

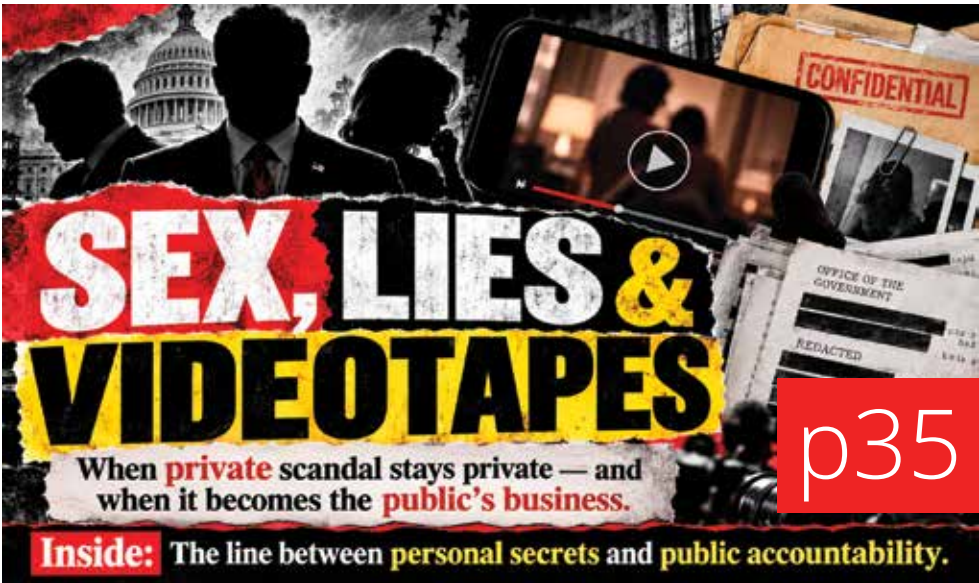
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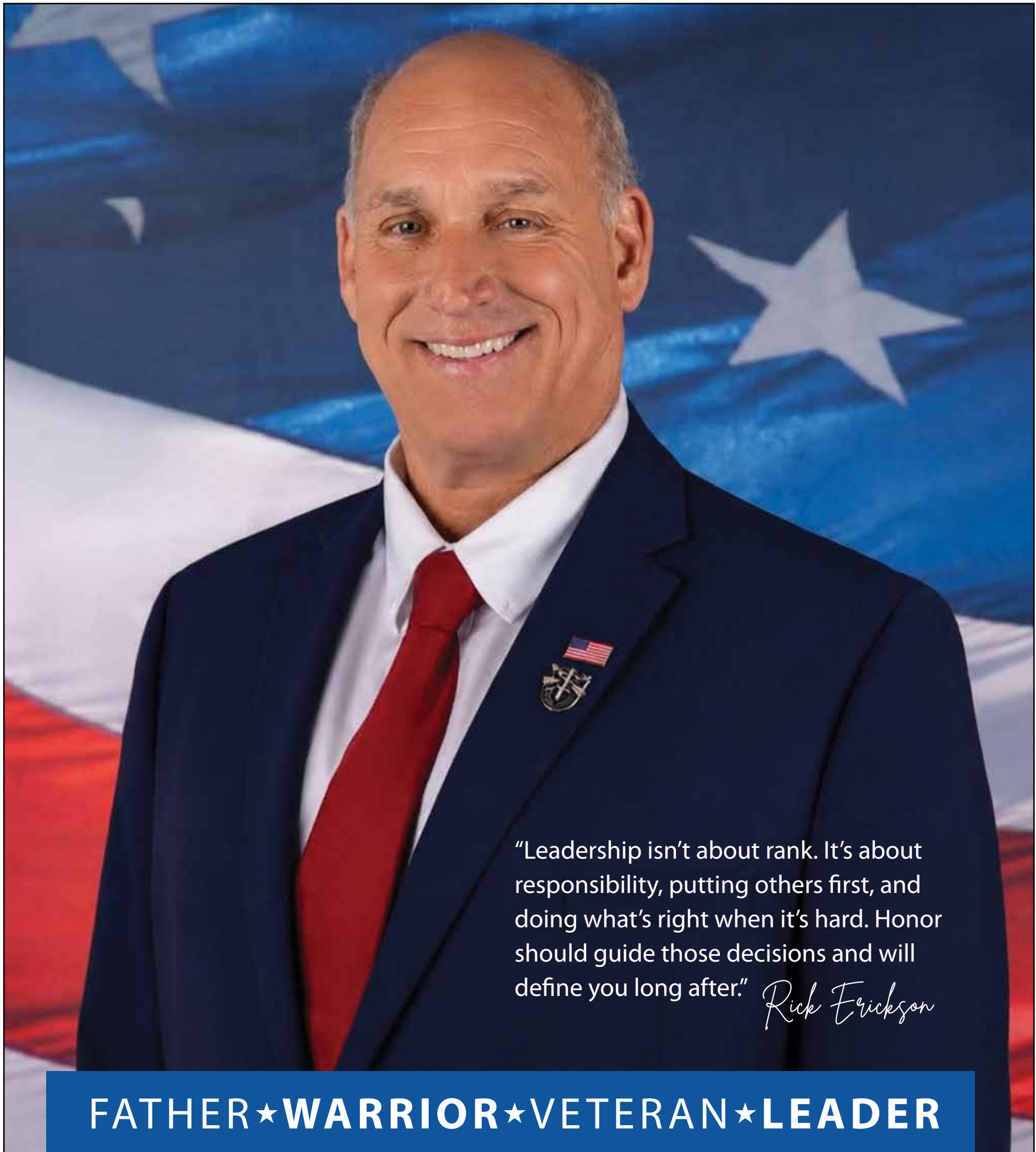
“Bobby has already been a fantastic leader with us, and being selected for this training reinforces what we already know about him. He is smart, driven, professional, and maintains the highest level of integrity day in and day out.”

p28
SHERIFF BILL PRUMMELL
Congratulations Lt. Bobby Judd



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GIGI GENTILE

Florida lawmakers deserve credit for setting aside money this year to raise pay for the state’s most experienced classroom teachers. In Lee County, that funding translated into a \$2,340 salary increase for educators with a decade or more in Florida’s public schools. It’s a meaningful gain, and one that took genuine negotiation between the Teachers Association of Lee County (TALC) and the district to implement fairly.

But a raise that reaches only part of the workforce isn’t a raise — it’s a dividing line.

The state’s allocation was never designed to cover everyone who teaches, counsels, or supports students in Lee County’s schools. Newer teachers, itinerant instructors, and personnel with fewer than ten years of experience were left out entirely, regardless of how essential their work is to the district’s classrooms.

That is the crux of the current impasse between TALC and the district. For months, TALC has negotiated in good faith, proposing reasonable, targeted solutions rather than sweeping demands. The union isn’t asking for the state’s money to be redistributed or second-guessed. It’s asking Lee County to use local funds to extend a comparable benefit — roughly \$2,320 — to the educators the state formula didn’t reach. Alongside that, TALC has proposed raising the district’s starting salary by \$1,000, adding a modest across-the-board increase for all represented staff, and restoring a small pool of performance pay and classroom supply funding.

NONE OF THIS IS EXTRAVAGANT. IT’S AN ATTEMPT TO KEEP PACE WITH A BASIC REALITY: TEACHERS ROUTINELY SPEND THEIR OWN MONEY ON MATERIALS THEIR STUDENTS NEED, AND A COMPENSATION SYSTEM THAT REWARDS TENURE WHILE IGNORING EVERYONE ELSE UNDERMINES MORALE PRECISELY WHERE THE DISTRICT CAN LEAST AFFORD IT — AMONG THE NEWER TEACHERS IT NEEDS TO RETAIN.

If the money isn’t there, the school board should say so plainly to the district — and then go get it. Lee County should be pressing the district, and if necessary the state, for additional funding rather than treating the current allocation as the ceiling of what’s possible. Too much of the district’s budget is absorbed at the administrative level and never reaches the classroom. Salaries at the district office frequently start well above \$100,000, a figure worth sitting with when measured against the hours a classroom teacher puts in — grading at night, coaching after school, buying supplies out of pocket — for a fraction of that pay. That imbalance is not a minor accounting detail. It is a statement of priorities, and it is the wrong one.

An impasse is not the same as a breakdown, but it does mean the two sides have run out of room to agree without outside help. That should concern every parent and taxpayer in the district, not just union members. A school system that pays its administrators well while asking teachers to wait for scraps of state funding will struggle to keep good teachers in the classroom, no matter how experienced its senior staff may be.

Lee County has the chance to close this gap without waiting on Tallahassee to do it for them. The school board should ask the district for more funding, full stop, and put the district’s own priorities — administrative pay included — back on the table. It should take that chance.

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SEASON OF Progress

AN UPDATE ON
THE NAPLES PIER

MAYOR TERESA LEE HEITMANN
CITY OF NAPLES

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be reused as recycled concrete aggregate.

Construction activities have now shifted toward building the future pier. All test piles have been installed, and engineers have confirmed the foundation design for the new structure. Crews have installed 150 of the 193 permanent pilings, and debris from previous generations of piers has been removed from the seabed.

Concrete pours are well underway. Crews have just completed the concrete pour for the mid-pavilion area, bringing us to the halfway point for the new Pier. We expect the first IPE wood decking to be installed before Thanksgiving, weather permitting.

This project has also presented opportunities to preserve our history. During demolition, original pilings from the 1888 pier were identified and authenticated through carbon dating. The City is now working with preservation experts to ensure these historic artifacts are protected for future generations.

The Naples Pier has always been more than a structure; it is a symbol of our community's resilience, heritage, and connection to the Gulf. Every pile driven, every piece of debris removed, and every milestone reached brings us closer to restoring this treasured landmark.

Projects of this magnitude are only possible because of the talented professionals working behind the scenes every day. I want to recognize Assistant City Manager Bruce Selfon, who has served as the City's project manager, providing leadership and oversight throughout this complex effort. City Manager Gary Young visits the site every week to help coordinate the City team's support for the project.

THE NAPLES PIER HAS ALWAYS BEEN MORE THAN A STRUCTURE; IT IS A SYMBOL OF OUR COMMUNITY'S RESILIENCE, HERITAGE, AND CONNECTION TO THE GULF.

that honors its historic character while incorporating modern engineering and resilience measures designed to withstand future storms. Throughout the planning and design process, City staff, engineers, regulatory agencies, and community stakeholders have worked diligently to ensure that the new pier reflects the values and expectations of Naples residents.

Since breaking ground in January, work has advanced steadily and safely, transforming years of planning into visible progress. The demolition of the old pier has been completed, making way for a new structure that will honor the pier's legacy while incorporating modern engineering and resilience standards.

Throughout the project, the City and our partners have remained committed to environmental stewardship. Prior to demolition, coral species attached to the old pier were carefully relocated to the Florida Coral Reef Research Facility at Mote Marine Laboratory, where they will be preserved and studied. Additionally, nearly 300 tons of concrete pilings from the former pier have been repurposed at Wasmer Reef, creating new marine habitat beneath the Gulf waters. Almost all of the remaining old concrete pilings were sent to

Alongside Bruce is an outstanding team of partners whose expertise is helping turn this vision into reality. Shoreline Foundation Inc. is leading the marine construction; MHK Architecture designed a pier that honors Naples' rich history while looking toward the future; and Turrell, Hall and Associates is providing the engineering expertise necessary to construct a resilient, long-lasting landmark. Through our longstanding partnership with the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, we have also worked to protect the pelicans and other wildlife that call the Pier and its surrounding waters home. Each partner's commitment, collaboration, and problem-solving have been instrumental in keeping this important project moving forward, and our community will benefit from their work for decades to come.

This season of progress reminds us that rebuilding is not simply about replacing what was lost. It is about creating something stronger, preserving our history, protecting our environment, and investing in the future of Naples for generations to come.

God bless the City of Naples,
Teresa Lee Heitmann, Mayor



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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we leave summer behind and enter this beautiful season of fall, October reminds us to care for one another. Breast Cancer Awareness Month is a time to honor survivors, encourage those undergoing treatment, and remember loved ones whose lives we cherish. Behind every pink ribbon is a person, a family, and a story. Compassion means more than wearing a color, it means praying, listening, lending a hand, and reminding someone they do not have to face their struggle alone.

The pink ribbon reminds us to care for our physical lives; the cross reminds us of God's love and His gift of eternal life. John 3:16 declares, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In His darkest hour, Jesus prayed, "Not my will, but thine, be done." He endured the cross, died for our sins, and rose again in victory! Through faith in Him, we are saved from eternal condemnation and receive eternal life. Salvation does not mean we will never face trials, but it assures us that those trials cannot separate us from His love.

Throughout October, let us support those affected by cancer and encourage everyone who has survived a difficult season. Whether you have faced sickness, grief, financial struggles, or heartbreak, what you have been through does not erase what God can still do in your life. Your scars tell a story, but your life still has purpose!

When we cannot provide a meal, clothing, or financial help, we can still pray. Scripture reminds us, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Prayer changes things! Because Jesus lives, we have hope for today, strength for tomorrow, and the promise of eternal life.

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



Pastor Demetrius Thomas
St. Mary Baptist Church
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As Vice Chair; I am pleased to announce that the Fort Myers General Employees' Pension Board has selected Casey Baum of Dimensional as one of its portfolio managers.

Casey Baum is recognized as one of the leading portfolio managers in the United States, with a stellar track record and responsibility for approximately \$1.1 trillion in assets under management.

Beyond his extraordinary accomplishments in the investment industry, I am especially proud that our employees' pension will be entrusted to someone who exemplifies integrity, humility, and strong moral character.

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THE INNATE CIRCLE

by Monique Wooley



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WHY THE PLANT-BASED SWITCH

If you have chosen a “vegetarian or vegan” lifestyle, focus on vitamin B12, which isn’t optional – it’s essential for nerves and red blood cells.

Nutrition and exercise become more prevalent especially when you choose a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. Meat provides protein that builds and repairs muscles, plus nutrients such as iron, vitamin B12, zinc, and creatine that support energy, red blood cells, immunity, and more importantly, brain function. If you’re not consuming meat, it can become more difficult to consume, absorb, and store the nutrients that are needed for your body’s daily functions.

I can’t say this enough-it is absolutely imperative to research from reliable sources and keep your health care professional informed of your diet. A dietitian should also be on your vegetarian/vegan team for guidance especially at the start of your meal-planning journey. Why, because lifestyle changes may naturally cause a shift in our body’s needs. This is another reason why it is crucial to adopt a regular exercise routine and remain consistent throughout your lifestyle journey. A simple brisk walk for at least 30 minutes daily can help keep your body on track.

Keep in mind that FOOD should always be the main source of your body’s nutrients. Supplements, should only be used for those who may suffer a deficiency. However, high doses of supplements can in fact be harmful. Therefore, supplements should always be shown on your daily medications list and your blood levels should be monitored by a trained medical professional. This is referred to as routine lab testing.

So how do we know if we are getting the correct nutrients as a vegetarian/vegan? Great question.

If you have been told by a physician that you have a deficiency, more than likely you will be required to take supplements. If you are starting to notice a limited appetite or you have an unbalanced diet. You may need supplements.

Nowadays-many people are becoming more aware of their eating habits as it relates to health. Which means, the information is no longer a secret. However, being a pescatarian myself, I get a lot of questions from people who seem amused by the fact that I don’t eat certain foods. They want to know why. And I’m happy to share my why. I also often ask vegetarian/vegans what their “why” is for becoming vegetarian/vegan. And in return, some are unable to explain why other than “meat is nasty.”

So allow me to explain my why. I’ve always been a person who didn’t quite understand why humans ate certain animal parts even as a child. So my mother would at times prepare certain foods for me separately. Growing up in a “soul food” household, I’ve watched multiple people in my family struggle with severe hypertension, RA, digestive issues, obesity, and other chronic illnesses. I didn’t want to follow suit. But I also didn’t quite understand how not to. But in my more recent adult years, I started to get hit with diagnoses like HTN. I began to dig deep

into research. I also had a mentor who explained things until it became clear. I read reliable books like Fit for Life by: Harvey & Marilyn Diamond, Eat, Drink & Be Healthy by: Walter C. Willett, and The Holy Bible. Then I used my many years of clinical experience and common sense. It did not come without trial and error and thankfully, I’m still learning. But my why has always been simple. I did it for my health, my family, for my grandkids, and someday my great-grandkids. Because of them, I was willing to change my mindset.

Now let’s talk about the how.

If you have chosen a “vegetarian or vegan” lifestyle, focus on vitamin B12, which isn’t optional-it’s essential for nerves and red blood cells. Unfortified plant foods don’t reliably provide it. Use a reliable B12 supplement or consistently eat B12- fortified foods. For Protein: Include beans, lentils, tofu, tempeh, peas, seitan, soy foods, nuts, and seeds. It is really important to include a protein source at each meal.

For Vitamin D: This may require a quality supplement, particularly with limited sun exposure. Choose fortified foods and discuss the appropriate dose with a healthcare professional.

(I personally suggest a liquid vitamin D) Tip: Taking vitamin K while taking vitamin D will aid in assisting the vitamin D to get to the right place in your body.

For Calcium: Choose calcium-fortified plant milk or yogurt, calcium-set tofu, beans, tahini, and greens such as kale or broccoli to name a few.

For Omega-3: Add chia, ground flaxseed, hemp seeds, and walnuts to a fruit smoothie, raw organic oats, or açai bowls. An algae-based DHA/EPA supplement may be worth considering, especially during pregnancy or for people who rarely eat these foods.

For Iron: Iron is found in lentils, beans, tofu, fortified cereals, seeds, and dark leafy greens. Pair these with vitamin-C foods such as peppers, citrus, or tomatoes to improve absorption. (Don’t take iron routinely unless a deficiency is confirmed)

For Zinc & Selenium: You can obtain zinc from beans, tofu, nuts, seeds, and whole grains; selenium from foods such as Brazil nuts, though amounts vary. Again, a varied diet is usually preferable to high-dose supplements.

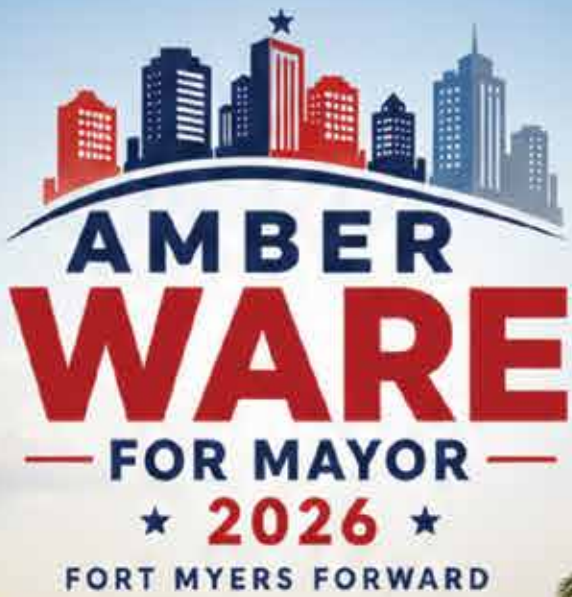
Lastly- for Iodine: I can never say to anyone to use iodized salt, even in moderation because I don’t ever. So use a suitable iodine supplement. Avoid relying heavily on seaweed, because iodine levels can be excessively high in seaweed.

**This is for informational purposes and a story of my journey’s experience. Although I am clinical, I am not a physician and this is not medical advice. I encourage you to do your own research to determine what’s best for you and seek professional medical advice when needed.

TOGETHER, WE CAN BUILD A STRONGER FORT MYERS



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ABOUT AMBER WARE

I'm Amber Ware – a devoted public servant, community advocate, and lifelong leader committed to making Fort Myers a better place to live, work, and raise a family. I bring experience, integrity, and a heart for service to City Hall. My focus is simple:
put people first and create real results that improve our quality of life.

- ✓ Experienced public servant and leader
- ✓ Committed to fiscal responsibility and smart, transparent government
- ✓ A strong voice for working families, seniors, and our youth
- ✓ Dedicated to building a safer, cleaner, and more vibrant Fort Myers

WHY I'M RUNNING

Fort Myers is full of potential, and I believe the best days are ahead of us. I'm running for mayor to bring new energy, accountability, and a clear vision that puts our residents and neighborhoods first. **Together, we can restore trust in our city government and create a stronger, more prosperous future for all.**

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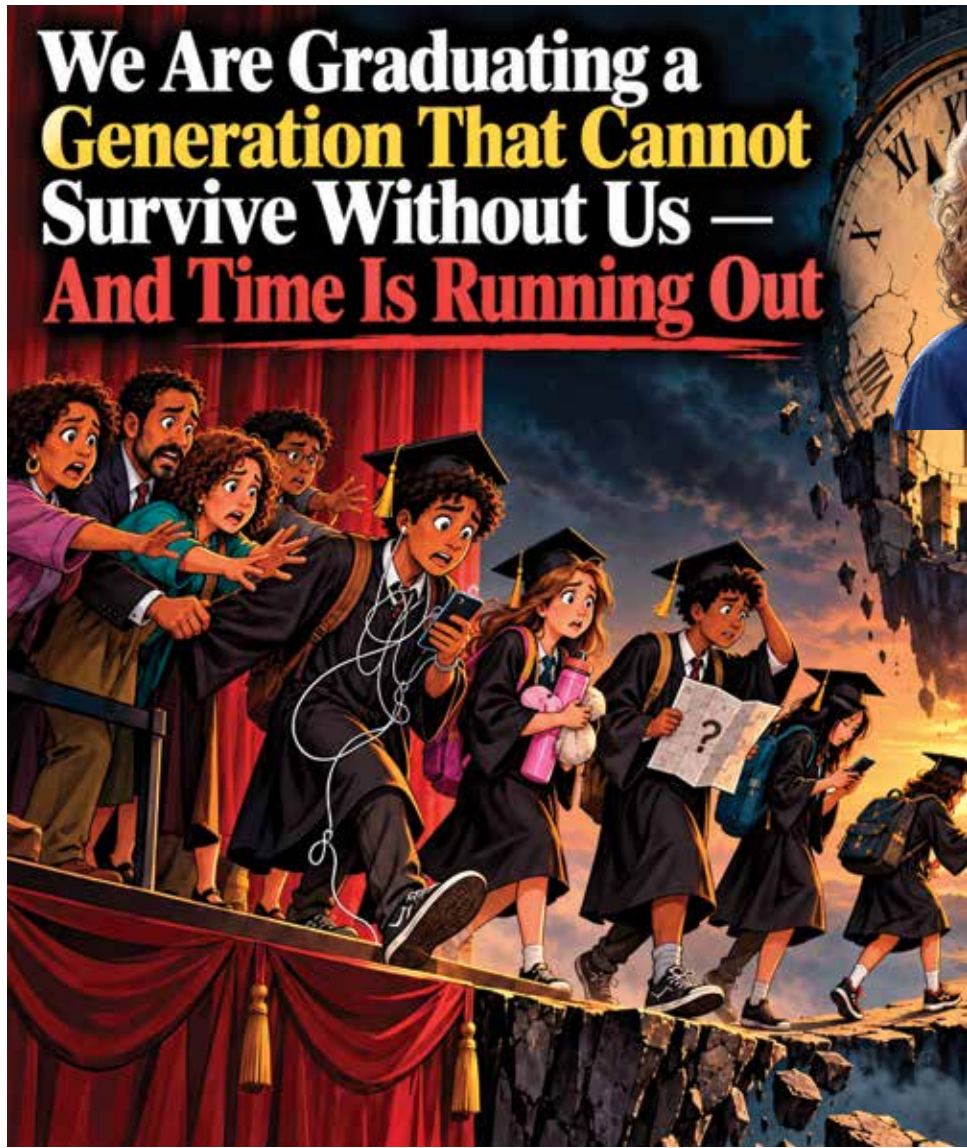
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GIGI GENTILE

A century ago, a person who finished eighth grade could frame a house, keep a farm's books, deliver a calf, and read a mortgage without a lawyer's help. Today, we are handing diplomas to eighteen-year-olds who cannot change a tire, cannot read the fine print on a loan, cannot cook a meal without a microwave, and cannot explain how their own bodies function. This is not a minor gap. It is a crisis, and it is accelerating.

We did not stumble into this. We built it, decision by decision, budget cut by budget cut. Shop class, home economics, and agricultural education were gutted to fund test prep and administrative bloat. Financial literacy got squeezed into a single forgettable semester, if it survived at all. History became a memorization drill instead of a lens for understanding the world our students are about to inherit. Health class covers puberty and stops there — nothing on what food does to a body, nothing on why sleep and movement matter more than any diet fad. We stripped practical competence out of public education and replaced it with standardized test scores, and we are now watching the bill come due.

The result is a generation that is credentialed but helpless. They can write a five-paragraph essay on a book they didn't choose, but they've never budgeted a paycheck, negotiated a lease, or fixed a single thing with their own hands. We have manufactured dependency at scale and called it education.

And it is breaking them. Teen anxiety and depression have climbed sharply over the past decade. Researchers point to social media, academic pressure, isolation — but no one should ignore the obvious: a young person who has never built, fixed, or provided for anything has never had the chance to discover they are capable of it. Confidence isn't handed out with participation trophies. It's earned through competence, and we've engineered competence out of childhood.

Let's be clear: this is not an argument against algebra or literature. It's an indictment of a system that produces students who can analyze a sonnet but can't read a pay stub — who can pass an AP exam but couldn't keep a houseplant alive, let alone grow food to eat. We have confused test performance with life preparation, and our children are paying the price.

And in case anyone doubts how far this has gone, look no further than Lee County Schools, which has a policy guaranteeing students no less than a 50% on a grade — even if they never attempt the work. Zero effort. Half credit. No name on the page, no pencil ever lifted, and the student still walks away with a passing floor under them. This is not compassion. This is a school system telling its own students, in writing, that trying is optional. We are stunned that we have to say this out loud: an education system's most basic job is to teach children that effort produces outcomes. A policy that guarantees a passing grade for doing nothing doesn't cushion failure — it manufactures it, and it does so on purpose, district by district, one school board vote at a time. This is exactly the kind of injustice this piece is warning about, and it deserves to be named directly.

IF WE DON'T ACT NOW, HERE'S WHAT WE'RE BUILDING

A population that cannot function without outside experts for basic decisions — financial advisors for simple budgeting, mechanics for minor repairs, apps to tell them what to eat. That is not convenience. That is vulnerability. A citizenry that doesn't understand its own economy, its own government, or its own body is a citizenry that can be misled easily and mobilized rarely. Democracy depends on capable, informed citizens. Every year we delay fixing this, we are weakening the foundation the next generation will need to stand on — and stand up for themselves.

THIS HAS TO CHANGE — STARTING NOW

- Restore applied learning immediately. Shop, agriculture, home economics, basic mechanics — these cannot be the first line item cut when budgets tighten. They are not electives. They are survival skills.
- Make financial literacy non-negotiable. Every student should leave school understanding taxes, credit, interest, and budgeting. This is not optional knowledge in the world they're entering.
- Teach history and civics like the stakes are real — because they are. Students need to understand why the past is shaping the fights happening right now, not just when the Treaty of Versailles was signed.
- Treat the human body as essential curriculum. Nutrition and physiology deserve the rigor we give chemistry, because no one will ever use chemistry as often as they'll use their own body.
- Stop measuring schools by test scores alone. Measure them by whether an eighteen-year-old can actually function on their own — because right now, too many can't.
- Kill grade floors that reward doing nothing. Policies like Lee County's 50%-minimum-for-no-work rule need to be scrapped immediately, everywhere they exist. They are not a safety net. They are a signal to students that effort is optional — and students are listening.

We do not have the luxury of waiting for another task force or another decade of studies. Every graduating class that leaves school without these skills is a class we have failed in real time. We owe our children more than a diploma. We owe them the ability to survive — and thrive — without us. The clock is already running.

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★ STRONG LEADERSHIP | STRONGER COMMUNITY | BRIGHTER FUTURE ★

Chantel Rhodes is a Fort Myers native, social worker, international humanitarian, entrepreneur, community advocate, and candidate for Fort Myers City Council, Ward 3. Born and raised in Fort Myers, she has developed a deep connection to the community and a lifelong commitment to serving others. Chantel earned a bachelor's degree in Criminology from the University of South Florida and a Master of Social Work from The Andrew Young school of policy studies at Georgia State University.

Her education and professional experience have strengthened her understanding of public safety, social services, community needs, and the challenges facing individuals and families seeking stability and opportunity.

Chantel's commitment to service has taken her around the world. She has worked and served in Malaysia, China, Pakistan, and Kenya. From 2017 to 2019, she taught English in China, building relationships across cultures and gaining experience in an international community. She also supported relocation advocacy for Syrian refugees, deepening her understanding of displacement and humanitarian needs.

Despite her international work, Chantel has remained closely connected to Southwest Florida. In 2020, during nationwide demonstrations and conversations about policing and racial justice, she led a local movement against police brutality in Southwest Florida. That experience strengthened her commitment to civic engagement, accountability, peaceful community action, and ensuring residents have a meaningful voice in decisions affecting their lives.

Chantel's decision to run for Fort Myers City Council, Ward 3, grew from her belief that residents deserve responsive, accountable, and appropriate representation. She is committed to ensuring Ward 3



CHANTEL
FORWARD 3
RHODES



residents are heard, respected, and included in the community's future.

Community and family remain central to her work. Together with her mother, Chantel co-founded the 239 Drumline, focused on music, youth engagement, discipline, creativity, and community involvement. They also created Baby D Collection, a fragrance brand committed to making fine fragrances affordable and accessible.

Chantel brings social work experience, international perspective, grassroots advocacy, entrepreneurship, and deep local roots to public service. Her priorities include strengthening Fort Myers neighborhoods, promoting safety and beautification, expanding community involvement, and providing accessible, engaged, and responsive leadership for Ward 3.



PAID FOR BY Chantel Rhodes for Ft. Myers City Council Ward 3



Positioned

BY LISA ESWAY



positioned

- An act of placing or arranging. An arranging in order

Being positioned is different from simply placed. To be positioned means God has brought you somewhere with purpose. The place may not look like you expected. God can use the very place you are standing as part of the assignment He has prepared for you. There is such importance in knowing your personal purpose. It makes all those things of our life worth it... you know ... the hard things.

Positioned. The dictionary's definition is, "An act of placing or arranging. An arranging in order".

Esther 4:14 scripture says "And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

Esther did not know the reason she was in the palace until the moment came when her position became her assignment.

You may be looking at where you are and asking why am I here? When God is looking at where you are saying this is exactly where I need you. Your position is not always your destination. Sometimes it's your divine placement for a season. And this is another beautiful layer... recognize that her position wasn't just for her. What God had brought her into was connected to the lives of other people.

Sometimes I wonder this about myself maybe God didn't bring me through the things that I've survived simply to give me a better life. Maybe He positioned me so that my

life could become evidence that He is still God in the hard places. The power that I lack. Esther was positioned in a place of influence. But she didn't immediately understand why. Her position wasn't just about her comfort, her success, or her own story, there was a greater purpose to where God had placed her. She had a choice to remain silent and protect herself, or to step into the assignment connected to her position... and that's what she chose... which elevated her up higher than she ever would have been.

I believe that God positions us before He reveals the purpose, we may not know the purpose for a long time. But that's okay... it is important because we often want the explanation before we are willing to embrace the placement. We want to know why before we trust God with where. But Faith doesn't always give us the entire map. Sometimes God simply gives us just the next step.

So perhaps the place where you're standing today is not a mistake maybe the wilderness has positioned you, maybe the things you survived was preparing you for an assignment you never could have carried before. We can even take the very places we thought would destroy us and use them as a place where He develops our strength, our compassion, our testimony and our dependence upon Him.

There are places in life that we would never choose for ourselves. He can take a broken chapter and turn it into a testimony. He can take a season of recovery and turn it into a ministry. He can take the person who once needed to be rescued and eventually position that same person to reach back and help someone else to find their way.

Your position doesn't have to look perfect for you. And maybe that's what God is asking us today will you trust me with where I have placed you? Your question shouldn't be why am I here? It should be what have you positioned me here to do?

Standing Strong with Isabella Fundraiser

We are standing strong with Isabella.

Join us at Sugarshack Downtown as we come together to support Isabella Baker, her baby girl, and her family while she battles Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

The afternoon will include live music, food, drinks, raffle baskets, a 50/50 raffle, and family-friendly fun, with a portion of the day's proceeds going directly to Isabella.

Bonita Springs, let's fill the Shack and show our support for Isabella and her family.

Saturday, October 10 | 12PM to 4 PM

Sugarshack Downtown, 27421 Old US-41 Rd, Bonita Springs 34135



**Golisano Children's
Hospital Fashion
Show to Benefit
Barbara's Friends**



Event supports Southwest Florida families facing cancer & blood disorders at Lee Health Golisano Children's Hospital

The 14th Annual Golisano Children's Hospital Fashion Show will bring together fashion, philanthropy and community on Thursday, Dec. 10, 2026, at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa in Bonita Springs. Proceeds from the event will benefit Barbara's Friends – Golisano Children's Cancer Fund, which has helped more than 12,000 children and families facing cancer and blood disorders since 1995. Barbara's Friends supports specialized pediatric care, advanced treatments, family support and counseling, equipment, staffing, and training that help children receive lifesaving treatment close to home.

"When a child is diagnosed with cancer, their entire family begins a journey they never expected," said Amy Helgeson, senior director of development for Lee Health Foundation. "This year's support of Barbara's Friends is an opportunity for our community to rally around local children and families, celebrate their resilience and help ensure they have access to exceptional care and support every step of the way."

Barbara's Friends supports Golisano Children's Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Program, the only program of its kind in Southwest Florida. Through the generosity of donors, sponsors, and community partners, the fund helps provide critical resources that improve patient experience and outcomes. Thanks to philanthropic support, no child is denied treatment because of a family's inability to pay.

Sponsorship opportunities are available for businesses and community partners looking to make a meaningful impact while gaining visibility among an engaged audience of supporters. For more information about sponsorship opportunities or to purchase tickets, visit LeeHealthFoundation.org/GolisanoFashion.

About Lee Health Golisano Children's

Lee Health Golisano Children's is Southwest Florida's leading provider of pediatric healthcare, offering comprehensive care through the region's only children's hospital, pediatric specialty services, outpatient care, emergency services, and neonatal programs. Caring for more than 45,000 children each year across 30+ specialties, Golisano Children's is nationally recognized for excellence and remains dedicated to delivering exceptional care close to home. For more information, visit GoGolisano.org.





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Pastor Dr. Deb Walsh | Mountain Mover & Water Walkers

Everything that happens to us here helps to shape our souls.

The whole of you is already known by God. And the whole of you is already glorified. The Bible says in Romans 8:28 (ERV) – We KNOW that in everything God works for the good of those who love him. These are the people God chose, because that was His plan.” When you have a situation or challenge, know it is for your good. I know that it is hard to believe when you are walking through it—but it is truth. The hope we have in Jesus is that once we accept Him as our savior, we become like Him! If we are to be conformed to the image of Christ, then we should expect that we will have to endure some things. Jesus endured the cross, was chased to be thrown off a cliff, was spit on, beaten, flogged, nailed to a cross--all for you. No human could endure this but He did this all for you! He did so you could endure, have hope, and His power knowing you will be glorified in Him.

There are two sorts of people: a) Those who say to GOD – thy will be done and b) those who say to God – my will be done. The funny thing is, God still acknowledges your will and tells you in

Psalms 37:5 Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass.

He will bring it! So, keep on walking through the valleys because He is your shield and buckler, He is walking with you and will bring it to pass. God is more powerful than all the forces of evil and all the rotten things that happen in our lives. He is the only One who can make a way where there is none. He can and will do it if you only trust in Him. He has proven it over and over. He makes seas split so you can walk on dry ground. He makes waters flow from the Rock. He turns the enemy on itself in victory.

When you are going through tough times, I want to leave with you what I do. I praise Him through it! I know victory is mine in Christ Jesus. I know the battle is already won. I know if He is for me, who could stand against me? Start praising Him now. Start positioning your mind to receive what God has for you. Transform it by reading the Word of God because it will blow your mind.

And lastly, don't let this be where you park. Keep moving forward in expectation. Don't let other people's opinions or mindsets hold you back. You may need to keep quiet until you get to the other side. You may need to be their example. Start today, everyday is a new day with new grace and mercy given to us by God. To commit to Him you can say something like this, “Lord, I don't know how I can get through this but I am counting on You. I am trusting that You can make a way. I know I am a sinner in need of your salvation and grace. I am sorry and ask your forgiveness. I need you and am ready to live for you. I am ready for the plans you have for me to prosper me. I am ready to be Your child. Come into my heart. Help me commit and trust in You. In Jesus name I pray. Amen and Amen.”

That's it! Enjoy your victory and I can't wait to hear about it!

I want to personally extend to YOU an invitation to join me at the National Leadership Conference on September 19th from 9-3pm at the Charlotte Harbor Convention Center. I want you to experience for yourself, the Jesus I know, and also to hear from other business and ministry leaders who have the wisdom and knowledge you need to be successful. Come expecting!!

Love, Pastor Dr. Deb Walsh

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord.

Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.

In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand.

Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there were one set of footprints.

This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints.

So I said to the Lord, “You promised me Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always.

But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life

there have only been one set of footprints in the sand.

Why, when I needed you most, you have not been there for me?”

The Lord replied, “The times when you have seen only one set of footprints, is when I carried you.”

Mary Stevenson



Set sail with us on October 30th for our 2nd Annual Halloween Sunset Wine Tasting Cruise: A Pirate’s Pour!

We’re taking Halloween to the high seas for an evening of wine, costumes, sunset views, and a little pirate mischief aboard our pirate-themed sunset cruise!

Our very own Advanced Sommelier, Jen Schmitt, will lead us through a guided tasting of five wines, including a bubbly toast as we cruise the beautiful waters of Estero Bay and watch the sun set over Southwest Florida.

And yes... pirate attire is HIGHLY encouraged!

Break out the eye patches, bandanas, boots, hooks, parrots, and your best Arrrrr! because we'll be awarding a prize for the Best Dressed Pirate — and if you know Jen, you know she gives GOOD prizes!

- Your Pirate Adventure Includes:
- Approximately 2-hour sunset cruise
 - 5 wine pours, including a bubbly toast
 - Guided wine tasting with Advanced Sommelier Jen Schmitt
 - Vichino’s pretzel charcuterie
 - Gorgeous sunset views over Estero Bay
 - Best Dressed Pirate Costume Contest
 - Plenty of Halloween & pirate fun!

Whether you arrive looking like a seasoned captain, a swashbuckling deckhand, or simply come ready to drink some great wine, this is one Halloween adventure you won’t want to miss.

Grab your crew, don your pirate gear, and join us for A Pirate’s Pour!

Space aboard the ship is limited, so don’t wait to claim your spot. Last year’s pirates had a mighty good time — and we’re ready to do it all over again!

This is a “classroom” style event led by our wine steward. They will take you through facts and information about the region, and each wine we taste. Glasses available for purchase after the tasting.

Wines will be available for purchase by the bottle/case at a discounted rate at the end of the event.

We ask you arrive on time and be ready to learn! Questions are strongly encouraged, don’t be shy!

Friday, October 30, 2026

5:30 PM to 7:30 PM)

Bonita Bay Marina
27598 Marina Pointe Drive, Bonita Springs

Departure Time
5:30 pm - Embark from Bonita Bay Marina

Please arrive early
between 5:10 pm & 5:20 pm
2 hour cruise (approx)

Price \$119
Seats are limited!



Your tour takes place aboard our 34-foot, U.S. Coast Guard-inspected passenger vessel, operated by a U.S. Coast Guard Licensed Master Captain. The boat is fully covered, providing protection from the Florida sun and weather, and features comfortable seating, and an onboard restroom.

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All ticket sales are final. Refunds will not be issued unless the event is canceled by Vichino's or the Marina.
Cruises operate rain or shine. Weather conditions can change quickly, and all decisions regarding the safe operation of the vessel are made by the Captain.
If the Captain or Marina determines prior to departure that conditions are unsafe and the cruise must be canceled, guests will be offered a refund, rescheduled date, or the option to transfer their tickets to another eligible event.
Cruise duration is approximately two (2) hours. If weather, water conditions, or other safety concerns arise after departure, the Captain may alter the route or return to the Marina early. If the cruise is shortened after departure for safety reasons, no partial or full refunds will be issued for the reduced cruise time.
Guest safety is always the priority, and the Captain's decision regarding weather, water conditions, and safe vessel operation is final.
WAIVER OF LIABILITY AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK. All attendees, by purchasing a ticket and/or attending the event, agree to assume all of the risks, hazards and dangers that may arise from, or relate in any way to, the risk of contracting a communicable disease or illness (including exposure to COVID-19, a bacteria, virus, or other pathogen capable of causing a communicable disease or illness) whether occurring before, during, or after the event, however caused or contracted. Therefore, anyone who purchases a ticket and/or attends the event, hereby waives any and all claims against Vichino's Cafe + Wine Bar, Dalla Terra, Wine Makers Imports, Reyes, Opici Imports, Zonin 1821 Imports, Trivin Imports, Sweetwaters, the presenter, and/or all related sponsors relating to all risks of personal injury, sickness, permanent disability and/or death.
Fine Print: All participants must be 21+ years of age. By signing up for this event and providing your email, you may be added to Vichino's email list at which you may unsubscribe at any time. Collected phone numbers will ONLY be used to call with order questions, event changes, and/or cancellations. Attendees are subject to photo & video footage during the show to be used for marketing purposes for Vichino's Cafe & Wine Bar & the performer. Events are subject to change. This includes but is not limited to date, time, theme, presenter, lineup, etc.



Collier County Supervisor of Elections Launches Art for Democracy Contest

CALL FOR ENTRIES BEGINS OCTOBER 1

The Collier County Supervisor of Elections office is excited to announce their partnership with Collier County Public Schools and Champions For Learning for the 2026 Art for Democracy contest – a unique opportunity for student artists of all ages and backgrounds to celebrate civic engagement through their creative talents.

A scholarship will be awarded to one winning entry submitted by a high school student and a donation will be awarded to the K-8 Art Department at the school with the “Best of Show” entry. Ten additional runner-up entries will be featured in election materials including the “I Registered to Vote” sticker for future voter registration drives conducted by the Supervisor of Elections office.

The awards are provided by Champions For Learning through the Chuck Mohlke Endowment Fund of the Community Foundation of Collier County, and by the Naples Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution.

“We are excited to see some new creative designs made by our students during this year’s contest,” – Melissa R. Blazier, Supervisor of Elections. “The winning artwork will be displayed in election materials across the county as we gear up for future elections.”

A call for entries will take place between October 1 and November 12. Winning entries will be announced in December. For further information, please visit the Collier County Supervisor of Elections website at, visit CollierVotes.gov/ART or contact the Supervisor of Elections office at 239-252-VOTE (8683).

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THE SOUTHWEST FLORIDA CHRONICLE

OCTOBER 2026



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Edison Sailing Center Named SWFMIA’s Member of the Year

FORT MYERS, FL — The Southwest Florida Marine Industries Association (SWFMIA) has officially named the Edison Sailing Center (ESC) as its 2026 Member of the Year, recognizing the organization’s decades-long commitment to youth maritime education and water safety.

Capt. Tim Zimmerman, a dedicated instructor and parent with the sailing center, proudly accepted the prestigious award on behalf of ESC at the association’s recent ceremony held at Caloosa Sound Convention Center in Fort Myers.

The Southwest Florida Marine Industries Association (SWFMIA)—now known as the Marine Industries Association of Southwest Florida & Tampa Bay (MIASWF)—is a regional non-profit trade organization dedicated to protecting, promoting, and growing the recreational boating industry along Florida’s west coast. Representing over 250 marine-related businesses (such as boat dealers, manufacturers, and marinas), the association focuses on three core functions:

- **Advocacy & Legislation:** actively monitoring local government agendas at the legislative level to protect the rights of boaters, preserve water access, and defend working waterfronts.
- **Public Events & Promotion:** hosting major regional boat shows, including the Fort Myers Boat Show, Charlotte County Boat Show, and Bonita Springs Boat Show, to support member businesses and engage the public.

- **Safety & Resources:** Through consumer-facing initiatives like their Go Boating Florida platform, they provide boating educational tools, promote waterway safety, and offer public resources like local ramp directories.

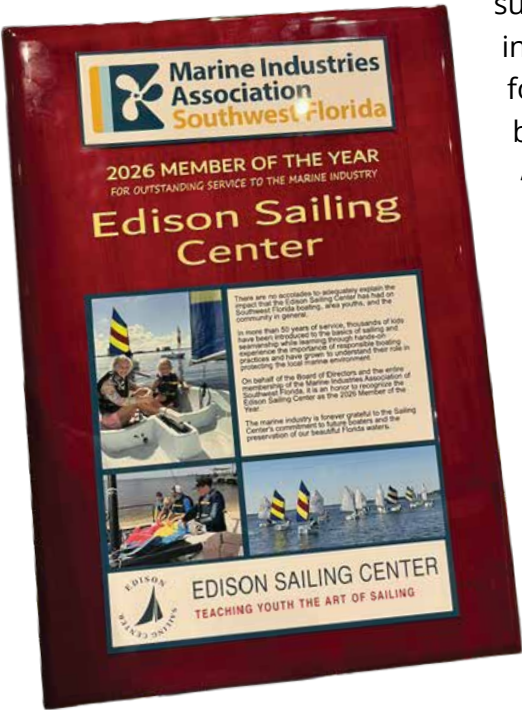
Since its founding in 1983, the Edison Sailing Center has been a cornerstone of the local community, teaching safe boating, navigation, and competitive sailing to area youth. Over the past 43 years, the non-profit organization has successfully served more than 18,000 children, instilling a lifelong love for the water and fostering the next generation of responsible boaters.

“We are deeply appreciative of this recognition from SWFMIA,” said Zimmerman following the presentation. “It is an incredible honor, especially in light of being recognized for doing something that we are all so genuinely passionate about every single day.”

The Member of the Year award highlights ESC’s ongoing mission to keep youth sailing accessible, safe, and community-driven. As the center looks toward the future, its leadership and volunteers remain dedicated to expanding their reach and continuing to serve the children of

Southwest Florida.

For information about programs offered at the sailing center, please visit: www.edisonsailingcenter.org





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Artis—Naples



OCTOBER 14, 2026 | 6PM AND 8:30PM

LUCY WIJNANDS ALL THAT JAZZ

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Lucy Wijnands, vocalist

Luciano Morello, founding producer
Lew Del Gatto, artistic director, tenor saxophone
James Suggs, trumpet
Mike Harvey, drums
Kevin Mauldin, bass
Jerry Stawski, co-bandleader, vocals, piano

Known for her soulful voice and sophisticated swing, acclaimed NYC-based jazz vocalist Lucy Wijnands, winner of the prestigious 2021 Ella Fitzgerald Vocal Competition, joins the Naples Philharmonic Jazz Orchestra for the opening program of the All That Jazz series. A Kansas City native, Wijnands brings a deep connection to the vocal jazz tradition, shaped by her studies at SUNY Purchase’s Conservatory of Music and her experience performing alongside artists including Ron Carter, Houston Person and Joe Magnarelli. Her performances balance classic influences with fresh, modern sensibility.

OCTOBER 18, 3:00PM | OCTOBER 20, 3:00PM

BEETHOVEN AND FANNY MENDELSSOHN

Naples Philharmonic Syptert Salon Chamber Music
Musicians of the Naples Philharmonic
Mendelssohn-Hensel — String Quartet in E-flat Major
Beethoven — Piano Trio in G Major, Op. 1, No. 2

Musicians of the Naples Philharmonic open the Syptert Salon series with two transformative works in an energetic and emotionally charged program. The performance begins with Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel’s String Quartet, a work that reflects her creative freedom and is often regarded as one of the earliest substantial string quartets composed by a woman. Beethoven’s Piano Trio in G Major, an early masterpiece that helped establish his reputation in Vienna, closes the program, bridging Classical refinement with the heightened emotional intensity of the early Romantic era.

The Syptert Salon Series is generously sponsored by Drs. George Syptert and Joy Arpin.



Artis—Naples

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Sunday noon-4pm





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Winter Schedule: November – April

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10:30 AM Traditional Service with Choir**



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LT. BOBBY JUDD GRADUATES FROM FBI NATIONAL ACADEMY

Charlotte County Sheriff’s Office Corrections Lieutenant Bobby Judd has graduated from the 299th session of the FBI National Academy.

Two hundred and sixty-five law enforcement officers graduated from the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia on September 17, 2026. The 299th session of the National Academy consisted of men and women from all over the country, including our very own Lieutenant Bobby Judd.

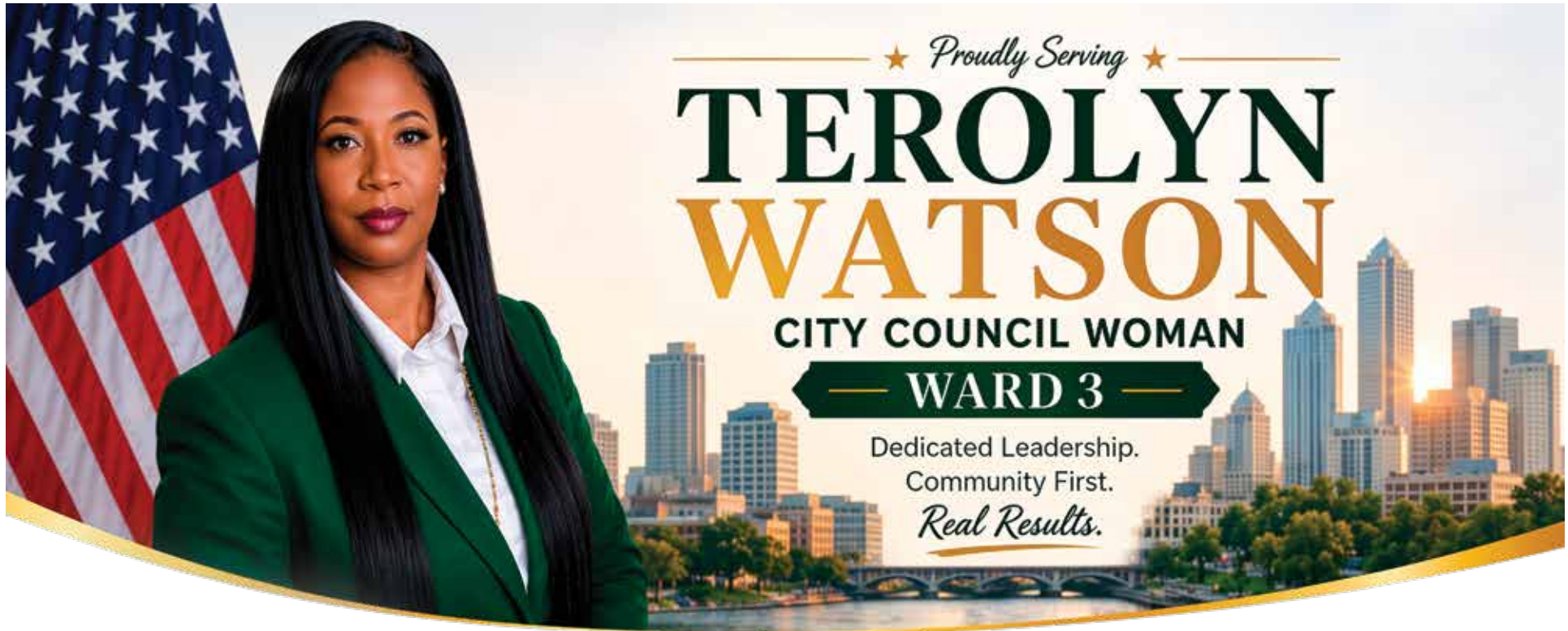
Internationally known for its academic excellence, the National Academy offers 10 weeks of advanced communication, leadership, and fitness training. Participants must have proven records as professionals within their agencies to attend. The National Academy is held at the FBI Training Academy in Quantico, the same facility where the FBI trains its new special agents and intelligence analysts.

“I am extremely proud of Lt. Judd for his success through this incredible program. Bobby has already been a fantastic leader with us, and being selected for this training reinforces what we already know about him. He is smart, driven, professional, and maintains the highest level of integrity day in and day out. I look forward to watching him take his leadership to the next level.”

SHERIFF BILL PRUMMELL

Lt. Judd stands with Sheriff Prummell at the 299th FBI National Academy graduation
A group photo of members of the 299th FBI National Academy graduation class





RE-ELECT TEROLYN WATSON

CONTINUED PROGRESSION

Deeply rooted and thoroughly committed describe Councilwoman Terolyn P. Watson and her seven years as the Councilperson for Ward Three. Terolyn was born, raised, and educated in Fort Myers, Florida. She has been employed with the Lee County School District for twenty eight years. Terolyn has two daughters, Jacinta and Aaliyah. Jacinta graduated from Florida State University, and Aaliyah currently attends Florida Academy. Terolyn has three grandchildren. Terolyn’s mother, Thelma J. Hamilton, worked and retired from Fort Myers High School. Growing up seeing her mother serving others inspired Terolyn to be a catalyst for change.

Under her leadership, Ward 3 has experienced extraordinary improvements. Terolyn has been a champion for introducing initiatives, safety measures, and expansions within Ward 3 and the development of the City of Fort Myers. Councilwoman Watson was born, raised, and educated in Fort Myers, Florida Terolyn has worked for Lee County School District for 28 years and has served the citizens of Fort Myers for the past seven years; she has served the people of Ward 3 on the Fort Myers City Council.

“ Representing the constituents of Ward 3 is an honor. I look forward to continuing to work with and for you, the residents.”

* Political Advertisement paid for and approved by Terolyn P. Watson Fort Myers City Council, Ward 3.

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Thank you
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FUTURE

CHARLOTTE COUNTY FORECLOSURES

Dear Community Leaders and Residents of Charlotte County, I am writing to bring attention to a serious problem affecting our community: the high rate of home foreclosures in Charlotte County, Florida. Recent housing data shows that Charlotte County, including the Punta Gorda area, has one of the highest foreclosure rates in the entire country. In fact, according to ATTOM data, the Punta Gorda metropolitan area had the highest foreclosure rate of any U.S. metropolitan area during the first half of 2026. About 0.5% of the area's housing units had a foreclosure filing. This was more than three times the national average.

A foreclosure happens when a homeowner is unable to make their mortgage payments and the lender takes steps to take back the home. Foreclosure can be extremely stressful for families. Losing a home can mean losing a place where children grew up, where families made memories, and where people felt safe. It can also hurt the entire community because empty or abandoned homes can affect nearby property values and neighborhoods.

There are several reasons why foreclosures may be increasing in Charlotte County. One major problem is the high cost of living. Homeowners have to pay not only their mortgage, but also property taxes, insurance, utilities, repairs, and other expenses. In Florida, homeowners have also faced rising insurance costs. For some families, these extra costs can make it difficult to keep up with their monthly bills.

Another issue is that Charlotte County has experienced major storms and hurricanes. Hurricanes can cause serious damage to homes and businesses. Repairs can be very expensive, and some homeowners may have difficulty getting affordable insurance or paying their insurance deductibles. Even families who are careful with their money can struggle when unexpected costs become too high.

The foreclosure problem is not only about individual homeowners. It can affect the whole community. When people lose their homes, local businesses may lose customers. Neighborhoods can have more vacant properties. Local governments may also have to deal with additional costs related to abandoned or damaged homes. A large number of foreclosures can make people worry about the future of the local housing market.

The numbers show that this is not a small problem. ATTOM reported that Florida had the highest foreclosure rate among all states during the first half of 2026. Charlotte County's Punta Gorda area ranked first among U.S. metropolitan areas, with foreclosure filings on about 0.5% of housing units.

Because of this, I believe Charlotte County leaders should work to make sure homeowners know where they can get help before they lose their homes. Residents who are having trouble making mortgage payments should be able to

easily find information about housing counselors, financial assistance, and other resources. Community organizations, banks, and local government agencies should work together to help families understand their options.

We should also pay attention to the rising costs of home



Charlotte County posted the highest foreclosure rate of any metropolitan area in the United States during the first six months of 2026, with Lee County sixth.

insurance and repairs. Finding ways to make insurance more affordable and helping homeowners prepare for hurricanes could make a major difference. Preventing a foreclosure is often better for a family and for the community than trying to help after the family has already lost its home.

Charlotte County is a beautiful place to live, and many families have worked hard to make their homes here. A high foreclosure rate should not simply be treated as a statistic. Behind every foreclosure is a person or family who may be struggling to keep a roof over their heads.

I hope our community leaders will recognize the seriousness of this problem and take action. By working together, we can help homeowners stay in their homes, protect our neighborhoods, and make Charlotte County a stronger place for everyone.

Sincerely,

BUCK
CHARLOTTE COUNTY RESIDENT





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ARBITRAGE

Arbitrage is an investing strategy that takes advantage of price differences for the same, or nearly identical, asset in different markets.

In simple terms, an investor buys something where it is cheaper and sells it where it is more expensive. The difference between the two prices can create a profit. Although arbitrage may sound complicated, it's really not, the basic idea is similar to finding a product on sale at one store and selling it for a higher price somewhere else. In financial markets, however, arbitrage usually happens much faster and requires careful analysis of costs, risks, and timing.

A simple example of arbitrage involves a stock that is traded

type is merger arbitrage, which involves companies that are in the process of being acquired. For example, suppose Company A announces that it will buy Company B for \$30 per share, but Company B's stock trades at \$28 after the announcement. An investor might buy the shares at \$28 because they could rise toward \$30 if the deal is completed. The \$2 difference represents the potential profit. However, the deal could fail because of regulatory problems, financing issues, or disagreements between the companies. Therefore, merger arbitrage is not risk-free.

Another strategy is **convertible arbitrage**, which involves convertible securities that can be exchanged for shares of a company's stock. Investors may purchase the convertible security while taking a position that protects them against certain movements in the stock price. This strategy is more complicated and is generally associated with professional



The most important lesson is to look for price differences that do not seem justified by differences in value or risk.

on two different exchanges. Suppose a company's shares are selling for \$50 on one exchange but \$50.50 on another. An investor could potentially buy the stock for \$50 and simultaneously sell it for \$50.50, earning a \$0.50 difference per share. If the investor trades 1,000 shares, the theoretical profit would be \$500 before transaction costs and taxes. In efficient markets, these opportunities tend to disappear quickly because other investors notice the price difference and take advantage of it.

One important reason arbitrage opportunities exist is that financial markets are not perfectly connected. Differences in supply and demand, currency exchange rates, trading hours, investor behavior, and information can cause the same asset to have slightly different prices. Technology has made markets more efficient because computers can identify and trade on price differences almost instantly. As a result, traditional arbitrage opportunities are often small and short-lived.

There are several different forms of arbitrage. One common

investors and hedge funds.

Arbitrage can also involve currencies. Exchange rates between currencies are constantly changing, and occasionally prices can become inconsistent between different markets. A trader could potentially buy a currency at a lower exchange rate and sell it at a higher rate elsewhere. However, transaction fees, exchange-rate changes, and the difficulty of completing trades quickly can eliminate what initially appears to be a profitable opportunity.

For individual investors, understanding arbitrage can be valuable even if they never perform traditional arbitrage trades. The most important lesson is to look for price differences that do not seem justified by differences in value or risk. This way of thinking can help investors identify opportunities that other investors may overlook. For example, two companies in the same industry may have similar businesses but significantly different valuations. An investor can research why the difference exists and determine whether one company is undervalued.

ARBITRAGE

Investors can also incorporate arbitrage thinking into strategies such as pairs trading. In pairs trading, an investor identifies two historically related stocks and takes a long position in one while taking a short position in the other. The goal is to profit if the relationship between their prices returns toward its historical pattern. This strategy does not depend entirely on whether the overall market rises or falls. Instead, it focuses on the relative value of the two investments.

However, arbitrage should not be confused with guaranteed profit. A price difference exists for a reason in many situations. Transaction costs, taxes, borrowing expenses, market volatility, and unexpected events can turn a seemingly profitable trade into a loss. Investors must also consider execution risk, which occurs when prices change



before both sides of a trade can be completed.

Ultimately, arbitrage teaches investors an important principle: markets can sometimes price similar assets differently, creating opportunities for investors who are willing to research carefully and act intelligently. Successful arbitrage requires discipline, accurate information, careful calculations, and an understanding of risk. For most individual investors, the greatest benefit may not come from attempting complex, high-speed arbitrage trades. Instead, learning to recognize pricing differences and question whether an asset's market price accurately reflects its value can improve investment decisions. By incorporating this mindset into their investing process, investors may discover opportunities that others overlook while developing a more analytical and disciplined approach to building wealth.



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WHY SENIOR SINGLES SHOULD DATE

by Vernon Brown The Dunbar Shade Tree Phd.

Who says dating is only for young people? If you are a senior citizen and thinking about getting back into the dating game, go for it! You may have a few more gray hairs than you did when you were younger, but that does not mean your love life has to retire too. In fact, dating later in life can be exciting, funny, and even a little bit adventurous. It is important for senior citizens to have fun, stay positive, and keep an open mind when meeting someone new.

First of all, dating should be fun. You do not have to act like you are auditioning for a television dating show. You can simply enjoy spending time with another person. Go out for dinner, grab a cup of coffee, take a walk, or see a movie. And if you fall asleep during the movie, just call it an early intermission! The point is to laugh, enjoy yourself, and make new memories.

Having fun can also help take away some of the nervousness that comes with dating. Going on a first date can be scary at any age. You may wonder, "What should I wear?" or "What should I talk about?" You might even spend 30 minutes deciding whether to text, call, or send a carrier pigeon. The truth is, you do not have to be perfect. Just be yourself and enjoy the experience.

It is also important to keep an open mind. You might meet someone who is completely different from the person you imagined yourself dating. Maybe

uncomfortable, constantly complains, or thinks borrowing money on the first date is romantic, it might be time to move on! Being open-minded means giving people a fair chance while still looking out for yourself.

Dating can also help senior citizens stay active and social. Getting out of the house and meeting people can make life

older does not mean you should stop meeting new people or looking for companionship. People can fall in love, make new friends, and enjoy exciting experiences at any age.

Dating later in life is not just about finding a husband, wife, boyfriend, or girlfriend. It is about enjoying life and meeting people. Maybe you find



more exciting. Instead of sitting at home arguing with the television remote, you could be out laughing with someone new. A relationship can give you someone to share meals with, go places with, and talk to about your day.

Another advantage of dating when you are older is that you have something

your perfect partner. Maybe you find a great friend. Maybe you simply have a wonderful dinner and a funny story to tell your friends the next day. All of those things are worth experiencing.

Senior citizens should have fun and keep an open mind when getting back into the dating game. Do not worry about being too old, too nervous, or too out of practice. Remember, you are never too old to meet someone new, laugh until your stomach hurts, or get butterflies in your stomach. And if you do not find love right away, at least you might get a free dessert out of the deal!

Life is too short to sit on the sidelines. Get dressed, put on your best smile, and give dating another chance. Just remember to have fun, be yourself, keep an open mind, and maybe leave the reading glasses at home—unless you actually need them to read the menu!

**Life is too short to sit on the sidelines.
Get dressed, put on your best smile,**

they have different hobbies, different tastes in music, or think pineapple belongs on pizza. Do not reject someone just because they are not exactly what you expected. Give them a chance. You might discover that their differences are actually what makes them interesting.

Of course, being open-minded does not mean ignoring your common sense. You should still have standards and boundaries. If someone makes you

young people do not always have: experience. You have probably learned a lot about life, relationships, and people. You know what you like and what you definitely do not like. You may also know that a person who says, "I never argue," probably has not been in a relationship very long!

Senior citizens should also remember that there is no expiration date on happiness. Just because you are

Dear Readers of the SWFL Chronicle,

I am writing to make my position clear about how I approach reporting and public accountability when it comes to elected officials. In an age when political disagreements can quickly become personal, sensational, and even vindictive, I believe there must still be a line between legitimate public-interest reporting and the unnecessary exposure of someone's private life.

That line is one I intend to respect.

My commitment is straightforward: I will focus my reporting on matters that directly concern taxpayers, registered voters, public resources, public responsibilities, and the actions of elected officials in their official capacities. I do not believe that holding public office means surrendering every aspect of one's personal life to public scrutiny.

An elected official is still a human being. They have a private life, personal relationships, families, personal struggles, mistakes, and shortcomings that do not automatically become the business of the public simply because that person was elected to office.

I believe strongly that an individual's personal business should remain personal unless there is a legitimate and demonstrable connection to the public's business.

Over the years, I have encountered information about elected officials in SWFL that could easily be turned into sensational stories. This can include personal nude photographs, sex videos, private communications, allegations, or other material that could cause embarrassment or damage to someone's reputation. I have made it my practice to approach such matters differently.

When I encounter material of that nature, I believe there is value in bringing the matter directly to the person involved rather than immediately taking it to the public. Many elected officials in SWFL can confirm the aforementioned, because I've personally hand delivered material to them. I also gave them my word that I will NEVER disclose their personal lives and only deal with the issues.

I may tell an elected official that I am aware of the material and give them the opportunity to understand what has come to my attention. But my purpose is not to threaten, blackmail, humiliate, or exploit them. Quite the opposite. My purpose is to make clear that I believe there is a difference between private conduct and public misconduct.

I will not use someone's private life as a weapon simply because they are an elected official.

That principle is important to me because integrity means having standards that apply even when breaking those standards might generate attention, controversy, clicks, or headlines.

However, protecting someone's privacy does not mean protecting public corruption or misconduct.

If an elected official's personal conduct directly affects taxpayers, registered voters, public money, public safety, the performance of their official duties, the integrity of an election, or the trust placed in them by the community, then the circumstances can become a legitimate matter of public interest.

There is an important distinction between reporting on someone's private life and reporting on conduct that has a genuine public consequence.

For example, if someone's private behavior involves the misuse of taxpayer money, abuse of governmental authority, conflicts of interest, corruption, fraud, coercion, abuse of office, or conduct that materially interferes with their responsibilities to the public, then I believe citizens have a right to know about the facts that affect them.

But if something is simply embarrassing, personally compromising, or unrelated to the official's responsibilities to the community, I do not believe that publishing it serves the public.

I refuse to believe that journalism should become a form of personal revenge.

The people of Southwest Florida deserve better than that.

Taxpayers deserve to know how their money is being spent. Registered voters deserve accurate information about the people asking for their votes. Communities deserve transparency when public officials make decisions that affect their neighborhoods, businesses, families, property, taxes, and quality of life.

Those are the issues I intend to concentrate on.

My responsibility is not to expose every weakness an elected official may have as a human being. My responsibility is to examine the decisions they make while entrusted with public authority and to ask whether those decisions serve the people who elected them.

I also believe that elected officials should understand that privacy and accountability are not mutually exclusive. You can respect someone's personal life while still demanding answers about their public conduct.

That is the standard I intend to follow.

I will not promise to ignore legitimate wrongdoing simply because the information happens to involve an elected official's personal life. If private conduct crosses into public misconduct, affects taxpayers, compromises an official responsibility, or creates a legitimate and substantial public-interest issue, I will investigate and report the matter responsibly and based upon verifiable facts.

But I will not expose someone's private shortcomings simply because I can.

There is a difference between having information and having a reason to publish it.

That difference matters.

My commitment to the readers of The SWFL Chronicle is that I will strive to put the interests of taxpayers and registered voters first. I will ask the difficult questions. I will investigate matters that deserve investigation. I will hold public officials accountable when their actions affect the people they were elected to serve.

At the same time, I will respect the boundary between public accountability and private life.

I believe that is not weakness.

It is integrity.

And in an era when almost anything can be recorded, leaked, posted, shared, and weaponized, I believe integrity matters more than ever.

*Sincerely,
McKinley G. Williams*

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Paid by Tony Beougher, nonpartisan, for Lee County School Board, District 4.