HENDRY

County Guide

2026 | 14th Edition

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Hendry County Guide

14th Edition February 2026

CONTENT

Hendry County is a special place. It is located in one of the most unique ecosystems in the world, and yet it draws – it does not shrink – from its sense of place. Here, beautiful sunsets against lakes and rivers impress on a daily basis, the opportunities to enjoy nature's offerings are nearly limitless, and the sense of community here drives a flourishing, growing community.

A special publication of Independent Newsmedia Inc., publisher of Hendry County News and Lake Okeechobee News, serving Hendry County since 1922.

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Exciting Things to Do

FESTIVALS, EVENTS, CELEBRATIONS AND MORE ...







Major League Fishing Tournaments

These national events often take place on beautiful Lake Okeechobee. Professional anglers come from across the country to compete for cash prizes. The event is held at the Roland Martin Marina & Resort in Clewiston. The season usually kicks off in January. For more information, visit majorleaguefishing.com.

Swamp Cabbage Festival

This festival celebrates local heroes with live entertainment, delicious food, and family fun and more. The festival is held annually on the last full weekend in February in Barron Park, 1559 De Soto Ave., in Downtown LaBelle. You can visit their website at swampcabbagefestival.org.

Hendry Co. Farm Tour

Hendry County — City Farm Tour Council and UF/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service will hold its 50th Farm Tour of the Hendry County agricultural industry March 14, 2026. Hendry County is one of the largest agricultural counties in the state and is the largest producer of oranges in Florida with over 75,000 acres of groves. Tickets are available on www.eventbrite.com.

Brighton Field Day Festival

The festival grounds are next to the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena, 17400 Sport Complex Road NE, Okeechobee, off State Road 721 in Glades County. This event, to be held Feb. 19-22, 2026, showcases Seminole and other Native American arts, crafts, food, dances and traditions. Call 863-467-6039 or visit their website at brightonfieldday.com.

Chalo Nikta Festival

Chalo Nitka will be held on March 6 & 7 (usually held the first weekend in March) in Moore Haven in nearby Glades County. Chalo Nitka is one of the state's oldest continuing festivals. The festival grounds are located in Chalo Nitka Park off U.S. Highway 27. There are midway games, rides, a pancake breakfast and vendor booths selling food, crafts and jewelry. Events also include the Big Bass Tournament, the Frontier Days Rodeo, the Kid's Day and Small Fry Fishing Contest, the Chalo Nitka Parade and the Chalo Nitka Queen Pageant. For more info, visit chalonitkafestival.com or email chalonitkasecretary@gmail.com.

Hendry County Fair and Livestock Show

Celebrating local agriculture with a livestock show and sale, cake auction, petting zoo, exhibits, pageants, a parade, frog racing and more, this week-long event is held in Clewiston on Feb. 6-15, 2026. You can visit their website at hendrycountyfair.com.

Clewiston Sugar Festival

Country music concert, arts and crafts, farming, beauty pageants, dessert contest, farming exhibits, fishing tournament, car show and more. It will be on Saturday, March 14 2026 at Clewiston's Sugar Festival Park, Civic Park, Osceola Avenue in Clewiiston. You can visit their Facebook page at facebook.com/ClewistonSugarFestival.

Black Gold Jubilee

Celebrating the end of harvest season, this unique festival will be held April 18, 2026, shows off Belle Glade's agricultural

• See **Things to Do** on page **6**

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Things to Do

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roots and organic “black gold” soil. Food, entertainment, fireworks, a car show, a volleyball tournament, rides and more. To be held at Torry Island Campground, 5000 W Canal St. N. in Belle Glade. For more information, visit blackgoldjubilee.org.

Shop Downtown

Saturday Markets are on the First Saturday of the month from November through March from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. located at 8 Park Avenue, Downtown LaBelle. Vendor booths, entertainment and interactive art classes! Find out more on the LaBelle Downtown Revitalization Corporation Facebook page at facebook.com/downtownlabelle

Sour Orange Festival

This event features the Sour Orange local Bake-Off, boasting delicious sour orange pies; vendors; entertainment; arts and crafts; a quilt show; recipe contests; and a photography display. The Sour Orange Festival is held in January at 1239 Red Barn Road in Lakeport. For more information, vist facebook.com/sourorangefestival.

American Indian Arts Celebration

Dance! Music! Arts! Culture! The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum will host the annual American Indian Arts Celebration in November of 2026 on the museum grounds at the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation, 34725 West Boundary Road, Clewiston. Enjoy traditional and contemporary arts and crafts, dance and music of the Seminole, Southeastern and other Indian tribes from across the country. Along with the Native American vendors, special presentations and wildlife shows, admission to the festival includes free parking and entrance to our award-winning, American Alliance of Museums accredited museum. Visit ahtahthiki.com or call 863-902-1113 for more information.

Clewiston Fall Festival

Organized annualy by the City of Clewiston, the Clewiston Fall Festival features games, food, kid costume and pet costume contests, local vendors, a car show and more on the Saturday before Halloween. For more information, call 863-983-1492 or visit their Facebook at facebook.com/CityofClewistonRecreationDepartment.

Attractions in and around



Hendry County

HENDRY COUNTY BOASTS A MULTITUDE OF SIGHTS, SOUNDS AND SCENES FOR TOURISTS TO EXPLORE. FROM HIKING AND BIKING TO AIRBOAT TOURS, FROM SKYDIVING TO BIRD WATCHING, THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS WAITING TO BE EXPLORED AT ONE'S OWN PACE.

SEE PAGE 8 FOR A SAMPLING.

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Roland Martin’s Marina and Resort, 920 E. Del Monte Ave. in Clewiston. For more information, call 863-983-3151 or visit rolandmartinmarina.com.

Walking/Biking Tour

Four self-guided trails all start from the Clewiston Inn and wander through residential areas of Clewiston at 108 Royal Palm Ave. in Clewiston.

For more information, please call the Clewiston Chamber of Commerce at 863-983-7979.

Dinner Island Ranch

Outstanding wildlife viewing awaits at this vast acreage site. It offers fishing, hiking, cycling, camping, hunting, horseback riding and scenic driving. They are located 29 miles southwest of Clewiston off of County Road 833. For information, visit myfwc.com.

Bird-Watching

In partnership the South Florida Water Management District Hendry Glades Audubon offers a limited number of escorted birding tours the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail site at Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) 5/6. This is ranked one of the best bird watching areas in the country. No reservations are required for walking or bicycling visits Friday-Monday unless the area is closed for the Sunday hunts during the winter. For directions and information go to www.hendrygladesaudubon.org or hgaudubon@gmail. com.

The Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail (GFBWT) is a 2,000-mile, self-guided trail designed to conserve Florida’s 490 native species of birds via birdwatching, education, and economic opportunities. The trail, which includes 510 premier wildlife viewing sites across the state. Hendry County viewing sites include:

- Dinner Island Ranch Wildlife Management Area,
- Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest and WMA,
- Seminole Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Boardwalk,
- Spirit of the Wild Wildlife Management Area and,
- Stormwater Treatment Area 5/6. For information, visit floridabirdingtrail.com.

For information, visit floridabirdingtrail.com.

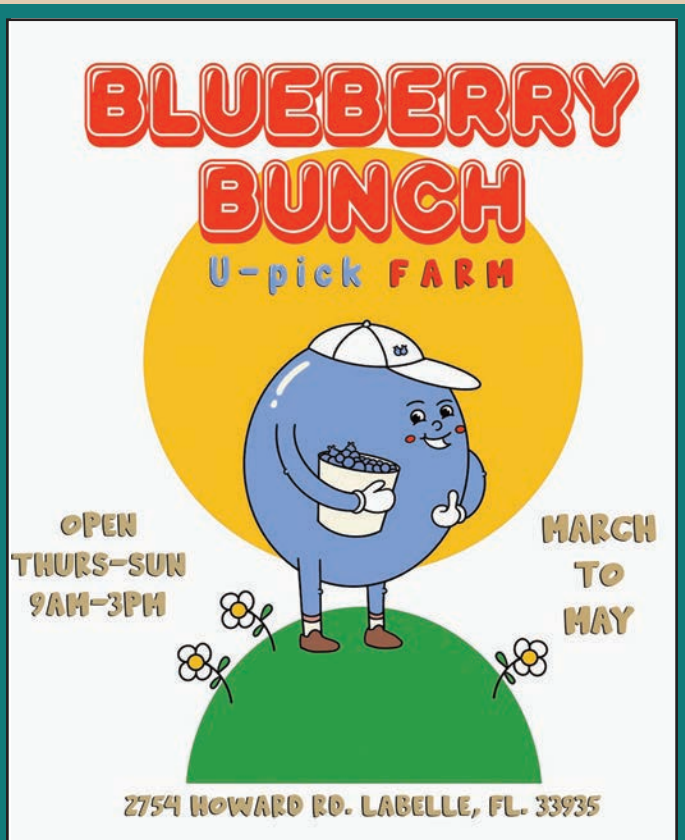
Silver Lake Preserve

This beautiful 1,876-acre tract offers a customized hunting program with some of the best year round native wildlife opportunities in South Florida. The Silver Lake Lodge can accommodate 10 guests and offers several amenities. They are located at 2860 Silver Lake Road. N.W. in LaBelle.

You can reach them by phone at 863-273-7712. You can visit their website at silverlakepreserve.com.

Florida Ridge Airports

A hang gliding and ultra- • See **Attractions** on page **10**









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ATTRACTIONS CONT'D

light facility offering a variety of tandem sky rides, pilot services and instruction. They are located at 12671 E. State Road 80 in Clewiston. You can reach them at 863-805-0440. You can visit their website at thefloridaridge.com.

Skydive Spaceland

Experience the thrill of diving from 14,000 feet and taking in the view of Lake Okeechobee. This park is located at 1090 Airglades Blvd. in Clewiston. Call them at 863-983-6151 or 800-533-6151 or visit their website at skydivespaceland.com.

Spirit-of-the-Wild Wildlife Area

Nature enthusiasts will want to visit this site because of the year round viewing of wildlife for which the area is known. The area offers fishing, hiking, biking, horseback riding and scenic driving. It is located 12 miles south of LaBelle on County Road 832. For information, visit myfwc.com/recreation/lead/spirit-of-the-wild/.

Clewiston Museum

The Clewiston Museum is located at 109 Central Avenue, Clewiston, Florida. It houses exhibits highlighting the local area, including: Fossils, Sugar, Cattle Industry Firsts, Commercial Fishing, Flying Brits, Killer Hurricanes and Seminole Indians. You can reach them at 863-983-2870. You can visit their website at theclewistonmuseum.org. Email: clewistonmuseum@ embarqmail.com.

Captain Hendry House

Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1993, Hendry House was the home of Francis A. Hendry, the "Father of LaBelle." It is located at 512 Fraser Ave. in LaBelle. For more information, please call 863-675-2872. For more info on the history, please contact the LaBelle Heritage Museum at 863-674-0034. You can visit facebook.com/people/Labelle-Heritage-Museum.

Uncle Joe's Fish Camp

Located in an off-the-beaten path area of Lake Okeechobee, Uncle Joe's offers cabins, plus groceries, tackle, live bait, docks and boat ramps with direct access to the lake. They are located at 1699 Griffin Road in Moore Haven. Reach them at 863-983-9421.

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Nestled in the heart of the Everglades, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum is home to more than 30,000 unique artifacts selected to celebrate, preserve and interpret the rich history and culture of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki mean 'a place to learn, a place to remember' in the Seminole language. To learn more, visit ahtahthiki.com.



LaBelle City Docks

Overlooking the south side of the Okeechobee Waterway, just west of the LaBelle bridge. The City of LaBelle provides these docks, complete with electric and water, free of charge. All vessels are welcome 3 days in, 8 days out. Close proximity (walking distance) to downtown LaBelle for shopping, restaurants, and fuel. For more information please call 863-673-1191. Visit the city's website at citylabelle.com.

Belle Hatchee Marina

Specializing in multi-hull haul out located in a hurricane protected area. Freshwater marina with no tides. Do-it-yourself boat work yard with 24 hour access. Inland boat storage in hurricane protected area. Ships Store on the premises. Shopping, restaurants and motels near by. Located at 121 Riverbend Drive in LaBelle. They can be reached at 863-675-4371 or go to lakeokeechobee.com/marina-belle-hatchee-marina/2193.

Port LaBelle Marina

Located on Okeechobee (Intracoastal) Waterway East of the LaBelle Bridge. This secluded marina offers fuel, electricity at the main dock, pump-out facility at the main dock, laundry, and men/women restrooms and showers. The marina is located at 1152 Marina Drive in LaBelle. You can reach them at 863-675-2261. Open 7 days a week 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Visit their website at portlabellemarina.com.

Clewiston Golf Course

A beautifully maintained, championship 18-hole golf course that is open to the public. Designed in the Donald Ross Style, the course is a classic and can be enjoyed by the amateur golfer or the seasoned professional. They are located at 1201 San Luiz Ave. in Clewiston. You can reach them at 863-983-1448.

Roland Martin Marina & Resort

Roland and Mary Ann • See **Attractions** on page **12**

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ATTRACTIONS CONT'D

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Firehouse Community Theatre



The Firehouse Community Theatre has been providing a unique cultural experience in the area for over 21 years. The theatre is staffed completely by volunteers from our communities. They are located at 241 N. Bridge Street in LaBelle. You can reach them at 863-675-3066. You can visit their website at firehousecommunitytheatre.org.

Hendry County Motorsports Park

Get ready for thrilling excitement on the Everglades clay at the Hendry County Motorsports Park, the southernmost raceway in the USA. They are located at 9985 West Hwy. 27 (9.5 miles north of Clewiston on U.S. 27). You can reach them at 863-983-3478. Or visit their website at hendryracing.com.

The Barron Park House Gallery and Gift Shop

Barron Park House Gallery is housed in the historic Christie House which was built in 1914. Local artists exhibit their oil, watercolor, acrylic, and mixed media paintings, sculptures, and photography. Exhibits are rotated monthly. Worth a visit for any art fan. It's hidden in the northeast corner of Barron Park, at 471 N. Lee St. You can reach them at 863-843-5505. Visit their website at artsinland.com.

Dolly Hand Cultural Arts Center

Located at the Palm Beach State College Campus, the Dolly Hand Cultural Arts Center and Theatre holds a roster of performances designed to offer an "escape from the everyday." They are located at 1977 College Drive in Belle Glade. You can reach them at 561-993-1160. Or visit their website at dollyhand.org.

Okeechobee Scenic Trail

Designated as a segment of the Florida National Scenic Trail, this route circles the second largest freshwater lake in the contiguous United States. The trail runs on top of the Herbert Hoover Dike and provides views ranging from scenic lakeside to working agricultural landscapes. There are numerous locations for access by hikers and bikers, as well as equestrians. Not all areas are paved and some portions close at irregular intervals, so please call 863-983-8101 for the latest information.

Big Water Heritage Trail

The trial's name, the Big Water Heritage Trail, stems from the Seminole word for Okeechobee, which means, "Big Water." This successful project, implemented in 2003, is a heritage trail that identifies, links and marks sites of historical, cultural, natural, recreational and educational importance to the area. The Big Water Heritage Trail encompasses five counties surrounding Lake Okeechobee in Florida. For more information, visit the website at visitflorida.com/travel-ideas/articles/florida-fishing-big-water-heritage-trail/

Okaloacoochee Forest

The Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest contains nearly 35,000 acres, mostly in Hendry County, which extends northward near the Caloosahatchee River and southward about 50 miles into Big Cypress Swamp. There are 38 miles of trails open for wildlife viewing, hiking, non-motorized biking, and horseback riding. Also available are four camp-grounds. To learn more, call 863-612-0776.

Fisheating Creek Outpost

The licensed concessionaire of the Fisheating Creek Wildlife Management Area provides recreational and educational opportunities to the public under contract of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Now offering camping, canoeing, paddling, hiking, and eco-adventures. RV/tent sites are available. You can reach them at 863-675-5999. You can also visit fisheatingcreekoutpost.com.

Gatorama

Gatorama is a family-friendly Eco Adventure Park and licensed gator farm in the heart of the Everglades. The focus is on family, fun and education. Food and drink is available from a food truck inside the park. The owners and staff invite you to play wild, get dirty and get up close and personal with Florida's apex predators. Both alligators and crocodiles live here in the Sunshine State, the only place on Earth where they exist side by side in the wild. See the Big Gator Feed Show, try your luck at our Fast Hands or No Hands Challenge or participate in one of their "Gatorventures." Located at 10665 N. U.S. 27 in Palmdale, Gatorama can be reached at 863-675-0623. Learn more at gatorama.com.

Hendry County ready to grow

By Keitha Daniels
DIRECTOR, HENDRY COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Located in South-Central Florida, between some of Florida's largest and fastest growing metros, Hendry County is becoming a premier destination for businesses and residents alike, seeking opportunities for affordability and accessibility, while providing a quality of life that cannot be found anywhere else.

Over the past five years, over 20,000 new residential developments have been approved county-wide. Initially, this growth was concentrated in unincorporated areas like Port LaBelle and Montura Estates with home buyers finding parcels for building. Now, planned developments created by national builders are being built within city limits offering amenities and well-maintained infrastructure.

This growth can be contributed to a lower cost of living, particularly housing prices compared to coastal areas, our rural lifestyle with easy access to outdoor activities, and a strong sense of community found in small towns like LaBelle and Clewiston.

Hendry's largest industry is agriculture; however, the manufacturing and logistics sectors are growing thanks to the availability of land along state road 27 and highway 80. The proximity to major cities (2 hours to Miami, 1 hour to Fort Myers) and deep seaports allows for easy access into major trading markets. In the past year alone, rezoning applications have been submitted that include 4 million sq ft of industrial use along these corridors.

As business diversity has increased within the County, so have funding mechanisms to support their needs. Local and state incentives are available for businesses of every size and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) works one-on-one with small businesses to help with any needs they might have. The SBDC has been instrumental in launching several establishments across the County through counseling that offered operational support to assisting with lending searches.

As more and more employment opportunities become available across Hendry, focusing on a healthy workforce is top priority. It is important for new and expanding business to have skilled workers and we are dedicated to educating our citizens for those careers. Institutions like the Hendry County Workforce and Adult Education, Florida Southwestern State College, and Florida Gulf Coast University are providing educational programming providing knowledge and skills needed to obtain employment in a variety of industries.

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WELCOME TO THE CLEWISTON MUSEUM

By Leigh Woodham
DIRECTOR, CLEWISTON MUSEUM

On behalf of the Clewiston Museum's Board of Directors and members, welcome to Hendry County!

You will find that Clewiston is a warm and friendly community with a unique and compelling history—one that can truly be discovered and explored at the Clewiston Museum. It is unusual to find a collection of this quality in a small-town museum, and the residents of Clewiston and the surrounding area take immense pride in both the facility and the history we share.

Following a complete transformation in the fall of 2024, history unfolds through enhanced galleries and clearly defined exhibit spaces featuring vibrant paint colors, dramatic wall graphics, professional interpretive signage, and engaging, informative exhibits.

Begin your visit in "Prehistoric Florida" within the Mark & Marisa Renz Fossil Gallery. Explore Giants in the Storm and Wild Waters, then learn about the early Native American residents of the Lake Okeechobee region in "Early Peoples." Discover the story of "Spanish Treasure," the galleons that carried it, and how that treasure ultimately made its way inland to the lake area. Continue into "Beautiful Lake Okeechobee," where Life on Lake O highlights the area's fishing heritage, local wildlife, and the devastating Hurricanes of 1926 and 1928.

Step back in time in "Clewiston, Est. 1925," where you'll learn about early historic settlements and the founding of the City of Clewiston, including ambitious plans for its future. This gallery also explores the history of Harlem, U.S. Sugar's predecessor company, the construction of the Herbert Hoover Dike, and the development of the local education system. Visit "The Seminole People" to learn about life on the Big Cypress Seminole Reservation, including traditional patchwork and cultural practices.

Delve into "Agriculture in Clewiston," highlighting the cattle industry, the early years of U.S. Sugar, and experimental crops grown in the region. Continue through "Living Life in Clewiston," which showcases the city's activities and a few notable institutions through the years. Then visit "WWII & Riddle Field," which tells the story of Clewiston as the home of the Royal Air Force's British Flight Training School No. 5. Learn how the British cadets trained and lived, captured the hearts of Clewiston and Palm Beach residents, and discover what may be the only remaining relic from a German prisoner-of-war camp once located near Clewiston.

CLEWISTON HISTORY MUSEUM
collect • preserve • exhibit • educate

Be sure to visit the Sue Corbin & Louise Sullivan Art Gallery and relax in the museum's theater, where videos showcase the history of Clewiston and the sugar-making process. Take time to appreciate the talent of local artists, including two original paintings by the Florida Highwaymen.

Free educational programming demonstrates the museum's strong commitment to learning and community engagement. During the season, the Museum After Hours evening presentations offer opportunities to explore Florida's unique history through programs from the Florida Humanities Florida Talks Speakers Bureau, as well as presentations by local residents. The schedule for these programs can be found at theclewistonmuseum.org.

The museum also operates an outstanding student outreach program funded by a grant from the Batchelor Foundation. The museum director visits Clewiston's schools to teach Florida history to fourth-grade students. Through eight sessions, students learn about prehistoric Florida, Native American history, European exploration and colonization, the hurricanes of 1926 and 1928, Florida's cattle, catfishing, and sugar industries, and the history of Clewiston and Hendry County. The program concludes with a free visit to the museum and an opportunity to ride the Sugar Express historical train at a reduced rate.

In addition to school outreach, the museum participates in local festivals, sharing history with residents and visitors alike. Our fossil boards are a favorite, allowing children and adults to explore artifacts from prehistoric land and sea creatures that once lived in Hendry County.

The Clewiston Museum also assists researchers



seeking historical photographs and information. Our extensive photo archives date back to the 1910s and have been used by law enforcement, businesses, college students, professors, authors, and families researching past generations. The museum also houses the Clewiston News archives from 1928–2009, which are widely used for historical research.

As the southernmost city and trailhead on the Florida Trail section of the National Scenic Trail, Clewiston is a popular destination for hikers. The museum is an official Florida Trail Association Gateway Community Partner and the place to receive your Florida Trail/National Scenic Trail passport stamp.

When you visit, be sure to stop by the Picker's Corner near the entrance, featuring unique vintage items and antiques available for purchase. The Museum Gift Shop is stocked with local goodies, toys, gifts, and historical books for all ages. Take home a memento from your visit and support the museum at the same time!

Recently celebrating its 40th anniversary, the Clewiston Museum is a private, not-for-profit organization that relies on donations, grants, support from the City of Clewiston, our local community, and our valued members. Memberships begin at just $50! To learn more, visit theclewistonmuseum.org and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Google My Business.

The Clewiston Museum is located at 109 Central Avenue, Clewiston, Florida. Hours of operation are Monday–Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with Saturday visits available by appointment. Admission is $10 for adults, $8 for seniors, and $5 for students and children. For more information, call 863-983-2870 or email director@clewistonmuseum.org.

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AMERICA'S SWEETEST TOWN WELCOMES YOU



"America's Sweetest Town" is Clewiston, Florida. Positioned on the southwest boundary of Lake Okeechobee, the second largest natural freshwater lake entirely contained within the continental United States, Clewiston is the gateway to Lake "O" as it is affectionately known in the area. Clewiston is centrally located between the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the east and the waters of the Gulf of Mexico to the west.

The "Sweetest Town" label is a tribute to the abundant sugarcane agricultural interests in the vicinity and the City's proud claim as home to the corporate headquarters of the U. S. Sugar Corporation. As one of the world's largest sugar producers, the area's top employer and given the company's long history of philanthropic support for the community at large, Clewiston is greatly indebted to U.S. Sugar for the plentiful contributions the company has made and continues to provide to the quality of life of this unique region.

Clewiston visitors and locals alike are fortunate to be able to enjoy a natural environment with seemingly limitless outdoor recreational opportunities available in reasonably close proximity to the community. With the noted convenient access to the lake's abundant fishing and wildlife attributes and close proximity to the wide variety of amenities offered in the more urban coastal areas on both shores of the state, Clewiston is uniquely positioned as a south Florida hub location for all. The City is home to an amazing museum, an attractive library facility and maintains numerous passive and active parks and recreational facilities including an historic and well-groomed 18 hole public golf course and bountiful water access points featuring a boat launch and ramp facility with recently improved lake access. The City also hosts one of the major access venues for hiking and biking enthusiasts to the Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail (LOST) that borders the 730 square mile lake. This hundred-mile plus paved trail sits atop the elevated Herbert Hoover Dike which encompasses the lake perimeter and is a major segment of the Florida National Scenic Trail system. Also, nearby in Hendry County are facilities of widespread interest to the birding community including the STA-5 Reservoir which is a focal point for the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society.

Clewiston is a well-designed John Nolen community with palm tree lined and landscaped streets and abundant open space. The City is intersected by the major US 27 & 80 transportation corridor, dubbed "Sugarland Highway", which handles most of the east-west traffic through central Florida south of the lake. City officials are focused on economic development initiatives to fortify and enhance existing commercial districts along the Sugarland Highway corridor particularly efforts to revitalize the older "downtown" sections. Clewiston has completed the sale to private interests of available parcels in its Park of Commerce entirely composed of development sites for small and medium light industrial type uses and the first of several planned industrial type facilities has been constructed in the park. The City is also experiencing significantly enhanced interest in residential, commercial and warehousing type growth in and around the community and particularly along the highway corridor.

This heightened interest is welcomed by Clewiston and has helped to promote the development of a strong partnership between the City and its municipal partner Hendry County to plan and expand access to necessary utility infrastructure to support larger scale industrial and commercial development along the highway corridor west of the City. This effort is in great part positively influenced by the planned Airglades International Airport project. Having received FAA concurrence for the sale of the public county-owned airport for private development, the buyers are engaged in steps to close on the acquisition near term with the initial phases consisting of a major cargo and freight handling facility on the site.

The City is committed to maintaining its' highly valued small town quality of life. Clewiston is blessed with a wonderful citizenry and a deeply committed Board of Commissioners. The city also boasts an active faith-based community, a strong group of civic organizations and a diverse and eclectic commercial base of small businesses.

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CITY OF LABELLE GROWTH CONTINUES



By Alexis Crespo
VICE PRESIDENT OF PLANNING

The City of LaBelle continues to see exciting development projects and public improvements coming to fruition. In 2025, new projects under construction or newly opened include the Family Health Centers facility on W. Hickpochee that will provide much needed medical services to the City. Additionally, approved commercial centers across from Walmart and at SR 80/Captain Hendry Drive that includes a national hotel brand will be starting construction this year. Newer commercial development continues to thrive including the Culver's restaurant on State Road 80 and the new 7-Eleven at SR 80/W. Hickpochee.

In terms of public and infrastructure project, the City is well into the design phase of a new sanitary sewer facility to be co-located with the water treatment plant on SR 29. This project is partially funded by grants and will assist in providing expanded capacity for residents of LaBelle.

The School District is also kicking off construction on the new Hendry County High School on the north side of Helms Road to serve LaBelle and Western Hendry with a state-of-the art facility.

LaBelle's development process and procedures are guided by the City's Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code (LDC) located on www.municode.com. The City is in the process of updating their Comprehensive Plan and will have additional workshops as well as public hearing starting in late Spring/early Summer.

Development and permitting applications continue to be reviewed by city staff under the direction of Superintendent of Public Works, Mitchell Wills, and assisted by City Planners, Patty Kulak and Alexis Crespo. The City now requires pre-application meetings to help applicant's understand the permitting process and streamline development review. LaBelle's staff remains committed to a high level of customer service and working with property owners to achieve workable solutions and consensus. The pre-application form, application form and fees are readily available on the City's website, www.citylabelle.com.

We are working hard to support quality growth and opportunities in LaBelle while maintaining the City's unmistakable small-town charm.

Hendry County Census Data

PEOPLE
Population estimates, July 1, 2024: 46,130

AGE AND SEX
Persons under 5 years: 6.2%
Persons under 18 years: 24.5%
Persons 65 years and over: 13.6%
Female persons: 44.7%

RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN
White alone: 82.1%
Black alone: 11.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone: 2.7%
Asian alone: 1.5%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone: 0.2%
Two or More Races: 1.8%
Hispanic or Latino: 59.6%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino: 27.3%

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS
Veterans: 1,172
Foreign born persons: 30.0%

HOUSING
Housing Units, July 1, 2024: 17,364
Owner-occupied housing unit rate: 73.6%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units: $219,200
Median selected monthly owner costs: $1,408
Median selected monthly owner costs - without a mortage: $483
Median gross rent: $1,003
Building Permits, 2024: 557

FAMILIES & LIVING ARRANGEMENTS
Households: 14,130
Persons per household: 2.83
Living in the same house 1 year ago, percent of persons age 1 year+: 88.7%
Language other than English spoken at home, percent of persons age 5 years+: 51.8%

COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE
Households with a computer: 93.1%
Households with a broadband Internet subscription: 84.9%

GEOGRAPHY
Population per square mile: 34.3
Land area in square miles: 1,155.95



Transforming Lives and Enriching Our Community

Hendry County is a community shaped by education, innovation, and opportunity. Florida SouthWestern State College is proud to be part of the cultural and economic fabric of Southwest Florida—supporting local talent, hosting community events, and preparing the region's future workforce.

Whether you're here for a season or a lifetime, FSW helps make Hendry County a place to learn, grow, and thrive.

Our mission is to transform your life.

Learn how at www.FSW.edu

FLORIDA SOUTHWESTERN STATE COLLEGE

FSW is an equal access, equal opportunity organization.
More: www.fsw.edu/equity.



LaBelle is the city of oaks

By the Greater LaBelle Chamber of Commerce

LaBelle ... Huge, live oak trees line the streets of this quiet, graceful little town which is nestled alongside the Caloosahatchee River in Hendry County. This is quintessential small-town Florida, where the pace is slower, the pleasures are simpler, and the surrounding nature entices you to explore its natural beauty.

For many years the Greater LaBelle Chamber of Commerce has proudly represented the businesses of LaBelle. The chamber was founded back in 1963, over 60 years ago. Back then the goal of the original Chamber was to support and promote the business community of LaBelle. The businesses of LaBelle have changed a great deal over the past six decades, but the LaBelle Chamber of today proudly maintains the founder's original goals – supporting and promoting LaBelle's business community.

Technology has certainly changed over the years, and the Chamber helps its membership by listing each of their 250+ members on the Chamber's website. On the website not only is the member's information listed, but if they have a website of their own their listing is linked to it. To assist their members even further, the Chamber "gets the word out" on their membership's upcoming events, or business specials, on their very active Facebook page. Both venues are excellent resources for locating information on LaBelle businesses.

We're excited to announce that the LaBelle Chamber of Commerce is now operating under new office management. This change brings fresh energy and a renewed commitment to serving our members and strengthening the local business community.

The Chamber membership covers all types of businesses. The LaBelle Heritage Museum keeps alive our history, while the Firehouse Community Theatre has entertained us for 30+ seasons. Local, family-owned shops like Davidson's Dry Cleaners, K & M Drugs, White's Furniture & Appliances, all line our streets. Two Peas Café, Sassy Basskets, The Forrey Grill, The Big V Restaurant, Bridge Street Coffee & Tea Café, and Sal Cal's Pizza are all known for their local cuisine.

LaBelle, "The Beautiful", offers spectacular nature trails. The Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest is a 32,270 acre facility approx 20 minutes south of LaBelle which features Hiking, Horse Trails, Picnic Areas, and the 15,400 acres slough marsh, for which the State Forest is named, is great for bird watching. Wildlife viewing opportunities are abundant, and the State Forest is part of the Great Florida Birding Trail. The slough is one of the few places in south Florida where the historic, natural landscape can be observed.

You won't want to miss our Swamp Cabbage Festival the last full weekend of February. Be sure to arrive early on opening day so you can enjoy the parade. At the festival, enjoy all the treats created from the swamp cabbage plant while you watch the LaBelle Rotary's Armadillo Races. Another great attraction during the weekend is the LaBelle Rodeo. Tuesday night leading up to the weekend you can enjoy the LaBelle Chamber's "Night on the Town," where the Chamber membership is invited to set up booths on the LaBelle Wharf to promote and introduce their business to the public. Music and local treats are part of the fun, so come one and all!

Not to be forgotten, LaBelle has always been, and continues to be, the fruit and vegetable basket for the country. This is where a great deal of the country's citrus and "row crops", such as watermelons, tomatoes, and bell peppers, are grown. But vegetables and fruit are not the only foods produced here in LaBelle. The Hendry County Cattlemen provide a great deal of beef to area markets.

Rich bountiful land ... a lazy, winding river ... natural beauty ... friendly people. Whether "born and raised here" or "transplanted," LaBelle is the place we call "HOME."

Clewiston Chamber welcomes visitors

Welcome to Clewiston, where Hendry County's character, culture, and community come together in a truly special way. The Clewiston Chamber of Commerce invites you to discover the spirit of "the liquid heart of Florida" and everything that makes our corner of Hendry County unforgettable.

Located on the southern edge of Lake Okeechobee, Clewiston, fondly known as "America's Sweetest Town" offers a unique blend of opportunity, tradition, and small-town charm. Our community is rooted in a rich agricultural legacy and surrounded by one of the most famous fishing destinations in the country, yet what truly sets Clewiston apart is the people who call it home.

Clewiston continues to thrive with a strong and growing economy supported by major employers such as U.S. Sugar, Hendry County School District, Hendry Regional Medical Center, Walmart, and an impressive network



• See **Clewiston Chamber** on page **22**

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Clewiston Chamber

• From page 21

of locally owned small businesses. Together, they create a welcoming environment for growth, innovation, and connection.



Here, we proudly describe ourselves as being "out in the middle of EVERYTHING." Clewiston offers the conveniences and services you expect, while preserving the warmth, simplicity, and close-knit feel of a rural community.

Lake Okeechobee, lovingly called "Lake O", is the heart of our town. Its legendary waters have helped shape world-class anglers, including Clewiston native Scott Martin, 2015 FLW Angler of the Year. One visit to Lake O is all it takes to understand why so many fall in love with this remarkable place.

Clewiston provides a wide range of experiences for visitors and residents alike. Enjoy breathtaking views with a walk or bike ride along the Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail atop the Herbert Hoover Dike. Stop by the Clewiston Chamber of Commerce to plan adventures such as fishing trips, airboat tours, swamp buggy rides, or agricultural tours. Dive into local history at the Clewiston Museum or explore Native American heritage at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. Treat yourself at one of our day or medical spas, and enjoy a variety of dining options, from early-morning breakfast spots to relaxed evening hangouts.

Whether you're considering a move, launching a business, or planning your next getaway, Clewiston offers a place where opportunity meets authenticity. The Clewiston Chamber of Commerce looks forward to welcoming you and sharing all that makes our community truly sweet.





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1400 CR 78

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21321 Palm Beach Blvd.

LEHIGH ACRES
Handy #86 ■★▲●
3205 Lee Blvd.

OKEECHOBEE
Handy #93 ■★▲●
2790 Hwy 441 South

IMMOKALEE
Handy #50 ★▲●
417 New Market Rd. W

IMMOKALEE
Handy #65 ★●
501 15th St. North

Handy #75 ★▲●
2902 Lake Trafford Road

Handy #77 ★▲●
1812 Lake Trafford Road

Handy #91 ★▲●
820 West Main Street

Handy #92 ■★▲●
120 West Delaware Ave.

*Status qualifications for Club CITGO Members: Premier Status requires 12 fuel purchases of 8 gallons or more during the promotional cycle at participating CITGO locations. Once achieved, Premier Status is valid until the end of the following promotional cycle. All Club CITGO promotional offers are limited to 30 gallons per purchase and subject to terms and conditions. Eligibility requirements, offer details, and participation rules may change at any time without notice. For more information, visit www.ClubCITGO.com.

HENDRY COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD



Dwayne E. Brown; District 1
Post Office Box 684
Clewiston, FL 33440
Email - district1@hendry-schools.net



Paul Samerdyke, Vice Chairman; District 2
653 Caloosa Estates Drive
LaBelle, FL 33935
Email - district2@hendry-schools.net



Amanda Nelson; District 3
Post Office Box 337
Felda, FL 33930
Email - district3@hendry-schools.net



Stephanie Busin; District 4
429 Royal Palm
Clewiston, FL 33440
Email - district4@hendry-schools.net



Jon Basquin, Chairperson; District 5
139 Oak Drive
Clewiston, FL 33440
Email - district5@hendry-schools.net

Hendry County Schools are dedicated to Excellence in Education

By Michael Swindle
SUPERINTENDENT OF HENDRY COUNTY SCHOOLS

I am deeply privileged and filled with gratitude to be serving as the leader of Hendry County Schools.

Hendry County is graced with stunning natural landscapes, a historically abundant agricultural industry, and a multitude of diverse cultures. From Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee River, numerous state forests and picturesque farm lands, Hendry County is an exceptional location to work, reside and engage in leisure activities.

Hendry County Schools host a selection of eminent Career and Technical Educational programs. Our students are afforded a diverse array of opportunities to acquire industry-leading skills, including, but not limited to, Health Care, Fire Academy, Criminal Justice Program, and the chance to earn industry certifications that pave the way for remunerative careers. Furthermore, we offer a broad spectrum of athletic programs, such as Football, Volleyball, Basketball, Softball, Baseball, and various other athletic pursuits that encourage physical fitness and competitive engagements that cultivate ethics and the value of hard work.

Hendry County has experienced exponential growth, with a current population of over 41,000 residents, of which 29.3% are school-aged children.

We are continuing to expand. Our schools have achieved academic success over the past three years, with three of our schools receiving A grades and all other schools receiving B and C grades. This accomplishment can be attributed to the positive culture within our schools, as well as the dedication and commitment demonstrated by our teachers, staff, students, and parents.

We are delighted to announce that the former CYDA facility is now serving as our new PreK Center in Clewiston. This consolidation aims to provide PreK services in a single location with an enhanced emphasis on inclusion. Furthermore, the district is progressing towards constructing a new high school in LaBelle, which has been ranked first in the State by the Florida Department of Education Special Facility Use Fund priority list. The official groundbreaking will take place in the spring, and it is projected to be completed by the end of 2027.

Furthermore, we are home to several esteemed clubs, including Future Farmers of America (FFA), Florida Public Service Academy (FPSA), and National Honors Society (NHS), which cultivate leadership and citizenship. These organizations empower students to create a positive impact within our schools and the wider community. Our unwavering commitment to elevating academic excellence, coupled with an array of educational opportunities, will undoubtedly prepare our students for both college and career pursuits.

As Superintendent, our objectives for Hendry County Schools are uncomplicated. We aim to persist in our efforts to become a high-performing school district. We are committed to maintaining safe, orderly, and welcoming schools where students have every possibility to leverage their learning capabilities.

Furthermore, we continue to develop an educational environment that encourages teachers to expand their knowledge and wisdom to better serve our students. Our primary focus is on enhancing student achievement and broadening the opportunities available to them in every school.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

CLEWISTON

Clewiston High School
Principal: Phillip Summers
1501 S. Francisco Street
Clewiston, FL 33440
863-983-1520

Clewiston Middle School
Principal: Tina Kelley
601 W. Pasadena Avenue
Clewiston, FL 33440
863-983-1530

Central Elementary School
Principal: Melissa Carter
1000 S. Deane Duff Ave
Clewiston, FL 33440
863-983-1550

Eastside Elementary School
Principal: Denise Gibson
201 W. Arroyo Avenue
Clewiston, FL 33440
863-983-1560

Westside Elementary School
Principal: Sarah Sanchez
205 W. Arroyo Avenue
Clewiston, FL 33440
863-983-1570

Clewiston Early Learning Center
Principal: Sebrina Rimes
435 East Circle Dr.
Clewiston, FL 33440
863-902-4216

Montura Early Learning Center
225 N. Hacienda
Clewiston, FL 33440
863-983-1596

Clewiston Adult School
475 Osceola Avenue
Clewiston, FL 33440
863-983-1511

LABELLE

LaBelle High School
Principal: Tammy Bass
4050 Cowboy Way
LaBelle, FL 33935
863-674-4120

LaBelle Middle School
Principal: Ryan Harris
8000 E. Cowboy Way
LaBelle, FL 33935
863-674-4646

Country Oaks Elementary
Principal: Reko Parantha
2052 Eucalyptus Drive NW
LaBelle, FL 33935
863-674-4140

LaBelle Elementary School
Principal: Amanda Howard
150 W. Cowboy Way
LaBelle, FL 33935
863-674-4150

Upthegrove Elementary School
Principal: Heather Cassidy
280 N. Main Street
LaBelle, Fl 33935
863-612-0750

LaBelle Adult School
4050 Cowboy Way
LaBelle, FL 33935
863-983-1511

For more information on any of the schools please visit the Hendry County School District website at www.hendry-schools.org.
District Office: 863-674-4642
Clewiston Sub-Office: 863-902-4244

HOME SCHOOL:

Hendry County School District Home Education Program Office
863-902-4244

PRIVATE SCHOOLS:

International Christian Academy LaBelle
233 Clark Street, LaBelle
863-675-4227

Clewiston Christian School
601 Caribbean, Clewiston
863-983-5388



CLEWISTON CITY COMMISSION



The elected officials who serve as the Clewiston City Commission are a dedicated group of people with great pride for their community. The Mayor, Vice Mayor and City Commissioners are the governing body of the City. They set policies and rules by which the City is operated, including establishing goals and targeting issues as well as setting the tax rates.

Regular Commission meetings are held on the third Monday of each month, starting at 5 p.m. in the city hall commission chambers, 115 West Ventura Avenue. Special meetings may be held at the call of the Mayor or by a majority of the Commission.

If you have an issue you wish to discuss at a city commission meeting, submit a written request to be included on the next commission meeting's agenda. For more information, contact City Clerk Fransheska Berrios at 863-983-1484, ext. 104.

The current members of the City of Clewiston City Commission are: Mayor James Pittman, Vice Mayor Hillary Hyslope, Commissioner Mali Gardner, Commissioner Barbara Edmonds and Commissioner Jason Williams II.

Danny Williams is the city manager. He can be reached at 863-983-1454, ext. 302.

CITY OF LABELLE



LaBelle, "The Belle of the Caloosahatchee," had its beginning as a settlement in the 1880s when the Caloosahatchee River began to play a part in Philadelphia entrepreneur Hamilton Disstons dream of Everglades Reclamation, and had the double advantage of being on the western edge of Captain Francis A. Hendry's vast ranch holdings in Monroe County.

"Belle," "Belle City," and "LaBelle" began to be used as names for the tiny new settlement populated by cattle drovers and trappers straddling the banks of the Caloosahatchee River as early as 1889. By 1891 LaBelle had its first school. Francis A. Hendry, the "Father of Labelle", subdivided and recorded a Plat of LaBelle, Florida in 1909. E. E. Goodno eventually owned the majority of the Hendry's holdings and increased LaBelle's size close to twenty times the original subdivision. The 1910 U S Census shows 42 households and some 174 residents LaBelle south of the Caloosahatchee River. In 1911, the Florida Legislature chartered the Town of LaBelle.

Regular business meetings of the LaBelle City Commission are held on the second Thursday of every month at 6 p.m. at City Hall, 481 Hickpochee Ave. Meetings are open to the public and everyone is welcome. If you would like to be on the agenda, call City Hall at 863-675-2872,

City of LaBelle Board of Commissioners are: Mayor Julie C. Wilkins, Commissioner Hugo Vargas, Commissioner Jackie Ratica, Commissioner Daniel Akin,m Commissioner Bobbi Spratt.

HENDRY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



EMMA BYRD
DISTRICT 1



EMORY "ROWDY" HOWARD
DISTRICT 2
VICE CHAIR



MITCHELL WILLS
DISTRICT 3



RAMON IGLESIAS
DISTRICT 4
CHAIRPERSON



MICHAEL ATKINSON
DISTRICT 5

The five-member Hendry County Commission is elected from geographic districts for staggered four-year terms. County commissioners annually elect a chairperson who serves as the Commission's presiding officer.

The Commission, in turn, hires a county administrator who is responsible for the administrative operations of County government.

The Commission's regular meetings are held at the following times and locations:

- Second Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m.- Clewiston City Hall, Commission Chambers, 115 West Ventura Ave, Clewiston, Florida.
- Fourth Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. - Hendry County Courthouse, Commission Chambers, 25 E. Hickpochee Avenue, LaBelle, Florida.

Meetings are livestreamed on the Hendry County YouTube channel.

To contact commissioners, call 863-675-5229.

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FSW serves nearly 19,000 students across five campuses and online, offering more than 60 academic programs, including associate and bachelor's degrees as well as professional certifications. Many programs boast exceptional licensure pass rates and strong job placement outcomes. FSW remains the most affordable higher education option in Southwest Florida, and through scholarships and financial aid, 77 percent of FSW students graduate debt free.

FSW faculty bring real-world expertise and deep academic knowledge into the classroom. Students are prepared to continue their education or launch meaningful careers through hands-on learning experiences that extend well beyond traditional coursework. Opportunities include honors courses, internships, undergraduate research and study abroad programs. FSW students may study at the Lorenzo de' Medici Institute in Italy and participate in international learning experiences in countries such as Iceland, Spain and Costa Rica.

As a member of the Florida College System, FSW provides students with the advantages of statewide articulation agreements established by the Florida Department of Education. Students who earn an Associate in Arts (AA) degree at FSW are guaranteed the opportunity to pursue a bachelor's degree at a Florida public university or state college offering four-year degrees. In addition, Destination FGCU supports a seamless transition to Florida Gulf Coast University for FSW AA graduates through advising, planning, and dedicated resources.

FSW also offers accelerated pathways for high school students through its collegiate high schools on the Lee and Charlotte campuses, collegiate institutes at Clewiston High School and Moore Haven High School, and a robust dual enrollment program. These opportunities allow students to earn college credit—and even an AA degree—while still in high school.

Student life at FSW is vibrant and engaging. Students can participate in clubs and organizations, intramural sports, and wellness activities supported by a state-of-the-art fitness center. FSW is also a cultural hub for the region, home to the Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall and the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery on the Lee Campus in Fort Myers.

Athletics and community events are another point of pride at FSW. Fans can cheer on the FSW Bucs basketball teams and the nationally recognized, championship-winning women's volleyball program at Suncoast Credit Union Arena. The arena also hosts concerts, commencements, tournaments, and community gatherings. Baseball and softball fans can enjoy Bucs games at the Lee Campus athletic fields.

To learn more about Florida SouthWestern State College, visit www.fsw.edu.

HENDRY COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

IN GOD WE TRUST



SHERIFF
STEVE WHIDDEN
101 S. Bridge St. LaBelle, Florida





LaBelle Admin Office
483 E. Cowboy Way,
LaBelle, Fl 33935
(863)674-5600

Clewiston Sub-Office
100 E. El Paso Ave,
Clewiston, Fl 33440
(863)805-5000







In an emergency, dial 9-1-1

HENDRY COUNTY OFFICIALS



CLERK OF COURT
Kimberly Barrineau

25 E. Hickpochee Ave.,
LaBelle, FL 33975
Tel: 863-675-5217 or
863-983-1586
Term ends 2028
www.hendryclerk.org



TAX COLLECTOR
Amy Collins

25 E. Hickpochee Ave.,
LaBelle, FL 33935
Tel: 863=675-5274 or
863-983-1460
Term ends 2028
www.hendrycountytc.com



SHERIFF
Steve Whidden

101 S. Bridge St.,
LaBelle, FL 33935
Tel: 863-674-5600 or
836-805-5600
Term ends 2028
www.hendrysheriff.org



SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS
Sherry Taylor

25 E. Hickpochee Ave.,
LaBelle, FL 33935
Tel: 863-675-5230 or
863-902-3392
Term ends 2028
www.hendryelections.org



PROPERTY APPRAISER
Dena Pittman

25 E. Hickpochee Ave.,
LaBelle, FL 33935
Tel: 863-675-5270 or
863-983-3178
Term ends 2028
www.hendryprop.com



CIRCUIT JUDGE
20th Judicial Circuit Judge Darrell Hill

25 E. Hickpochee Ave.,
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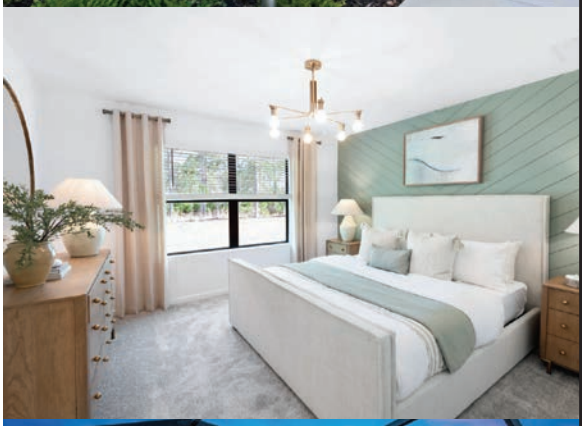
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