

SWFL CHRONICLE

SERVING CHARLOTTE, LEE & COLLIER COUNTIES | AUGUST 2026

WHO WILL LEAD US OUT OF THE POLITICAL WILDERNESS?



★ ★ ★ *You're Invited!* ★ ★ ★
COMMUNITY MEET & GREET
MEET THE CANDIDATES YOU CAN COUNT ON

FRIDAY
8/7
5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Join your neighbors for an evening of conversation and connection. Ask questions. Get to know these great candidates. Meet them in person!

MEET OUR GRASSROOTS CANDIDATES

- ★ GISELE 'GIGI' GENTILE – School Board Dis. 4
- ★ RICK ERICKSON – Cape Coral Mayor
- ★ JAMES VARGAS – Cape Coral City Council
- ★ ANNETTE WARREN – Cape Coral City Council
- ★ JEFF HUDDLESTON – Cape Coral City Council
- ★ TOM SHADRACH – Cape Coral City Council
- ★ MIKE PEDERSEN – Congress
- ★ MICHAEL COLOMBO – County Judge
- ★ VERA BERGERMANN – Circuit Judge

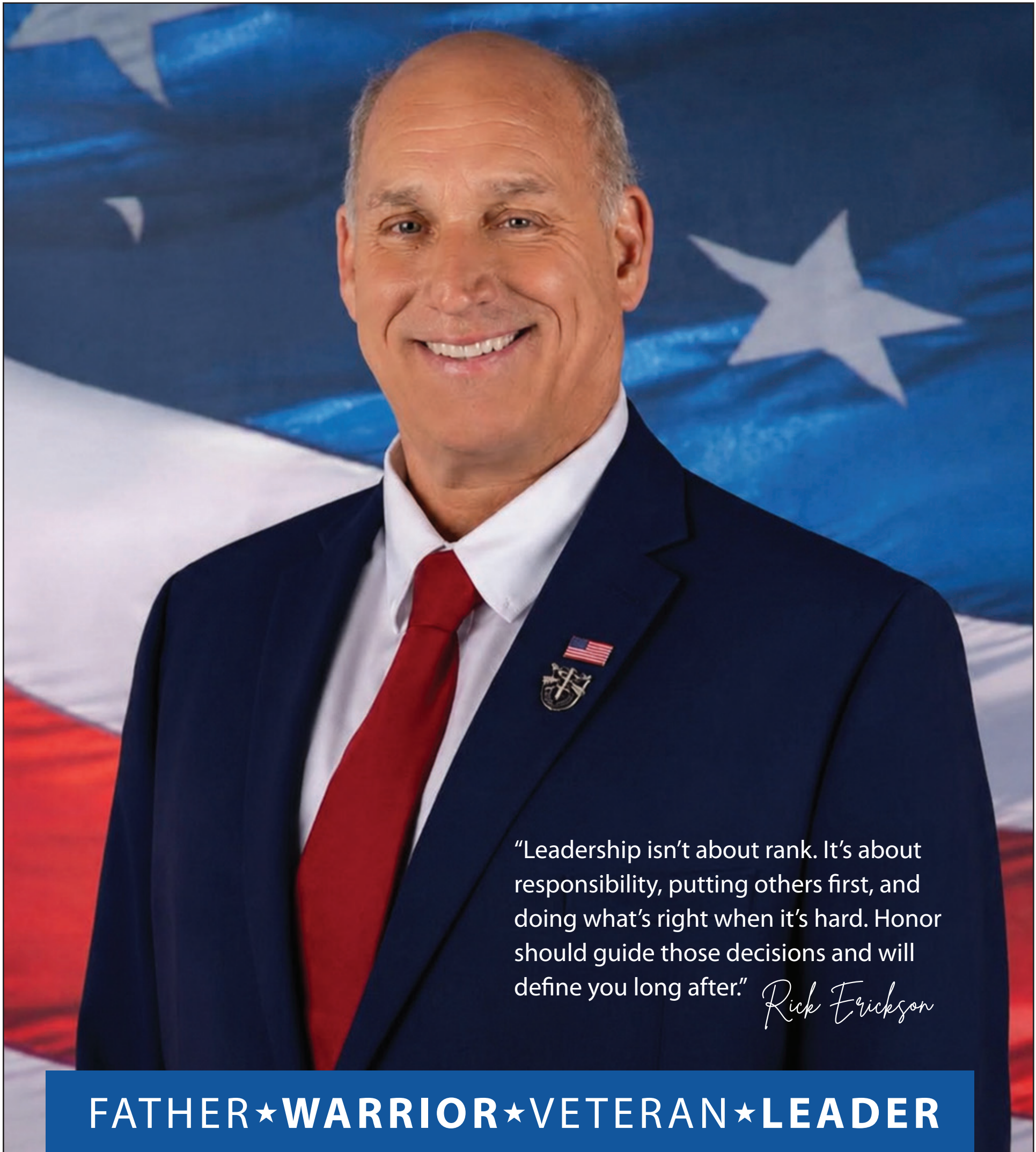
Join us at:
BAYSIDE BURGER & BEER
211 Hancock Bridge Pkwy #9
Cape Coral, FL 33990

THESE GRASSROOTS CANDIDATES NEED VOLUNTEERS FOR EARLY VOTING POLLS.
Your time and help make a difference!

PLEASE TEXT **239-486-3023**
OR CALL **239-810-0693** TO RSVP
AND LET US KNOW IF YOU CAN VOLUNTEER TO HELP THESE CANDIDATES.



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“Leadership isn’t about rank. It’s about responsibility, putting others first, and doing what’s right when it’s hard. Honor should guide those decisions and will define you long after.” *Rick Erickson*

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PAID FOR AND APPROVED BY RICK ERICKSON CAMPAIGN FOR CAPE CORAL MAYOR.



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KING

FOR CAPE CORAL CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 6

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This ad was paid for and approved by Annette for Cape Coral City Council District 6



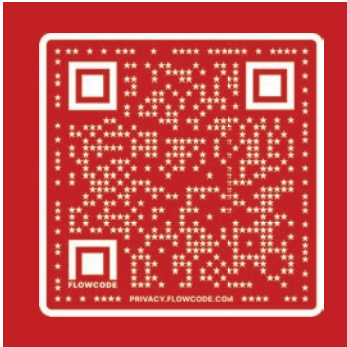
We are pleased to announce the addition of Tina M. to our SWFL CHRONICLE team. Tina is a top forensic accountant and investigative journalist. Tina can trace a penny back to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and her connections as a former government operative are invaluable.

SWFL
CHRONICLE

AMANDA
Cochran

for Lee County Commissioner
— A LEADER WHO LISTENS —

VOTE
AUGUST 18



AmandaForLee.com

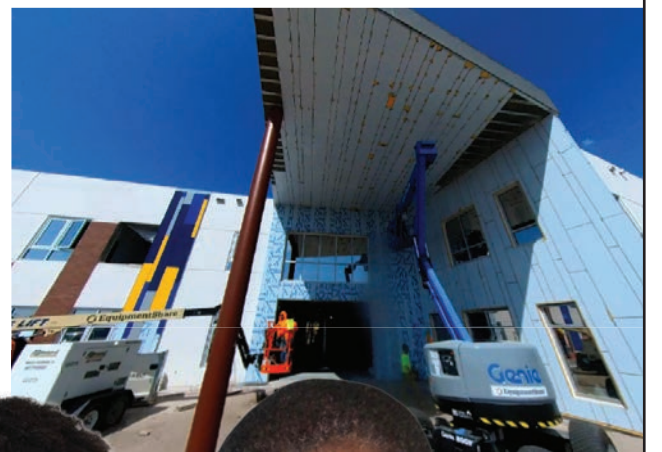
Paid by Amanda Cochran, Republican, for Lee County Commissioner District 5

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FORT MYERS 33916

REFLECTING ON AMERICA 250 IN NAPLES

MAYOR TERESA LEE HEITMANN
CITY OF NAPLES

239-213-1000
Mayorheitmann@naplesgov.com



As our nation commemorated the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the City of Naples joined communities across America in honoring this historic milestone through a series of meaningful events that celebrated our nation's past, recognized those who have served, and inspired future generations.

Our America 250 observance began in May when the City recognized the winners of the America 250 Student Essay Contest during a Naples City Council meeting. Students from schools within the City shared thoughtful reflections on what makes America special, the importance of freedom, the heroes who inspire them, and their hopes for the nation's next 250 years. Their essays demonstrated a remarkable appreciation for the values and opportunities that define our country and provided a hopeful glimpse into the future of civic engagement.

In June, residents gathered during Tree Fest for a special America 250 tree dedication ceremony. The tree, planted in honor of this historic anniversary, symbolized the enduring strength, resilience, and growth of our nation. Later that month, the City Council honored 100-year-old Royal Harbor resident and retired U.S. Marine Corps Colonel Robert N. Burhans. To preserve Colonel Burhans' remarkable story for future generations, City staff also produced a [commemorative video](#) highlighting his lifetime of service to our nation and the values he represents. Together with the Naples Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution and the Big Cypress Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the City recognized those who have served our country and safeguarded the freedoms we cherish.

The community's patriotic spirit was also on full display during Naples' annual Fourth of July celebration. Families, veterans, civic organizations, residents, and visitors came together for the beloved Independence Day parade and the spectacular fireworks display over the Gulf. As part of the America 250 commemoration, the celebration carried special significance, reminding us of the sacrifices, determination, and ideals that have shaped our nation for two and a half centuries.

That spirit of reflection continued on July 8, when residents gathered on the steps of City Hall for a public reading of the Declaration of Independence organized by the Big Cypress Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Naples joined communities across the country in this nationwide observance as the Declaration was read simultaneously at 6:00 p.m. Eastern Time, commemorating the day the Declaration was first publicly proclaimed in 1776. Hearing those historic passages read aloud alongside fellow Americans from coast to coast created a powerful connection between our nation's founding and its future, reminding us that the principles of liberty, equality, and self-government remain as relevant today as they were when first declared.

Throughout the year, partnerships with veterans and civic organizations, and community-wide participation helped make America 250 a meaningful and authentic celebration for Naples. More than a series of events, this commemoration provided opportunities for gratitude, reflection, civic pride, and connection across generations.

To preserve these memories, City staff is producing a commemorative video highlighting Naples' America 250 celebrations throughout the year. The video will capture the many events, community partnerships, and moments of reflection that brought residents together in honor of our nation's 250th anniversary, ensuring this historic chapter in our City's history can be remembered and shared for years to come.

As we look back on these celebrations, we are reminded that America's story continues to be written by citizens who value freedom, service, opportunity, and community. It was an honor for Naples to join communities across the nation in recognizing this extraordinary anniversary and reflecting on the enduring ideals that unite us as Americans.

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

Teresa Lee Heitmann, Mayor

ELECT JAMES VARGAS

Candidate For Cape Coral
City Council District 4

I'm a grassroots
candidate
running to
return City Hall
to the people
and end
business as
usual. I believe
government's
sole purpose is
to advance the
goals and
priorities of its
citizens.



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Campaign Account

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ELECT
JAMES VARGAS

for Cape Coral City
Council District 4
and preserve the

*American
Dream.*

Are We One Nation Under God?

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Word of God reminds us in Proverbs 14:34, “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.”

If we are truly one nation under God, it must be more than a phrase we recite, it must become a principle we live by every day.

Righteousness calls us to rise above racism, hatred, violence, injustice, and political division. We may vote differently, worship differently, and come from different backgrounds, but we can still stand together as one nation under God.

My brothers and sisters, it is time to stop judging people by their neighborhood, culture, economic status, political affiliation, or the color of their skin. God is not honored by how loudly we proclaim His name while quietly mistreating His people. And when I say “His people,” I mean all people. A nation is strengthened when justice is defended, compassion is practiced, families are supported, and every person is treated with dignity and respect. We must learn to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Our communities may have different stories, traditions, and struggles, but we share the same streets, the same hopes, and the same need for God’s grace. From the White House to the church house, we are where we are only because of God’s grace. We cannot build a stronger nation while fighting one another and ignoring the demonic forces seeking to divide us. It is time for churches, families, government officials, community leaders, and neighbors to come together—not because we agree on everything, but because division is costing us too much.

If we want better schools, safer streets, stronger families, healthier communities, and hope for the next generation, righteousness must begin with each of us. “One nation under God” is not merely a national declaration; it is both a spiritual responsibility and a call to accountability. When we choose love over hatred, truth over deception, unity over division, and service over selfishness, we show the world what it truly means to be One Nation Under God.

One Love, Pastor Demetrius Thomas
St. Mary Baptist Church of Punta Gorda



Pastor Demetrius Thomas
St. Mary Baptist Church
of Punta Gorda

ST. MARY BAPTIST CHURCH
605 MARY STREET
PUNTA GORDA, FL 33950
(941) 637-7782

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- ✓ Former Federal Special Agent (post 9–11)
- ✓ State Attorney’s Office, 20th Circuit (FL), over a decade
- ✓ Special Victim’s Unit (State Attorney’s Office – Florida)
- ✓ State Attorney’s Office and Private Practice (civil, criminal defense, family & employment law)– Connecticut
- ✓ Private Practice, Florida (criminal defense and civil)
- ✓ Over 100 trials+ to verdict, to include nationally recognized results.

- ✓ Florida Bar and Lee County Bar Association
- ✓ Professional Ethics Committee, Florida Bar (appointment by the Florida Supreme Court in June 2023 and re-appointed in June 2026)
- ✓ Connecticut Bar
- ✓ Georgia Bar
- ✓ U.S. District Court of Connecticut
- ✓ U.S. Southern District of Florida
- ✓ U.S. Northern District of Florida

Paid by Michael Colombo,
non-partisan,
for Lee County Judge



SHERIFF CARMINE MARCENO REMINDS YOU...

School Bus Safety Tips

1. BE ON TIME. DON'T RUN TO OR FROM THE BUS.
2. STAND BACK FROM THE CURB.
3. CROSS AT LEAST 10 FEET IN FRONT OF THE BUS.
4. DON'T CRAWL NEAR THE BUS IF YOU DROPPED SOMETHING.
5. WAIT FOR THE BUS TO COME TO A COMPLETE STOP.
6. NEVER WALK BEHIND THE BUS.



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PD BY CSTF

GET READY TO VOTE

VOTE411 and additional Nonpartisan Resources to Vote Informed

August 18, 2026

Ahead of the August 18, 2026 primary election, the League of Women Voters of Lee County, inc. offers the nonpartisan voter education tool **VOTE411.org**. This “one-stop shop” for election information provides Lee County voters with information on where candidates stand on issues and tools to help navigate the voting process. *VOTE411 provides personalized candidate information, voter registration details, polling place locations, and other helpful election information for all voters nationwide.*

The League of Women Voters of Lee County, Inc. urges voters to vote informed in the August 18, 2026 election. Every eligible voter should exercise their right to vote and make their voice heard at the ballot box.

We encourage voters to visit **VOTE411.org** so they are prepared to cast their vote confidently.

Elected leaders make the decisions that affect the economy, education, environment, housing, healthcare, transportation, water quality, and more.

In the August 18th Primary Election, voters will elect the Lee County Commissioner District 5, School Board Members for Districts 1 and 6, 20th Circuit Judges and a Lee County Judge. In addition, Bonita Springs voters will decide on a Bond Referendum for the Bonita Estero Rail Trail (BERT). Cape Coral voters will determine candidates for the general election and decide three Cape Coral City Charter amendments. Party voters will determine who advances to the general election.

All eligible voters, including those without a party affiliation, may vote in the Primary Election. All primary ballots will include nonpartisan races. Ballots for voters with a party affiliation will include their party’s candidates.

Trusted Nonpartisan Resources for Voters include:

- **VOTE411** | www.Vote411.org by the League of Women Voters Education Fund, with local, state, and federal candidate information, proposed ballot measures, and other nonpartisan election information.
- **Lee County Supervisor of Elections** | www.lee.vote, 239-533-8683 to Register to Vote, request your VoteByMail Ballot, view your Sample Ballot, and check your voting location for Lee County Early Voting and for Election Day.
- **Election Protection** | protectthevote.net for voting questions or issues. 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683) – English language hotline. 888-VE-Y-VOTA (888-839-8682) – Spanish language hotline.
- **Voter Identification Assistance** | www.VoteRiders.org 866-432-8683.
- **Returning Citizens/Rights Restoration.** Contact the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRRC) at 407-901-3749 or email info@floridarrc.org.
- **League of Women Voters’** Publications, to view and print click on links below or visit www.lwvlee.org:
Choosing Candidates in Florida

Voting for School Board Members/A Checklist for Making Smart Choices



Visit www.LWVLee.org for more election information and to sign up for email updates.

The League of Women Voters of Lee County, Inc. is a nonpartisan organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League of Women Voters does not support or oppose candidates and/or political parties.

The League is fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice.

Information on the programs and issues of the League of Women Voters is available on the web at www.lwv.org, www.lwvfl.org, and www.lwvlee.org. Call 239-278-1032 or e-mail lwvlee@lwvlee.org

EARLY VOTING

2026 PRIMARY ELECTION

Charlotte, Collier, Hendry, and Lee County Early Voting Schedule

Early voting for the 2026 Primary Election can begin as early as Monday, August 3 in the State of Florida, and early voting dates, times and locations will vary depending on where voters are registered.

Early voting sites will be open daily including on the weekends. Voters can also drop off their Vote-by-Mail ballot at a Secure Ballot Intake Station located at early voting sites during the early voting period in their county.

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

AUGUST 8-15, 8:30 A.M.-6 P.M. DAILY

- **Charlotte County Historic Courthouse** – 226 Taylor Street, Punta Gorda, FL 33950
- **Centennial Park** – 1120 Centennial Blvd, Port Charlotte, FL 33953
- **Mac V. Horton West County Annex** – 6868 San Casa Drive, Englewood, FL 34224
- **Mid-County Regional Library** – 2050 Forrest Nelson Blvd, Port Charlotte, FL 33952

COLLIER COUNTY

AUGUST 8-15, 10 A.M.-6 P.M. DAILY

- **Collier County Government Complex** – 3311 Tamami Trail, Naples, Naples, FL 34112
- **Everglades City Hall** – 102 Copeland Avenue N, Everglades City, FL 34139
- **Golden Gate Community Center** – 4701 Golden Gate Parkway, Naples, FL 34116
- **Heritage Bay Government Services Center** – 15450 Collier Boulevard, Naples, FL 34120
- **Immokalee Community Park** – 321 N First Street, Immokalee, FL 34142
- **Library Headquarters** – 2385 Orange Blossom Drive, Naples, FL 34109
- **Marco Island Librar**y – 210 S Heathwood Drive, Marco Island, FL 34145
- **Norris Center at Cambier Park** – 755 8th Avenue S, Naples, FL 34102
- **North Collier Regional Park** – 15000 Livingston Road, Naples, FL 34109
- **South Regional Library** – 8065 Lely Cultural Parkway, Naples, FL 34113
- **Supervisor of Elections Office** – 3750 Enterprise Avenue, Naples, FL 34104

HENDRY COUNTY:

AUGUST 3-15, 9 A.M. - 6 P.M. DAILY

- **Clewiston Elections Office** – 1100 S Olympia Street, Clewiston, FL 33440
- **LaBelle Elections Office** – 25 E Hickpochee Avenue, LaBelle, FL 33935

LEE COUNTY

AUGUST 8-15, 10 A.M.-6 P.M. DAILY

- **Bonita Springs Elections Office** – 25987 S Tamiami Trail #105, Bonita Springs, FL 34134
- **Cape Coral Elections Office** – 1039 SE 9th Avenue, Cape Coral, FL 33990
- **Cape Coral-Lee County Library** – 921 SW 39th Terrace, Cape Coral, FL 33914
- **Dr. Carrie D. Robinson Center** – 2990 Edison Avenue, Fort Myers, FL 33916
- **East County Regional Library** – 881 Gunnery Road N, Lehigh Acres, FL 33971
- **Estero Recreation Center** – 9200 Corkscrew Palms Boulevard, Estero, FL 33928
- **Fort Myers Regional Library** – Voting Room Address: 1651 Lee Street, Fort Myers, FL
- **33901/Library Address:** 2450 First Street, Fort Myers, FL 33901
- **Lakes Regional Library** – 15290 Bass Road, Fort Myers, FL 33919
- **Lee County Elections Center** – 13180 S Cleveland Avenue, Fort Myers, FL 33907
- **North Fort Myers Recreation Center** – 2000 N Recreation Park Way, North Fort Myers, FL 33903
- **Northwest Regional Library** – 519 Chiquita Boulevard N, Cape Coral, FL 33993
- **Veterans Park Recreation Center** – 55 Homestead Road S, Lehigh Acres, FL 33936

In order to participate in this election, residents must have registered to vote in Florida by July 20, 2026. For additional information about early voting, please contact your local Supervisor of Elections office:

CHARLOTTE COUNTY 941-833-5400 SOECharlotteCountyFL.gov	COLLIER COUNTY 239-252-VOTE (8683) CollierVotes.gov	HENDRY COUNTY 863-675-5232 HendryElections.gov	LEE COUNTY 239-LEE-VOTE (533-8683) Lee.vote
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Dear Northwest Cape Coral Neighbor,
I'm Joe Angrisano, a homeowner in Northwest Cape Coral, and I'm running for City Council because our city, our fellow taxpayers, deserve a fresh approach.

Like you, I'm concerned about rising costs and want to afford to live in the city we love. I will work to control wasteful spending, protect our tax dollars, and make sure growth pays its fair share, so current residents aren't paying more for less. As a self-funded candidate, I'm watching every penny.

Public safety must come first. As we grow, I will prioritize our police, firefighters, and EMTs with the resources they need to keep our families safe.

I'm running as a true conservative with zero ties to the current administration or special interests. I answer only to you — the hardworking residents of District 6.

As a full-time Council member, I commit to listening to your input, making transparent decisions, and always putting residents first.

Together, we can restore fiscal responsibility, implement UEP assistance for seniors and a full UEP program review, ensure responsible growth, create a business-friendly environment, expand the tax base, and continue to build the safe, affordable Cape Coral we deserve.

I humbly ask for your vote on August 18th.

"Thank you for your support and see you at the polls!"

Sincerely,

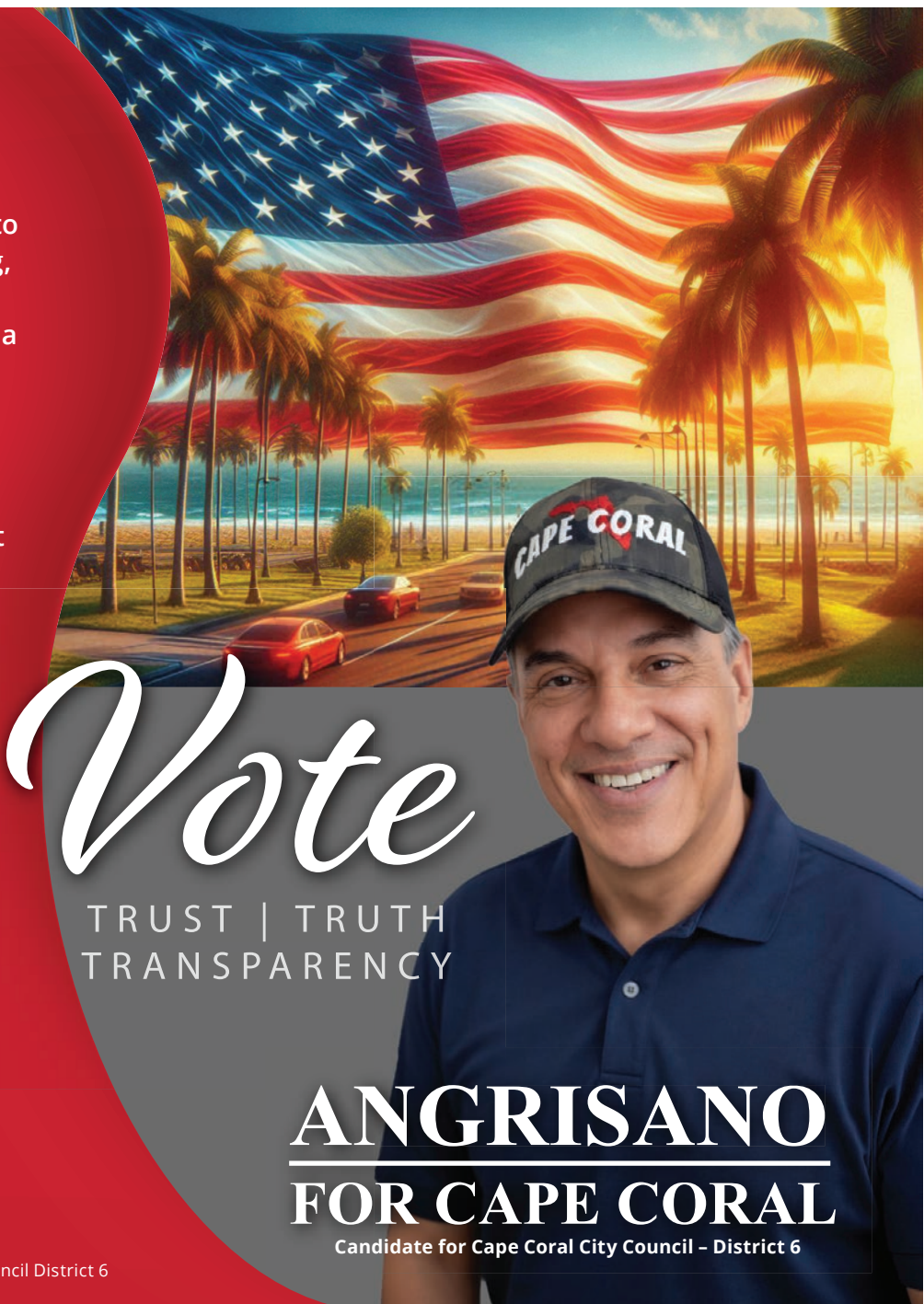
Joe Angrisano

Candidate for Cape Coral City Council - District 6

politicscapecoral@gmail.com | www.SaveCapeCoral.com

www.CapeCoralVotes.com | TEXT: 978-880-5512

Political advertisement paid for and approved by Joe Angrisano, Candidate for Cape Coral City Council District 6

A campaign poster for Joe Angrisano. The top half features a large American flag waving over a tropical beach scene with palm trees and a few cars on a road. In the foreground, Joe Angrisano is smiling, wearing a dark blue polo shirt and a black baseball cap with "CAPE CORAL" written on it. The word "Vote" is written in a large, white, cursive font across the middle. Below it, the words "TRUST | TRUTH" and "TRANSPARENCY" are written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the name "ANGRISANO" is written in a large, white, serif font, followed by "FOR CAPE CORAL" in a slightly smaller, white, serif font. Below that, in a small, white, sans-serif font, it says "Candidate for Cape Coral City Council - District 6".

Vote

TRUST | TRUTH
TRANSPARENCY

ANGRISANO
FOR CAPE CORAL

Candidate for Cape Coral City Council - District 6

THE
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ENDORSES

Nigel Fullick and
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FOR CITY COUNCIL OF
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NIGEL FULICK



RAY SANDELLI



Elect Dr. Charles Dailey
NAACP President



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August 12
6:00pm | 8:30pm
Buy tickets at artisnaples.org

Nathan Chester

& The Old Souls Motown Revival

Known for his captivating performances on season 25 of NBC’s The Voice, powerhouse vocalist and Chicago native Nathan Chester brings his Old Souls Motown Revival to Daniels Pavilion for the first time. With a throwback voice that at once recalls Stevie Wonder, Al Green and Otis Redding in their primes, Chester proves time and again that the sound and spirit of ‘60s and ‘70s soul remains in good hands for new generations to discover.



CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICAN AMANDA Cochran

for Lee County Commissioner

Paid by Amanda Cochran, Republican, for Lee County Commissioner District 5

Trust is Earned, NOT Given



AMANDAFORLEE.COM



DEAR *Beloved*

Pastor Dr. Deb Walsh | Mountain Mover & Water Walkers

Ecclesiastes 10:20 states “Do not revile the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird in the sky may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say.”

Dear Beloved:

Ecclesiastes 10:20 states “Do not revile the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird in the sky may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say.”

This verse has been my meditation for quite some time. The AI explanation does a good job stating:

- It emphasizes the power of words and their potential consequences.
- The context suggests that criticism can lead to unforeseen repercussions.
- The verse encourages respect for authority and caution in communication.

However, let’s take a deeper dive. We should align our identity to Christ – as followers of Christ. We should be more concerned with what God thinks than what man thinks. The understanding of this verse in accordance with the Bible is:

1. God has instituted governing authority; to speak – or even think – contemptuously is to oppose Him (Rom 13:1-2, Prov 24:21).
2. Jesus affirmed this principle when He told Pilate, “You would have no authority over Me if it were not given you from above” (John 19:11). If Christ recognized God’s hand behind an imperfect ruler, we can too.
3. Sin begins in the heart (Matt 15:18-19). Keeping inner attitudes pure, guards outer behavior.
4. Respecting leaders isn’t blind endorsement of every policy; it is obedient acknowledgment of God’s order while still allowing for godly appeal (Acts 24:10-13).

There is also so much more to study and discuss in the context of this verse including birds of the sky and winged creatures that I won’t go into here. However, we do need to be careful of our words. Every word we say, as a reminder, is recorded in heaven. Even if we don’t say anything but think it, God knows our hearts and knows what we think before we think it.

Psalms 139:2 - You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar

The enemy seeks to kill, steal and destroy and one of the age-old tactics is to divide us. Being aware of this, let’s do more to unite with others and love each other with respect and courtesy. Let’s be mindful who we are. We are made in the image of God. We are precious in His sight. We are ordained, chosen and loved by the one and only God. Guard your hearts and minds. Keep your mind on things above and not below. How do you do that? Ask God to come into your heart and let Him transform you. He will guide and lead your steps and make your crooked paths straight. Once you do, God promises to give you the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16). Find a Bible and a Bible-believing church. Know you are loved beyond comprehension by the God who created heaven and earth.

Love,
Pastor Dr. Deb Walsh



RE-ELECT
**JOHN
GUNTER**
FOR CAPE CORAL MAYOR

WHEN EXPERIENCE MATTERS

Mayor John Gunter is an experienced mayor with tested, proven leadership. Experience matters most in the 7th largest city in Florida. It matters most when unforeseen natural disasters occur. It matters most when Cape Coral is ranked the second safest city in Florida and one of the fastest growing cities in our nation.

The Citizens Of Cape Coral Need a Mayor who is experienced with proven results.

Accomplishments & Policy Platform

Public Safety Expansion: Mayor Gunter emphasizes the addition of three new firehouses, a fire training facility, and a police training facility during his tenure. He also highlights the hiring of approximately 80 new police officers and 80 firefighters to keep pace with the city's growth.

Tax Rate Reductions

A central part of his campaign is the reduction of the city's millage rate from 6.75 to 5.1 mills, which is a historic low for the city over the last 50 years.

Experience & Stability

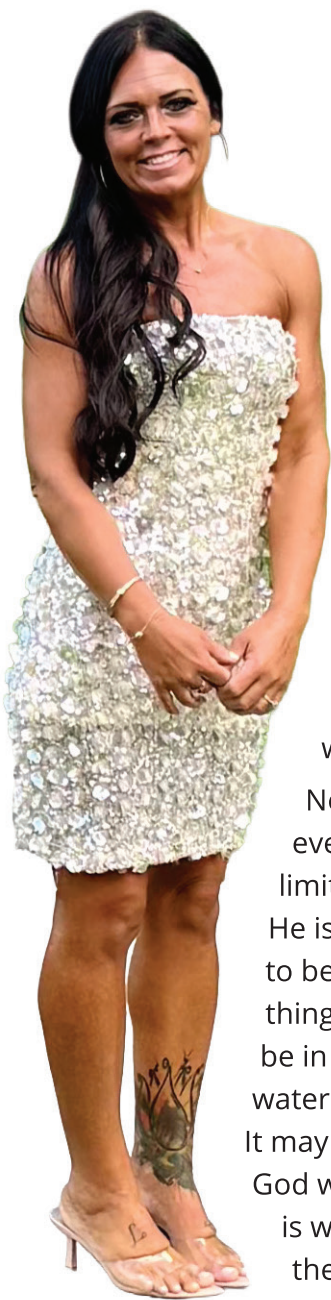
Mayor John Gunter has five years of experience on the City Council and his time as Mayor. The City of Cape Coral needs "an experienced Mayor" rather than someone who'd be on a learning curve or on the job training. Cape Coral's status is one of the fastest-growing cities in the country.

Infrastructure Management

Mayor Gunter identifies ongoing needs in transportation and utility expansion as his next priorities, advocating for "creative funding solutions" to address these growth challenges.



Paid for by Re-Elect John Gunter For Cape Coral Mayor



I Am

BY LISA ESWAY

God has called me to be something. He has called me to glorify Him in difficult situations. Maybe in a prison or a jail or in the streets or in a job place or in the family. In surrender you do not have to struggle. Speak this over yourself. My life has purpose!!

My story was a liability...right now it is an asset for me. It's like a hand of Texas hold'em. A lot of times I would fold. Because I don't think I have a good hand to win but the other guy is bluffing. I don't have to have anything... he only needs me to fold. When I already have the winning hand. It's like walking with the Lord.

No matter what the situation God gives a revelation in every situation of who He is. That is changeless. Do not limit God with our own broken understanding of who He is. I AM. There was a lot of room because there has to be. You're going to need God to be a lot of different things in your life and at a lot of different times. You may be in a wilderness and you're thirsty He will be that living water for your soul. Another time you may need guidance. It may be dark and you need a pillar of fire to guide you ... God will light up the sky and show you your next step. That is why He said "I am" you see... things seem simple on the surface. If you don't dig down deep you won't get

too complex. Are you growing through it? Find happiness in a situation or remove yourself from the situation. Do not settle. You know what you deserve what's on the inside remember what you stand for don't let the look of things blind you if you're not fulfilled inside ... everything else breaks down. Take back what you lost. Remember the things that make you laugh. Truly winning. Remember the things that make you smile. Not on the outside because you always will smile for the camera. The outside and the inside both need to be in unity. The words "I AM" reveal the eternal nature of God. When Moses asked God what he should say to the Israelites, God replied, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14). God did not define Himself by circumstances, time, or human understanding. He simply is the One who has always existed, who never changes, and who is everything we will ever need. His presence is constant, His power is limitless, and His promises are unshakable.

Because God is the great I AM, we never face life alone. When we are weak, He says, I AM your strength. When we are afraid, I AM your refuge. When we are lost, I AM the way. When our hearts are broken, I AM near. Whatever need we bring to Him, the great I AM is already there, faithful and sufficient, meeting us with His perfect love and unchanging presence. It is the humble that God exalts.

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Ford understands that a strong school system is the heartbeat of a thriving community. When our schools succeed, our property values rise, our local economy grows, and our children have a genuine future ahead of them. He will back any investment that is truly in the best interest of this community.

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"We can't expect Gold Medal results if we don't treat our teachers like professionals."

Ford K. Dalusma — on teacher compensation and respect for the classroom

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Investing in Equipment Trust Certificates

BY MCKINLEY G. WILLIAMS

Investing is an essential part of building long-term wealth, and successful investors understand the importance of maintaining a diversified portfolio. While stocks, bonds, and mutual funds receive the most attention, there are several lesser-known investment vehicles that can provide attractive income and stability. One such investment is the Equipment Trust Certificate (ETC). Although Equipment Trust Certificates are not as widely discussed as traditional bonds or equities, they have played an important role in financing major transportation industries for more than a century. Understanding how they work, their advantages, and their potential risks can help investors determine whether they deserve a place in a diversified investment strategy.

An Equipment Trust Certificate is a debt security that is backed by physical equipment rather than unsecured promises to repay. These certificates have historically been issued to finance expensive assets such as railroad locomotives, freight cars, commercial aircraft, and, in some cases, other forms of transportation equipment. Instead of purchasing the equipment outright, a transportation company raises capital by issuing ETCs to investors. The proceeds are used to acquire the equipment, while the equipment itself serves as collateral for the loan.

One of the defining characteristics of Equipment Trust Certificates is the additional security provided by the

underlying assets. Unlike unsecured corporate bonds, ETCs are backed by tangible property that can be repossessed if the issuer defaults on its payment obligations. For example, if an airline experiences severe financial difficulties and cannot continue making payments, ownership rights to the financed aircraft may revert to the trustee on behalf of the certificate holders. This collateral feature generally reduces credit risk when compared to unsecured debt issued by the same company.

Income generation is another attractive feature of Equipment Trust Certificates. Investors typically receive regular interest payments throughout the life of the certificate, followed by repayment of principal at maturity according to the terms of the agreement. For retirees and income-oriented investors, these predictable cash flows can help supplement retirement income while providing greater stability than many common stocks, whose dividends can fluctuate or be suspended during difficult economic conditions.

Equipment Trust Certificates have traditionally been associated with industries that require substantial major capital investments. Commercial airlines and railroad companies rely on fleets of expensive equipment that often remain in service for decades. Financing these assets through ETCs allows companies to spread the cost over many years rather than making large upfront expenditures. This financing



GUEST COMMENTARY
BY ARMOR PERSONS

Promises Made, Promises Kept: A Vision for Lee County Schools in 2030

Four years ago, I asked for your trust and promised to put students first, strengthen school safety, restore accountability, and focus on academic excellence. Together, we have delivered real results.

We have already made incredible progress in the School District of Lee County. Today, our district has earned its highest total points from the state in a decade, with 29 schools improving their letter grades and zero traditional schools earning a D or F. Graduation rates have reached historic milestones for two consecutive years, and teacher vacancies have dropped dramatically from triple to single digits.

We have strengthened school safety through enhanced security, dedicated School Resource Officers, the implementation of the Guardian Program, and advanced screening technology. At the same time, we have improved transportation reliability and expanded student horizons through specialized Career and Technical Education (CTE), STEM, artificial intelligence, dual enrollment, and JROTC. These accomplishments prove what is possible when we stay focused on students, support our educators, respect parents as true partners, and spend taxpayer dollars wisely.

But our work is not finished. The decisions we make over the next four years will lay the foundation for what Lee County Schools look like by 2030. I truly believe our district can—and should—become one of the premier public school systems in America. That isn't just a campaign slogan; it is a vital, achievable vision that is fully within our reach. By 2030, I envision a district recognized nationwide for excellence in every category.

First and foremost, that means achieving uncompromising safety. We must make our campuses the safest in Florida, giving parents total confidence and allowing teachers to focus entirely on their classrooms. This secure environment will serve as the bedrock for an "A" rated school district built on high expectations, academic rigor, and a culture that celebrates student achievement.

We must also commit to purpose-driven graduation. I

envision a district where every single graduate walks across the stage with a clear pathway to success—whether that means a university acceptance letter, military enlistment, an apprenticeship, or a high-wage industry certification. To support this, our future-ready classrooms must continue expanding workforce development partnerships, skilled trades, fine arts, and leadership programs to prepare kids for tomorrow's economy.

Achieving this vision requires making Lee County the best place to teach. We must actively recruit, support, and retain exceptional teachers and staff by ensuring this is a community where educators genuinely want to build their careers. Concurrently, we must manage our county's rapid population growth through smart, fiscally responsible infrastructure planning—building new schools, expanding successful K-8 campuses where appropriate, and modernizing existing facilities to maximize every taxpayer dollar.

True education succeeds when families and schools work hand-in-hand. We will continue to protect parental rights while strengthening the partnership between families and educators. Furthermore, we will maintain the public's trust through absolute transparency, eliminating waste, and ensuring every dollar directly benefits students.

Most importantly, I envision a district where opportunity is never determined by a ZIP code, and where every child—regardless of where they live or the path they choose—has access to the education and support needed to achieve their God-given potential.

Our future is bright, our students deserve our absolute best, and the best is yet to come. There is only one Lee County School District, and by 2030, we will be the undisputed best choice for every family in our community. On August 18, I respectfully ask for your vote so we can continue moving our schools forward together.

ARMOR PERSONS REPRESENTS DISTRICT 5 ON THE LEE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD AND CURRENTLY SERVES AS THE BOARD CHAIR.



Beware of SCAMS

Common SCAMS targeting seniors:

- Urgent Impersonation Scams
- Financial Schemes for payment via gift cards or crypto
- Tech Support Fraud
- Romance Scams

These SCAMS exploit trust, fear and loneliness and often use AI voice cloning to steal retirement funds or sensitive personal information.

Take these steps to protect yourself against Scams:

HANG UP & VERIFY Hang up and call the official number of the agency or family member directly	BE SUSPICIOUS OF URGENCY Take the time to verify what is being asked, scammers rely on pressure	DO NOT USE GIFT CARDS/CRYPTO No legitimate business or government agency will ask for payment via gift cards or crypto currency	NEVER GIVE REMOTE ACCESS Do not let strangers access your computer or phone.
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HELPFUL GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

Provide valuable information on the latest scams, how to report them, and tips on avoiding fraud.

- Federal Trade Commission (FTC):** www.consumer.ftc.gov/
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB):** www.consumerfinance.gov/
- USA.gov:** www.usa.gov/scams-and-fraud

SENIORS AGAINST SCAMS

<https://www.ncoa.org/article/seniors-against-scams-financial-education>
Seniors Against Scams is a financial safety education program available at senior centers across the country.

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The People Who Show Up Every Day:

WHY LEE COUNTY MUST INVEST IN ITS TEACHERS

STRONG SCHOOLS. STRONG FUTURE.

Guest Commentary by Gisele “GiGi” Gentile



Gigi Gentile knows firsthand what teachers face — and says District 4 cannot afford to keep losing great educators.

I want to tell you what a teacher's day actually looks like — because I think most people, even those who care deeply about education, do not fully see it.

A Lee County teacher arrives before the first bell, often before 7 a.m.

She has already spent time at home the night before grading papers, adjusting lesson plans, and responding to parent emails. She walks into a classroom that she has stocked — partly with school supplies, and partly with items she purchased herself because the budget did not cover everything. She manages a room of 25 or 30 children with vastly different needs, attention spans, home situations, and learning styles. She differentiates instruction, manages behavior, tracks data, attends meetings, completes documentation, and does it all while making every child feel seen and valued.

She does this every single day. For a salary that, despite recent improvements in Florida, still does not reflect the weight of what she carries.

“You cannot have great schools without great teachers. If we want the best for our kids, we have to invest in the people teaching them.”

I know this because I lived it. I was a substitute teacher who walked into a different classroom every morning. I was a special education teacher who built individualized plans, navigated complex family situations, and fought to make sure students who were easy to overlook were never overlooked on my watch.

And I watched colleagues burn out. I watched talented, dedicated educators leave the profession — or leave Lee County — because they felt unsupported, overwhelmed, and undervalued. Every time that happens, our children pay the price.

Lee County faces a teacher recruitment and retention challenge that is not unique to us but hits our community hard. We are a growing county, which means we need more teachers every year. We are competing with other counties and other states that are actively recruiting the same talent we need.

I will advocate relentlessly for competitive teacher compensation. I will fight to reduce the administrative burden that is consuming hours teachers should be spending on instruction. I will push for classroom supply funding so teachers stop subsidizing public education out of their own pockets. And I will make teacher voice a genuine part of every major policy conversation on the board.

Great schools are built by great teachers. Investing in them is not a cost — it is the wisest investment District 4 can make.

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.GigiForDistrict4.com.

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For Mayor of Fort Myers



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for ALL of Fort Myers**



Protecting Community Safety

As a former police officer, Kevin supports our first responders who help keep Fort Myers a safe place to live and work.



Supporting Small Business

Kevin believes a strong local economy begins by cutting red tape and supporting entrepreneurs.



A Stronger Sense of Community

Kevin has long given back to the community and believes trust is built by encouraging collaboration and coming together.



Managing Growth Responsibly

As Fort Myers continues to grow, Kevin understands the need for sustainable development that protects our quality of life.



***Vote on
November 3rd!***



KevinAndersonForMayor.com



Paid by Kevin Anderson for Ft. Myers Mayor.



Halfway Through Summer —

Are You Ready for Back-to-School?! Can you believe summer is almost over? Crazy how time flies when you're having fun. While the kids are have enjoyed their break, now is the perfect time for families to get ahead of the back-to-school rush.

Here's everything you need to know to start the 2026–2027 school year feeling prepared!

TAX-FREE SHOPPING FOR CLOTHES & SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Florida's Tax-Free Holiday begins runs through August 20th — this is the perfect opportunity to shop for back-to-school clothing and school supplies without paying sales tax. A little savings goes a long way, especially for households with multiple children. Check off that shopping list early before shelves start to empty!

REQUIRED PHYSICALS/SCREENINGS

Starting this school year, EKG screenings are required for all incoming 9th-grade student-athletes and any student in grades 10–12 who has never previously participated in an FHSA-sanctioned sport. Getting screened is simple — visit your primary care provider, a Lee Health outpatient center, or attend a community screening event for just \$20. If your student had an EKG after August 1, 2024, you're already covered! For more information, visit the Lee Health Youth Heart Screening. Please spread the word to any families new to our area!

Open House & First Day Dates: Check your student's assigned school and plan ahead:

- Elementary Schools – Wednesday, August 5
- K-8 and Middle Schools – Thursday, August 6
- High Schools – Monday, August 10
- First Day of School – Tuesday, August 11

Also, incoming 6th graders — your middle school is hosting a special kickoff event in late July! Check with your assigned school for details.

If you are attending a new school this year, be sure to visit their website and review their Bell Times and Dress Code, as each school may vary.

As always, it is my honor to serve the families of Lee County. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me directly at vanessamc@leeschools.net or via phone at 239-337-8243.

Wishing everyone a wonderful rest of summer — here's to a fantastic 2026–2027 school year!

*Respectively,
Vanessa Chaviano, School Board Member, District 6*



A portrait of a woman with dark, wavy hair, smiling. She is wearing a red turtleneck sweater under a dark blue velvet blazer. She is also wearing a pearl necklace, a gold bracelet, and a ring. Her hands are resting on a white surface. The background features a large American flag on the left and a classical building with columns and statues on the right. The text "45 YEARS OF NO SHOOTING" is visible in the top right corner.

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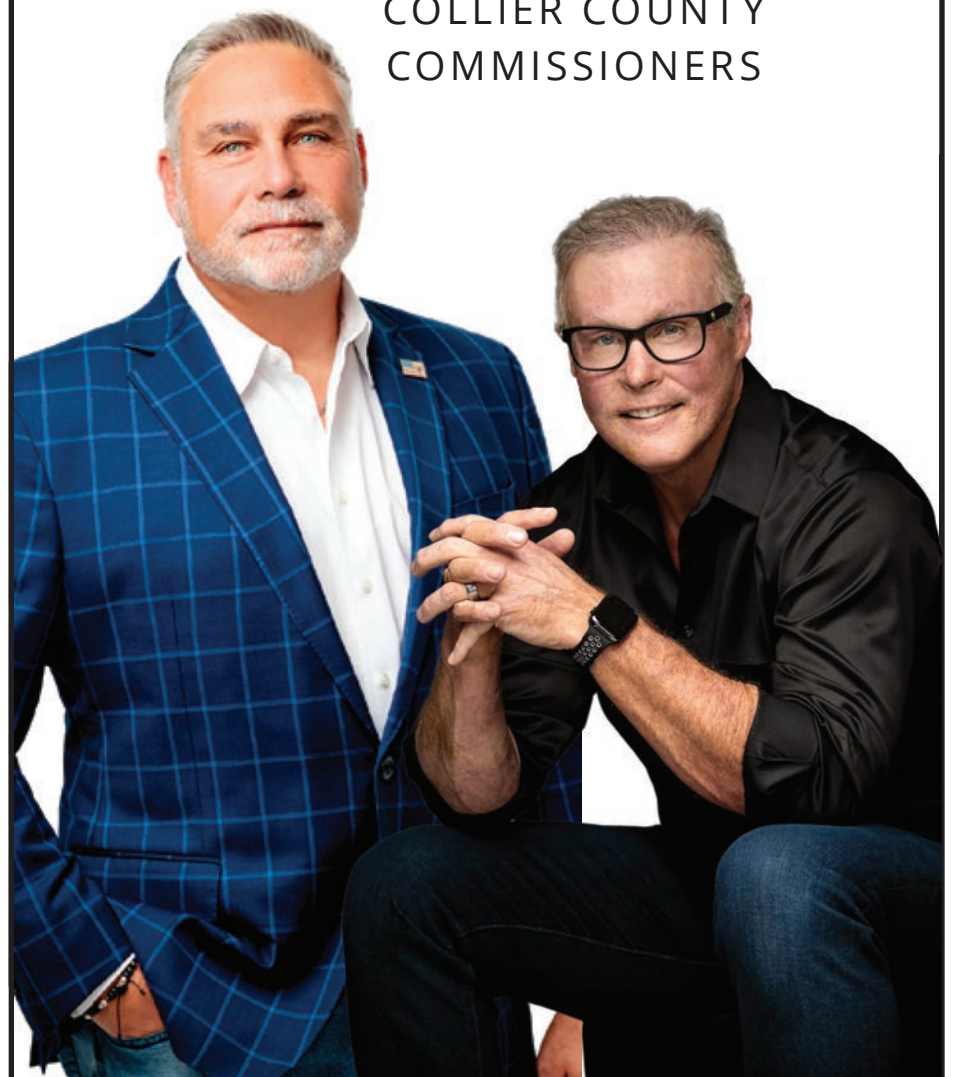
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Lee County Republican Executive Committee Chair Calls on Voters and Candidates to Reject Attack Ads and Smear Campaigns

As Chair of the Lee County Republican Executive Committee, I am issuing a clear statement against the growing use of attack ads, negative mailers, and online smear tactics in our local elections. These practices have become more common in Lee County elections over the last decade and run directly counter to the core objectives of the Republican Party. Ultimately, they undermine the kind of politics all voters in Lee County deserve.

Our Republican Executive Committee exists to advance seven specific objectives which can be found at www.LeeGOP.org. Political attack ads work against every one of them. Three are especially harmed:

1. Fostering loyalty to the Republican Party

Loyalty is built on shared principles and mutual respect. Both PAC-driven and social media-fueled character attacks fracture the Party, breed distrust, and turn neighbors against one another instead of uniting us around common values.

2. Promoting an informed electorate

True voter education requires accurate information about records, ideas, and policy positions. Distorted or highly selective attack ads do the opposite: they confuse voters, bury substance under personal attacks, and substitute emotion for informed judgment.

3. Seeking qualified Republicans to represent us

This objective is especially damaged. Many capable, community-minded citizens who would make strong public servants simply refuse to run. They watch the personal attacks, the reputational harm, and the coordinated smears and decide the cost is too high for their families and their professional lives. When qualified people stay on the sidelines our community loses.

Political smear campaigns do not represent the kind of culture or expect from our leaders. For the good of the future of Lee County, I ask two things:

First, I ask the electorate to reject these tactics. Do not reward attack ads with your vote. Look past the glossy negative mailers. Research the candidates at www.LeeGOP.org/candidates, view livestreams from our forums, review campaign finance reports, and judge candidates by their ideas, records, and character rather than by the worst claims made against them by third parties.

Second, I ask every candidate to refuse to engage in or benefit from these practices. Leaders should publicly reject character assassination, even when it is directed at their opponents.

Lee County is one of the fastest-growing counties in the country. We need serious, qualified, solutions-oriented Republicans willing to step forward and lead. As a community we suffer if we don't raise the standard of our campaigns. The Ethical Campaign and Accountability Initiative (ECAI) is a new Lee GOP priority that exists for exactly this reason: to insist that, specifically, Republican campaigns in Lee County be conducted with integrity and substance. Learn more about ECAI and participating ECAI candidates by visiting our website www.LeeGOP.org.

The choice is ours. We can continue down a path that deters good people from running, leaves voters cynical and divides us in an irretrievable way, or we can restore honor to our process, protect the Republican Party's objectives, and elect leaders on the strength of their policy positions.

I urge every Republican in Lee County to choose the better path.

Mercedes Price-Harry
Chair, Lee County Republican Executive Committee



BE AN INFORMED VOTER

Visit www.LeeGOP.org/candidates/ to research Republican candidates to Keep Lee County RED! GOTV August 18.

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District 6 Jada Langford-Fleming

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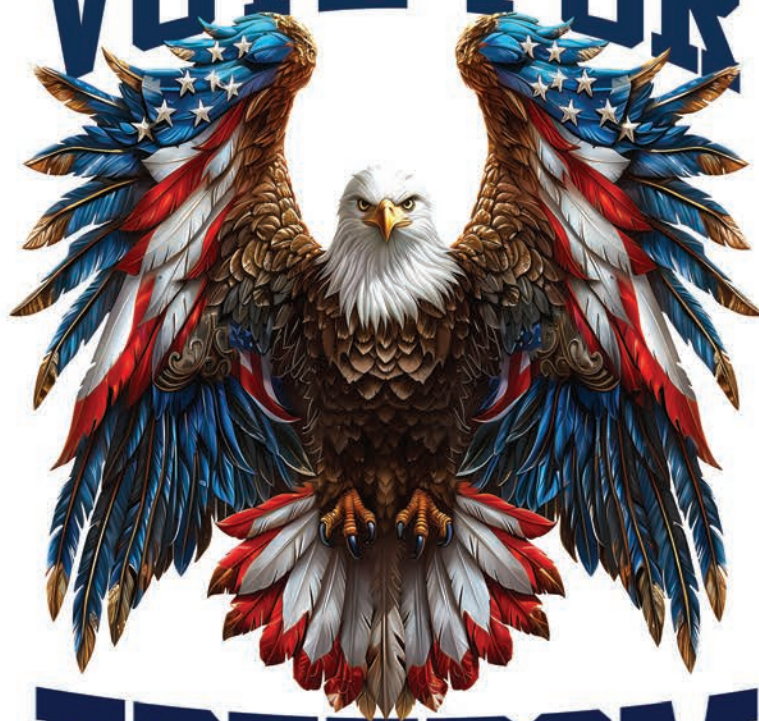
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THE INNATE CIRCLE

by Monique Wooley



DISTRACTIVE ANXIETIES - TRUTH BE TOLD

In my daily work routine, my attention began to focus on a dirty coffee cup that was tucked behind the paper towel roll, left on a countertop. This cup has been sitting in the same spot for weeks maybe even months. I saw it but didn't pay much attention to it. But this day it caught my attention.

The designed words written on the cup were words like "God, faithful, truth, grace, trust, prayer, loyalty, and honor."

I began to admire this cup and wondered who would leave such beautiful cup so dirty, filled with stale water over old coffee stains just sitting out of plain sight on the counter.

My mind began to wander. Then it dawned on me that this is exactly how we treat God. When he's new in our lives we are determined to read the word, worship our Lord and Savior, spread the word, and constantly seek a better understanding. But eventually life happens. We unconsciously become distracted. The world becomes more important.

Not realizing that distractions has a spiritual cost. It can lead people to live reactively instead of intentionally. Instead of seeking God's direction, we constantly chase news, monetization, opinions, and comforts, that can ultimately lead to anxieties.

Anxieties that are caused by caffeine overload, work stress, financial concerns, negative thinking patterns, lack of sleep, loss of a loved one, health issues and a multitude of debilitating fears.

Over time, this can create a pattern where prayer feels distant, Scripture feels routine, and worship becomes secondary at best.

God says put down that phone, silence those notifications, stop chasing that next viral story or focusing your attention on possessions. He said cease giving your heart to people who never intended on giving you their heart back.

Proverb 3:5-6 teaches us "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than trust in man"

The Most High wants you to refocus your attention back to that countertop, pick up that dirty coffee cup, clean off the distractive dirt and refocus on the words that he's given.

"God, faithful, trust, prayer, loyalty, truth, grace, and honor."

Take a daily walk outside, do deep breaths, drink some herbal teas, plant a garden, read a good book, volunteer to do something for someone else, create a comfortable, quiet space to seek The Most High in prayer daily and read his word until your reading dedication and his guidance helps you to begin to encompass his words.

And remember - ***"You can never truly be free, free of distractions, free of anxiety, free of depressions until you fully stand in your own Truth."***

"No one can ever steal your story, your story is unique to your journey and was designed to be a testimony for others."

So never be afraid to tell your story in truth. You'll never know who needs to hear your story or when it may change the trajectory of someone else's life.

But do it in Prayer, do it in Faith, do it in Truth, do it with Trust, Honor and Grace. And no matter what...Do it with God.





Dating is not just for the young.

VERNON BROWN THE DUNBAR SHADE TREE PHD.



Dear Seasoned/Retired Friends,

Dating is not just for the young. In fact, many senior citizens discover that companionship, romance, and meaningful relationships can bring some of the greatest joys and experiences of their lives. Whether you are recently widowed, divorced, have been single for many years, feel ready to open your heart again, or you simply have that itch that needs to be scratched, dating later in life can be an exciting new chapter.

However, dating as a senior comes with its own unique opportunities and challenges. The experiences, wisdom, and life lessons you have gained over the years can be your greatest strengths. By keeping a few important do's and don'ts in mind, you can enjoy the journey while protecting your heart, your health, and your happiness, and your current peace of mind.

1. BE OPEN TO NEW EXPERIENCES

One of the greatest advantages of dating as a senior is that you know yourself better than ever before. In other words, you know what makes you tick. You also know what makes you ticked off. You understand what matters to you, what makes you happy, and what qualities you value in another person. Use that wisdom to be open-minded. Your ideal partner may not look exactly like someone you imagined years ago. Give people a chance based on their character, kindness, values, integrity, and how they make you feel.

Try new activities where you can meet others naturally.

Community events, social clubs, volunteer opportunities, classes, travel groups, and even online dating platforms designed for seniors can help you connect with people who share your interests.

2. PLEASE TAKE YOUR TIME

A common mistake people make at any age is rushing into a relationship because they miss companionship. It is natural to want someone special in your life, but a healthy relationship develops over time.

Take the opportunity to learn about someone's personality, background, family, friendships, and goals. Enjoy conversations, shared activities, and getting to know one another. A strong relationship is built on trust, respect, and friendship before it becomes something deeper.

3. DO COMMUNICATE HONESTLY

Honest communication is one of the foundations of a successful relationship. Be clear about what you want. Are you looking for companionship, friendship, travel partners, or a serious romantic relationship? There is no right or wrong answer, but it is important that both people understand each other's expectations.

Talk openly about important topics such as finances, health, family responsibilities, living arrangements, and future plans. At this stage of life, honesty is not only respectful—it helps prevent misunderstandings.

*Never feel guilty for taking precautions.
Protecting yourself is not a lack of trust—it is a sign of wisdom.*

4. DON'T IGNORE WARNING SIGNS

While many wonderful people are looking for love and companionship, it is important to protect yourself. Pay attention to warning signs that someone may not have your best interests at heart.

Be cautious if someone pressures you to move too quickly, asks for money, avoids answering basic questions about their life, or tries to isolate you from family and friends. A caring partner will respect your boundaries and understand that trust must be earned.

5. DON'T PRETEND TO BE SOMEONE YOU ARE NOT

One of the best parts of dating later in life is that you no longer need to impress people by pretending to be someone else. Be proud of who you are. Your experiences, stories, interests, and personality are what make you unique.

The right person will appreciate you for who you are, not for an unrealistic image of perfection. Authenticity creates stronger and more meaningful connections.

6. DON'T FORGET TO ENJOY YOURSELF

Dating should bring happiness, excitement, and companionship. It should NEVER feel like a stressful obligation. Enjoy meeting new people, having conversations, sharing laughter, and creating new memories.

Remember that finding love is not the only measure of success. Every new friendship, every enjoyable conversation, and every new experience can add value to your life.

IN SHORT

Dating as a senior citizen is an opportunity to celebrate life, connection, and personal growth. Your age is not a limitation—it is an advantage because you bring decades of knowledge, patience, and understanding to any relationship.

Be open, be careful, communicate honestly, and most importantly, be yourself. The best relationships are built when two people come together not because they need someone to complete them, but because they enjoy sharing life's journey with someone special.

*There is always room for friendship, companionship,
and love at every stage of life.*





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