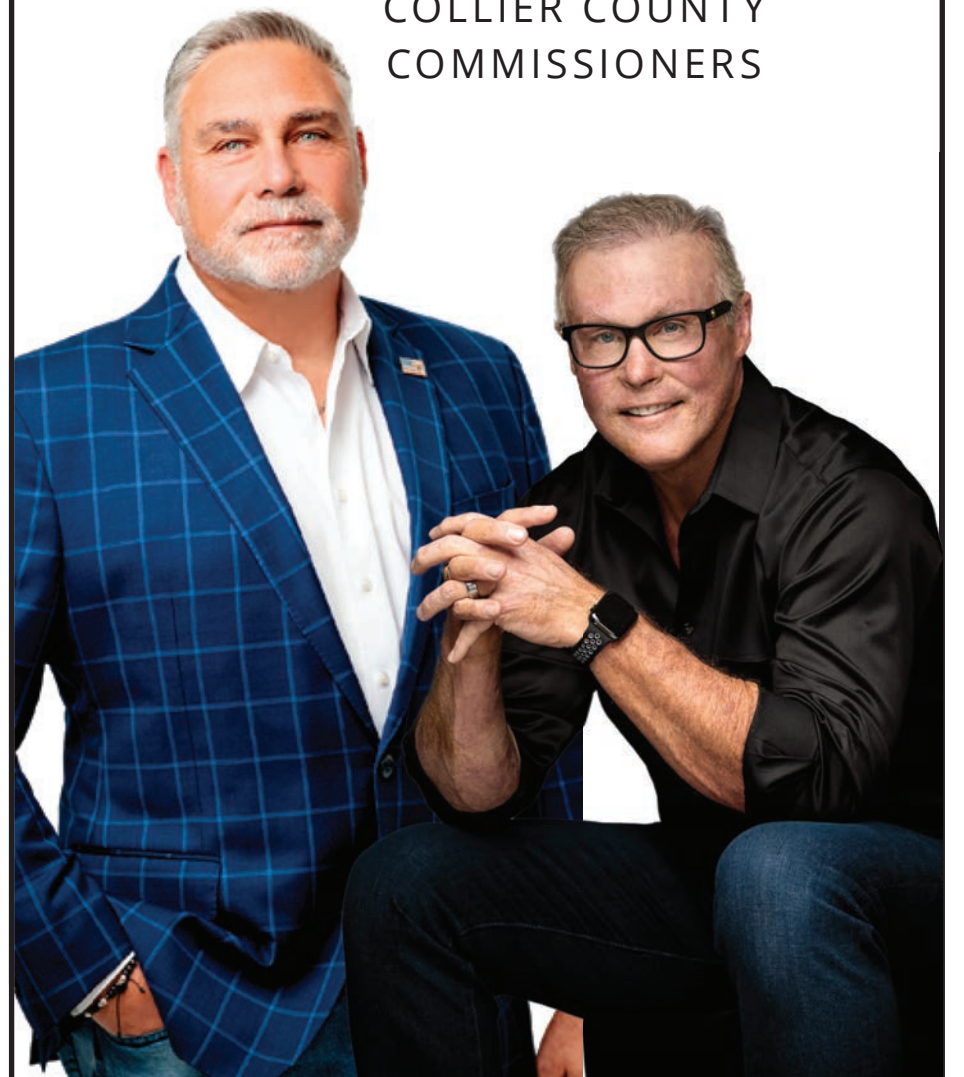
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DEAR SOUTHWEST FLORIDA... LET'S HAVE 'THE TALK'

BY MEL WHITLOCK

Recently the Florida school system has been rocked with several allegations of sexual misconduct involving teachers, coaches, and most recently a band director.

Although these kinds of indiscretions in education have existed for decades, with the 24-hour news cycle and social media, it is common throughout the nation to see a headline relating to an adult in education being accused of predatory behavior on his or her student(s). "They should have known better" is an easy response to any of the incidents regarding sexual misconduct of an educator towards a minor in their supervision, however I do believe it's time for all educational leaders to have "the talk" with their faculty and staff about safeguarding healthy relationships between adults and students in the school building.

INNOCENCE UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY

For almost two decades I have served as an educator and/or athletic coach, and it absolutely abhors me whenever there is a "breaking news" story of a teacher or coach under investigation for sexual misconduct or indecent liberties with a minor. Although there are some 'scum bag' individuals easy to identify within the profession who have been charged or convicted of being predators, there are others who were respected professionals who would have never aroused such a suspicion. Unfortunately, in the court of public opinion only three kinds of people make headlines whenever they are accused of a crime: politicians, entertainers, and educators.

As tempting as it may be to 'cast the first stone,' I still want to remind readers of this op-ed that even teachers and coaches deserve the courtesy of being 'innocent until proven guilty.' In 2023 an article written by Matt DeGroot for the Houston Chronicle titled How a False Allegation Changed a Former Cy-Fair Coach's Life, DeGroot highlighted how a coach lost his career and had his reputation ruined over a false allegation from a female student. Additionally, former Georgia Tech head men's basketball coach, Josh Pastner was a victim of an extortion plot by a woman who threatened to falsely accuse him of sexual assault. For these two reasons, and many others, I encourage readers to allow any allegations of sexual misconduct to have a process of completion before rendering any judgment.

NOT A NEW PHENOMENON

While Mary Kay LeTourneau was making national headlines for her unapologetically sick sexual assault on one of her middle school students in the late 90s, I can remember a former high school coach from my hometown being perp walked out of his classroom over allegations of an inappropriate sexual relationship with one of his students. However, because the incident only garnered local news, and I do not believe the parents pursued any justice, it was summarily 'swept under the rug.'

I would argue that most teachers and coaches have worked with a colleague who has either been suspected, or convicted, of some kind of sexual misconduct involving a minor. One of the most recent incidents here in Florida was only reported because of CS/HB 495: K-12 Public Education was signed by then Governor Rick Scott in 2018, which summarized that a teacher or coach could be charged with sexual assault, even if the victim consented and was 18 years of age. Veteran teachers and coaches have a moral obligation to correct novice teachers and novice coaches whenever there is a recognized potential of the latter crossing personal boundary lines with their students or players.

WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO TO SAFEGUARD THEMSELVES... HAVE THE CONVERSATION!

"They should have known better" is a sensible response whenever there is a report of a teacher or coach being arrested for sexual misconduct involving a minor. However, novice educators are being set up to fail by their post-secondary institutions and their districts through mis-prioritizing this historical problem. I am asking for both school districts and post-secondary training institutions to consider developing curriculum on this topic because 'they should know better' can no longer be the only sufficient response!

Below are five simple steps I believe every teacher and coach should consider about their environment as a supervisor of students and athletes:

1. Always, if possible, keep the door of the classroom open when alone with a student; especially, if it is a student or athlete of the opposite sex
2. When transporting a student alone, make sure the ride is always recorded (recommended for coaches)
3. Avoid having social media interaction with current students and/or players
4. Removing oneself from any social setting where current students and/or athletes frequently attend
5. Never disclose relationship matters in detail to students and/or athletes

Unless someone has a historical pattern of predatory behavior prior to entering the education profession, very few, if any, teachers or coaches who have been convicted of sexual misconduct towards students start their careers with the intention of being a child sexual assaulter. Some convicted teachers or coaches turned sexual predators have blamed failed adult relationships, persistent student-initiated flirtation, or being 'caught in the moment' as reasons for their indiscretion. However, there is no excusable reason for an adult in a supervisory role to sexually abuse and violate the most innocent of our society. If the worst outcome of my five suggestions is nothing, then so be it; nonetheless, educational leaders having these discussions in their trainings might prevent a teacher or coach from losing their career, or worse, their freedom.

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THE CITY OF NAPLES America 250 Student Essay Contest



MAYOR TERESA LEE HEITMANN
CITY OF NAPLES
Mayorheitmann@naplesgov.com | 239-213-1000

This week, I had the privilege of celebrating some of the brightest young voices in our community during the City of Naples' America 250 Student Essay Contest recognition ceremony. As we prepare to commemorate America's 250th anniversary, this event reminded all of us that the future of our nation is in thoughtful, capable, and compassionate hands.

Students from five schools across the City of Naples and homeschoolers who reside within the City were invited to reflect on what America means to them, its history, values, and future. The response from our students was extraordinary. Their essays demonstrated not only strong writing skills, but also a deep understanding of freedom, citizenship, civic responsibility, and hope for the next generation.

One of the most inspiring parts of the morning was hearing directly from our first-place winners as they read their essays aloud before the City Council, families, teachers, principals, and community members. Their words reflected sincerity, patriotism, and a genuine appreciation for the opportunities and responsibilities that come with being American.

We were proud to recognize our:

FIRST PLACE WINNERS:

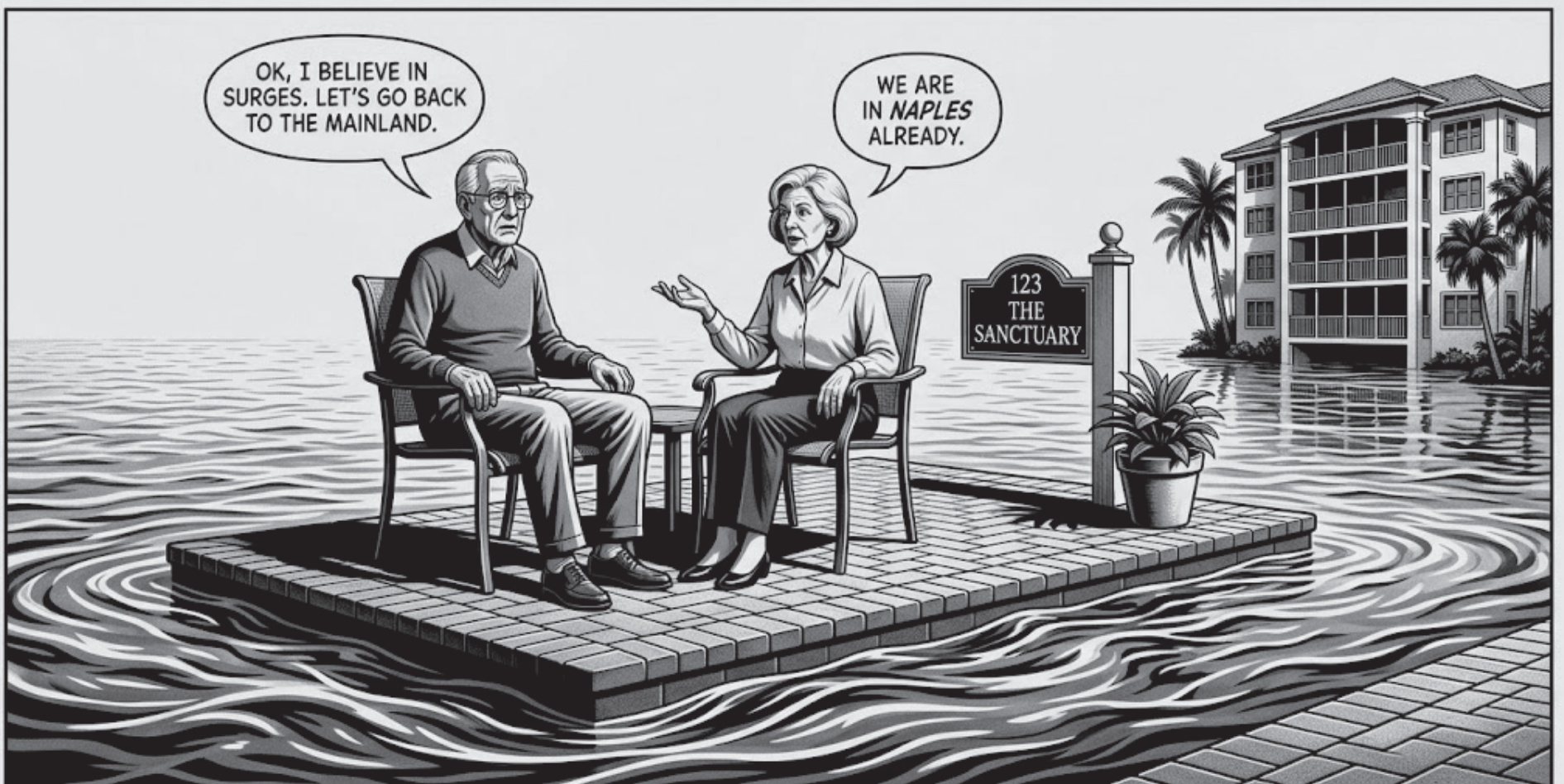
- **Ansley Brown, My American Hero, Sea Gate Elementary School, 4th Grade**
- **Caleb Vergara, Land of Freedom, Because of the Brave, Home School, 6th Grade**
- **Octavio Hester, My Favorite Place in America, Naples High School, 11th Grade**

We also honored several outstanding students who received **HONORABLE MENTIONS:**

- **Claire Al Kurdi, Freedom is Important, St. Ann School, 3rd Grade**
- **Adrianna Diedrich, What Makes America Special to You?, St. Ann School, 3rd Grade**
- **Kaitlyn Maya, Thank You Susan B. Anthony, Lake Park Elementary School, 5th Grade**

This celebration would not have been possible without the incredible support of our teachers, principals, parents, judges, donors, staff, and community partners who poured so much time and care into making this event meaningful for our

THE SANCTUARY AT PELICAN BAY



students. I am especially grateful to the educators and school leaders throughout the City of Naples who encouraged students to participate, guided them through the writing process, and helped foster thoughtful conversations about patriotism, civic responsibility, and the American spirit in their classrooms.

A special thank you goes to our volunteer judges for the thoughtful time and attention they dedicated to reviewing each essay submission. We were honored to have respected community members serve in this role, including longtime Naples historian Lila Zuck, Linda Epstein of the American Association of University Women Greater Naples Chapter, and Joe LoGrippe, founder of Naples NICE. Each judge brought a deep love for our community and a genuine appreciation for the voices of our young people.

I also want to recognize the generous donors and community partners whose support helped make this celebration so memorable for our students. Through their generosity, first-place winners received a commemorative trophy, a letter of recognition from Mayor Heitmann, a \$250 gift card, a \$50 gift card to Slice, and a copy of Naples: A Second Paradise. Honorable Mentions received a medal, a letter of recognition from Mayor Heitmann, a \$50 gift card to Gelato's, and two passes to the Naples Zoo including giraffe feedings.

I want to extend a special thank you to Lila Zuck, who generously donated copies of her book not only to the first-place winners, but also to their teachers and all five participating schools' libraries so students across our community can continue learning about Naples' rich history and unique character.

Thank you as well to our additional supporters, including an anonymous donor, Slice, Gelato's, and the Naples Zoo, for helping recognize and celebrate the voices of these talent-ed students. These thoughtful contributions reflected the community-wide support behind this initiative and reinforced to our students that their hard work and ideas matter.

What stood out most to me throughout the event was the sincerity behind every essay. When these students submitted their entries, there were no prizes or awards announced, only the opportunity to have their voices heard and to be recognized during a City Council meeting. They participated because they genuinely care about their country, their community, and the future they will help shape. This spirit of civic engagement is exactly what makes Naples so special.

As we continue celebrating America 250, I look forward to creating even more opportunities for students to share their voices, ideas, and vision for the future. Their passion, thoughtfulness, and love for community give me great confidence not only in the future of Naples, but in the future of our nation as well.

God Bless the City of Naples, and God Bless America.

Teresa Lee Heitmann, Mayor



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Less than a year after its high-profile launch, Florida's border enforcement experiment, the South Florida Detention Facility or "Alligator Alcatraz," has crashed and burned. Touted by Governor Ron DeSantis and Representative Byron Donalds as a tough, fiscally responsible migrant deterrent, the operation became a textbook example of political overreach meeting logistical and financial catastrophe. The abrupt June 2026 shutdown follows months of chaos, unpaid debt for Florida taxpayers, and a definitive legal defeat over civil rights and

catastrophic contractor insolvency, leaving vendors unpaid and halting supply networks and facility maintenance. Exposed ICE contractors are now positioned to sue the state for massive breach-of-contract damages. Federal courts simultaneously stripped the site of legal viability through injunctions over civil rights and environmental violations. The remote, toxic location also decimated the workforce. Guards at the isolated Dade-Collier airport wasteland faced punishing heat and swarms of mosquitoes. Aggressive,

to halt the discharge of chemically contaminated wastewater, arguing that relentless light pollution from 24-hour security illumination infringed on its sovereign hunting rights. Attorneys from Earthjustice and the Center for Biological Diversity proved that this pervasive light pollution and unpermitted infrastructure dismantled critical habitats, threatened the region's dwindling panther population, and forced an immediate end to the failed project.

The closure of Alligator Alcatraz was a political embarrassment to Secretary

The closure of Alligator Alcatraz was a
POLITICAL EMBARRASSMENT
to Secretary Noem and Trump, which has led to her
being sidelined to an invented agency.

environmental negligence.

The political chest-thumping surrounding the July 2025 launch has degraded into rapid damage control. DeSantis, who championed its hostile footprint in the Everglades as an unyielding deterrent, has inverted his narrative, now claiming the encampment was temporary. The closure stems from severe financial bleeding, costing an unsustainable \$1.2 million per day. The state expected federal reimbursement for the \$600 million spent on operations, but Washington refused to pay, forcing Florida taxpayers to absorb the loss. This fiscal strain triggered

continuous mosquito spraying exposed personnel to hazardous chemical vectors, compounding a volatile internal culture—reports detailed operational rot and physical brawls. The collapse left local ICE personnel and emergency management staff stranded and exposed to personal liability.

Local and national civil rights and environmental groups banded together to sue Florida. Friends of the Everglades Executive Director Eve Samples exposed financial underreporting, with internal spending projections hitting \$1.4 billion. The Miccosukee Tribe litigated

Noem and Trump, which has led to her being sidelined to an invented agency. It is a fiscal and environmental disaster. After burning through \$1.2 million per day, the facility leaves behind hundreds of millions in state debt, exposed contractors ready to sue, and legally vulnerable local personnel. Most critically, the project failed because it ignored fundamental environmental and constitutional law, with relentless light pollution and chemical spraying harming ancestral Miccosukee lands and the Florida panther population.

Bebe has a Plan.

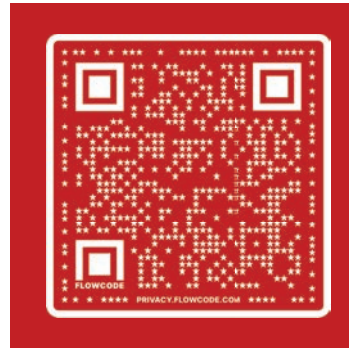


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ETF'S - a simple and smart way to Invest

BY MCKINLEY G. WILLIAMS

I wanted to share some thoughts with you about investing, especially about something called **EXCHANGE TRADED FUNDS**, or **ETFs**. Many people hear complicated financial terms and immediately feel confused or nervous. The good news is that ETFs are actually one of the simplest and smartest ways for ordinary people to invest money over time.

An ETF is basically a basket of investments. Instead of buying shares of just one company, an ETF allows you to own small pieces of many different companies at once. Some ETFs include hundreds or even thousands of companies. This is important because it spreads out your risk.

For example, imagine you put all your money into one company and that company struggles or goes out of business. You are up the creek without a paddle. You could lose a large amount of your investment. But if your money is spread across many companies through an ETF, one company performing badly will not hurt your investment as much. This is called *diversification*, and it is one of the biggest advantages of ETFs. Especially for beginners.

Another reason ETFs are a good investment is because they are simple to buy and sell. ETFs trade on the stock market just like regular stocks. *You can buy them through most investment accounts, retirement accounts, or online brokerages. This makes them very convenient for beginners and experienced investors alike.*

ETFs are also known for having low costs. Many mutual funds charge high management fees because professional managers actively choose investments. ETFs, especially index ETFs, usually cost much less because they simply follow a market index like the S&P 500. Lower fees are very important because high fees can slowly eat away at your profits over time. Even a small difference in fees can make a huge difference after many years of investing.

One of the best things about ETFs is that they allow everyday people to invest in the overall economy. Historically, stock markets have grown over long periods of time. While markets go up and down in the short term, they have generally

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. ETFs Provide Instant Diversification
2. They Trade Like Stocks
3. Costs Are Often Lower
4. There Are ETFs for Almost Everything
5. Not All ETFs Carry the Same Risk



**Remember
it's about
"time in the
market"**

**NOT "timing
the market."**

increased in value over decades. By investing in broad market ETFs, people can participate in that long-term growth without trying to guess which individual stocks will succeed.

Trying to pick winning stocks can be difficult, even for professional investors. Many experts fail to consistently beat the market. ETFs remove a lot of that stress because you are not depending on one company or one decision. Instead, you are investing in a wide group of businesses that grow together over time.

ETFs can also help people stay emotionally disciplined. When investors buy individual stocks, they may panic when prices fall or become overly excited when prices rise. This can lead to poor decisions like selling during market downturns. Since ETFs are diversified, they often feel less risky and can encourage people to stay invested for the long term, which is usually the best strategy.

Another advantage is flexibility. There are ETFs for almost every type of investment. Some focus on large American companies, while others invest in international markets, bonds, technology, healthcare, energy, or dividend-paying companies. This gives investors the ability to build a portfolio that matches their goals and comfort level.

For retirement savings, ETFs are especially useful. Many people regularly invest a small amount every month into ETFs through retirement accounts. Over time, this creates the power of compound growth. Compound growth means your money earns returns, and then those returns begin

earning returns too. Over many years, even small monthly investments can grow into substantial savings.

For example, someone who invests consistently over 20 or 30 years may build significant wealth, even if they never earn a huge salary. The key is patience and consistency. ETFs make this easier because they are affordable and easy to manage.

ETFs are also transparent. Most ETFs clearly show what investments they hold, so investors know where their money is going. This transparency can give people confidence and help them better understand their investments.

Of course, no investment is completely risk-free. ETF values can go down during market downturns, recessions, or economic uncertainty. Investors must be prepared for temporary declines. However, many financial experts believe that long-term investing in diversified ETFs is one of the safest and most reliable ways to build wealth over time.

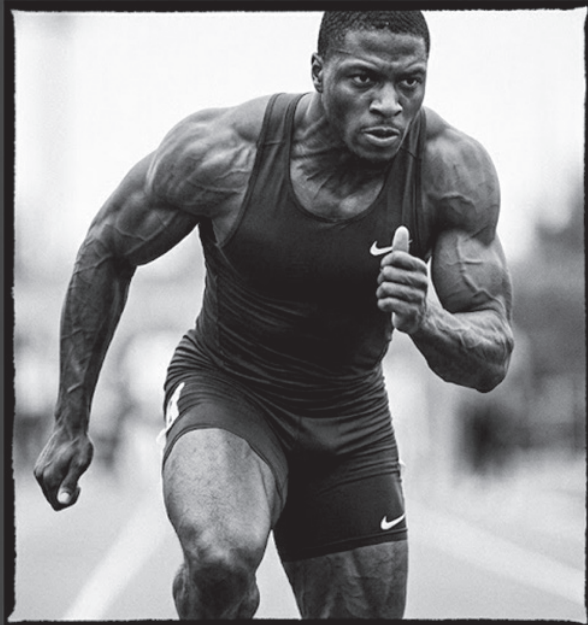
One important lesson about investing is that time in the market is usually more important than trying to perfectly time the market. In other words, consistently staying invested for many years is often more successful than constantly buying and selling based on short-term news. ETFs are ideal for this long-term approach because they are designed for steady, diversified investing.

In my opinion, ETFs are one of the best investment tools available today because they combine simplicity, low costs, diversification, and long-term growth potential.

They make investing accessible to regular people who may not have advanced financial knowledge or large amounts of money to start with.

The earlier someone begins investing in ETFs, the more time their money has to grow. Even small investments made consistently can become meaningful over the years. While there will always be market ups and downs, patient investors who stay focused on the long term are often rewarded. Remember it's about "time in the market" NOT "timing the market."

I hope this explanation helps make ETFs easier to understand. Investing does not need to be complicated, and ETFs offer a practical and sensible way for many people to build financial security for the future.



MARVIN BRACY-WILLIAMS - TRACK SPRINTER



MEGAN ROMANO - ELITE SWIMMER

Do Performance-Enhancing Drugs Prolong Athletic Careers?

BY BEBE KANTER

The inaugural Enhanced Games, scheduled for May 2026 at Resorts World Las Vegas, shifts the performance-enhancing drug (PED) debate from temporary performance spikes to athletic longevity. Operating outside World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) jurisdiction, the event legalizes medically supervised pharmacology to test whether chemical intervention can extend the operational lifespan of aging or sanctioned athletes.

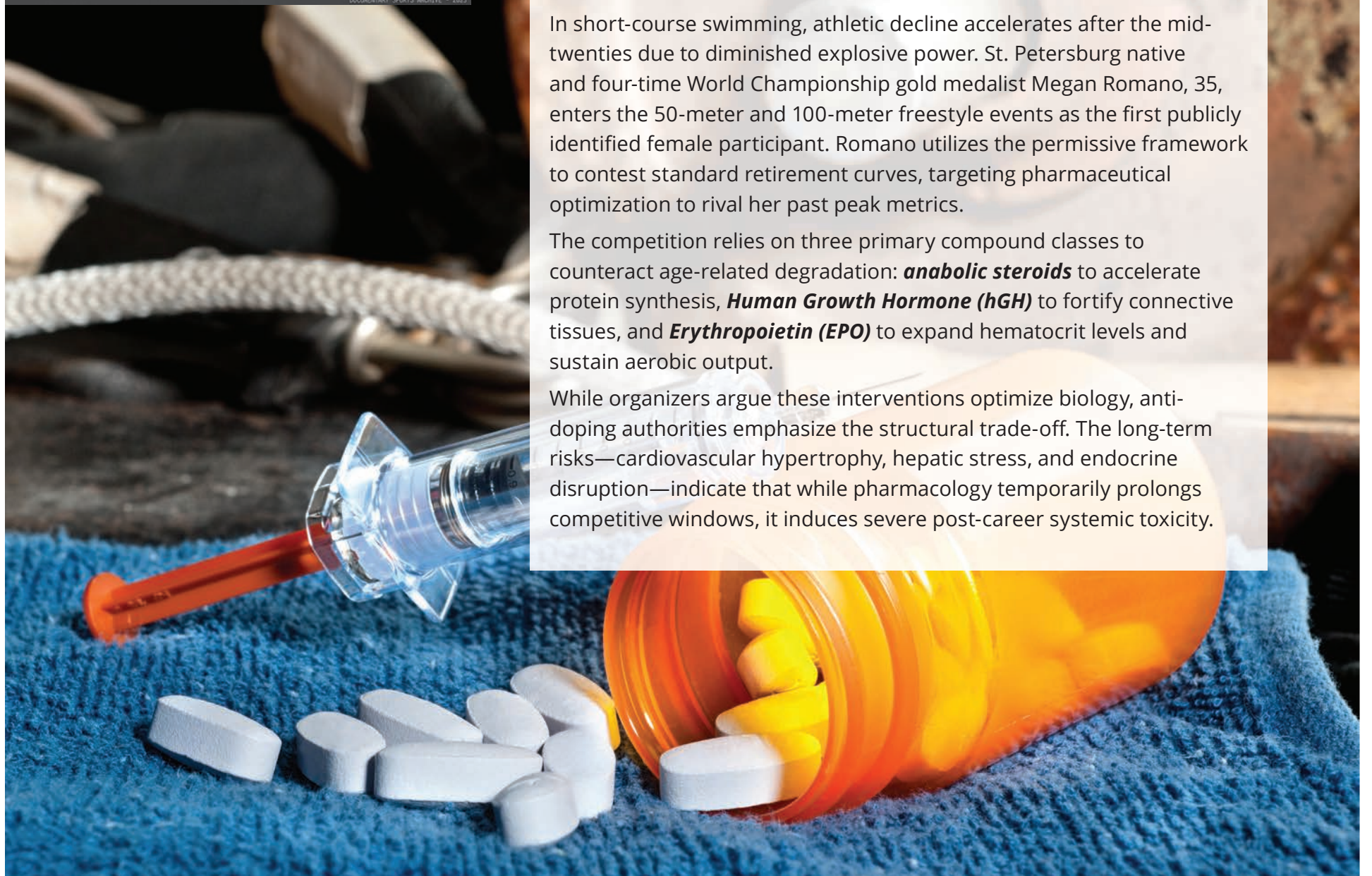
The roster features two Florida natives whose trajectories challenge traditional retirement timelines: sprinter Marvin Bracy-Williams and swimmer Megan Romano.

For many elite competitors, career termination stems from regulatory sanctions rather than biological exhaustion. Marvin Bracy-Williams, an Orlando native and 2022 World Athletics Championship silver medalist, is serving a 45-month U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) suspension through November 2028. Under traditional frameworks, this enforced inactivity would compel the 32-year-old into permanent retirement. Enhanced Games offers an alternative to administrative closure, helps you stay competitive, and can lead to multi-million-dollar compensation.

In short-course swimming, athletic decline accelerates after the mid-twenties due to diminished explosive power. St. Petersburg native and four-time World Championship gold medalist Megan Romano, 35, enters the 50-meter and 100-meter freestyle events as the first publicly identified female participant. Romano utilizes the permissive framework to contest standard retirement curves, targeting pharmaceutical optimization to rival her past peak metrics.

The competition relies on three primary compound classes to counteract age-related degradation: **anabolic steroids** to accelerate protein synthesis, **Human Growth Hormone (hGH)** to fortify connective tissues, and **Erythropoietin (EPO)** to expand hematocrit levels and sustain aerobic output.

While organizers argue these interventions optimize biology, anti-doping authorities emphasize the structural trade-off. The long-term risks—cardiovascular hypertrophy, hepatic stress, and endocrine disruption—indicate that while pharmacology temporarily prolongs competitive windows, it induces severe post-career systemic toxicity.



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are living in a time where it feels like everybody is being pulled apart. Families are strained, communities are divided, churches are under pressure, and social media constantly pushes people further into disagreement. Yet in the middle of all the noise, confusion, and conflict, there is still one thing powerful enough to bring people back together: the presence of God. Psalm 133:1 reminds us, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." These words were originally sung by worshippers traveling together to Jerusalem, celebrating the beauty of people from different backgrounds coming together as one. Even then, unity was not always easy, but it was always necessary.

David opens the passage with excitement, almost as if he wants people to stop everything and pay attention to something special. He describes unity as both "good" and "pleasant." In other words, unity reflects the heart of God and creates an atmosphere filled with peace, joy, and purpose. The word "brethren" goes beyond family ties and points to a larger community of believers connected by faith, love, and shared purpose. David encourages people not just to visit unity occasionally, but to dwell in it and live in it daily. In a culture where people are quick to disconnect, cancel, or isolate themselves, this message challenges us to stay connected, pray together, worship together, and support one another through every season of life.

Psalm 133 goes on to compare unity to the oil poured over Aaron the priest, symbolizing the anointing and blessing of God flowing freely among His people. It also compares unity to the refreshing dew of Mount Hermon bringing life to dry land. The message is clear: where unity exists, God sends renewal, healing, strength, and fresh vision. Many of us are searching for peace, breakthrough, and hope, but sometimes the answer is found in reconnecting with one another and returning to God together. The truth is, we are stronger together than we are apart. Previous generations survived hardship because they stayed unified in faith, prayer, and perseverance. Now it is our turn to carry that same spirit forward. Because when people come together in God's presence, burdens become lighter, faith becomes stronger, and lives can truly be changed. Unity still matters and there is still power in being "Unified In His Presence."

With Love, Pastor Demetirus Thomas
St. Mary Baptist Church of Punta Gorda



*Pastor Demetrius Thomas
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WHY SENIOR CITIZENS SHOULD DATE AND NOT BE CELIBATE



BY VERNON BROWN THE DUNBAR SHADE TREE PHD.

First of all, congratulations! You are a Senior Citizen. You have survived decades of life, work, family drama, fashion trends that should never have happened, and technology that now requires a password, a verification code, and apparently a blood sample just to check your email.

You have earned wisdom, experience, and the right to tell younger generations, "Back in my day..." at least three times per conversation.

However, I write today regarding a matter of national importance: dating. Now this is what all of us seniors think about, but don't talk about.

So I'm gonna tell you specifically, why senior citizens should continue dating and not retreat into a life of romantic hibernation.

Now, some of you may be thinking, "At my age, why bother?"

To which I reply: "At your age, why stop?"

Dating in your senior years is like finding bonus levels in a video game. You already completed the hard part. You've paid mortgages, raised children, endured awkward office parties, and survived countless family vacations where nobody could agree on a restaurant.

Compared to that, dinner with a pleasant companion is easy.

Let's consider the advantages.

First, dating keeps life interesting.

Without dating, your biggest source of excitement might become arguing with the pharmacy about prescription refills or trying to remember where you put your reading glasses while they're sitting on top of your head.

Dating adds suspense.

Will they call?

Will they laugh at your jokes?

Will they also need reading glasses to read the menu?

Nobody knows!

It's thrilling, because all kinds of stuff goes through your head.

Second, dating proves that attraction doesn't have an expiration date.

The greeting card industry would have us believe romance belongs exclusively to people under thirty who run on beaches in slow motion.

Nonsense. That's a bunch of bull. You can walk slowly with someone and trust me; it's just as romantic.

Real romance is two people comparing blood pressure medications and discovering they both enjoy the same television programs.

Young couples exchange playlists.

Senior couples exchange cardiologist recommendations.

That's maturity.

And frankly, it seems more practical.

Another excellent reason to date is companionship.

At a certain age, you've accumulated enough stories to fill several libraries.

Someone should hear them.

The grandchildren pretend to listen, but they're secretly looking at their phones. Everything you say is going in one ear and out the other as they post and text away.

A dating partner, on the other hand, may actually appreciate hearing about the time gasoline cost less than a cup of coffee or how televisions once required getting up from the couch to change channels. I also remember when kids were the remote control, because we'd have them change the channel for us.

Those stories are historical treasures.

Dating also provides valuable exercise.

Think about it.

You get dressed up.

You go out.

You walk through restaurants.

You dance occasionally.

You spend ten minutes getting in and out of a car.

That's practically a fitness program.

In fact, if someone could package dating as a workout routine, insurance companies would probably cover it.

Then there is the matter of flirting.

Many people mistakenly assume flirting is reserved for the young.

Absolutely not.

Flirting improves with age.

Young people flirt by posting mysterious photos online and waiting for reactions.

Seniors flirt with confidence.

You know exactly who you are.

You don't need filters.

You've already lived through enough nonsense to recognize a good person when you meet one.

Also, compliments become far more meaningful.

At twenty-five, saying, "You look amazing" is nice.

At seventy-five, saying, "You look amazing" may require stronger glasses and complete sincerity.

That makes it priceless.

Let's also discuss one overlooked benefit of dating: having a designated person to complain with.

Life presents endless opportunities for mutual grumbling.

The weather.

The price of groceries.

The television volume that somehow changes itself.

Kids who text instead of calling.

A romantic partner doubles your complaining efficiency while cutting loneliness in half.

It's a remarkable arrangement.

Now, some may argue that celibacy offers peace and quiet.

True.

But so does a library.

Human beings are social creatures.

We thrive on connection, laughter, affection, and occasionally having someone remind us that we've worn two different shoes to dinner.

Dating provides all of that.

Furthermore, modern senior dating has become wonderfully practical.

Nobody is trying to impress anyone with six-pack abs or sports cars.

The questions are more important.

Do you enjoy breakfast?

Can you tolerate my favorite game show?

Would you like to split a dessert because neither of us should eat the whole thing?

These are the foundations of lasting relationships.

And let's be honest.

The senior dating pool may actually be better than the younger one.

People are generally more honest.

Nobody has time for elaborate games.

If someone likes you, they'll tell you.

If they don't, they'll probably tell you that too.

Efficiency is one of the great gifts of aging.

Of course, dating doesn't necessarily mean searching for a soulmate.

It can simply mean enjoying another person's company.

Having coffee together.

Sharing meals.

Attending concerts.

Visiting museums.

Laughing about how neither of you can remember why you walked into a room.

Friendship and romance often overlap beautifully.

Both enrich life.

Both make ordinary days more enjoyable.

Most importantly, dating reminds us that life remains full of possibilities.

Age may add candles to the birthday cake, but it doesn't extinguish curiosity, affection, humor, or the desire to connect with others.

Those qualities remain wonderfully alive.

So, dear senior citizens, I encourage you to embrace romance with enthusiasm.

Go on dates.

Accept invitations.

Share conversations.

Hold hands.

Tell stories.

Laugh loudly.

Order dessert.

Flirt shamelessly.

And remember that happiness is not reserved for the young.

If anything, you've earned it more than anyone.

After all, if life has taught us anything, it's that opportunities should be seized when they appear.

Especially if they come with good company and an early-bird dinner special.

With admiration, encouragement, and the sincere hope that someone charming buys you coffee soon,

A Supporter of Senior Romance

P.S. If anyone tells you that dating is only for young people, simply smile and remind them that experience beats inexperience every single time.

ASHLEY TURNER:

How a Hometown Leader is Shaping Public Safety, Trust and Resilience in Charlotte County



Charlotte County's 40 Under 40 program recognizes young professionals who are not only building successful careers, but also strengthening the fabric of the community. These are the leaders who grow here, lead here, and give back. Ashley Turner is one of those leaders. Ashley Turner, 40 Under 40

A Charlotte County native and graduate of Charlotte County Public Schools who continued her education at Liberty University, Ashley represents the kind of full-circle journey that defines Careers on the Coast. Her path reflects a powerful reality. Young professionals can leave to gain experience, return home, and build meaningful, impactful careers right here in Charlotte County.

From youth sports at Harold Avenue Regional Park Recreation Center to helping lead crisis communications during hurricanes, her story is rooted in place, purpose, and community.

A FOUNDATION BUILT IN CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Growing up in Charlotte County meant more than just living here. It meant belonging.

Ashley describes her childhood as one rooted in connection. The same teachers who taught her parents stood in her classrooms. The same fields and gyms where she played sports became the foundation for lifelong friendships and discipline.

From Friday night lights at Port Charlotte High School to long weekends traveling for basketball and volleyball tournaments, those early experiences shaped her work ethic, resilience, and team-first mindset.

That sense of community never left. Ashley Turner, 40 Under 40 Even after leaving for college and spending time out of state, what was meant to be a temporary return quickly became something more permanent. Opportunity, purpose, and connection brought her back and kept her here.

Today, that decision defines her career.

FROM CREATIVE ROOTS TO CRISIS COMMUNICATION LEADER

Ashley's journey with Charlotte County began in 2018 as a graphic specialist. What followed was not just career growth, but personal discovery.

Each role she stepped into helped shape her into the leader she is today. Now, as Public Information Officer for Charlotte County Public Safety, she operates at the intersection of communication, emergency response, and community trust. Her role is critical. Ashley Turner, 40 Under 40

She serves as the voice the public relies on during some of the most stressful and uncertain moments. From hurricanes to fires to public safety emergencies, Ashley ensures that information is not only accurate and timely, but human.

That work has not gone unnoticed.

She was recently named Public Information Officer of the Year by the Florida Fire Chiefs Association, a statewide recognition that reflects both her leadership and her impact.

But for Ashley, the recognition means something deeper. It represents showing up when it matters most.

LEADING THROUGH CRISIS WITH CLARITY AND COMPASSION

Crisis communication is not just about speed. It is about trust. Ashley approaches every emergency with one question in mind: "If my family were on the other side of this message, what would they need to know to stay safe?"

That perspective drives everything she does. Ashley Turner, 40 Under 40

Her ability to balance accuracy, urgency, and empathy has been shaped through real experience, including multiple hurricane responses and deployments to assist other communities in crisis.

One of her most defining leadership lessons came early in her career when she chose not to speak up on messaging that lacked empathy. The public response confirmed her instincts and changed her leadership approach forever.

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*Sunday Morning Worship:
8:00am, Contemplative Rite I | 10:00am Rite II*

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ASHLEY TURNER: *continued from page 12*

Now, she leads differently.

She creates space for feedback, encourages collaboration, and ensures that every message reflects both facts and humanity.

ROOTED IN COMMUNITY, DRIVEN BY CONNECTION

Ashley Turner, 40 Under 40

For Ashley, public safety is not just about response. It is about relationships.

Whether she is helping a child try on a firefighter helmet at a community event or engaging with families at outreach programs like Santa's Pancake Breakfast, she is building trust long before emergencies happen.

Those moments matter.

They shape how residents see public safety and how comfortable they feel asking for help when they need it most.

Her work reflects a larger truth about Charlotte County.

This is a place where relationships drive results, where leadership is accessible, and where community is not just a concept, but a daily experience.

A COUNTY WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

Ashley's story is not unique in Charlotte County. That is what makes it powerful.

She describes the region as a place where young professionals are given real responsibility early in their careers. A place where leaders are approachable, mentorship is encouraged, and innovation is supported. Ashley Turner, 40 Under 40

Most importantly, it is a place where the work matters.

Here, you can see the impact of your efforts. You can feel the difference you are making in the lives of your neighbors, your friends, and your community.

That is what keeps people here.

That is what builds leaders.

VOLUNTEERISM AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

For Ashley Turner, service does not stop when the workday ends.

Her commitment to Charlotte County extends beyond her role in public safety and into the spaces where community is built in quieter, more personal ways.

A proud graduate of Charlotte County Public Schools and Liberty University, Ashley's journey reflects the strength of the region's local talent pipeline. Like many young professionals, she left to pursue opportunities. Ultimately, she returned home, where she found not only career

growth, but purpose.

Ashley Turner, 40 Under 40 Today, she is paying that forward.

Ashley has spent time coaching youth basketball at Harold Avenue Recreation Center, the same place where she first discovered her love for the game as a child. That gave her the opportunity to mentor the next generation. She helped young athletes build confidence, discipline, and a sense of belonging in the same community that shaped her.

Her involvement also extends into education, where she serves on an academic advisory board, helping guide students as they prepare to enter the workforce. By sharing real-world insight and experience, she helps ensure students understand that meaningful, impactful careers are not something they have to leave home to find.

This is what Careers on the Coast represents. It is not just about jobs. It is about creating pathways where students can grow up here, get educated here, and return to build careers that matter. Ashley's story is a clear example of that cycle in action. Ashley Turner, 40 Under 40

She also plays an active role in community outreach events, from public safety education initiatives to family-centered gatherings like Santa's Pancake Breakfast. These moments help build trust long before emergencies happen. They also reinforce the connection between public service and the people it supports.

For Ashley, volunteerism is not about recognition.

It is about showing up, investing in others, and strengthening the community that continues to invest in her.

And in Charlotte County, that kind of full-circle leadership is exactly what turns local roots into lasting impact.

MENTORSHIP, GROWTH, AND LOOKING AHEAD

Ashley credits much of her growth to strong mentors and meaningful relationships, both locally and across the nation.

She now carries that forward by mentoring others, creating opportunities for young professionals, and helping them step into roles they may not yet feel ready for.

Her vision for the future is simple but powerful.

It is not about titles. It is about impact.

She hopes to continue strengthening trust, supporting communities through difficult moments, and helping others grow into confident leaders.

Her legacy, she says, is not about

JUST FOR FUN

Favorite music on repeat: Luke Combs, Morgan Wallen, Cody Johnson, Parker McCollum, plus early 2000s throwbacks like the Jonas Brothers, Justin Bieber, Usher, and Kelly Clarkson

Favorite local restaurant: Carmelo's for the memories and Zoet's for family dinners

Perfect day off: Farmers market in Punta Gorda or Babcock Ranch, followed by time outdoors, on the water or at the beach, ending the day with friends at Celtic Ray

Hidden talent to learn: Playing the guitar

Fun fact: She's traveled to 26 states, lived in California for a summer, and loves exploring national parks

Dream vibe: Mountains, snow, desert views, proving paradise isn't always tropical

Advice to her younger self: Be bold, trust your voice, and lead with empathy

recognition.

It is about people feeling supported, prepared, and seen.

MORE THAN A CAREER, A COMMITMENT TO HOME

Ashley Turner's story is one of full-circle leadership. Ashley Turner, 40 Under 40

From a young athlete growing up in Charlotte County to a trusted voice during emergencies, she embodies what it means to serve with purpose.

Her journey reflects something bigger than one career path. It represents a growing reality for the region's workforce.

Students who are educated here can return. Young professionals can build careers here. Leaders can rise here.

Through her work in public safety, her investment in the next generation, and her deep connection to this community, Ashley is proof that opportunity in Charlotte County is not something you have to search for elsewhere.

It is already here.

And for those looking to build a life, a career, and a lasting impact, Charlotte County is not just a place to start.

It is a place to stay, to grow, and to lead.



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