

CALOOSA BELLE INDEPENDENT



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DONATIONS

LaBelle residents help hurricane victims

By C. M. Schmidtkofer
CALOOSA BELLE INDEPENDENT

LABELLE — Fort Myers residents impacted by Hurricane Ian got a helping hand from LaBelle developer MJ Newell Homes on Sunday, Oct. 9. The developer coordinated efforts to distribute nonperishable necessities to the community at the Family Dollar Store in Fort Myers.

The event was the second held there in the past week, providing dry goods, nonperishable food, children's medication, water, juice and more to those in need after Ian ripped through the area, demolishing buildings and homes,

cutting off power and causing the Caloosahatchee River to rise to devastating levels.

The event began at 11 a.m., according to a Standard Land Development spokesperson on Oct. 10, ending about 5 p.m. Standard Land Development is the parent company of MJ Newell Homes, and its daughter companies Standard Land Development Landscaping and Standard Land Development Hauling transported truck loads of supplies and food to the location for distribution. Eric Henwood, director of Standard Land Development

» See Hurricane on page 2



Volunteers unload donations of food and water at the Family Dollar Store in Fort Myers Oct. 9 as drivers line up to have their vehicles filled with necessities. [Photo courtesy Standard Land Development]

VOLUNTEERING



LHS students clean up after Ian

FORT MYERS — LaBelle High School's criminal justice students got up early the morning of Saturday, Oct. 8, for a trip to Fort Myers to help residents clean up after hurricane Ian. Students bought lunches for local residents, bought their own clean-up supplies and waters to hand out. They spent the day picking up debris and giving back to their neighboring community! [Photo courtesy LHS]

ELECTION 2022

Referendum benefitting Hendry Co. schools to appear on ballot

SPECIAL TO CALOOSA BELLE

LABELLE — A half-cent sales surtax referendum will be included in the November 2022 ballot. This referendum is designed to fund much-needed improvements throughout the Hendry County School District with all funds remaining within the county.

If passed, the tax would be applied to select goods and services sold throughout the county, however, the tax would not be ap-

plied to groceries, gasoline, or prescription medication.

More than 7,000 students attend Hendry County schools and will benefit from the funds if the referendum passes in November.

If passed, the Hendry County School District plans to renovate schools or construct new ones to allow growth and keep up with the expanding population. New technology and

» See Referendum on page 2

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HURRICANE DAMAGE

Agricultural losses estimated up to \$1.56 billion

SPECIAL TO CALOOSA BELLE INDEPENDENT

The combination of seasonal crops, livestock, nursery and aquaculture products potentially lost as a result of category 4 Hurricane Ian will likely be valued between \$787 million and \$1.56 billion, University of Florida economists predict. The estimate was released as part of a new document, "Preliminary Assessment of Agricultural Losses and Damages Resulting from Hurricane Ian," from the UF/IFAS Economic Impact Analysis Program.

"Even though the coast — an area with comparatively less agricultural production than inland areas — bore some of the worst impacts of the storm, the strong winds and heavy rains battered a wide swath of the peninsula that includes over 5 million acres of agricultural land," said Christa Court, director of the program and assistant professor in the UF/IFAS food and resource economics department. "This estimate only accounts for production losses, or changes in expected revenues for the current calendar or market year; citrus, for example, had not yet begun harvesting, and some fall

vegetables, like tomatoes and peppers, were already planted."

Some commodities were already looking at lower expected production due to a hard freeze event in January that affected much of the same acreage, she added. The UF/IFAS Economic Impact Analysis Program conducts assessments after any event that disrupts the standard operations of Florida's agriculture industry; usually, the surveys are deployed after natural disasters like hurricanes, floods and freezes, but have more recently included assessments of the impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Southwest counties that got hit the hardest by Hurricane Ian have remained in rescue and recovery mode; we anticipate our assessments will not be complete for several weeks," Court said. "Our preliminary estimate is a range, a wide range, to account for many of these unknowns. What isn't destroyed might have diminished yield or quality, which will not be apparent for weeks or months, and then even more effects can appear in the long-term."

Court and her colleagues

began collecting baseline data for agricultural losses and damages resulting from tropical cyclone events in 2016. Since then, the program has continued to improve its baseline and impact databases for these types of analyses.

Even with this comparison data available to the research team, analyzing Hurricane Ian's impacts remains complicated, as the preliminary assessment notes. It made landfall not far from 2017's Hurricane Irma, but it cut across toward the east coast, rather than north through the entire peninsula. More importantly, Ian was a more powerful storm, bringing hurricane-strength (74-156 mph) winds to nearly 1.2 million acres of agricultural lands.

To assist with the preliminary analysis, the UF/IFAS Economic Impact Analysis Program used data from multiple sources, in addition to its previous post-storm assessments. The National Hurricane Center's imagery of the storm was combined with geospatial data from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) and information from USDA Na-

tional Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA-NASS) on croplands in the area, including the seasonal planting and harvest times. The researchers then used additional information from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s United States Census of Agriculture, Ask IFAS, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Once the impacted agricultural acreages were determined, the team used a five-year average for value per acre of each com-

modity group to estimate the total "at-risk" production value across affected acres. The total value of all the croplands that saw tropical storm or hurricane conditions topped \$8.1 billion.

Despite heavy flooding prohibiting full assessments of some fields, the researchers collected some visual assessments. Among their predictions:

- Citrus crops are expected to sustain significant production losses (\$147 million to \$304 million), depending on the level of fruit

drop, damage to branches, and impacts due to heavy precipitation and flooding.

- Vegetables and melons are expected to sustain significant production losses (\$208 million to \$394 million), with impacts heavily dependent on the ability to replant damaged or destroyed crops.

- Livestock operations and producers of animal products are expected to suffer losses (\$113 million to \$222 million) due to damaged fencing, power outages and flooding.

FRAUD ALERT

Con artists prey on disaster victims

SPECIAL TO CALOOSA BELLE INDEPENDENT

ATLANTA — Disaster survivors should be aware that con artists and criminals may try to obtain money or steal personal information through fraud or identity theft after a disaster. In some cases, thieves try to apply for FEMA assistance using names, addresses and Social Security numbers they have stolen from survivors.

If a FEMA Inspector comes to your home and you did not submit a FEMA application, your information may have been used without your knowledge to create a FEMA application. If so, please inform the inspector that you did not apply for FEMA assistance so they can submit a request to stop further processing of the application.

If you did not apply for assistance but receive a letter from FEMA, please call the FEMA Helpline at 800-

621-3362.

If you do wish to apply for FEMA assistance after stopping an application made in your name without your knowledge, the Helpline will assist you in creating a new application.

FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance teams, housing inspectors and other officials will be working in areas impacted by Hurricane Ian in Florida. They carry official identification badges with photo IDs. FEMA and U.S. Small Business Administration representatives **never charge applicants for disaster assistance, inspections or help in filling out applications.**

- Don't believe anyone who promises a disaster grant in return for payment.

- Be wary of unexpected phone calls or visits to your home from people claiming to be FEMA housing inspectors or people claiming they work for FEMA. FEMA representatives will

have your FEMA application number.

- Don't give your banking information to a person claiming to be a FEMA housing inspector. FEMA inspectors are never authorized to collect your personal financial information.

If you believe you are the victim of a scam, report it immediately to your local police or sheriff's department or contact the Office of the Attorney General by calling 1-866-9-NO-SCAM (1-866-966-7226) or visit myfloridalegal.com. To file a fraud complaint, go online to Scam Report (myfloridalegal.com).

If you suspect fraudulent activity involving FEMA, you can report it to the FEMA Fraud Branch at: StopFEMAFraud@fema.dhs.gov, fax: (202)212-4926 or write to: FEMA Fraud and Internal Investigation Division, 400 C Street SW Mail Stop 3005, Washington, DC 20472-3005.

Hurricane

» From page 1

Hauling arranged for transportation.

Miami Dade County Councilman Christian Cevallos reprised his role collecting and delivering donations and Hendry County Sheriff Steve Whidden was on hand helping as well.

According to the Standard Land Development spokesperson, donations were set up to quickly fill car trunks, truck beds and vehicle interiors with bags of food, water, clothing and other necessities. About 100 volunteers helped with set up and distribution, most of them Standard Land Development employees.

The vehicles lined up along SR 80, driving



Pallets of dry goods, water and other essentials were transported to the Family Dollar Store in Fort Myers Oct. 9 by Standard Land Development Haulers to distribute to Hurricane Ian victims. [Photo courtesy Standard Land Development]

through with their trunks open so volunteers could quickly put donations into vehicles and keep the line moving.

MJ Newell Homes prides itself on its carefully planned and designed residential housing units in La-

Belle and Lehigh Acres, considering income levels of potential homeowners before proposing a housing development in order to ensure the price points are within the economic range of those already living in the area.

Referendum

» From page 1 security will also be funded, along with the lease or purchase of school buses.

A half-cent surtax will have little impact on residents. For example, it would only add two cents to the cost of a Happy Meal®, or twenty-four cents to the cost of a sheet of plywood.

But the impact on students would be felt in generations to come.

"As a generational resident of Hendry County, I know firsthand the impact our local school system has on our students' futures," stated Superintendent of the Hendry County School District, Michael Swindle. "And, as a parent of a child

in the Hendry County school system, I can see the need for funding. I encourage the residents of Hendry County to educate themselves on the surtax, and to decide what is best for their families and our community."

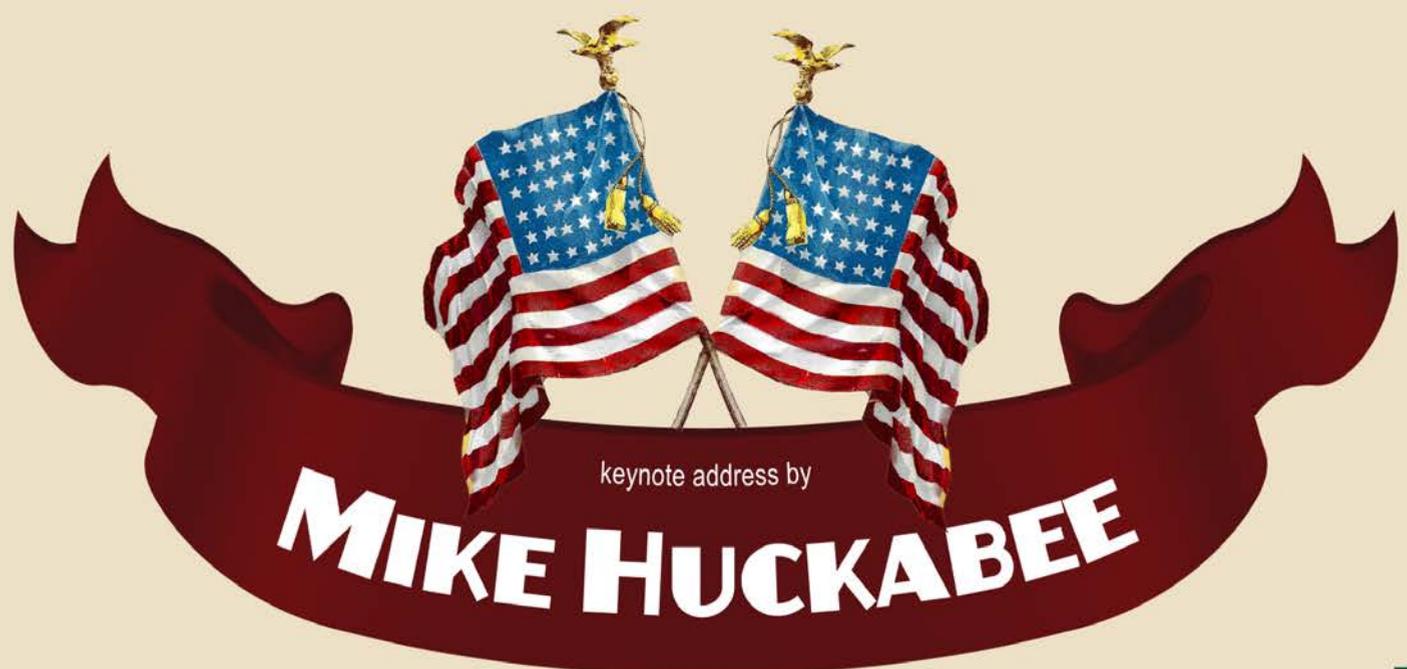
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QUALITY CARE

National changes affect small healthcare systems

SPECIAL TO CALOOSA BELLE
INDEPENDENT

CLEWISTON — Patients and families know quality care when they experience it. A nurse's response time, a doctor's bedside manner, the hospital's atmosphere - all these things affect how people feel about the quality of their healthcare.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the nation's hospitals work collaboratively to publicly report hospital quality performance information on the CMS Care Compare

website. Changes made by CMS are affecting small healthcare systems' star ratings like Hendry Regional Medical Center (HRMC).

When hospitals talk about quality, it is generally in reference to very specific clinical data collected and analyzed over a period. Quality data show how well a department or institution achieves desired health outcomes for a particular procedure, often by tracking how closely clinical staff meet standards of care.

"We place a strong emphasis on quality data measurements and reporting. It is how we hold ourselves accountable to the community and public in providing not just quality healthcare but excellent healthcare," stated Dakota Redd, Chief Nursing Officer, HRM.

While Hendry Regional does participate in outpatient and inpatient quality data reporting with CMS, with the new changes there are now too few measures/measurement groups reported or

cases/patients are too few to calculate a star rating.

What does this mean? HRMC previously held a 3-star rating, higher than many other local hospitals, however a star rating is no longer available (N/A) on the CMS Care Compare website.

"It is important to note that while CMS no longer recognizes HRMC with a star rating, we would have maintained a 3-star rating if those changes had not gone into effect based on the data we continue to submit," stat-

ed Redd. "We are proud of the excellent healthcare we provide and that is witnessed by all our patients who receive care at HRMC regardless of a star rating."

In reviewing HRMC's quality data, they score well above the national and state average in most areas. Striving to ensure that the care provided

is safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, and equitable.

In a continued effort of transparency HRMC will be making even more data available in the coming months. To view HRMC quality data or to learn more, visit hrmc.us.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Hope Healthcare offers grief support group

SPECIAL TO CALOOSA BELLE
INDEPENDENT

FORT MYERS — The holiday season can be especially difficult for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one. While others may enjoy the lights, laughter, and joy of ongoing festivities, bereaved friends and family members often feel isolated and unhappy. To address these special needs, Hope Healthcare is offering a three-part support group, Surviving the Season: Getting through Thanksgiving to the New Year after Loss.

Designed for adults ages 18 and older, this virtual workshop offers professional guidance for dealing with grief and loss when emotional triggers are commonplace. A bereavement counselor will help group members develop effective coping strategies, and art and music therapists will demonstrate creative techniques to adjust to challenging new circumstances.

The group project is open to the public at no

cost, thanks to generous community support. Advance registration is required for the Zoom sessions, held Thursday Nov. 3 and 17 and Dec. 8 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. To learn more or register, contact Lorrie.McCann@HopeHCS.org or call 239-985-7716.

With more than 40 years of experience as a local, not-for-profit organization, Hope Healthcare is able to help people of all ages coping with grief and loss. Professional

counselors lead groups including Bereaved Mothers, Men's Grief Toolkit, Young Widows and Widowers, Healing Survivors of Suicide, and other special topics. Hope also offers urgent crisis support for local schools and businesses as well as an LGBTQ+ group, counseling in Spanish and age-appropriate help for children and teens. Visit HopeHCS.org/counseling for more information.

OVERDOSE

Free Naloxone available at Health Depts

SPECIAL TO CALOOSA BELLE
INDEPENDENT

If you suspect someone is experiencing an overdose, take these steps immediately.

1. Check to see if they respond.
2. Administer Naloxone
3. Call 911
4. If necessary, give second dose (in other nostril).

What is Naloxone?

A medicine that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose by attaching to opioid receptors, and reversing and blocking the effects of the drug.

How can you help?

If you know someone in need, carry Naloxone and learn to administer the

medicine safely. isavefl.com

Locate Nalone providers in your area and additional resources for community support.

Contact your local county health department for information on receiving Naloxone for your community.

Health Departments in Hendry and Glades Counties:

LaBelle, 1140 Pratt Blvd., 863-674-4041

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OPINIONS

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SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

A majestic tree...an image of me!

By Reverend Elizabeth Nelson
GOOD SHEPHERD EPISCOPAL CHURCH

There is a beautiful tree outside my pool cage. Unlike trees in the north, it loses its leaves several times a year; and, oh, what a mess it makes! Yet, as fast as the leaves fall, it's not long before the growth begins again, the green starts to shine, and its glorious foliage hangs in beauty. Now, I see this tree every day. But, the other day, it was more. It was majestic. It reached up toward the heavens, and I saw beauty and creation, and it somehow represented us...you and me.

Like this tree, each of us is unique, ripe with imperfections, yet beautiful in the eyes of God. During our lifetime, we might need extra care. We will see days when our strength is almost gone, like leaves falling from the tree. We might remember those times when friends and family appeared to "clean up" after us when we made mistakes, when we forgot who we are and whose we are. And when the storms of life threatened to bring us down, a light from heaven...the Spirit of God...would remind us that tomorrow would be another day and that there is always light at the end of the tunnel. Imagine...a tree reminding us that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. And He is ever-present. His love is life's fertilizer. His grace props us up when we need it. And once again, if we see ourselves through the eyes of God, we are beautiful and strong, nurtured by love, and saved by grace.

About the author: Previously the priest at St. Francis of Assisi in Lake Placid for 21 years, Rev. Elizabeth L. Nelson is now the Priest at Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in LaBelle.

FRANKLIN LOCK TREES



Volunteers plant trees at Franklin Lock

Ninety volunteers from the neighborhood, local schools and colleges, along with the support of 17 Corps rangers and staff, reforested a large grass field with native plants Sept 24 at the W.P. Franklin Lock Recreation Area. [Photo courtesy USACE]

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Pumpkin Cornbread Muffins

Ingredients

- 1 cup pumpkin purée
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar (light or dark)
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 2 Tbsp molasses
- 1/3 cup buttermilk (substitute milk or half and half)
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon (substitute cardamom or ginger)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 Tbsp baking powder
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 cup all purpose flour

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 375F.

Grease and flour a muffin tin, or use paper muffin liners.

- In a large mixing bowl, whisk the first 8 ingredients together (pumpkin through salt.) Make sure everything gets well incorporated.

- Whisk in the baking powder, corn meal, and flour, mixing until just combined, but don't over beat this. I usually switch to a silicone spoon at the end.

- Use a standard ice cream scoop to fill 10-12 muffin cups fairly full. My muffin tin is on the large size so I got 10 muffins from my batter.

- Bake for about 20-22 minutes until the muffins

are fully risen. The tops should spring back when lightly touched. If your muffins are smaller than mine they will take a shorter time. Try not to over bake as they will dry out.

- Let the muffins cool for about 10 minutes in the tin, and then run a blunt knife around the edges to loosen before turning out onto a cooling rack. If you use muffin liners you can pop them out immediately.

- Serve warm with butter and honey. The muffins can be reheated for 20-30 seconds in the microwave.

This week's recipe provided by Southern Heritage Real Estate.

FEMA

Hendry County residents eligible for disaster assistance

SPECIAL TO CALOOSA BELLE INDEPENDENT

LABELLE — Hendry County has been included as a county designated for individual assistance from FEMA in the wake of Hurricane Ian.

The Declaration provides Hendry County with funds to help residents impacted by Hurricane Ian.

Eligible residents can apply for assistance at www.disasterassistance.gov

CALOOSA BELLE INDEPENDENT

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- 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.
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ADOPT A PET

Caloosa Humane Society seeks forever homes for pets

LABELLE — The Caloosa Humane Society has lots of dogs and cats just waiting to be your new best friends. The Caloosa Humane Society, Inc. is a not-for-profit, 501 (c) (3) status organization that receives no federal, state, or local funding and relies on donations, bequests and fundraising events. The shelter, 1200 Pratt Blvd in LaBelle is open Tuesday - Saturday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information call 863-675-0997. [Photos courtesy of Caloosa Humane Society]



Look into the eyes of Safire. She is 1 year old.



Minnie is over the shelter life. She is 1 year old.



Arcadia will turn 1 year old on Nov. 2. Will you be her birthday present?



Schatzie is looking for her human! Is it you? She is 1 year old.



This is Onyx. He is 6 months old.



Flower is the first one in your lap every time.



Frank is a great guy! Come meet Frank.



Can you see where "Tilt" got his name? He is a character. Tilt is 4 years old.



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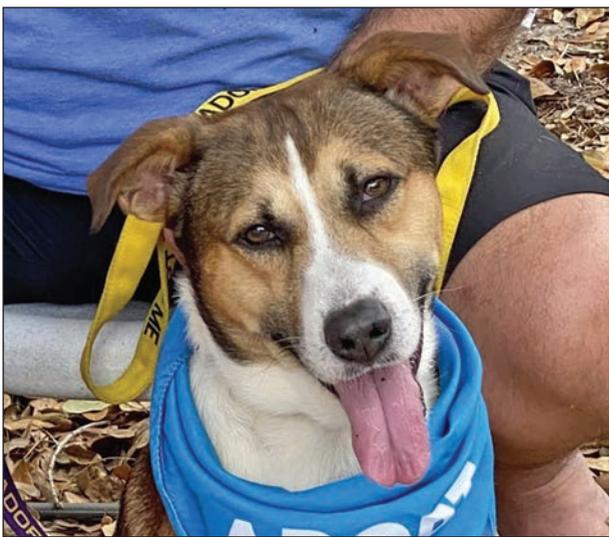
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Luke is still waiting for his family! He's a happy, sweet boy. Luke is 2 years old.



Jagger is just a big ole happy 80 pound love bug. He is 2 years old.



Penelope is pure cuteness. She is 3 months old.



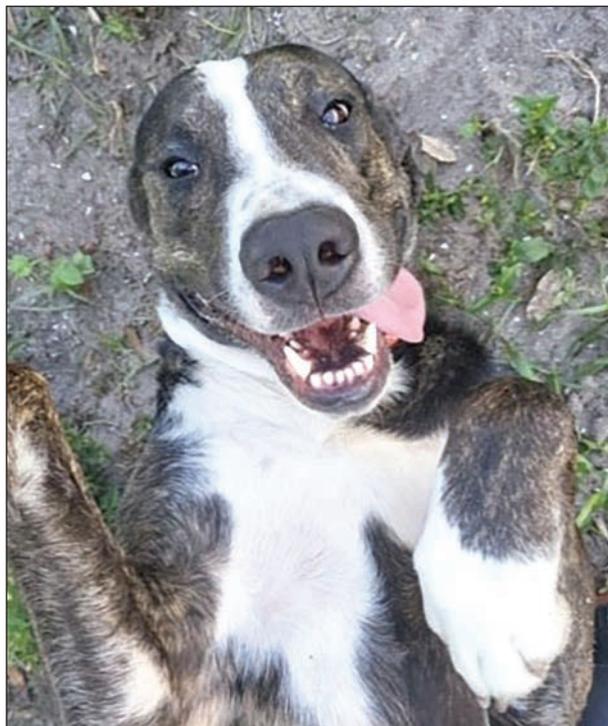
Gigi is such a great girl! She is 6 years old.



Four year old Tootsie is our little special-needs girl. But she loves big!



Rockstar LOVES kids! He is 2 years old.



Charlie just needs some kids to play with! He is 3 years old.



Duchess is a very sweet soul. She is 7 years old.



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EDUCATION

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CITIZENS OF THE MONTH

West Glades School presents Citizens of the Month

LABELLE – West Glades School would like to congratulate its Citizens of the Month for the month of October. [Photos courtesy West Glades School]



VPK students of the month are Grayson Wingate and Kamala Camilo.



Kindergarten citizens of the month are Aries Estrada, Poppy Jett and Emma Metz.



First grade citizens of the month are Rowan Van Houten, Maria Gomez and Kailin Grimaldo.



Second grade citizens of the month are Parker Alvarez, Rainey Stokes, Andrea Alaniz and Kynsley Grimaldo.



Third grade citizens of the month are Zoey Desroche, Natalie Cruz-Villeda, Drayton Van Houton and Tyson Calloway.



Fourth grade citizens of the month are Emmanuel Villa, Zoey Calloway, Riley Mills and Oliver Gonzalez-Ayala.



Fifth grade citizens of the month are Wyatt Miller, Aaron Alcaez, Andrea Madrid and Parker Dillman not pictured.



Middle school citizens of the month are Aubrey Pollard, Camryn Martinez, Colton Clark, Abbie Reinking, Grayson Arnold and Elliot Cruz (not pictured).

LEADERS OF THE MONTH

COE recognizes Leaders of the Month



PreKindergarten through second grade Leaders of the Month for September.



Third through fifth grade Leaders of the Month for September.

SPECIAL TO CALOOSA BELLE INDEPENDENT

LABELLE — Country Oaks Elementary (CES) congratulates the September Leaders of the Month who have demonstrated Habit 1: Be Proactive!
PreKindergarten: Amirah Garcia, Jazlyn Lemus, Fernando Pena-Garcia and April Blandon
Kindergarten: Pablo Aguilar, Natalia Santamaria, Nicolas Saucedo, Daila-Lali Garcia,

Bethany Walker and Angelina Maldonado
First Grade: Rodrigo Chairez, Emerie Campbell, Emma McAvoy, Juliette Valadez, Masen Ramos, Aiden Costa and Emiliano Niri Alvairus
Second Grade: Anais Verduzco, Kamila Miranda, Martin Mendez, Noah Andrade, Pablo Campos and Sophia Aburto
Third Grade: Marinelly Trejo, Cameron Delacruz,

Aria Cruz, Lawrence Mc-Crea, Damian Martinez, Anabelle Laperonerie and Dariel Dominguez
Fourth Grade: Jesus Reyes, Brianna Orduna, Caleb Rivera, Josue Lopez, Nevaeh Yzaguirre, Paola Silva-Pena and Rihanna Prezaz
Fifth Grade: Aubrianna Rueda, Jeremiah Avila, Josue Nieto, Adanyah Mills, Mariela Estrada and Jaylynn Andrade

STORM DAMAGE

School district approves funding for repairs after Ian

By C. M. Schmidtkofer
LAKE OKEECHOBEE NEWS

CLEWISTON — Hendry County School District voted 5-0 to approve funding for emergency purchases related to Hurricane Ian with a cap of \$50,000 per incident.

Superintendent of Schools Michael Swindle made the request during the Oct. 4 school board meeting in Clewiston, saying that he isn't expecting any major repairs due to the hurricane.

"There are some things that staff needs to do," he said. "Like hire a tree-trimming company to come in and do the heavy lifting of part of it."

Some aluminum awnings need replacement which are going through the

usual procurements. Facilities, Maintenance & Transportation Director Anthony Busin estimated repairs to be approximately \$21,000, although he has submitted purchase orders for some minor repairs already.

The approval means damages can be addressed in real time without having to wait for various repair approvals under normal circumstances.

In other business, the board unanimously approved allocation for a physical education paraprofessional coach at LaBelle Middle School where, due to increased enrollment, some P.E. classes have up to 118 students. LMS currently has two P.E. coaches.

Out-of-field teacher lists

were also approved by the board. The term refers to teachers providing instruction for a subject their current certification is not recognized as appropriate for the particular assignment. It also includes teachers who do not have a ESOL certification, required upon hire for teaching English as a second language and something not easily obtained according to ESLTeacherEDU.com.

Swindle said out-of-field teachers are allowed five years to obtain the certification and hopes upcoming teacher negotiations will make the effort more attractive to teachers without it, so it can be more easily achieved and thus out of the way.



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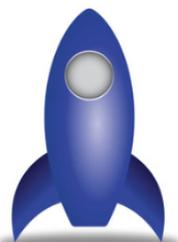
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Official General Election Ballot / Boleta Oficial de las Elecciones Generales November 8, 2022 / 8 de Noviembre de 2022 Hendry County, Florida / Condado de Hendry, Florida. Includes instructions and candidates for United States Senator, Commissioner of Agriculture, 2nd District Court of Appeal, Justice of the Supreme Court, and Governor and Lieutenant Governor.

VOTERS RESIDING IN ONE OF THE BELOW DISTRICTS WILL HAVE ADDITIONAL VOTING OPTIONS ON THEIR BALLOT.

LOS VOTANTES QUE RESIDEN EN UNO DE LOS SIGUIENTES DISTRITOS TENDRAN OPCIONES DE VOTACION ADICIONALES EN SU BOLETA ELECTORAL.

Table listing districts and their corresponding ballot options. Includes School Board District 4, City of Clewiston, Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District, and Port LaBelle Community Development District.

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UPDATE YOUR ADDRESS
ACTUALIZE SU DIRECCION
SEE ELECTION RESULTS
MIRE LOS RESULTADOS DE LAS ELECCIONES
GET A LIST OF ELECTED OFFICIALS
OBTENGA UNA LISTA DE LOS OFICIALES ELEGIDOS
CHECK THE STATUS OF YOUR PROVISIONAL BALLOT
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ENCUENTRE SU LUGAR DE VOTACION
GET THE LINK TO READ THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS
OBTENGA EL ENLACE PARA LEER LAS ENMIENDAS CONSTITUCIONALES

ATTENTION! VOTERS IN PRECINCT 4. Your polling place has changed. You will now go to the Big Cypress Gymnasium located at 31201 Josie Billie Hwy. Includes owl logo and photo of the gymnasium.

Table of constitutional amendments and ballot questions. Includes 2nd District Court of Appeal, No. 2 Constitutional Amendment, School Capital Outlay Sales Surtax, and No. 1 Constitutional Amendment.

OBITUARIES

Obituaries should be submitted to Caloosa Belle Independent by emailing obits@iniusa.org. Customers may also request photos and links to online guestbooks. A link to the obituaries is available at southcentralfloralife.com



Malcolm (Mac) Davis Baker

Malcolm (Mac) Davis Baker was born November 17, 1928 in Eden, North Carolina and passed away peacefully at home in LaBelle, Florida on October 8, 2022. His wit, kindness, and love will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Born to Leonard Jackson and Ophelia Davis Baker, Mac was the youngest of 4 siblings. He grew up in Eden, North Carolina and graduated from Draper High School in 1946. He then attended Davidson College before enlisting in the Air Force. He proudly served overseas in Northern Africa, Okinawa, Berlin, and Utapau, Thailand. This adventure would also take him to Eglin Air Force base where he would meet a young nurse. After a courtship involving many water skiing adventures, he married Amanda Lu Sirmon in 1957. Together their adventures continued to Chize, France, Las Vegas, Clovis, New Mexico, Warner Robins and Albany Georgia. Their sons, Eric and Michael, joined them in 1960 and 1961. Their family adventures included many camping trips across the country. Mac also competed as a pistol shooter in the Air Force, competing in the national match twice.

Upon retiring from the Air Force in 1971 as a Senior Master Sergeant, being a supportive and loving husband, he followed his wife to Gainesville, Florida for her to attend graduate school. Their "short" stay in Gainesville lasted nearly 15 years, with a large

portion spent on their farm in Waldo, Florida. His notorious "hay operation" employed many high school and college friends of Eric and Michael, who recount their hard work and fun to this day.

Amanda's successful career as a university administrator took them to Troy and Mobile, Alabama, before their retirement in LaBelle, Florida in 1998. Since their arrival in LaBelle they have been faithful members of Carlson Memorial United Methodist Church, with Mac serving as a Trustee and in other administrative roles. He was also a reliable member of the Methodist Men. His service to others reflected his strong faith in Jesus. Outside of church, Mac's 1968 Chevrolet Impala convertible became a fixture in the local Swamp Cabbage parade, where he regularly paraded local officials each February.

Through his years in LaBelle, Mac was well known for his mischievous sense of humor, generosity of spirit, and constant presence in the lives of so many. His love for his family abounded and motivated so much of his life. He was predeceased by parents, his brother Melvin and sisters Mildred and Mary Ruth (Ben). He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Amanda. He is also survived by his two sons and their families: son Eric (Teresa), grandchildren Matthew (Kyla), Brittany (Tyler) and great-grandchildren Lorelei, Brynn, Chet, and Lucy and son Michael (Kimberly), grandchildren Kerri (Micah), Brittany (Christian), and Katrina and great-grandchildren Lena, Jack, and James.

Visitation with the family was Saturday, October 22, 2022 at 10am at Carlson Memorial United Methodist Church in LaBelle, Florida with a memorial service at 11am. Following the memorial service, there was a reception in the church's Fellowship Hall.

In lieu of flowers, the family has chosen donations be made in Mac's name the Florida United Methodist Church Children's Home - 51 Main Street Enterprise, Florida 32725

CITIZENS OF THE MONTH

Upthegrove Elementary honors Citizens of the Month

LABELLE - Congratulations to the May Citizens of the Month for Upthegrove Elementary School.



Pre-kindergarten through kindergarten Citizens of the Month are: Leila Velasquez Garcia, Emmalyn Thompson, Darwin Cervantes, Camila Jimenez, Delilah Hernandez, Yuliana Bustamante and Natalie Lopez.



First through second grade Citizens of the Month are: Iván Trejo, Mariah Villa, Savannah Pequeno, Shelby Zilen, Leilani Santiago-Dominguez, Alexander Middleton, Anahi Ortiz, Leslie Cedillo-Zavala, and Yandel Salguero.



Third through fifth grade Citizens of the Month are: Andreina Escobedo, Itzel Collazo, Isaf Cassioan, Delilah Castro, Crystal Pequeno, Yanelly Pérez-Poblano, Elena Beltrán-Gutiérrez, Jordan Paniagua, James Williams, Rachelt López, Caín Lózano-Norton, Iván González and Perla Moreno-Martínez.

CALOOSA BELLE INDEPENDENT

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ONLINE TEACHING SERVICE

School district contracts with classroom streaming service

By C. M. Schmidtkofer
CALOOSA BELLE INDEPENDENT

CLEWISTON — Hendry County School District will contract with an online teaching program to fill the gaps left by the teacher shortage it is experiencing, along with many schools in the country.

Superintendent Michael Swindle said online teaching isn't the best way in his opinion to run classrooms, but considering the difficulties finding local teachers nearly impossible, suggested the district contract with Elevate K-12, which provides

certified teachers that will livestream classroom instruction to schools.

The school board has grappled to employ teachers for the 2022-2023 school year by hiring uncertified military veterans and importing teachers from out of the country to fill in the numerous open slots in the ever-increasing school district.

"We are still struggling with teachers," Swindle told the board during its Oct. 4 meeting. "And this is an effort on our behalf to bring teachers in to the district that's able to deliver

high quality instructions to their students."

He cited Clewiston High School's physics class, which has students but no teacher. He proposed focusing on math and science teachers through the streaming classroom option.

Swindle said the option could be considered a pilot program for the school district due to the flexibility of Elevate K-12's contract which can be discontinued without penalty at any time.

Staff interviewed three educational streaming companies nationwide,

he said, and all of them reported they had plenty of certified teachers on hand with five or more years of teaching experience, ready to work. Many are teachers who have left the classroom have maintained their certification, turning their focus to programs such as Elevate K-12.

"Elevate K-12 had a very robust proprietary platform that I felt very comfortable with, and inadvertently they had the lowest price point for us," he said.

Elementary and Secondary School

Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding will be used to pay for the program.

"Basically, what we did was what our teachers typically do, which is six periods at 60 minutes and that works out to I think \$63,000 which, with benefits, is pretty much what we pay [existing district teachers]," Swindle said, adding that there are instructors for just about every school subject including foreign languages.

"We're hoping to not use them except for shoring up that we really need," he said. "And the physics class

is a prime example of that."

Swindle said that classroom management was still going to be the responsibility of the school district, and that means finding parents to be present during the livestream events. While he didn't think that would be a problem, he said he thought substitute teachers could be replaced by parents if there were enough of them.

"Again, we would rather have teachers," Swindle said. "We can't hire teachers."

The board voted 5-0 to approve the contract.

TEACHERS

HCSD waives degree requirement for veteran teachers

By C. M. Schmidtkofer
CALOOSA BELLE INDEPENDENT

LABELLE — United States military veterans will be given priority for teaching positions in Hendry County School District.

The school board voted 5-0 to move forward with a notice of a series of proposed rules during its Sept. 6 meeting, which included a reading of a "preference for veterans in employment" document.

The document states veterans – and in some cases spouses and immediate family members of veterans – be given preference in employment, promotion, retention and re-employment if they meet the

minimum eligibility requirements and have the "knowledge, skills and abilities required for the particular position."

While veterans are commonly given preference over other applications for many jobs, the school board is looking over its policy to reflect recent legislation signed into law by Gov. Ron DeSantis this year allowing veterans a temporary teaching certificate without the benefit of a bachelor's degree.

Florida requires teachers to hold a bachelor's degree and complete a state-approved teacher education program to become certified to teach in public

schools.

The current document states that spouses and in some cases immediate family members may be given preference over other applicants, however according to the Florida Department of Education (FDOE), the allowance does not apply to either group.

Veterans without a bachelor's degree must meet the following criteria as outlined on the FDOE website: "A minimum of 48 months of military service with an honorable/medical discharge;

Minimum of 60 college credits with a 2.5 grade point average;

Passing score on a

Florida subject area examination;

Employment in a Florida school district, including charter schools; and Cleared background screening."

Veterans who obtain the five-year temporary teaching certificate will be assigned a mentor teacher for a minimum of two years; must earn their bachelor's degree during the five-year period to be eligible for a full professional certificate and may not teach subjects requiring a master's degree.

The temporary certificate cannot be renewed once it expires.

The proposed school

district preferences will be applied to "disabled veterans; the spouse of a disabled veteran or of a person missing in action, captured in the line of duty or forcibly detained

by a foreign government while in the line of duty; a wartime veteran who has served at least one day during a wartime period; the widow or widower of a veteran who died of a service-connected disability; the mother, father, legal guardian or widows or widowers who have not re-married of a veteran who died of a service-connected disability or who died in the line of duty; and current

members of any reserve components of the U.S. Armed Forces or Florida National Guard. Active duty for training is not considered eligible."

Superintendent Michael Swindle said in July that the school district would be actively recruiting military veterans due to the severe teacher shortages, which he said are not limited to Florida but are state-wide.

Those interested in employment at Hendry County School District are invited to apply at applitrack.com/hendry/onlineapp/ or call the Human Resources Department at 863-674-4500 for assistance.



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MURDER

LaBelle man charged with death of ex-wife

SPECIAL TO CALOOSA BELLE INDEPENDENT

LABELLE — On Friday, Oct. 10, Hendry County Sheriff's Office Major Crimes Unit officially charged 43-year-old Ian Baunach of Ft. Denaud in the death of his former wife, 39-year-old Katie Samantha Baunach.

During the morning hours of Thursday, Sept. 30, Hendry County Sheriff Steve Whidden received

a call from a friend of Katie Samantha Baunach, reporting that she was concerned for her safety. She reported that the night before Katie had left

her two children in her care to go to the home of her former husband Ian Baunach to retrieve some of her personal items. Friends and family had not heard from



Ian Baunach

her nor have been able to reach her on her cell phone.

When deputies arrived at the home and were unable to contact either Katie or Ian Baunach, detectives requested a search warrant. A search warrant was obtained and deputies along with the Hendry County Sheriff's Office Special Response Team

responded to the home. During the search detectives found a large amount of steroids within the home, to which Ian admitted belonged to him.

Ian was then placed under arrest and charged with 13 charges of possession of controlled substance without a prescription and transported to the Hendry County Jail.

Still unable to locate Katie, a second search warrant was obtained for the home and property.

It was during this four day search, detectives were able to determine that remains found on the property were those of Katie.

On Oct. 10, at approximately 5 p.m., Hendry County Sheriff's Major Crimes Unit charged

Baunach with first degree pre-meditated murder; destruction/conceal physical evidence, use of two-way communication device to facilitate a felony, cremate dead body 48 hours after death and failure to report death to medical examiner.

Baunach is currently being held in the Hendry County Jail with no bond.

STAFFING

HCSO begs commission for more deputies

By C. M. Schmidtkofer
CALOOSA BELLE INDEPENDENT

LABELLE — Hendry County Sheriff Chief Deputy Kevin Nelson begged county commissioners Sept. 26 to increase its 2022-2023 budget to allow for at least two more patrol deputies.

The department had requested funding for 19 new positions in the proposed budget, but only got enough for four, which is not nearly enough to cover the rapidly growing population.

"What I'm going to ask you to do is try to sharpen your pencil a little bit and give us two more," Nelson pleaded with commissioners during its regular board meeting when the final \$98,495,804 county budget

was set to be approved.

"When we come in to ask for something, it's because we need it, not because we just want to see a bunch of new people," he said.

Deputies are currently stretched too thin, and there is danger that with the growth in the county, they won't be able to keep up with demand even though the City of LaBelle committed to paying for two day-shift deputies for increased coverage there. That will ease the burden a bit.

The proposed tentative budget Sept. 26 left the sheriff's department with a choice to hire two more deputies or give existing deputies a raise. Nelson said the department will

give them a cost-of-living increase and the state of Florida will give them a salary adjustment. In the end, the sheriff's department felt forced to forego raises in favor of hiring the additional deputies.

Nelson complained that the department only has a handful of senior officers left, as most have gone to other agencies where they can make \$10,000-\$12,000 more. Additional deputies translate into a better response time for the public, Nelson said.

"When they (public) call, they sometimes complain we're not getting there quick enough," he said. "People are upset by the time we get there. We get there as quick as we can,

but we're busy."

With only two or three deputies working a shift, calls have to be prioritized and minor calls get pushed to the back on busy days.

"One highway crash takes up the whole shift for two or three hours sometimes," Nelson said.

Commissioners agreed there is a need to spend the additional \$158,000 estimated to cover two deputy salaries, but not sure where it would come from.

Commissioner Ramon Iglesias suggested it might be drawn from the catastrophe fund as a last resort to be repaid as soon as possible. Another option might be the \$4.5 contingency fund.

Ultimately, the board

voted 5-0 to approve the additional \$158,000 for two deputies to come from the contingency fund in the proposed budget, with a recommendation at its first meeting in October to have an amendment to

that budget as to where the funds will be moved from.

The commission also approved the final millage rate of 7.1000 which is 8.14% higher than the rollback rate of 6.5653.

Looking for arrest reports?

Hendry County Sheriff's Office arrest reports are posted weekly on the SouthCentralFloridaLife.com website. The arrest reports can also be found in the weekly Lake Okeechobee News, available for home delivery by mail or on sale in LaBelle at the following locations:

- Big V Restaurant (coin) 32 Hall St.
- Bridge St. Coffee & Tea (coin) 23 Fort Thompson Ave.
- Dollar General Market 50 Bridge St. Ste 500
- K & M Pharmacy 149 W Hickpochee Ave.
- Save-A-Lot (coin) 81 S Lee Street
- Whisper Creek RV (coin) 1887 N State Road 29
- Winn-Dixie #0721 960 South Main St.

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Fisheating Creek offers outdoor adventures



Enjoy spending the night camping at Fisheating Creek, surrounded by Florida nature. [Courtesy photo]

GLADES COUNTY – Few places in Florida can match Fisheating Creek Wildlife Management Area for its range of activities and wilderness setting.

Fisheating Creek meanders through banks lined with cypress and oaks. Expect to see numerous alligators and a variety of birds. Rent a canoe, kayak or stand up paddle board (SUP) in the campground or launch your own from the campground or the Main Street access. Fisheating Creek Outpost offers a livery service with two drop-off points upstream of the campground, creating options for an eight-mile trip (from Burnt Bridge) or a 16-mile trip (From Ingram's Crossing). Water levels vary widely; check current conditions before planning your paddling trip.

The fall is the time to hunt for deer and feral hog on Fisheating Creek Wildlife Management Area. The best conditions for hunting deer are when water levels are down in the creek but not so low as to make travel by boat impossible. In the spring, turkey hunts are popular and usually yield excellent results. Paddling is best during high water, which usually occurs in late July, August, and September. High water may also occur following winter cold fronts.

Enjoy fishing anywhere along the creek either from a boat or along the bank. These tea-colored waters are home to bass, crappie, catfish and bream, as well as the nonnative armored catfish and tilapia.

Fisheating Creek WMA is an excellent place to view wildlife year-round. Wading birds, hawks, osprey and owls are common. White-tailed deer and Osceola turkey are frequently spotted and alligators are prevalent. Large numbers of migratory swallow-tailed kites gather here in late summer.

This area is part of the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail. Enjoy year-round hiking and bicycling the WMA. Trails are prone to seasonal flooding; the January through May period offers the driest conditions.

Primitive camping is permitted year-round throughout the area. For full hook-up RV sites and primitive campsites within the concession-operated Palmdale campground, visit Fisheating Creek Outpost. The campground offers restrooms, showers and a camp store. During established hunting seasons, individuals are encouraged to camp at the Palmdale campground or at designated sites along Fisheating Creek. Weekends and cooler months are the busiest, so plan accordingly.

The entrance to the campground is 7555 U.S. 27 in Palmdale. For more information, go online to fisheatingcreekoutpost.com/



Kayaking and canoeing are popular on Fisheating Creek. The Fisheating Creek Outpost will drop off watercraft at two points upstream of the campground. [Courtesy photo]



The tea-colored water is the result of tannins from plants. [Courtesy photo]

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Light up your business

LABELLE — Join the Light Up Your Business contest. Check the LaBelle page at <https://www.southcentralfloridalife.com/> for more details to be released later.

FCT presents plays

LABELLE — The Firehouse Community Theatre (FCT) will present the murder mystery comedy, "A Murder Has Been Renounced by Lee Nueller" on Nov. 4, 5 & 6. On Dec. 11, 12 and 13, Firehouse Community Theatre will present "Every Christmas Story Ever Told and Then Some!" For information and times, call 863-675-3066 or visit firehousecommunitytheatre.com.

Attend a night of dinner and dancing

LABELLE — The River Bend Motorcoach Resort, 5800 West State Road 80, will host Peace, Love & Paws Gala with a night of dinner, dancing and saving lives on Saturday, Nov. 5. Doors open at 5 p.m. Proceeds will benefit the Caloosa Humane Society.

Shop at the Outdoor Market

LABELLE — The Outdoor Saturday Market will be held on Saturday, Nov.

5 and Dec. 3 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Shop from Barron Library, 461 N. Main St. to Barron Park along the City Wharf.

5K Turkey Trot is Nov. 5

LABELLE — The LaBelle Turkey Trot 5K will be held on Saturday, Nov. 5 beginning at 8 a.m. on Forrey Drive. To register, visit runsignup.com/Race/Registrar/?raceId=111767&eventId=615263.

Blood drive set

Moss Landing on Aqua Isles Boulevard will host a blood drive on Tuesday, Nov. 8 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The blood mobile requires an ID. Blood donation is considered an essential service. You are our only source to help accident victims, cancer and surgical patients. Please eat something and drink plenty of water before donating. Each donor will receive a wellness checkup including blood pressure, temperature, pulse, iron count and cholesterol screening! For more information or to make an appointment, visit www.oneblood.org/donate-now or 1-888-936-6283.

Chamber to shred documents

The LaBelle Chamber of Commerce, 125 East Hickpochee Avenue, will have a free shredding event for

members on Nov. 9 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. You can bring a file folder or a truckload full of papers to be shredded while you watch. Non-members may participate for a \$20 donation. All of the shredded material will be recycled into toilet paper!

Elvis tribute to come

LABELLE — The ELVIS Tribute Show coming to LaBelle as a fundraiser for the Firehouse Community Theatre in LaBelle. Please get your tickets now! This was a sold out show last year. Elvis tribute artist grand champion Matt Stone is the number one young Elvis tribute artist in the State of Florida. He was named one of Graceland's Top Ten Elvis Tribute Artists in the world! He is a perfect visual and vocal representation of the King of Rock and Roll. Matt Stone has mastered the persona of Elvis! The Elvis Tribute Show will be on Saturday, Nov. 12, at 8 p.m. at the Firehouse Community Theatre, 241 N. Bridge St. Doors will open at 7 p.m. Get tickets by calling the ticket hotline at 863-675-3066.

Wharf Walk Artisan Weekend planned

LABELLE — Wharf Walk Artisan Weekend

will be held in downtown LaBelle on Saturday, Nov. 12 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, Nov. 13 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at DeSoto Avenue Wharf and Barron Park, 1559 De Soto Ave. For information, visit www.downtownlabelle.com/wharfwalk.

1K Fun Run Walk is Nov. 12

LABELLE — The 1K (untimed) Fun Run/Walk will be held on Saturday, Nov. 12 at 8 a.m. on Forrey Drive. To register, visit runsignup.com/Race/Registrar/?raceId=111767&eventId=615265.

Chamber dinner rescheduled

Due to Hurricane Ian, the LaBelle Chamber of Commerce, has rescheduled the Business of the Year event to Monday, Nov. 14 at the LaBelle Civic Center. The 2022 Business of the Year will be announced. The 2020 and 2021 Businesses of the Year will also be honored. Due to COVID-19, the chamber was unable to host the annual dinner in 2020 and 2021. Meet & Greet will be 5 to 6 p.m. Dinner will promptly begin at 6 p.m. Guest speaker will be State Representative Lauren Melo. For information and tickets, call 863-675-0125 or email lchamberofcomm@embarqmail.com.

Chamber social planned

LABELLE — On Nov. 16, Riverside Real Estate, 45 S Riverview St. Suite S, will hold a Harvest Social at 5:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

VFW Post 10100 hosts events

LABELLE — The LaBelle VFW, 20 Veterans Way, plans the following events:

- Celebrate Veterans Day on Friday, Nov. 11, with a luncheon at noon. Free to all veterans and families. VFW Post 10100 will provide fried chicken, mac & cheese, and baked beans. This will be a potluck event and everyone is encouraged to bring your favorite dish to share.

- Friday, Nov. 4, Meatloaf Dinner, serving will begin at 5 p.m.

- Saturday, Nov. 5, Karaoke begins at 5 p.m.

- Saturday, Nov. 12, Dinner TBA. Dawn Renee' is in the House for your entertainment, music will begin at 5 p.m.

- Saturday, Nov. 19, Honor Guard will host Taco Night at 5 p.m. Moore 2 Music Karaoke begins at 6 p.m.

- Saturday, Nov. 26, Dinner TBA. Steve White Karaoke will begin at 6 p.m.

- Every Sunday morning: Biscuits and Gravy at 9 a.m.

- Every Monday night, Left, Right, Center will begin at 5 p.m.

- Every Wednesday is Pizza Night beginning at 5 p.m. Dine-in or take-out.

- Every Wednesday night, Euchre Cards at 5 p.m.

- Every Wednesday night Richard Smith Entertainment is in the house at 5 p.m.

- Every Friday night a jam session will begin at 6 p.m.

- Every Friday night there will be free jukebox from 6 to 8 p.m.

- Every Saturday, night there will be entertainment.

This is a SMOKE FREE VFW. Smoking is permitted on the outside Patio.

The VFW is open to the public for lunch every day.

Every Monday and Thursday FREE Tia Chi Class is from 1 until 2 p.m. Friday is Red Shirt Day, all day get \$.50 off all drinks except for soda and draft.

Moon Lite Madness is Friday and Saturday from 8 to 10 p.m., \$.50 off all drink, except soda and draft.

Men's Night is every Monday night from 6 to 8 p.m.

Ladies Night is every Thursday night from 6 to 8 p.m.

Happy Hour is Monday to Friday 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 4 to 6 p.m.

Bingo is every Sunday at 2 p.m., open to the public.

Turkey shoot is on the second and fourth Sunday of every month at 1 p.m. Open to the public.

» See Things to Do on page 19



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First Thursday of every month is House Committee Meeting at 6 p.m.

First Thursday of every month is Veterans Regular monthly meeting at 7 p.m.

Second Wednesday of every month, the Auxiliary meets at 6 p.m.

Honor your Veteran on the Veterans Park Wall. Further information and applications are available at the VFW Post.

The post is located on Hwy. 29 next to the rodeo grounds. For further information call 863-675-8008.

Christmas Parade is Dec. 2

LABELLE — The Light Up LaBelle Christmas Parade will be held on Friday, Dec. 2, at 6 p.m.. The parade begins at Dollar General at N. Main St. and S.R. 80 and proceeds north on Main St. to conclude at Barron Park. Festivities in Barron Park will include pictures with Santa, movies in the park and much more. For parade registration, call Julia at 239-284-6182.

Chess Club meets

The LaBelle Chess Club meets on Mondays at the Barron Library, 461 North Main St., on Monday, from 5 to 6 p.m.

Sewing Club meets

The LaBelle Sewing Club meets on most Mondays at the Barron Library, 461 North Main St., on Monday, from 5 to 7 p.m.

Audubon offers birding trips

CLEWISTON — The Hendry Glades Audubon and SFWMD offers escorted birding trips to Stormwater Treatment Area 5/6 on Nov. 5, Nov. 19, Dec. 3 and Dec. 17, a.m. For information email Margaret England at hgaudubon@gmail.com or leave a message at 863-517-0202.

Woman's Club plans Trees of Joy

The GFFWC LaBelle Community Woman's Club will host Trees of Joy on Dec. 2 and 3. They're asking local businesses, clubs, families and anyone who wants to flex their creative muscles to decorate a tree to reflect their style and theme. On Dec. 2 and Dec. 3, they will invite the public to the LaBelle Woman's Club to view the trees while sipping hot cocoa, visiting with Santa and getting in the holiday spirit. The 863 Alliance will be there collecting toys for the Annual Christmas Outreach for underprivileged children in Hendry and Glades counties. To register or for information, email treesofjoylabelle@gmail.com.

Moose Lodge hosts events

The LaBelle Moose Lodge is open Monday through Saturday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., or later if there are customers, and Sunday from noon 'till 8 p.m. Follow us on Facebook: LaBelle Moose Lodge 2398 Mondays are hot dog specials.

Tuesdays are open pool table all day and tournaments at 6 p.m. With taco and taco salad specials!

Karaoke at 7 p.m. on Wednesdays! With wing specials!

Bingo is every Thursday, from 3 to 5 p.m. Open to the public with burger specials all day.

Saturdays has special dinners from 5 to 7 p.m.

Sundays is brunch from noon to 3 p.m.

Not a member? Stop by and check us out, Guests are welcome! The lodge is located at 230 Jaycee Lions Dr. in LaBelle. For information, call 863-230-6154.

Kiwanis hosts Kids Day

Kiwanis Kids Day has been rescheduled to Jan. 21, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Barron Park. Join in the fun with games, entertainment, food, face painting, bounce houses and lots of vendors. The LaBelle High School Kiwanis Key Club and West Glades Middle School Builders Club students will be on hand to add to the excitement. Save the date

-bring your friends and family. Come join in the fun, food, entertainment and many community vendors which gives everyone a chance to learn about the many services available to everyone in LaBelle. If interested in being a vendor or entertainer, please contact Nikki at 239-564-2005.

Woman's Club to meet

You're Invited! The public is welcome to come to GFWC LaBelle Community Woman's Club, 382 W Hickpochee Ave. next to Ace Hardware on the second Tuesday of the month September through May. The social starts at 6 p.m. with the business meeting starting at 6:30 p.m.

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.

Hope Connection Senior Services

All seniors 60 and up are invited to come to Hope Connections on Cowboy Way just east of the airport for a hot free luncheon Monday through Fridays. Sign up for transportation if needed. Enjoy comradely, games, social contact, new friends and information about community and medical help. Call 863-675-1576

» See Things to Do on page 20

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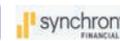
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for more information.

Church offers grief support group

LABELLE — Have you experienced the loss of someone you love? Has there been a struggle to move forward since that loved one has been gone? Do you feel like no one truly understands what you are going through? Do you wonder why anger, depression, loneliness, impatience, irritation and frustration seem to define your life now? Join a group of people who are on a similar journey. Find compassion, support and hope together in GriefShare. This support group meets in the Grace building of Caloosa Baptist Church, 550 W. Hickpochee Ave. in LaBelle. To register, call or text Cindy at 863-673-3855.

Garden Club is back!

LaBelle Garden Club meets the fourth Monday of the month at 7 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 more information please call or text Nikki 239-564-2005.

Salvation Army distributes food

On Wednesdays from 9-11 a.m. (and 1-3 p.m. if food is still available) the Salvation Army gives free

food to needy families. 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. Clubs and groups are encouraged to host food drives to help stock their food pantry. For info, call Greg at 863-517-1088.

Christ Central distributes food

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

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 <https://www.aa.org/>

LaBelle Christmas Boat Parade

LABELLE — The LaBelle Christmas Boat

Parade, hosted by East Coast Marine, will be held on Wednesday, **Dec. 21**. Departure time is 7 p.m. and begins at Barron Park, 1559 De Soto Ave. The parade will be lead by the Hendry County Sheriff's Department. All interested boaters/skippers contact the East Coast Marine at 721 N. Bridge St., by phone at 863-674-1680, or by email at nellie4898@gmail.com. There will be first, second and third place prizes for decorated boats.

American Legion Post #130 events

American Legion Post 130 is located at 699 S.R. 80 West, across from the Shell Station. For further information: 863-675-8300. Upcoming events include the following.

- Pizza & Hot Dogs available: 11 a.m. till close, Sunday thru Thursday; 11 a.m. - 1 a.m. Friday and Saturday; 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. - Happy Hour, Monday - Friday.
- Nov. 4, 11, 18, 25 - Friday FISH FRY - 5-7 p.m. \$11; Assorted fish (baked or fried), crabcakes, chicken & chicken nuggets, baked potato or french fries, cole slaw, roll; Public welcome! Dine In or take out. Karaoke from 7-11 p.m.
- Nov. 4, 5; 11, 12; 18, 19; 25, 26 - Friday & Saturdays - Karaoke 7-11 p.m.
- Nov. 11 - Friday - Veteran's Day - Ceremony 11 a.m. at Park followed by lunch at the American Legion.
- Nov. 24 - Thanksgiving American Legion Post 130 Meetings: All members welcome.
- Nov. 2 - first Wednesday - 7 p.m. - American Legion Riders meeting.
- Nov. 3 - first Thursday - 7 p.m. - DAV - Disabled American - meeting at Christ Central Church on

East SR80.

- No. 9 - second Wednesday - 7 p.m. - SAL-Sons of the American Legion
- Nov. 10 - second Thursday - 6:30 p.m. - American Legion E-Board; 7 p.m. General Meeting - Commander Myra Johnson.

- Nov. 17 - third Thursday - 6 p.m. - American Legion Auxiliary

American Legion Post 130 is located at 699 SR80 West, across from the Shell Station. Call 863-675-8300 for more information.

Blue Star Mothers

Do you have, or do you know someone who has, a child in the Military? We would love to keep you company along the often challenging, but always rewarding journey of being a Military Mom! Blue Star Mothers of America is a national, non-profit 501(c)3 service organization which serves our troops, and our military families through programs, activities, and service projects. We are mothers, stepmothers, grandmothers, foster mothers, and female legal guardians in Lee, Collier and Hendry counties who have children serving in the military, guard or reserves. Our mission is to support our military, military families, and each other, while promoting patriotism. If you are interested in finding out more about Gulf Coast FL-12 Blue Star Mothers, please contact us. Email: President.FL12@BlueStarMothers.us or visit our website: GCFBSM.weebly.com.

Visit the DAV Flea Market

LABELLE — LaBelle Disabled American Flea Market is held on **Saturdays**, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., at 228 Miller Avenue.

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We want your news!

Have an event to add to this column? Clubs, organizations and churches are welcome to send community event items to cbnews@iniusa.org. Deadline for the December edition of the Caloosa Belle Independent is Nov. 18. You can also post news items on our website calendar at southcentralfloridalife.com at no charge.

SAFETY

Access road cut off from Moss Landing

By C. M. Schmidtkofer
CALOOSA BELLE INDEPENDENT

LABELLE — Moss Landing residents may be getting closer to having access road problems resolved after a discussion between a resident and the Clewiston Board of Commissioners Oct. 18.

Nikki Yeager, a Moss Landing resident who has spearheaded efforts to make the intersection on SR 80 and Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. safer for the 55-plus mobile home community, told the commission the only alternative route to the highway, Shady Oaks Lane, has been blocked off, forcing residents to travel through the

Belle Arbor housing development on Aqua Isles Blvd.

“It’s a major problem,” Yeager said. “Especially when all of the northerners come down and they can’t see, and they can’t hear.”

It is not the first discussion residents have had with the commission regarding the intersection and possible relief, the latest one in March, wherein it was pointed out the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) was responsible for the roadway and is undertaking a study to determine if a traffic signal there is warranted.

But that might take several years, and City

Attorney Derek Rooney suggested FDOT might move the project up if the city expressed an interest in installing a signal itself.

“They don’t want the city to do that,” he said.

FDOT is undertaking a study of the intersection before committing to any changes to the intersection, Mayor Julie Wilkins said, adding she would prefer the closed road be reopened to Moss Landing residents could access it.

Initially, Yeager thought the road through Belle Arbor was private, but the commission said it had been returned to the city, but not for maintenance purposes.

TRAFFIC

Workshop on SR 29 rescheduled

SPECIAL TO CALOOSA BELLE INDEPENDENT

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has rescheduled a workshop for the SR 29 Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study Re-evaluation from CR 80A (Cowboy Way) to north of CR 731 (Whidden Road) in Hendry County.

The in-person meeting will now take place on Wednesday, Nov. 30, 2022 at 5 p.m. at the original location – LaBelle Civic Center, 481 W. Hickpochee Ave., LaBelle, Florida 33935, and the virtual meeting will now take place on Thursday, December 1, 2022 at 6 p.m. The public meeting was originally scheduled in-person for Wednesday, October 26, 2022, and virtually on Thursday, October 27, 2022. Meetings for this project are being rescheduled due to Hurricane Ian.

The purpose of this PD&E Study Re-evaluation is to improve traffic operations, access, and mobility along SR 29. FDOT anticipates this project will also enhance safety along the project corridor; improve emergency evacuation; and improve access between Hendry and Glades

Counties. The project will widen sidewalks along the corridor and look at improvements at the intersections of SR 29 and Cowboy Way, SR 80 at Main Street and Bridge Street, and Park Avenue at Main Street and Bridge Street. The no-build alternative, where no improvements other than routine maintenance are made to SR 29, will remain viable throughout the remainder of this study. The PD&E Study Re-evaluation Workshop is being held to present information regarding the proposed design to SR 29 and to gather feedback from the public.

You can participate in the workshop live online or in-person. The same materials will be displayed at both the online and in-person events, and will also be posted by November 23, 2022 on the project website.

IN-PERSON OPTION: Attend the in-person alternatives public workshop on Wednesday, November 30, 2022, at LaBelle Civic Center, 481 W. Hickpochee Ave., LaBelle, Florida 33935. Visit the in-person meeting any time between 5 and 7 p.m. to view the project video and

displays, speak with project team members and submit comments or questions.

LIVE ONLINE OPTION: Attend virtually on Thursday, December 1 starting at 6 p.m. This event will include a viewing of the project video and a live question-and-answer component with the project team. Meeting materials will be posted to the project website swfroads.com/project/417878-8 by November 23, 2022. Please review the materials before attending the virtual event. Register in advance by visiting <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5944723345688090637> or on the project website. Once registered, attendees will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the workshop online. Please note, Internet Explorer cannot be used to register or attend this event.

WEBSITE: View all materials online at swfroads.com/project/417878-8. Comments can be provided through the project website and questions can be answered by calling the FDOT project manager David Agacinski at 239-225-1924.

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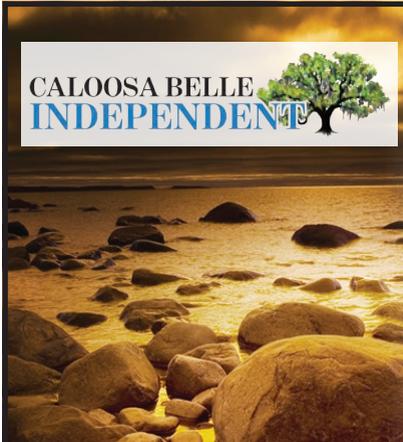
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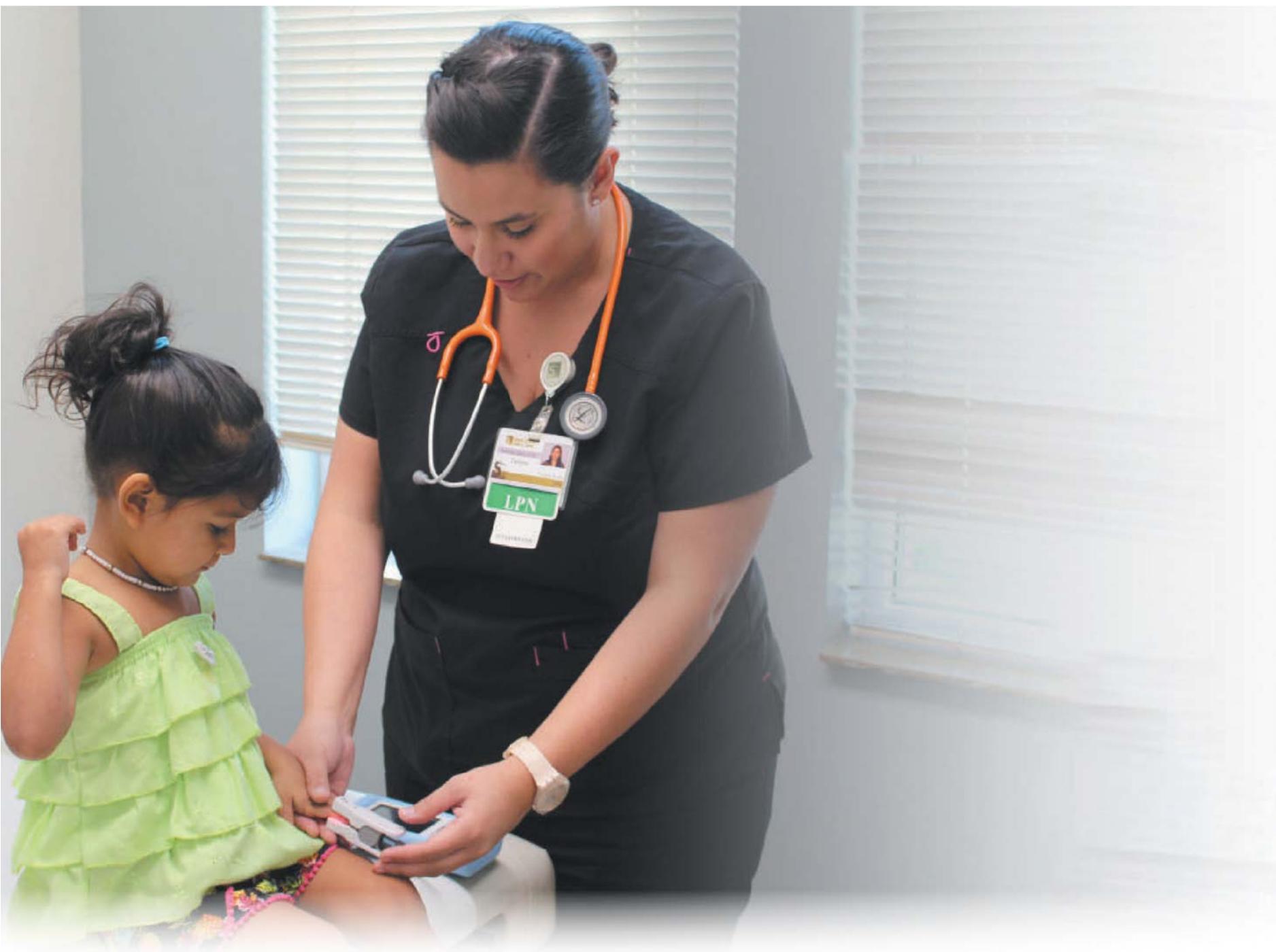
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Mark Your Calendars!

Send us your events for our December edition!

The deadline to submit news is Friday, November 18.

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