November 2026
Vol. 3 No. 11



EDUCATION:
Glades Electric
Plans DC trip, 15



ADOPT A PET:
Dogs and cats
Need homes, 6

COMMUNITY:
Junior Rodeo
Events planned, 7

BOATING:
Locks closed
For repairs, 6

THINGS TO DO:
Special events
Planned, 16 & 18

Hendry County News

Formerly Caloosa Belle Independent

Lake level rising thanks to heavy rainfall

By Katrina Elsken
LAKE OKEECHOBEE NEWS

October rainfall created a slow rise in Lake Okeechobee, with the Big O ending the month at 12.77 feet above sea level. Heavy rains fell in Okeechobee and Glades Counties on Nov. 1, pushing the lake up past 13 feet.

On Nov. 1, South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) closed the Taylor Creek Lock to boat traffic in order to use it for flood relief.

Anglers report the lake is recovering from years of high water levels that decimated submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) that acts as the lake's natural filter and provides habitat for fish and wildlife.

Lake Okeechobee's ecology depends on seasonal fluctuations. The levels most beneficial to the lake's ecology range from below 12 feet at the start of the wet season to 15.5 feet at the start of the dry season. At 15.5 feet, the marshes are inundated with water. When the lake level rises above 15.5 feet, water stacks up against the side of the Herbert Hoover Dike, an earthen berm which encircles the lake for flood protection. High water levels cut off sunlight to SAV.

In 2025, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers used the "recovery" scheduled in the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) to release additional water from Lake O in the dry season – sending the equivalent of about 1 foot of water on the lake south, west and east. This achieved the goal of lowering the lake to below 12 feet for at least 90 days during the 2025 dry season.

A drought in 2026 kept the lake level low. In September, the lake level fell below 11 feet, before rainfall began to slowly raise the water level.

Thanks to lower lake levels and several projects to seed parts of the lake with new SAV, the big lake is making a

• See **Lake Level** on page **2**

BelieveNBooks Initiative reaches 6,800 children



VPK students enjoys Pete the Cat at Kid City Early Learning Academy in LaBelle. [Photo courtesy Early Learning Academy]

By Aditi Maheshwari
ON BEHALF OF BELIEVENBOOKS

ESTERO — BelieveNBooks, a Florida-based nonprofit dedicated to expanding children's access to books, is launching its My Very Own Book initiative. The program will provide more than 6,800 young children across eight Florida counties with a book of their own to take home and access to a corresponding read-aloud video.

Through partnerships with the Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland and the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, more than 150 early learning centers will receive books through the ini-

• See **BelieveNBooks** on page **2**

HENDRY REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER
"Where It's All About Getting Better"
LaBelle – 863.675.2356
Clewiston – 863.902.3000
hrmc.us
Proudly serving all of Hendry County since 1951



PRSRT STD
ECRWSS
US POSTAGE PAID
Phoenix, AZ
Permit No.
1424
Postal Customer

Caloosa Humane Society awarded 'Arts and Animals' grant

SPECIAL TO HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

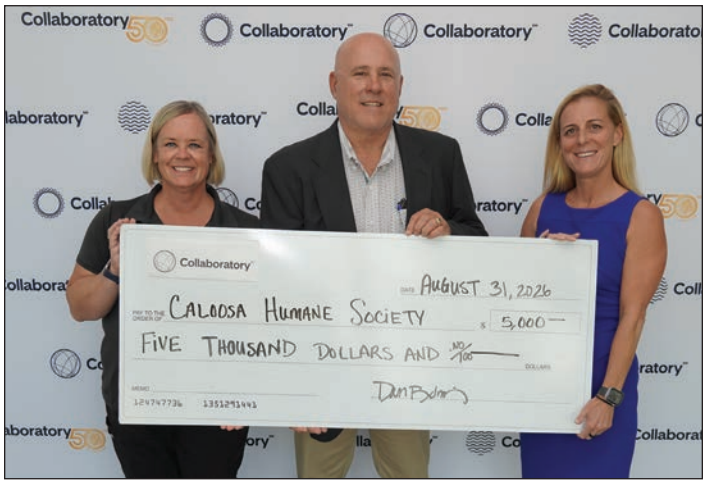
FORT MYERS — Collaboratory and its donors are making a strategic investment into the future of arts and animal care in Southwest Florida by helping fund the missions of 14 purpose-driven organizations.

Through specific legacy funds, Collaboratory honored regional collaborative nonprofits by awarding $90,000 to fund distinct programs and services that enrich the community. Collaboratory presented the Arts and Animals Grants on Aug. 31 and Sept. 2 in Fort Myers.

Arts and Animals is an endowed, field-of-interest grant program. The grants provided were from legacy field-of-interest funds.

"Our donors emphasized a strong desire to assist nonprofits that enhance the arts culture in Southwest Florida and provide a nurturing environment for animals that need our support," said Dawn Belamarich, president and CEO of Collaboratory. "These grants recognize the incredible work these organizations are already doing while investing in what's possible next – helping make Southwest Florida a community that values the arts and cares deeply for the animals who call it home."

Collaboratory honored eight animal care organizations., **Caloosa Humane Society received a $5,000 grant). The socieity shelters and protects homeless pets while providing low-cost spay and neuter services.**



Collaboratory awarded the Caloosa Humane Society with a $5,000 check. [Photo courtesy Collaboratory]

BelieveNBooks

• From page **1**

tiative, reaching Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) students across Collier, Lee, Hendry, Glades, Charlotte, DeSoto, Hardee and Highlands counties. Each participating child will receive a copy of Pete the Cat Too Cool for School, to take home and keep, along with access to a YouTube read-aloud video of the same book.

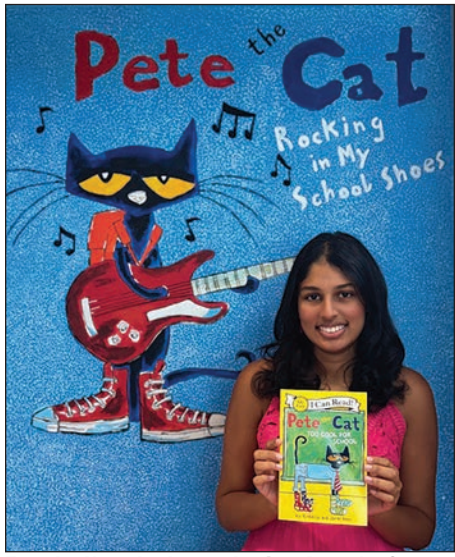
"Early literacy grows stronger when the learning that begins in the classroom can continue at home," said Dr. Melanie M. Stefanowicz, CEO of the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida. "The My Very Own Book initiative gives children something tangible that belongs to them, while the read-aloud component gives families another way to share in that experience. We are grateful to BelieveNBooks for helping make reading more accessible, engaging and meaningful for young children and their families."

The initiative extends reading beyond the classroom by pairing each book with a companion read-aloud video. Children can follow along with the physical book at home, including when a caregiver is unavailable to read aloud or faces English-language barriers. This approach helps children build home libraries while supporting early literacy, English-language development and kindergarten readiness.

"There is something powerful about being able to say, 'This book is mine,'" said Natasha Agarwal, Founder and CEO of BelieveNBooks. "Every child deserves the opportunity to build a home library and experience the excitement of having a reading buddy. We can make that experience possible for thousands of children and give them a story they can enjoy long after they leave the classroom."

The launch represents one of BelieveNBooks' largest coordinated early-childhood book distributions to date and significantly expands the organization's work with early learning communities across Florida. BelieveNBooks is grateful to the Wildcat Run Charitable Foundation and Galeana Foundation for their support in making the initiative possible.

Following the initial distribution, BelieveNBooks plans to expand the program to additional Early Learning Coalition regions across Florida, with a longer-term goal of bringing the model to children enrolled in subsidized early learning and preschool programs nationwide. To date, BelieveNBooks has distributed over 250,000 books to 50,000 children in need.



Founder Natasha Agarwal enjoys Pete the Cat at the Guadalupe Center library. [Photo courtesy Natasha Agarwal]

Lake Levels

• From page **1**

comeback.

The Xtreme Bass Series championship took place Oct. 15-17 on Lake O. Derek Daniels of Macclenny and Michael Johnson of Raiford took first place in a field of 125 teams. They were in second place after day one with 23.30 pounds. On the final day they weighed the heaviest bag of the tournament, a 27.85 pound limit, and won with a 51.15 pound two-day total. Calan Hawkins and Austin Baskette caught the biggest bass of the tournament, an 8.66 pound Trophy Catch on day two worth $850.

On Oct. 28, Anglers for Lake Okeechobee reported the fishing "is getting GOOD.

"Believe it or not, with the lake slightly above 12½ feet, the bass are already pushing back into the shallows and getting ready for the spawning season," AFLO posted on social media. "The wind has been strong and steady from the same direction over the last 10 days. Some areas are muddy, but there's still plenty of cleaner water to find, especially where the wind is blowing out of the marsh toward the open lake."

AFLO continues to call for less use of chemical herbicides to control invasive aquatic plans in the big lake: "We have to protect our new SAV, submerged aquatic vegetation. Keep the spray boats accountable. Do not spray chemicals in or over these areas of new growth!"

GAME TIME!

Two Large 1-Topping Pizzas, 8 Wings, Deep Dish 3 Cheezer Bread, Howie Brownie & a 2-Liter

$49.99



PIZZA BUFFET

SALAD, SOUP, PASTA, PIZZA-BY-REQUEST, CHEESE BREAD & MORE, **ALL INCLUDED!**

KIDS 10 & UNDER **$9.99**

ADULTS **$12.99**

KIDS UNDER 5 EAT **FREE!**

ALL NEW HOURS:
DAILY 11AM - 6PM



INCLUDES A **FREE** FOUNTAIN DRINK!

Hungry Howie's®

FLAVORED CRUST® PIZZA

260383

CARRY-OUT • PIZZA BUFFET
DINE-IN • DRIVE-THRU PICK UP

LABELLE • 180 SOUTH MAIN ST.
1 BLOCK SOUTH OF 80
863-675-6363

To View Our Menu Or Order Online, Scan This Code!

HOWIEMONGOUS $16.99

XLG 16" PIZZA

Your Choice of 2 Regular Toppings, 100% Mozzarella or 3 Cheese blend of Mozzarella, Cheddar & Parmesan Cheese

Additional toppings available. Premium toppings extra.

WACKY WEDNESDAY™ $7.99 EACH

Carry-out only.

- LARGE 1-TOPPING PIZZA
- BAKED SPAGHETTI WITH 1-TOPPING*
- ANY REGULAR SALAD
- LARGE OVEN BAKED SUB**

CHOOSE YOUR FAVORITE!



Price and participation may vary by location. Carry-out only. Premium toppings extra.

DEEP DISH PIZZA $12.99

SAUCE ON BOTTOM
LARGE 1-TOPPING



Additional toppings available. Premium toppings extra.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

What do you cherish?

By Rev. Elizabeth Nelson
Good Shepherd Episcopal Church

What is important to you? I'm often teased about the labeled boxes I have around the house. The other day I ran across one marked "Personal," and I found precious memories: children's photos, scribbled drawings, Mother's Day cards. I smiled as I shuffled through the papers, and I thought: What do we cherish? What brings a smile to our hearts, reminding us how blessed we are?

I thought of those who lost every in the last hurricane. If they survived, I'm sure their answer would be different than before the hurricane. The material things we have can be taken away in a moment. We might have a high paying job, a big house, the finest clothes. But try as we might, we won't find what is most important to cherish here on earth. The world tells us that more is better and that our happiness depends on how much we can acquire. But the Bible gives us the answers we seek.

In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, we see one man who is impressed with his earthly accomplishments and the other who knows he needs more than what this world could give him: a right relationship with God. And that's exactly what we should cherish...living in a right relationship with God.

There's certainly nothing wrong with boxes of photos and cherished memories. But the treasure that will last is found only in a relationship with our God.

Clean water success shows Everglades Restoration Partnership in action

By Eric Hopkins

For those of us who farm in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), the land is more than where we work. It is where many of us were raised, where our families built their lives, and what we hope to pass down to the next generation.

That is why protecting land and water is not a talking point for EAA farmers. It is a responsibility we live every day.

Recently, farmers across the Everglades Agricultural Area reached another major clean water milestone, achieving a 65% reduction in phosphorus in 2026. That is nearly three times the 25% reduction required under Florida's Everglades Forever Act. For farmers who have spent decades investing in better practices, better technology and better outcomes, this is a result worth recognizing.

It also did not happen by accident.

Since the Everglades Forever Act was implemented in 1996, EAA farmers have been required to reduce phosphorus in water leaving their farms, which we have achieved through on-farm Best Management Practices, or BMPs. These practices are designed to protect water quality while allowing farmers to continue producing the fresh vegetables, rice, sugarcane and other crops that help feed Florida and the country.

Over the past three decades, EAA farmers have not only met that standard, we have consistently exceeded it. Farmers in the EAA have achieved an average 57% annual phosphorus reduction since the program began. In that time, our South Florida farms have helped prevent more than 5,111 metric tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades.

Those numbers reflect years of work in the field.



Eric Hopkins [Courtesy Photo]

On farms across the EAA, BMPs include practices like precision fertilizer application, soil testing, water management, sediment control, land laser leveling, ditch bank stabilization and water retention systems that help capture and reuse rainfall. These are practical, science-based tools that help farmers use resources more efficiently, reduce runoff and protect the land and water that make farming possible.

• See **Clean Water Success** on page **5**

Hendry County News at LakeONews.com

Hendry County's Hometown Paper

Our Staff

News:
Debbie Akins.....dakins@iniusa.org
Richard Marion.....rmarion@iniusa.org
Annie Wills.....nwills@iniusa.org
Cathy Womble.....cwomble@iniusa.org

Advertising:
Kay Sheedy – *Advertising Manager*.....ksheedy@iniusa.org
Angie Bridges.....abridges@iniusa.org
Rick Lewis.....rlewis@iniusa.org

Graphics:
Erik Maurer.....emaurer@iniusa.org
Debbie Myers.....dmyers@iniusa.org
Mona Lisa Navarrette.....mnavarrette@iniusa.org
Chris Pitts.....cpitts@iniusa.org
Kris Schwartz – *Creative Services Team Leader*.....kschwartz@iniusa.org
Chris Williams.....cwilliams@iniusa.org

Circulation:
Terri Rodgers – *Circulation Manager*.....trodgers@iniusa.org
Janet Madray.....jmadray@iniusa.org

Editor-in-Chief:
Katrina Elsken | kelsken@iniusa.org
President & CEO:
Charlene Bisson | cbisson@iniusa.org

To Reach Us
313 NW 4th Avenue, Okeechobee, FL 34972
888.665.3848 • okeenews@iniusa.org
customerservice@iniusa.org

Hendry County News Subscriptions
All Access Digital Subscriptions to LakeONews.com $5 a month

Advertising Services
okeeadsales@iniusa.org

To Place an Classifieds Ad
877.353.2424 • classads@iniusa.org

To Place an Obituary
877.353.2424 • flobits@iniusa.org

Our Purpose...
Hendry County News is published by Independent Newsmedia Inc, USA. Independent is owned by a unique trust that enables this newspaper to pursue a mission of journalistic service to the citizens of the community. Since no dividends are paid, the company is able to thrive on profit margins below industry standards. All after-tax surpluses are reinvested in Independent's mission of journalistic service, commitment to the ideals of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, and support of the community's deliberation of public issues.

We Pledge...
- To operate the newspaper as a public trust
- To help our community become a better place to live and work, through our dedication to conscientious journalism
- To provide the information citizens need to make their own intelligent decisions about public issues
- To report the news with honesty, accuracy, purposeful neutrality, fairness, objectivity, fearlessness, and compassion
- To use our opinion pages to facilitate community debate, not to dominate it with our own opinions
- To disclose our own conflicts of interest or potential conflicts to our readers
- To correct our errors and to give each correction the prominence it deserves.
- To provide a right to reply to those we write about.
- To treat people with courtesy, respect, and compassion

© 2025 Independent Newsmedia, Inc., USA.
The publication of any advertisement in this newspaper does not constitute an endorsement by the publisher of products or services advertised. All real estate advertised herein is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act. We will not knowingly accept any advertising that is illegal or considered fraudulent.

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA
Celebrating & Connecting Our Communities

W.P. Franklin and Ortona Locks to close for maintenance

SPECIAL TO LAKE OKEECHOBEE NEWS

Attention all concerned boaters!

The W.P. Franklin Lock will be closed to all traffic for dewatering and major maintenance from Jan. 4, 2027 to March 1, 2027. No passage through W.P. Franklin Lock will be available during this critical scheduled maintenance. The Ortona Lock will be open to local traffic only from Jan. 4, 2027 to March 1 2027.

The Ortona Lock will be closed to all traffic for dewatering and major maintenance from March 1, 2027 to April 30, 2027. No passage through the Ortona Lock will be available during this critical scheduled maintenance. The W.P. Franklin Lock will be open to local traffic only from March 1, 2027 to April 30, 2027.

For the current Lake Okeechobee water levels, please see: https://w3.saj.usace.army.mil/h2o/currentLL.shtml

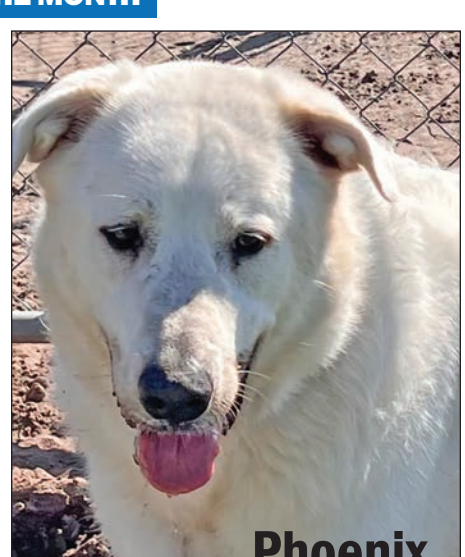
For up-to-date Lock information, contact the shift operator 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. at:

- St. Lucie Lock & Dam 772-287-2665 or 863-662-9148
- Port Mayaca Lock & Dam 561-924-2858 or 863-662-9424
- Julian Keen, Jr. Lock & Dam 863-946-0414 or 863-662-9533
- Ortona Lock & Dam 863-675-0616 or 863- 662-9846
- W.P. Franklin Lock & Dam 863-662-9908
- Canaveral Lock 321-783-5421 or 863-662-0298 (6 a.m. to 10 p.m.)

PETS OF THE MONTH









CALOOSA HUMANE SOCIETY PRESENTS PETS OF THE MONTH

LABELLE — This month's Pets of the Month are beautiful fur babies in need of loving families! You can come meet these babies at the Caloosa Humane Society, 1200 Pratt Blvd. in LaBelle. [Photos courtesy Caloosa Humane Society]

Clean Water Success

• From page **4**

For people who do not farm, our practices may sound technical. For farmers, they are part of the daily routine. They influence where and how we apply nutrients, how we manage water, how we preserve soil, and how we prepare our land for the next crop and the next season.

The EAA is one of the most productive farming regions in the United States, especially during the winter months when much of the country cannot grow fresh vegetables. Farmers here grow sweet corn, lettuce, celery, green beans, radishes, rice, broccoli and many other crops that reach grocery stores, restaurants, schools and family tables across the country.

That level of food supply comes with a serious obligation. We know that what happens on our farms matters far beyond our own fields. It matters for our local communities, for the Everglades, for the families who depend on fresh food, and for the future of farming in South Florida.

Farming is always changing. Weather changes. Technology changes. Markets change. But the basic principle remains the same: if we take care of the land, the land can continue to take care of us.

For many EAA farmers, this work is personal. We are not just farming for today's crop or this year's harvest. We are farming with our children and grandchildren in mind. We want them to inherit healthy soil, clean water and a strong agricultural community that can continue feeding families for generations.

The latest clean water results show that farming and environmental stewardship can go hand in hand. They show that Best Management Practices have worked to help restore the Everglades.

As farmers, we are proud to grow food for our communities. We are just as proud to do it in a way that protects the land and water that make it all possible. Because for us, this land is not just our livelihood, it is our legacy.

Eric Hopkins is the Senior Vice President of Hundley Farms in Belle Glade.

Join United Way's free tax preparation team and make a difference

SPECIAL TO HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

FORT MYERS — The United Way of Lee, Hendry, and Glades is seeking volunteers to help the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program during the 2027 filing season. Join VITA and you can help provide free tax preparation for hardworking families and individuals earning $100,000 or less at more than 25 locations across Southwest Florida.

Whether you're a retired professional, working adult, college student or simply someone who wants to help others, VITA offers a rewarding way to make a difference. Volunteers receive free training and support throughout the season. Just a few hours of your time can help local families, seniors and individuals receive every dollar they're entitled to and avoid costly tax preparation fees.

Last year, 234 VITA volunteers made a tremendous impact across Southwest Florida, helping prepare more than 9,000 tax returns and bring more than $11 million in federal refunds back to local households. The service also saved taxpayers an estimated $2.7 million in preparation fees, putting more money back into family budgets and strengthening our local economy.

"Volunteering with VITA has given me the opportunity to get real-world experience while making an impact on my community," said Tristan Weeks, a recent FGCU College of Business graduate and VITA volunteer. "I hope to encourage more people to volunteer with VITA, as it has been a life-changing experience for me."

Join the VITA program today and help us make a difference in our community. Flexible hours are available from January through April every tax season. Orientation and training classes for new volunteers begin in November. To register, visit UnitedWayLee.org/VITA-Volunteer, or contact VITA@UnitedWayLee.org for more information.

American Red Cross offers ways to help keep loved ones safe and reduce your risk of a home fire

By the American Red Cross

The American Red Cross, South Florida Region offers steps you can take to help prevent a fire in your home and keep your loved ones safe.

"Across the country, the Red Cross responds to more than 60,000 disasters a year and most of these are home fires. Here in South Florida, our disaster teams have responded to over 650 fires since the beginning of 2026," said Monic Rusconi, Regional Disaster Officer. "These fires are devastating for the people involved. But there are steps everyone can take which will help not only help prevent a fire from starting but also help keep everyone safe should an emergency occur."

First: Steps to help keep you safe – check out the first 10 steps below to learn what you should do:

Have A Plan You may have less than two minutes to escape from a burning home. Draw up a household fire escape plan and practice it twice a year.

1. Everyone in your household should know two ways to escape from each room in your home.

2. Decide where to meet once you get outside. Select a meeting spot at a safe distance away from your home, such as a neighbor's home or landmark like a specific tree in your front yard, where everyone knows to meet.

3. Get out and stay out. Never go back inside for people, pets or things.

4. Time your fire drill and find out how long it took everyone to get out.

5. If a fire starts in your home, get out safely, then dial 911.

Smoke Alarms SAVE LIVES Smoke alarms can cut your risk of dying in a fire nearly in half.

1. Place smoke alarms on each level of your home, including inside and outside bedrooms and sleeping areas.

2. In addition to testing your alarms once a month, change the batteries at least once a year, if your model requires it.

3. Check the manufacturer's date of your smoke alarms. If they're 10 years or older, they need to be replaced because the sensor becomes less sensitive over time. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

4. Identify two exits from every room.

5. Teach children what smoke alarms sound like and what to do when they hear one.

SECOND – STEPS TO HELP PREVENT A FIRE - steps 11 through 20 focus on things you can do to lessen the chance of a fire in your home:

Be Safe in the Kitchen Cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the U.S. Follow these five steps to help you avoid a cooking fire:

1. Never leave cooking food unattended. If you must leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove. Use a timer to remind yourself that the stove or oven is on.

2. Avoid wearing loose clothing or dangling sleeves while cooking.

3. Keep kids away from cooking areas by enforcing a "kid-free zone" of three feet around the stove.

4. Keep anything that can catch on fire pot holders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags, food packaging, and towels or curtains away from your stove top and oven or any other appliance in the kitchen that generates heat.

5. Purchase a fire extinguisher to keep in your kitchen.

Heat Your Home Safely Home heating equipment is the second leading cause of home fires. As the time of year nears when people turn the heat back on, take these five steps to heat your home safely:

1. Never use a cooking range or oven to heat your home.

2. Never leave a fire burning in the fireplace unattended. Make sure any embers in the fireplace are extinguished before going to bed or leaving home. Use a glass or metal fire screen to keep embers in the fireplace.

3. Space heaters: It's critical to keep at least three feet of space around all heating equipment, and never leave space heaters unattended.

4. If you must use a space heater, place it on a level, hard and non-flammable surface, such as a ceramic tile floor. Don't place it on rugs and carpets, or near bedding and drapes. And keep children and pets away from the heater.

5. Plug space heater power cords directly into outlets — never an extension cord. Turn it off every time you leave the room or go to sleep.

"According to the National Fire Protection Association, there was a home fire every 23 seconds in 2024 which claimed a life every two hours and 14 minutes," Rusconi reported. "During Fire Prevention Week, we here at the Red Cross urge everyone to develop their evacuation plans, check their smoke alarms and help keep the members of their household safe."

Hendry County sponsors Junior Rodeo events

By Annie Wills
HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

CLEWISTON — At the regular meeting of the Hendry County Board of Commissioners on Tuesday, Oct. 13, the board voted and approved the sponsorship of $12,000 for two All Florida Junior Rodeo Association event.

The October All Florida Junior Rodeo was held Oct. 24 and 25 at the LaBelle Rodeo Arena,

The November All Florida Junior Rodeo is planned for Nov. 21 and 22 at the LaBelle Rodeo Arena. On Saturday, the rodeo starts at 11 a.m. On Sunday, the program starts with Cowboy Church at 9 a.m.

These weekend events usually attract around 250 spectators per event and are to be held at the label Rodeo grounds. Junior rodeo draws participants and fans from Glades, Lee, Okeechobee, Highlands, Palm Beach and Broward Counties. These people will stay overnight in local hotels and use the rodeo arena RV hook-ups. During their stay, they often visit local shops and restaurants and as such, have an economic impact on the county in grocery, store, and fuel purchases.

The Hendry County Tourist and Development Council (TDC) discussed these events at their own meeting on Oct. 7 and estimated a $12,000 total for the two rodeo events. The TDC submitted a proposal for commission approval of that total on Tuesday. The proposal states that "TDC and staff would like to see more community and tourism

• See **Junior Rodeo** on page **8**

BOCC amends contract with Children's Advocacy Center

By Annie Wills
HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

CLEWISTON — The Children's Advocacy Center proposed an amendment to their contract at the Hendry County Commission meeting held Tuesday, Oct. 13. This amendment increases the annual contract funding amount from $18,750 to $38,000 and establishes a reimbursement rate of $500 per examination.

Hendry County entered into a contract with Children's Advocacy Center of SWFL on Oct. 1, 2009. The contract renews annually unless terminated by either party. The current contract provides funding of up to $18,750 for these services.

The contract allows the Children's Advocacy Center to provide forensic medical examinations and consultations for children under the age of 18 alleged to have been abused or neglected.

The proposed amendment increases the annual compensation amount from $18,750 to $38,000, an increase of $19,250. It also establishes a reimbursement rate of $500 per examination, with total annual compensation not to exceed $38,000. The reimbursement rate means that the county will reimburse the Children's Advocacy Center at a rate of $500 per examination, not to exceed $38,000 annually.

The board voted and approved the amendment. This is the first amendment made to the contract.



"It's more than what we do. It's who we are."



Randy's GARAGE
SERVING OUR CUSTOMERS SINCE 1992
Full Service, Maintenance and Repair
ACDelco
737 S. Bridge Street • 863.675.1032

TRI-COUNTY ROOFING
Robert Sanchez
Owner
(863) 517-9922
Tricoroofing@yahoo.com
License # CCC1325814
Services
Specializing in residental properties
Metal & Shingle Roofing
Repairs/New Construction
Roof Inspections
Seamless Gutters
Soffit & Fascia
Family-owned and operated • Free Estimates

Operation Christmas Child drop-off locations open Nov. 16-23

SPECIAL TO HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

Volunteers are preparing to collect Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts during National Collection Week, Nov. 16 – 23. Nearly 5,000 drop-off locations will open across the country in November, and shoebox packers can find their local drop-off locations across Florida.

Since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has been collecting and delivering gift-filled shoeboxes to children including many who are suffering from war, poverty, disease and disaster. Operation Christmas Child hopes to reach 12.8 million children in 2026 with the hope of Jesus.

Shoebox packing is fun for individuals, families and groups! Find a step-by-step guide on the How to Pack a Shoebox webpage at Samaritanspurse.org. The project partners with local churches across the globe to deliver these tangible expressions of God's love to children in need. Participants can donate $10 per shoebox gift online through "Follow Your Box" and receive a tracking label to discover its destination.

"Shoebox gifts may seem simple, but they have an eternal impact. Each box is an opportunity to tell a boy or girl in need about the true meaning of Christmas," said Franklin Graham, president of Samaritan's Purse. "I've delivered these boxes around the world, and I never get tired of seeing the joy that they bring—even in the midst of disasters, war, and poverty."

The boxes can be dropped off at the First Baptist Church of Labelle, 330 N. Main Street, LaBelle, Nov. 16-20, between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m., on Nov. 21 from 9 a.m. to noon, on Nov. 22 from 1 to 3 p.m. and on Nov. 22 from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

Operation Christmas Child, a project of Samaritan's Purse, seeks to demonstrate God's love in a tangible way to children in need around the world and, together with the local church worldwide, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has collected and delivered more than 244 million gift-filled shoeboxes to children in more than 175 countries and territories.

Junior Rodeo

• From page **7**

support for these events to help increase spectator traffic and show a greater demand for hotels in the LaBelle area while highlighting the history and importance of cattle ranching, and western/rodeo heritage, which is a large part of Hendry County's heritage."

The board approved voted and approved the sponsorship of $12,000, not to exceed $6,000 per event.

All Florida Junior Rodeos are also planned March 20-21 at the Bronson Arena, 301 10th Street in Moore Haven March 20-21, 2027; and April 17-18 at the Okeehcobee Agri-Civic Center in Okeechobee. The weekend of May 14-16, the State Finals will be held at the Okeechobee Agri Civic Center.

Audubon Florida recognizes conservation leaders

SPECIAL TO HENDRY OKEECHOBEE NEWS

TALLAHASSEE — Audubon Florida recently honored conservation leaders during its annual Assembly, held Oct. 15–17, 2026. For decades, Audubon Florida has brought together staff, members, partners, and other stakeholders to celebrate the year's accomplishments and look ahead to upcoming priorities. The three-day event was hosted at the TradeWinds Resort in St. Pete Beach and focused on a theme of Protecting What Connects Us —Water, Wildlife, and Community.

The Everglades Champion Award is given for bold action on behalf of the Everglades or continuous leadership on behalf of Everglades restoration and the recovery of Lake Okeechobee and its estuaries. This year, Audubon proudly recognizes Chauncey Goss. Since 2019, Goss has served as Chairman of the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board, guiding it through a period when major Everglades restoration projects have advanced into construction and to completion. Under his leadership, the Board invested in water quality, storage, and reducing Lake Okeechobee discharges. Accomplishments during Goss' tenure include expanded water-quality monitoring in the Northern Everglades and Lake Okeechobee, completion of the EAA Reservoir Stormwater Treatment Area, completion of the Everglades Restoration Strategies construction phase, progress on the Western Everglades Restoration Project, and completion of the Picayune Strand Restoration Project. The South Florida Water Management District also helped secure recent state-federal agreements accelerating the EAA Reservoir and other projects, working across state and federal agencies, tribes, and conservation partners throughout.

The Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award is given to an officer or officers who have demonstrated that protecting wildlife is more than a job, but a moral obligation, and have made significant contributions to protecting Florida's wildlife either within or above the course of their regular duty. This year's award went to Sgt. David Estes, Cpl. Robert Kirkland, and Cpl. Jerrod Carver with the Collier County Sheriff's Office Agriculture Unit. These individuals are Audubon's first call when issues such as trespassing, illegal access, potential poaching, or other security concerns arise. Their quick response, professionalism, and familiarity with Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary allow Audubon staff to address sensitive situations safely and effectively while minimizing impacts to wildlife and visitors.

The Distinguished Philanthropist Award is given to an individual or organization in appreciation of their dedicated philanthropy, advocacy, and for being a driving force for Audubon's work. This year's honor went to Collier Community Foundation for serving as an exceptional partner to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary.

The Volunteer of the Year Award recognizes an individual who demonstrates exemplary dedication



From left to right" Chauncey Goss, Eve Waterman, and Paul Gray, Ph.D. [Courtesy photo]

to birds and the places they need and consistently goes above and beyond in their service to conservation. This year's award went to Eve Waterman. Eve has been volunteering with the Audubon coastal team in the Tampa Bay region for several years, frequently doing a morning shift at Ft. De Soto Park stewarding Wilson's Plovers, Least Terns, and American Oystercatchers, then an evening shift at Redington stewarding Black Skimmers. She averages 50+ shifts a year, and her hours translate to roughly $2,500/year in donated value to Audubon Florida. She is also Treasurer of the St. Pete Audubon chapter.

The Teddy Roosevelt Award is given to an individual demonstrating leadership, resolve, and courage on behalf of Florida's environment. Audubon is pleased to recognize State Senator Jeff Brandes and The Guy Bradley Award recognizes an individual for stewardship in the face of threats to birds and their habitats and a relentless commitment to conserving Florida's wildlife. Audubon selected Audubon Everglades Science Coordinator Paul Gray, PhD, who retired this year, to receive this award. Throughout his 31-year career at Audubon, Gray has embodied the hallmarks of Audubon culture: science-based, collaborative, solutions-oriented, and intersectional. While Gray brought strong science to some of Florida's most difficult water and wildlife issues, this success was also built on relationships. He worked with ranchers, agency staff, scientists, landowners, and conservation partners — often people approaching issues from very different perspectives — and built the trust and credibility needed to move difficult issues forward.

Embracing Local Journalism *for a Better Future*
Support us with a subscrition at LakeONews.com/Subscribe-Today or
Make a donation at LakeONews.com/SupportUs

· OLDE FLORIDA ·
MOTORCOACH & RV
RESORT

VETERANS DAY

JOIN US FOR VETERANS DAY
ON NOVEMBER 11, 2026

BEGINNING AT 12:30 P.M.

- PRESENTATION OF COLORS
- COMBAT FLAG FOLDING
- THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- THE NATIONAL ANTHEM
- REMARKS FROM THE LEGION CAPTAIN

FREE MEALS FOR VETERANS
Our way of saying thank you for your service.

APPRECIATION LETTERS
Write a letter to show our support for active duty military members.

HCSO K9 SALUTE
Join us on November 12 at 11:30AM to honor the HCSO K9 Unit

VETERAN KARAOKE
Join us at Flip Flops Bar and Grill on November 13 from 6-9pm for Karaoke hosted by Myra Johnson

· OLDE FLORIDA ·
MOTORCOACH & RV
RESORT

CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY

Join us at Olde Florida Motorcoach and RV Resort as we light up the Christmas Season!

Open to the public
December 5, 2026
7551 W SR 80, LaBelle, FL 33935

Holiday Market - 2 to 6 PM
Tree Lighting Ceremony - 6 PM

TAKE PHOTOS WITH SANTA!



Bring a new unwrapped toy to fill our donation box for TaDa You are Blessed, our nonprofit partner!

For more details call 863.373.1850 or email events@ofmcr.com

OLDE FLORIDA EST. 2024 MOTORCOACH & RV RESORT

OFMCR Market Days

SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESSES

UPCOMING MARKET DAYS

DECEMBER 5TH	2 PM - 6 PM
JANUARY 9TH	9 AM – 2 PM
FEBRUARY 13TH	9 AM – 2 PM
MARCH 13TH	9 AM – 2 PM
APRIL 10TH	9 AM – 2 PM

$50.00 PER 10x10 SPACE
(Applies to November – April Markets)

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A VENDOR?

Shellie Hunter
863-373-1850
shellie@ofmcr.com
7551 West State Rd 80
LaBelle, FL 33935


TICKETS ARE SELLING NOW, AND SPOTS ARE LIMITED! DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO RING IN THE NEW YEAR IN OLDE HOLLYWOOD STYLE. SCAN THE QR CODE AND SECURE YOUR TICKETS BEFORE THEY'RE GONE!
OLDE HOLLYWOOD
NEW YEAR'S EVE
at Olde Florida Motorcoach and RV Resort
DECEMBER 31, 2026 | 8 PM - 1 AM | HOLLYWOOD RED CARPET GLAMOROUS ATTIRE
STEP BEHIND THE VELVET CURTAIN AND INTO THE GOLDEN AGE OF HOLLYWOOD, WHERE TIMELESS ELEGANCE MEETS THE ALLURE OF A HIDDEN SPEAKEASY. JOIN US AT THE ORANGERY AT OLDE FLORIDA FOR A NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATION FILLED WITH VINTAGE GLAMOUR AND A LITTLE PROHIBITION-ERA MISCHIEF.

Hendry County Library Cooperative announces award recipients

News from Hendry County Library Cooperative

On Aug. 11, the Southwest Florida Library Network (SWFLN) held their Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony. This was a day full of connection, celebration, and recognition of the incredible library staff serving all of Southwest Florida and the local region as well as learning all about SWFLN, what they've accomplished and what their future plans are as they continue to support their member libraries.

Hendry County Library Cooperative was thrilled to have two outstanding employees recognized and awarded for their dedication to serving our communities. Both recipients work at the Clewiston Public Library where they've given their all to their patrons for decades all while ensuring to deliver the highest level of customer service.

Shirley Reynolds - Outstanding Library Employee Award



Shirley Reynolds (Photo courtesy Clewiston Public Library]

Honoring a dedicated, reliable, and versatile staff member who is the steady foundation of their library's daily success. This award recognizes an individual who consistently goes above and beyond in service to both patrons and colleagues. Known as the "go-to" person, they handle a wide range of responsibilities with professionalism, teamwork, and grace—even during challenging moments. With a strong commitment to customer service, a positive attitude, and unwavering dependability, they are truly the backbone of their library.

Since 1999, Shirley Reynolds has been an instrumental and invaluable employee in making the Clewiston Public Library a success. For more than two decades, Shirley has consistently demonstrated an extraordinary level of dedication, dependability, and commitment to both the library and the community she serves. From daily supervisory clerical duties, circulation tasks, building maintenance to serving on the City of Clewiston's Safety Committee and much more, Shirley continually exceeds all expectations of her employer and community.

Over the past three years, the Hendry County Library Cooperative has undergone significant changes to its integrated library system (ILS). To say that the logistics were complex would be a major understatement. Shirley managed and coordinated this overhaul all while continuing to manage her numerous existing responsibilities, which included cataloging and maintenance of over 110,000 bibliographic records, financial reconciliation, front desk management, building maintenance, and much more. Imagine being the only staff member that bears the responsibility of physically touching every item that can be found at all three library locations in Hendry County? Another strength that shines through Shirley's daily actions is her unwavering dedication to the library facility itself. For years, the library experienced persistent roof leaks, and Shirley routinely inspected the building, reported issues to Facility Services, and, in the meantime, took immediate action to prevent further damage to the floors, walls, furniture, and electronics. Her willingness to respond outside of normal working hours demonstrates just how seriously she takes her responsibility to the library. It is very evident that Shirley takes immense pride in the condition of the facility and treats the building as though it were her own. Her actions reflect a level of ownership, responsibility, and dedication

These examples may sound simple, but they perfectly illustrate who Shirley is. She never hesitates to step up. She does not ask whether something is technically her responsibility. If there is a problem, she finds a way to solve it.

Shirley is extremely dependable, kind, hardworking, and committed. She has spent more than 25 years serving the Clewiston Public Library, and her contributions extend far beyond any single job description. She is the person staff can count on when systems change, when a building needs attention, when an unexpected problem arises, or when someone simply needs an extra hand.

Diana Osborne - Community Engagement Award



Diana Osborne [Courtesy photo]

Honoring a staff member whose outreach, collaboration and community connections have significantly strengthened the library's role in public life. This award celebrates an individual who actively builds relationships and engages the community through impactful initiatives—whether through events, partnerships, social media, or outreach programs. Their efforts foster meaningful connections, raise the library's visibility, and create lasting, measurable benefits for the community. They exemplify how libraries thrive when they meet people where they are—both in spirit and in action.

Diana has worked at the library for over 11 years, and in all that time, I have yet to hear a negative comment from a patron after meeting or working with her. She is truly loved by the community. In fact, she has touched the lives of families so deeply that even after two families moved out of our area, they continue to drive 45 minutes just to attend her programs. That level of dedication and connection with patrons speaks volumes about the impact she has made.

One of the things that sets Diana apart is her unwavering dedication to her job and to ensuring that knowledge, literacy, and meaningful programming are available to everyone. Diana does not limit herself to an 8-to-5 schedule. She has a genuine "whatever gets the job done" mindset. Her creativity and dedication can be seen throughout the library. If you have ever visited and admired the decorations throughout the building, much of what you see is the result of Diana's vision and hard work. From elaborate summer reading program themes to holiday decorations and special events, she develops imaginative ideas and brings them to life in ways that continually amaze our patrons and staff.

Diana has been instrumental in developing the library's most engaging programs as the Program Coordinator, including STEAM activities, robotics programs, virtual reality sessions, and much more. She is beloved by children and parents alike, and patrons regularly ask for her when they visit the library. Her commitment to accessibility also extends beyond traditional in-person programming. Diana has created virtual sessions for individuals and families who cannot make it to town, as well as passive programming that allows children and adults of all ages to participate independently and at their own convenience. She is also responsible for creating and managing the library's manga and graphic novel collections, which have grown significantly in popularity and demand.

Diana has created and hosted 1,156 programs that attracted 9,387 patron visits this past fiscal year. That number alone is remarkable, but it only tells part of the story. Behind every program is Diana's time, creativity, planning, preparation, networking, purchasing, decorating, teaching, and commitment to making sure patrons have a meaningful experience.

Enjoy a hike at Fisheating Creek WMA



The Fisheating Creek Wildlife Management Area has popular trails for bicyclists and hikers. [Photo by Katrina Elsken/Lake Okeechobee News]









Fisheating Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) offers opportunities for hiking, bicycling, wildlife viewing, fishing and more.

The 12,000-acre WMA in Glades County is a great place to view wildlife year-round. It is on the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail. Wading birds, hawks, osprey and owls are common. White-tailed deer, Osceola turkey and alligators are frequently spotted. Large numbers of migratory swallow-tailed kites gather there in late summer.

The WMA is managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The WMA is also important to the long-term welfare of a number of native wildlife, including Florida panthers, Florida black bears, swallow-tailed kites, sandhill cranes and crested caracara.

Entrances are at Fort Center/Banana Grove Road (3010 Banana Grove Road, Moore Haven) and Gaskin's Entrance (8359 US-27, Moore Haven).

For more information, go online to www.myfwc.com/recreation/fisheating-creek/

This tourism feature was brought to you by Handy Food Stores, who encourages you to get out and explore your own backyard and all the things our region has to offer!

Fill up your tank, fill up your cup

Handy Neighborhood Store – Serving Florida Neighborhoods for 60 Years 1965 2025

Serving the Central Florida Neighborhoods for 60 Years

Locations in Okeechobee, LaBelle (3) & Alva

- Friendly Service
- Clean Restrooms
- Diesel Fuel

(Okeechobee, Alva & LaBelle - Handy #58)

Now Hiring at Labelle & Alva Stores

Visit us on Facebook or handyfoods.com

Earn with Handy Rewards To Go! Piecing The Savings Together!

FREE GAS!

Win a $100 CITGO gift card!

Register at LakeONews.com/gasgiveaway

Congratulations to our October winner!

Linda Davis

CITGO Fueling Good · TriCLEAN Gasoline · Top Tier Detergent Gasoline

FSW to offer new agriculture courses in LaBelle

SPECIAL TO LAKE OKEECHOBEE NEWS

LABELLE — Florida South-Western State College is expanding educational opportunities in one of Southwest Florida's most important industries with the launch this fall of new agriculture courses at the FSW Hendry/Glades Curtis Center in LaBelle.

The initiative is giving students in the Florida Heartland region a local pathway to explore precision agriculture, agribusiness, soil science and emerging agricultural technologies while learning both in the classroom and through hands-in-the-dirt experiences in the field. Additional courses are planned for spring 2027.

"Agriculture looks very different today than it did a generation ago," said Dr. Henry Akwah, director of Agricultural Technology and Supply Chain Management at FSW. "Modern agriculture increasingly relies on continuous education and awareness, along with the integration of precision agriculture concepts that combine traditional agricultural knowledge with modern technologies such as geographic information systems, artificial intelligence, sensors, drones and data analytics."

The new offerings come at a pivotal time for Florida agriculture. Florida Agriculture Commissioner Wilton Simpson has recognized 2026 as Florida's "Year of the Farmer," highlighting the essential role farmers play in the state's economy and food supply. The state has also committed significant investment to protecting working agricultural lands, including $425 million for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program.

For FSW, the launch reflects the college's broader commitment to workforce development and to responding directly to the needs of the communities it serves. "Workforce readiness is at the heart of this initiative," said Dr. Martin McClinton, associate vice president of Academic Affairs at FSW.

"Agriculture is changing, and employers need people who understand both the fundamentals of the industry and the technology and business practices that are shaping its future. By offering these courses locally, we are giving students in this region an opportunity to build those skills close to home and prepare for the workforce needs of our region."

The Hendry/Glades region serves as the agricultural heart of Southwest Florida, where agriculture remains a major economic driver. By bringing agriculture courses to LaBelle, FSW is helping create new pathways for students while supporting the skilled workforce needed to sustain and advance the industry.

Faculty and students are available for interviews to discuss the new agriculture courses, the hands-on learning experiences and how the initiative is preparing students for careers in modern agriculture.

To learn more, visit fsw.edu/news/20261015-aginitiative and FSW AG Courses.

DAIRY GOATS



MEET LMS'S DAIRY GOAT EXHIBITOR TEAM

LABELLE — LaBelle Middle School's FFA Dairy Goat Exhibitor Team officially kicked off their journey on Oct. 21 by diving into animal nutrition and learning how to properly feed their goats! For their Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) project, these four students will spend the next five months managing daily feedings & care, practicing showmanship, handling health care, and prepping their animals to show at the LaBelle Youth Ag and Livestock Show. Meet the team: Yovana & Copper, Camden & Bambi, Abriel & Caroline, and Tiana & Lilly. [Photo courtesy LaBelle Middle School] For more photos go to facebook.com/LMSBroncos/ [Photo courtesy LaBelle Middle School FFA]

PERFECT ATTENDANCE



CENTRAL STUDENTS EARN PERFECT ATTENDANCE

CLEWISTON — The following Central Elementary School classes earned all of their letters in Perfect Attendance: Miss Hayes, Ms. Wheeler, Mrs. Simmons, and Mrs. Smith! The students were treated to ice pops. [Photo courtesy CES/Clewiston]

BACK TO SCHOOL

Randy's Garage

737 S. Bridge St. • LaBelle • 863-675-1032 • OPEN: Monday - Friday from 8am to 5pm

Proudly Supporting Education in LaBelle

A+ SCHOOL

Glades Electric opens applications for 2027 D.C. Tour

High school juniors in four Florida counties are eligible to apply for an all-expenses-paid leadership experience

SPECIAL TO HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

MOORE HAVEN — Glades Electric Cooperative is accepting applications for its 2027 Washington, D.C., Youth Tour, offering high school juniors in Glades, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee counties the opportunity to earn an all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital June 17-22, 2027.

The cooperative will select two students to participate in the annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, a national program coordinated by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. The weeklong experience brings together more than 1,500 high school students from across the country for leadership development, educational tours and opportunities to learn about the nation's history, government and legislative process.

Youth Tour delegates visit historic landmarks and museums, participate in leadership and advocacy workshops, and meet with congressional staff to learn firsthand about public service and the legislative process. The experience also gives students the opportunity to build friendships with motivated peers from across the country and develop skills that can benefit them in college and future careers.

For Gabriel Gonzalez-Molina of Okeechobee, one of Glades Electric's 2026 delegates, the experience offered a new perspective on leadership and the nation's history.

"This is an experience like no other. You go in with one mindset and come out with another," Gonzalez-Molina said. "You meet new friends from across the nation that are leaders like you and you see key moments in our nation's history and monuments that inspire many to stand up and become strong leaders like the ones of our past."

Glades Electric has sponsored students for Youth Tour for decades as part of its commitment to education, leadership development and community involvement. All high school juniors who reside in Glades, Hendry, Highlands or Okeechobee counties are eligible to apply, regardless of whether their homes receive electricity from Glades Electric Cooperative.

The application process requires students to complete an online application, submit two letters of recommendation and provide a video lasting 90 seconds to three minutes. The deadline to apply is Jan. 5, 2027.

Students interested in participating can find application requirements, the video prompt, judging criteria and application materials at gladeselectric.com/community/student-programs-information. Questions may be directed to communications@gladeselectric.com.

For students interested in leadership, government, history or simply expanding their horizons, Youth Tour offers an opportunity to explore the nation's capital, connect with future leaders and bring home experiences that can last a lifetime.

Glades Electric Cooperative is a not-for-profit, member-owned electric cooperative serving portions of Glades, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee counties in Florida's Heartland. Founded in 1945, the cooperative is committed to providing reliable electric service while supporting the communities it serves.

SCHOOL SPIRIT



CENTRAL ELEMENTARY STUDENTS WEAR RED

CLEWISTON — Central Elementary School students had a blast showing their school spirit at the Quarter One Awards Rally on Friday, Oct. 23. [Photo courtesy CES/Clewiston]



KING RISK PARTNERS

PROGRESSIVE · Swyfft · FOREMOST INSURANCE GROUP · MERCURY INSURANCE GROUP · TRAVELERS · Nationwide

AUTO · HOME · COMMERCIAL · BOAT · RV
MOTORCYCLE · WORKERS COMP

Serving SW Florida since 1977

(239) 657.3614 · Maria.Olvera@king-insurance.com
711 West Main Street, Immokalee, Florida 34142
www.king-insurance.com · Se Habla Español

LABELLE THINGS TO DO

Barron Library's November events

LABELLE — Barron Library, 461 N Main St., will hold the following events: The Chess Club meets on Mondays from 5-6:30 p.m. Storytime for ages 0-10 is held on Tuesdays at 11:30 a.m. For information, call 863-675-0833.

Woman's Club to hold Bingo Night

LABELLE — LaBelle Woman's Club, 382 W Hickpochee Ave., will hold bingo on Friday, **Nov. 13**, the doors open at 5 p.m. and bingo starts at 6 p.m. Proceeds will to the LaBelle High School Cowboy Band. For information, visit labellewomansclub.org or call 863-228-0551.

Jukebox to be held at FCT

LABELLE — The Firehouse Singers present Jukebox Jive on Friday, Nov. **13** and again on Saturday, **Nov. 14** at 7 p.m.; and Sunday, **Nov. 15** at 2 p.m. at the Firehouse Community Theatre, 241 Bridge St. Tickets can be purchased at firehousecommunitytheatre.org/. For information, call 863-675-3066 and leave a message.

Rotary Club to hold Vendor Market

LABELLE — The Rotary Club of LaBelle will hold a Vendor Market on Saturday, **Nov. 14** from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Hendry County Sports Complex, 845 Forrey Drive. For information, call Holly Kobie at 239-707-6140 or email holly.kobie@labellerotaryclub.com.

Woman's Club seeking new members

LABELLE — The LaBelle Community Woman's Club is seeking new members. Meetings are held the **second Tuesday** of every month. For information, visit labellewomansclub.org or call 863-228-0551.

Legion plans events

LABELLE — American Legion Post 130 is located at 699 W Hickpochee Ave., across from the Shell Station. For info, call 863-675-8300. Upcoming events include the following. Pizza & hot dogs available – all day: Sunday - Thursday 11 a.m. till close and Fridays and Saturday 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. Happy Hour is held on Monday - Friday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday Fish Fry nights is held from 5-7 p.m. Karaoke begins at 7 p.m. Friday & Saturdays, Karaoke in lounge beginning at 7 p.m.

VFW Post 10100 hosts events

LABELLE — The LaBelle VFW, 20 Veterans Way (Hwy. 29 next to rodeo grounds), plans the following events: Every Saturday night there will be entertainment. Every Saturday, best burgers in town. Serving from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Every Wednesday, Euchre cards at 5 p.m. First and third Friday, jam session begins at 6 p.m. Every Sunday, biscuits and gravy made by Jennifer. Serving begins at 9 a.m. Second and fourth Friday, free juke box from 6 to 8 p.m. For info, call 863-675-8008.

Assembly of God church hosts services

LABELLE — LaBelle Assembly of God, 139 Fraser Ave, holds a service on Sundays at 9:45 am. and a worship service at 11 a.m. Bible Study is held on Wednesdays at 7 p.m. Community Ladies Bible Study is held on Fridays at noon. The church has a ramp and a wheel chair - and if you need assistance, or for info, call 863-675-0900 to leave a message.

Free monthly lactation classes

LABELLE — Milkyway Breastfeeding & Chestfeeding Resources will offer breastfeeding classes on the second Wednesday of every month at 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Goodwill Community Center, 91 S Lee St. Registration is required. Classes are free but donations are welcome. To register or for info, call 863-332-3405.

BBBS seeking mentors

Big Brothers Big Sisters is seeking volunteers to ignite, inspire and empower potential in our youth. Learn how to become a mentor by visiting our website at www.bbbssun.org. No title, degree or special qualifications are needed. A little time, encouragement and a laugh or two can be just what a child needs to achieve a BIG and brighter future. For more information contact Laurie Waninger at 863-345-0107, or to sign up go to www.bbbssun.org and click on the tab Become a Big.

Salvation Army distributes food

LABELLE — The Salvation Army gives free food to needy families on Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to noon at the United Way House, 133 N Bridge St. It is easy to sign-up to be eligible for once a month pickup. Anyone may make donations to the Salvation Army food pantry between 9-5 weekdays. For information, call Angie or Jody at 863-674-1441.

Christ Central distributes food

LABELLE — Christ Central Church on East SR80 hosts a food distribution every Thursday morning. First time recipients sign up, otherwise, line up for free food.

Garden Club meets

LABELLE — The Garden Club meets the fourth **Monday** of the month at 6 p.m., doors open at 5:30 p.m., at the Dallas Townsend Center at 1085 Pratt Blvd - across from the Health Department. Anyone can bring any plant or garden produce to exchange or share. Bring any plants that need identifying, any questions or local features happening. If anyone wants to share a treat for light refreshments, it's always welcome! For info, call Ginny at 239-849-5707.

Church offers grief support group

Caloosa Baptist Church, 550 W. Hickpochee Ave. holds GriefShare support group meetings. To register, call or text Cindy at 863-673-3855.

Transportation for veterans available

Transportation is available for to and from the Affairs Medical Center in West Palm Beach and the VA clinic in Cape Coral. Vans can only transport two at a time and they must sit in the back seats. Veterans must wear mask at all times while in the van, the service cannot transport wheelchairs . Van scheduling number 863-675-5255. Disabled American Van Transport to West Palm Beach VAMC on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, leaving at 5:30 a.m. return 11 a.m. Disabled American Van Transport to Lee County (Cape Coral Clinic) on Monday, Wednesday and Friday leaving at 5:30 a.m. return 11 a.m.

AA meets in LaBelle

Alcoholics Anonymous meets in LaBelle at the following locations.

- Hispanos de LaBelle, 462 E. Cowboy Way, meets on **Sundays** at 9 a.m. and **Mondays** and **Fridays** at 8 p.m. (Spanish)
- Good Shepherd Church, 1098 Collingswood Pkwy., Port LaBelle Group meets on **Sundays** at 7 p.m., hosts a discussion meeting on **Fridays** at 7 p.m, and "As Bill Sees it" on **Saturdays** at 9 a.m.
- First Christian Church, 138 Ford Ave., LaBelle Group holds "12&12" meeting on **Tuesdays** at 7 p.m., a discussion meeting on **Thursdays** at 7 p.m., and an Early Bird meeting on **Wednesdays** at 7 a.m.

The AA 24-hour phone line is: 239-275-5111.

For more information about AA meetings, go online to www.aa.org/

BUSINESS DIRECTORY & CLASSIFIED ADS

VISIT US @ iniusa.org/classifieds | EMAIL US: iniclassads@iniusa.org

DEADLINE: Tuesdays by 4pm

EMAILS

okeeadsales@iniusa.org
legals@iniusa.org
flobits@iniusa.org

To place your ad call us at
863.763.3134

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA
Celebrating & Connecting Our Communities

AUTOMOTIVE & MERCHANDISE RATES

$20 per week – 30 words
Your ad appears in the Lake Okeechobee News plus online
$5.00 for color and each additional photo
25¢ extra per additional word

$60 four weeks – 30 words
Your ad appears in four weeks of Lake Okeechobee News plus online
$5.00 for color and each additional photo
25¢ extra per additional word

BUSINESS/SERVICE DIRECTORY RATES

Starting at $30
for one column by two-inch advertisement
$15.00 per inch after (maximum size 8.55 inches)
Logo and photos included
4-weeks minimum

EMPLOYMENT ADS

Starting at $30
for one column by two-inch advertisement
$15.00 per inch after (maximum size 8.55 inches)
Logo and photos included
No minimum commitment requirement

CLASSIFIED ADS ONLINE
Create Your Own Ads Online, It's Easy!
Go to: iniusa.org/classifieds
then select "Place an ad"

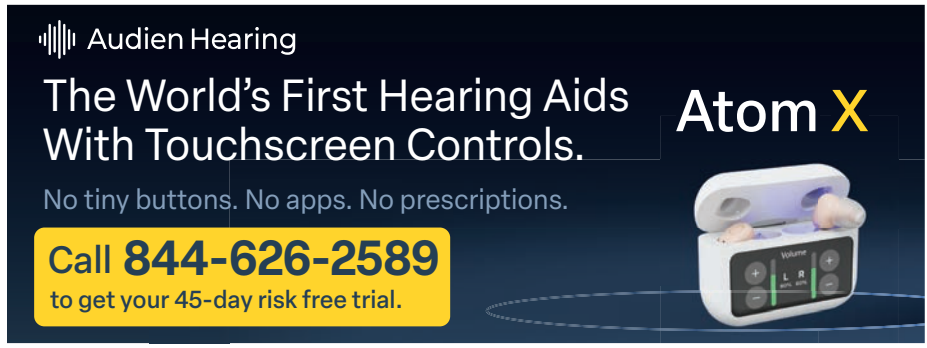
Miscellaneous

Consumer Cellular®
OVER 50? UNLIMITED FOR JUST $35/MONTH.
Backed by #1 Network Coverage and Customer Satisfaction.*
Switch & Save Today. **877-399-1149**
© 2026 Consumer Cellular Inc. Terms and Conditions subject to change. Plans shown above include $5 credit for AutoPay and E-billing. Taxes and other fees apply. Credit approval required for new service. Cellular service is not available in all areas and is subject to system limitations. For unlimited plans, high-speed data is reduced after 35GB on single-line plans and 50GB of combined usage on multi-line plans for the remainder of your billing cycle. Unlimited data plans only for customers age 50+. *2025 ACSI® Survey of customers rating their own wireless service provider. ACSI® and its logo are registered trademarks of the American Customer Satisfaction Index LLC. For more about the ACSI®, visit www.theacsi.org.

Miscellaneous







LOCAL NEWSPAPERS ARE ESSENTIAL TO AMERICA.
READERS LIKE YOU ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE FUTURE OF LOCAL NEWS.

Miscellaneous

Transform Your Bathroom and Change Your Life.

FREE TOILET + $2,000 OFF*

For your FREE information kit and our Senior Discounts, Call Today Toll-Free

1-855-781-7421

safestep

*Free toilet with purchase and installation of a walk-in tub or walk-in shower only. Offer available while supplies last. No cash value. Must present offer at time of purchase. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Market restrictions may apply. Offer available in select markets only. CSLB 1082165 NSCB 0082999 0083445 13VH11096000

Full Time

Hendry County BOCC is seeking applications for the **Senior Services Case Aide - LaBelle** position. Applications will be received until position is filled, please apply at the Human Resources Department, 640 South Main Street, LaBelle, FL 33935. A complete job posting and application forms are available on the Hendry County website at www.hendryfla.net.

Hendry County is a VP, EEO/AA, DFWP employer and participates in E-Verify. Individuals needing assistance in the application process should contact the County Human Resources department at 863-675-5352

Houses- Rent

Collier County Housing Authority
NOW AVAILABLE
AFFORDABLE
Farm Worker Housing
1-, 2-, 3-, & 4-bedroom units.
Seeking farm workers to apply, rent starts as low as $530.
Please call us TODAY at 239.657.3649

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

To Advertise CALL 877.223.1503

YOU CAN'T AFFORD NOT TO

CLEWISTON THINGS TO DO

Bereavement group meets

CLEWISTON — VITAS Healthcare, 316 Bond St., offers bereavement support group meetings every **Tuesday** of the month at 6-7 p.m. with support team members April McCullen and Rory O'Sullivan. For information, call 863-301-5450. If you need additional support or resources, contact Bereavement Services at 239-744-2300.

Breastfeeding classes held

CLEWISTON/LABELLE — Milkyway Breastfeeding & Chestfeeding Resources will offer breastfeeding classes on the second Wednesday of every month at 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Goodwill Community Center, 91 S Lee St. in LaBelle and on the fourth Wednesday of the month at the Clewiston Library, 120 W. Osceola Ave., in Clewiston. Registration is required. Call 863-332-3405.

Clewiston Library events

CLEWISTON — The Clewiston Library will host the following events: The Mahjong Club meets on **Mondays** and **Thursdays** at 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. On **Tuesdays** Mats for the Cats is from 10 a.m. to noon.

La Leche to hold meet-up

CLEWISTON — La Leche meets on the **second Monday** of the month at Montura Ranch Estates Park, 106 Ave. Del Club, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. Virtual Meet-Up is held the third Tuesday from 3 to 7 p.m., call or email for the Google Meet link. For info, visit LLLflorida.com/Hendry or email Maria.LLLHendryCounty@gmail. com or call 863-612-6264.

Miscellaneous



Miscellaneous



Miscellaneous



Miscellaneous



New mobile home and RV park could be in LaBelle's future

By Annie Wills
HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

LABELLE — At the regular meeting of the Board of Hendry County Commissioners on Tuesday, Oct. 27, a request was submitted to amend the Future Land Use Map from low density residential, to high density residential to allow for a mobile home and RV park on Old State Road 78.

The property, which largely remains undisturbed, consists of approximately 39 acres. The applicant has proposed adding the subject property to the existing LaBelle Yacht Club PUD (Planned Unit Development) and rezoning it to permit the development of a mobile home and RV park.

The new mobile home and RV park would be a 55+ community and each lot would be required to have at least a doublewide unit placed on it. Other additions to the park could include a clubhouse with a bar; a pool with fire pits nearby; shuffle and pickleball courts; a dog park; and laundry services.

The board voted and the request was approved, but it is to be noted this is just one step in a long process.

Management of United Way Hub in LaBelle to change

By Annie Wills
HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

LABELLE — The United Way of Lee, Hendry & Glades Counties (United Way) has submitted notice that they do not wish to renew their lease with the county of the building located at 133 N. Bridge St. in LaBelle. County staff has been in conversation with the United Way about options moving forward to continue providing services to residents.

In September the United Way provided official notice of the non-renewal to their lease. While they plan to continue to fund agencies, they will be stepping back from overseeing day-to-day operations in their hubs. After discussion with United Way, county staff believes that the best fit moving forward will be having county employees handle those functions.

The hub was located there for many years and many residents have come to see it as a place where they can seek assistance. The county has begun advertising for a Mental Health Resource Coordinator and it is the belief of staff that this individual will be able to meet the mental health needs of residents, as well as coordinate volunteers and agencies at the hub.

Despite the changes, the building will continue with the name of United Way Resiliency Hub and the United Way will continue fundraising for agencies, as well as offering other resources as needed and available.

At the Hendry County Commission meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 27, the board approved the request to move forward with this model.

This will cause an annual decrease in revenue of $12,000 due to the termination of the lease agreement.



ELI'S WESTERN WEAR

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS SALE

NOVEMBER 27TH - NOVEMBER 29TH

SHOP IN STORE OR ONLINE

15%-30% OFF ALL JEANS!

CLEARANCE RACKS UP TO 75% OFF!

30% OFF ALL REGULAR PRICED

- BOOTS
- SHIRTS
- JACKETS
- CAPS
- BELTS
- WALLETS
- SPORTS COATS
- PURSES

LAYAWAY & FREE GIFT WRAPPING ALWAYS AVAILABLE

EXCLUSIONS APPLY: TACK, STRAW & FELT HATS, COOLERS, JEWELRY AND HOME GOODS. SEE STORE FOR FURTHER DETAILS.

ARCADIA 1011 EAST OAK ST

OKEECHOBEE 907 NW PARK ST

DUNDEE 27995 HWY 27

WWW.ELISWESTERNWEAR.COM