



Friends of the Everglades Airpark



by Patty Huff

In early March of this year, Everglades City residents learned that the County was considering closing our 1940s Airpark, and that it was listed under the Consent Agenda for the March 11 Board of County Commissioners meeting. Residents and pilots throughout Florida and the southeast sent emails to the Commissioners asking them to pull the item from the Consent Agenda, which they did prior to the meeting. This provided the opportunity for many people to speak out. After listening to the supporters, the County Commissioners voted to do a study to determine how to keep the Airpark open. District Five Commissioner McDaniel asked that the study also consider the possibility of closing the Airpark. An Ad Hoc Committee was established to prepare a report with a list of recommendations. Stacey Heaton, Southern Regional Manager of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, spearheaded this committee. There were three meetings of the committee members, and a full report to the County Commissioners



File Photo

will be forthcoming.

In the meantime, one of the pilots from outside Florida donated \$5,000 to use to support the Airpark. The Friends of the Everglades Airpark, Inc. was created as a Florida not-for-profit corporation, and paperwork is currently being processed to file it as a 501(c)3 charitable organization. Donated funds will be used to advance public understanding and interest and benefits derived from the safe and efficient operation of the Everglades Airpark.

At its first meeting on June 16, the following officers were elected:

President - Deborah Trujillo;
Vice President – Mike Merritt;
Secretary/Treasurer – Paul Sims;
Board of Directors:
Harry Henkel and Greg Melanson.

Currently, a website is being developed as well as printed material.

Dues are \$25 for individuals, \$50 for family, \$100 for businesses and donors, \$500 for sponsors, and \$1,000 for patrons. If you wish to become a member or donate, please mail a check

to Friends of Everglades Airpark, Inc. to Harry Henkel, P.O. Box 372, Everglades City, FL, 34139. For more information, you can contact Harry at 410-829-7156.

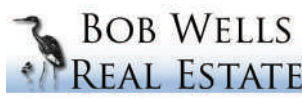


Photo by Kelly J. Farrell

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'Operation Dry Water' Targets Boating Under the Influence

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Everglades Area WELCOME Center

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Tassels Turned! Everglades City Students Celebrate Graduation

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Calendar						
Sunday, June 29th	Monday, June 30th	Tuesday, July 1st	Wednesday, July 2th	Thursday, July 3th	Friday, July 4th	Saturday, July 5th
		2:30 – 4:30 pm U.S. Rep Diaz-Balart 7:00-8:00 AM City Council	9:30-12:00 pm Food Pantry	8:30 am Ladies Coffee at Island Cafe		
Sunday, July 6th	Monday, July 7th	Tuesday, July 8th	Wednesday, July 9th	Thursday, July 10th	Friday, July 11th	Saturday, July 12th
			9:30-12:00 pm Food Pantry	8:30 am Ladies Coffee at City Seafood		
Sunday, July 13th	Monday, July 14th	Tuesday, July 15th	Wednesday, July 16th	Thursday, July 17h	Friday, July 18th	Saturday, July 19th
10:00 am – 3:00 pm Christmas in July Big Cypress Gallery with Clyde and Niki Butcher		6:00 -7:00 pm Code Enforcement Meeting 7:00 -8:00 pm Planning and Zoning Meeting	9:30-12:00 pm Food Pantry	8:30 am Ladies Coffee at Island Cafe 2:00-3:00 You're in Skunk Ape Country Lecture Museum of the Everglades		
Sunday, July 20th	Monday, July 21th	Tuesday, July 22th	Wednesday, July 23th	Thursday, July 24th	Friday, July 25th	Saturday, July 26th
			9:30-12:00 pm Food Pantry	8:30 am Ladies Coffee at City Seafood		
Sunday, July 27th	Monday, July 28th	Tuesday, July 29th	Wednesday, July 30th	Thursday, July 31th		
			9:30-12:00 pm Food Pantry	8:30 am Ladies Coffee at Island Cafe 5:05 pm Collier County School Board Meeting MLK Admin Ctr.		

Calling All Veterans

By Elaine Middelstaedt

Dave Soldana from the Vet Center will be in Everglades City for Vet Outreach each Wednesday at 10 a.m. He will be stationed at the Everglades Community Church

which has a food pantry distribution on Wednesdays. His direct phone number is 239-940-5748.

Veterans Crisis Line – If you or someone you know is in crisis or have suicidal thoughts, help is available.

Call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1, text 838255, or chat online at <https://www.veteranscrisisline/chat>.

Special thanks to all Vietnam Veterans, who were instrumental in the development of Vet Centers,

where all veterans can find connection, camaraderie, and community. A program of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, services are provided at no cost and without judgment.

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Audrey on her bike in Chokoloskee as a teen at her grandma McKinney's house.

Photos Courtesy of the Mitchell Family

Remembering Audrey Marie Brown Hancock

Audrey Marie (Brown) Hancock slipped away into the arms of Jesus in the early morning hours of June 3rd, 2025, in Sebring, Florida, with her two daughters by her side. She was 96 years old, born on Feb. 27, 1929. She grew up on Chokoloskee Island, where her grandparents, C.G. and Susan McKinney, were among the first settlers. As a child, she loved to run around the island barefooted, singing her heart out and eating "hog plums" and other tropical fruits that grew all over the island.

She is predeceased by her parents, John and Alice Brown; her husband, Ira Dennis Hancock, Jr., and all of her siblings - Laberta Thompson and Bert, Totch, and Peg Brown. She is survived by her children, Angela (Tom) Mitchell of Lake Wales, Florida, Brad (Desta) Hancock of Gatesville, Texas, and Joy Hancock of Naples, Florida. She also leaves behind four beloved grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, and seven

great-great-grandchildren. In April of 1946, she traveled across the country by train to marry her husband, Dennis Hancock, in Seattle, Washington, where he was stationed in the U.S. Navy as WWII was nearing its end. Soon, they settled in the Everglades City area and raised a family. She was the school secretary for 23 years before retiring and moving to Lake Placid, Florida, in 1993. The family had begun vacationing in Lake Placid in the 1970s, and she dearly loved the area. She and her husband shared seven wonderful years there until he went on to be with the Lord in Dec. 2000. For a short while after that, she lived in Chokoloskee again, but realized her heart was still in Lake Placid so she returned to her residence there where she lived until she went to be with her Lord.

She was a member of the Placid Temple Church of God. She volunteered at the hospital gift shop in Lake Placid for many years. She enjoyed crocheting, knitting, bird watching, reading, and yard work. She especially loved her caladiums, a colorful foliage plant, for which Lake Placid is known. She also enjoyed many trips to the Smoky Mountains to see the fall colors with one of her daughters.

Audrey was patient, loving, and kind, always thinking of others before herself, and liked to believe the best



about everyone. She was loved by all who knew her and will be deeply missed by her family and friends.

A celebration of life was held on Saturday, June 7th, at her hometown church, Chokoloskee Family Church of God. She will be interred at the nearby family cemetery in a private burial, between her mother and grandparents.

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints." Psalms 116:15.

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." John 11:25-26 (KJV).



MULLET RAPPER

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"There are no other Everglades in the world. They are, they have always been, one of the unique regions of the earth; remote, never wholly known. Nothing anywhere else is like them."
~ Marjory Stoneman Douglas



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You're in Skunk Ape Country

Submitted

In early July of the year 2000, local resident David Shealy captured video of a tall, hairy, bipedal humanoid creature running through the shoulder-high sawgrass of the Big Cypress Swamp behind his home. In his mid-30s at the time, Shealy had first spotted the elusive Everglades cryptid, commonly known as the “Skunk Ape,”

while hunting with his older brother at the age of 11. Today he is known as the foremost authority on the region’s legendary hide-and-seek champion.

On July 17th, Museum Manager Thomas Lockyear will explore the facts and fiction surrounding this iconic South Florida cousin of the better-known “Bigfoot,” including its roots in indigenous culture and historic sightings dating back centuries.

Event Details:

You're in Skunk Ape Country

Thursday, July 17th 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Museum of the Everglades

105 Broadway Ave W

Everglades City, 34139

Everglades Area WELCOME Center

by Patty Huff

In September 2017, the Everglades City area was hit hard by Hurricane Irma, destroying many homes and devastating businesses. One of these was the iconic building at the corner of US 41 and SR 29, just as you turn to go towards Everglades City and Chokoloskee. The building was originally constructed in the 1950s and operated as the Welcome Center by the Everglades Area Chamber of Commerce. It was the busiest welcome/visitor center in Collier County. After the hurricane, we were left without a central place to welcome the thousands, if not millions, of tourists who come to our city and the surrounding national and state parks/preserves.

On February 1, 2020, the Everglades Society for Historic Preservation (ESHP) took on the task of reopening a place where visitors could come and learn about the opportunities to explore the area. With the building in Carnestown being condemned by Big Cypress, who owned the property, ESHP opened in a new location in the center of town at 207 West Broadway across from the Rod and Gun Club.



Photo by Patty Huff

When the historic 1927 Bank of Everglades Building is completed, ESHP will move its offices, gift shop, and welcome center there.

Tourists tell us they are sometimes confused on where to go and learn about the area since there are several “visitor centers” located in close proximity.

The new Marjory Stoneman Douglas Visitor Center (formerly called the Gulf Coast Visitor Center built in 1953 and located within Everglades City limits half a mile south of the Circle) will serve as the primary entrance into the Everglades National Park on the west coast (look for more information closer

to their grand opening later this Fall).

Big Cypress National Preserve has two visitor centers: 1) The Nathaniel P. Reed Visitor Center (formerly called the Big Cypress Swamp Welcome Center and located just 2.5 miles east of Carnestown), and 2) the Oasis Visitor Center, 21.5 miles east of Carnestown. These two visitor centers have interesting exhibits and lots of information about those exploring the wonders of the Big Cypress.

One of the businesses in town, Everglades Adventures (currently the temporary location for ENP rangers from Friday through Monday), has consolidated all of its businesses in

one building (Everglades Adventures Visitor Center) at 611 Collier Avenue.

So, as of July 1, ESHP will be operating the Everglades Area Welcome Center to eliminate confusion. This was the original name of the building in Carnestown for over 60 years and so it will be again. Our local volunteers welcome thousands of visitors a year and provide information for all of our businesses, including lodging, restaurants, attractions, and tour operators. Stop by 207 West Broadway and check out all the brochures, maps, local gifts, and friendly service. We look forward to seeing you!



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Summer Snook!

Capt. Mike Merritt

Fishing here in the summer months is typically tougher for the Seatrout and the Redfish. But the Snook fishing is usually good all summer!

Warmer water temperatures mixed with afternoon rains can change the fishing, especially for the Seatrout. They are not as prone to be up on the flats like they are when the water is cooler. They will find their way to deeper water and even end up offshore. We are still catching some around the Islands and even in the back country, but it has become tougher to get on a consistent bite. Incoming tide or a high outgoing tide will probably be best.

Redfish were biting good last week but slowed a little this week. I was getting them about mid-tide on a rising tide. We caught some decent fish, up to 26", but no big ones. Live

bait, cut bait, or shrimp all work. June, July, and most of August are always tougher months here for the Reds. They are scattered about and even in the back country, too.

Since the rains started, the bait fish have moved. It got harder to find Pilchards or Threadfins, but we had some large Menhaden show up. These work for big Snook pretty well. Mullet should be more plentiful as summer progresses.

Snook have been biting out in the Islands and in the rivers. We have caught some nice fish so far in June. Time to start using topwater lures in the morning. And if you can handle the bugs, Snook bite pretty well at night. I love fishing for Snook and prefer to target them. So summer is always fun for me.

There are still Tarpon around, and of course, you can catch Goliath Grouper just about anywhere. Both of these fish will be around all summer.

So get out and enjoy the action. Avoid the rain and heat by getting out early and getting in early! Stay hydrated and have some summer fun!



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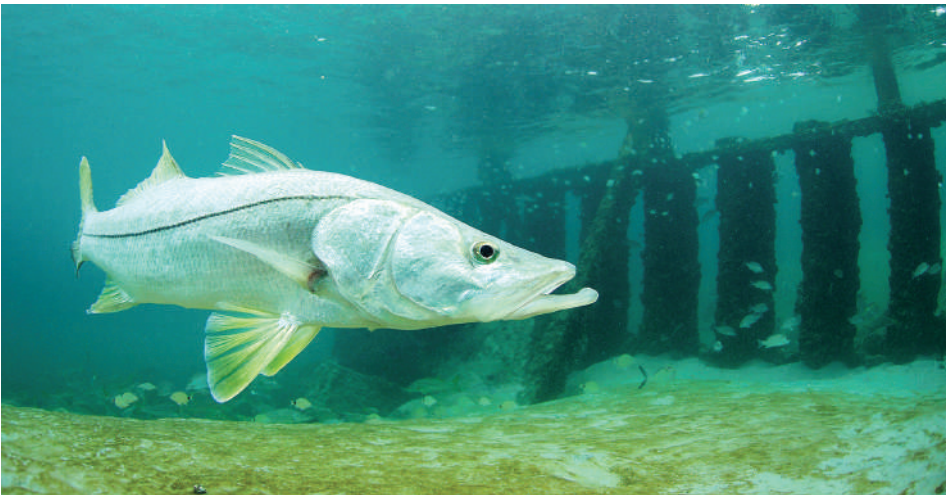
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Angel of the Swamp

by Patty Huff

It takes a brave and committed person to walk along the causeway out and back to Chokoloskee this time of year. That’s exactly what Don does as often as he is available (when he’s not fishing or on the East Coast). You will see him tirelessly making the trek early in the mornings when it’s not blistering hot but still as buggy as ever. On this day, Don was swatting mosquitoes left and right. Steve and I usually stop on our way back from biking to Chokoloskee to say hello and talk about current fishing conditions, but today there was no way we were going to put Don through the misery of standing still – only time for a quick photo in the sun.

Over the years, the *Mullet Rapper*

has recognized our Angels of the Swamp, and several times the ones who pick up trash along our roads. During season, we observe many of our winter residents taking up this task. I remember when we moved here over 30 years ago, Betty Campbell would ride her bike up and down the causeway collecting trash. Don is one of those hardy souls who takes pride in our community and wants to keep it clean. We applaud Don for his commitment and contribution to making our roads look better. We can tell the difference when he, and others, are not around and no one is there to pick up the litter. It would be nice if everyone would be considerate and not let trash fly out of their vehicles. In the meantime, we’re fortunate to have our “Angels.” Thanks, Don.

If you know of someone who should be recognized as an “Angel of the Swamp,” please contact me at 239-719-0020 or email snookcity@gmail.com.



Photo by Patty Huff



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Holding On To Good Memories

By Pastor Jesse Wilson

Growing up in Northern Michigan was filled with cold winters and breezy summers. In the winters, I spent a lot of time at the winter park. There you could ice skate, ski down a short hill, or risk your life attempting to sled down what was known as ‘suicide hill.’ Not a very nice name, but appropriately named as it was designed so as to not allow anyone to make it from the top of the hill to the bottom. The folks who ran the park thought it a good idea, well probably more of a funny idea for them, to make it extremely difficult by putting in jumps and rough areas on the hill. There were so many it was impossible not to hit a dozen of them.

Unless you were velcroed to your sled or securely tied to it, you weren’t going to make it to the bottom without wiping out midway down. That didn’t stop a bunch of us kids from attempting it though, over and over and over again. Each time believing the next attempt would be a success. I’m sure the owners sat in their warm little office laughing hysterically at the little rug rats playing on the hill. I’m sure with each wipeout they would high-five one another and put a mark on a piece of paper while humming ‘another one bites the dust, another one bites the dust, and another one down, another one down, another one bites the dust.’

Summers were filled with riding our bikes and exploring the woods behind our home. The blessing of living in the country for us was the wild fruit that grew behind our house. The woods were filled with wild blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries. We also had rhubarb that grew in the woods, too. Back then we didn’t worry about bugs, or dirt; we just wiped it off and ate it! Of course, we also drank from a water hose and from the little creek down from my grandma's house.

That might explain why the doctor told me my immune system is so strong.



Years later, as I stood on the bank of the little creek I used to drink from and occasionally play in, I noticed the flow of water went through a cow pasture. Nothing like drinking cold Michigan water from a creek, while watching the cows drink from it too, as it flowed towards me.

The falls in Michigan were filled with days raking the leaves and bagging them, but not until we had made large piles and spent hours jumping into them. We didn’t realize that only created more work for us. But when you’re a kid, it’s all about having fun and enjoying life without a care in the world. Recently, my dad went home to be with the Lord. It was unexpected, and my sister and I were unprepared.

When I was two years old, my dad went to prison for eight years. I don’t remember the trial, but I do remember when he got out. My dad could rebuild engines with his eyes closed and knew how to fix anything around the house, or anything with a motor. Not bad for someone with an eighth-grade education.

My dad also spent six years in the Navy and was part of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Spending every other weekend with him and my stepmom was always fun. But as I look back on my childhood, I wish I had listened more and played less when I was with



Photos Courtesy of Jesse Wilson

him. I could have learned to work on engines and fix things around the house. That explains why I have to have others do that for me now, which my wife is thankful for because I’d leave a mess if I attempted it.

Here's what I love about memories, though, and I think it's what God intended. We can relive those moments that brought us such joy, almost as if

we’re back in that time. So, though I miss my mom and my dad, and other loved ones, I have so many memories that I can enjoy. And for a few moments, while the world around us teeters on crazy and crazier, I can step away and go back to some moment in time and enjoy a few minutes of laughter and joy. And that is worth holding onto!



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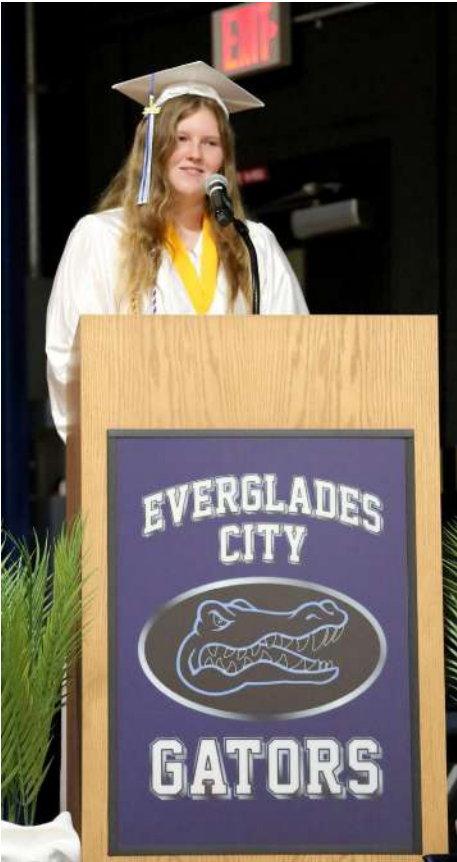
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Valedictorian Gena Collins gives her speech to the graduating class.

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Photos by Maria Shealy



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Murder Always Brings a Crowd

By Scott H. Shook

They arrived 30 minutes early - in a driving rain - packing the parking lot and lining the median and roadside along Broadway Avenue in Everglades City. They were hurrying, scurrying, and hopping puddles to get inside the Museum of the Everglades to claim a chair for Thomas Lockyear's Third Thursday talk on June 19. They say a sellout creates excitement and that the crowd brings enthusiasm into a room. Well, that was certainly the case on Thursday afternoon. And the topic, Murder in the Everglades, certainly piqued the crowd's curiosity.

Museum manager Lockyear, who fronted a band in his younger days, showed he still knows how to work the room. He immediately got the crowd pumped up.

"I apologize for the lack of space," Lockyear announces to applause, "we're proud of the fact that we are the smallest and the most remote, but the mightiest of Collier County's five free museums. It's not that often that we exceed our boundaries like this. During the summer months, I try and pick a really juicy topic. Apparently, I found the winner."

And talk about exceeding

boundaries: besides the lecture room being SRO, the adjacent display room was also full, with everyone standing - or leaning - anywhere they could. One lady poked her head between two pillars for an hour so she could peer inside the lecture room. While most people in the outer room couldn't see Lockyear or his screen presentation, they still stayed and listened to the entire hour-long presentation.

"Can everybody hear me out in the nether regions out there?" Lockyear asks. "There are a couple of standing spots over on this side for somebody that really wants to be able to see the screen. But there's not going to be a seat for you. But we're all friends here, right?"

Lockyear immediately lets the crowd know how important their questions are in making Third Thursdays, now six years old, a success.

"Very often I'll have people come through and ask a question that I don't know the answer to," Lockyear said. "And once it happens a couple times, I'm like, 'I need to learn this topic. I need to really figure this out.' And the way to do that is to assign myself to learning. And my process for doing this is a little bit crazy. I'm not an expert. But I do have a passion for history and for sharing. So, I come across really difficult topics."

Lockyear immediately hooked his audience with stories of murders and violent incidents in the Everglades region from the early 1900s to the present. Stories of houses being burned by the Park Service, the



A recent Everglades murder. Photo Courtesy of the Collier County Museum



It was a standing room only crowd for the Third Thursday talk at the Museum of the Everglades. Photos by Scott H. Shook

murder of Audubon warden Guy Bradley, and murders attributed to the notorious outlaw Edgar Watson, who was eventually murdered himself in dramatic fashion.

"Guy Bradley was living down at Flamingo," Lockyear said, "but he was covering a huge area from Key West all the way up to about Fort Myers. This is back in the days when they were hunting plumes to make fancy hats. And it was one of the first times that people here were able to make real cash money. So, people didn't care too much for Mr. Bradley and the fact that he was trying to stop them from doing it. So, on July 6, 1905, he met his maker. He was killed by Captain Walker Smith because Mr. Smith said, 'I told you when you arrested my boy the last time, if you ever did it again, I was going to shoot you and kill you.' And he did shoot him before he even got off the boat. He bled out in his boat and washed up."

Lockyear painted a vivid description of Watson, the Everglades' most

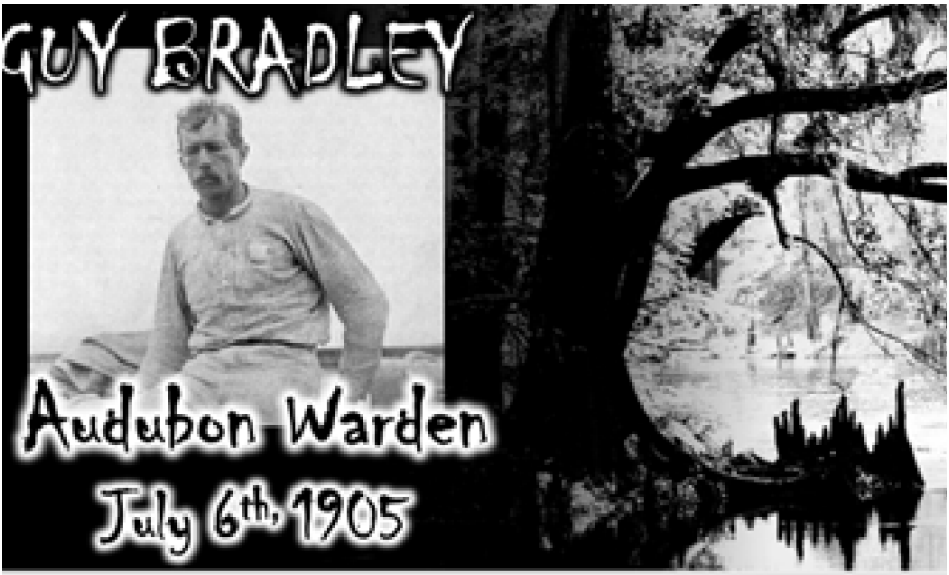


Thomas Lockyear knows how to entertain a crowd.

notorious figure, being killed in Chokoloskee.

"They put 33 bullets in the man," Lockyear said to oohs and aahs from the crowd.

Lockyear's next Third Thursday talk will be July 17 at 2:00 PM, when he will talk about the legend of the skunk ape.



Lockyear entertained the crowd with stories about game warden Guy Bradley, who was murdered in 1905.



The crowd shows their appreciation for Thomas Lockyear's presentation at the Museum of the Everglades.



The crowd was totally engaged at the Murder in the Everglades presentation.

Mangoes or Mangos

by Patty Huff

Apparently, both are acceptable, with “mangoes” more common in formal writing and British English, and “mangos” is often used in American English. No matter, the abundance this time of year is outstanding, and the taste of each variety enticing!

In 1980, the photography class of Everglades City High School undertook the project of collecting recipes using local foods and talking with locals about the food of the area. This resulted in the first of several booklets titled “Prop Roots” with Vol.

Two on “Recipes from The Mangrove Country of The Everglades.” One chapter had multiple recipes for Mango and included this quote from Marion VanAtta from Living Off the Land: “The mango is rated as one of the best tropical fruits of the world. It is sometimes called the ‘peach’ of the tropics.”

For the past week, I have enjoyed eating a portion of a mango every day. Looking for options than just cutting and eating plain (which is hard to beat), I found several recipes in this Prop Roots pamphlet: Green Mango Pie, Haden Mango Salad, Mango Jam, Mango Key Lime Pie, Mango Pickle, Mango Pie, Old Fashioned Mango Pie, and Plantation Mango Pie (it’s beginning to sound like ways to cook shrimp in Forrest Gump!). Anyway, the most intriguing to me is the Mango Key Lime Pie by Gracie Goff.

Thoroughly mix ¼ cup lime juice, 1 can sweetened condensed milk, 2 egg yolks, and 1 ½ cups mango puree. Beat 2 egg whites with a dash of salt to stiff peaks. Fold into mixture. Turn into a 9-inch crumb-lined crust and chill until firm.

Note: This is the same recipe I used to make Key Lime Pie (without the mango) but I now bake the pie first rather than using raw eggs.



Photo by Patty Huff



Photo Courtesy of Big Cypress Gallery

Clyde and Niki Butcher will be at the Big Cypress Gallery Sunday, July 13.

Meet Clyde and Niki at Big Cypress Gallery

By Trina Butcher

Celebrate Christmas in July with us at the Big Cypress Gallery on Sunday, July 13th, from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Meet Clyde and Niki Butcher in person and enjoy exclusive summer specials on art and books - available only at the galleries.

This event is free and open to the public. RSVP to be automatically entered into our raffle for a chance to

win a prize! Must be present to win. Link to claim your spot: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/christmas-in-july-at-the-big-cypress-gallery-tickets-1384348346169?aff=oddtcreator>

We expect this to be a more relaxed experience with fewer crowds this time of year, so come and enjoy some time with Clyde.

Questions? Call the Big Cypress Gallery at 239-695-2428.

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Locals Say No to Alligator Alcatraz

By Kelly J. Farrell

Residents gathered in the Everglades to oppose Alligator Alcatraz on Sunday only for the government to move forward with the immigration detention center without local or public input or support.

Following constituents’ concerns, Collier County Commissioners discussed the status of Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier’s Alligator Alcatraz immigration detention center being installed at the Miami Dade Jet Port located in Ochopee on Tuesday morning. Collier County officials were disappointed not to be informed about the project sooner, they said.

“I have to be careful not biting the hand that feeds me,” Collier County Emergency Manager Dan Summers said.

Many state and county government officials were not only not included in the decision but were not informed, thus not afforded any time to inform their constituents about the detention center that may house 5,000 or more immigrants as early as July 1, per ever-changing plans announced by Uthmeier as of Tuesday.

On Saturday morning, Collier County staff communications to state officials about Alligator Alcatraz revealed the immigration detention center was just a plan. However, by end of the day, mobilization on the site had already begun without any return contact, county officials said.

Uthmeier initially made his plan public on the social media platform X on Thursday, June 19.

“This is in my district. I had no visibility on this whatsoever,” said Commissioner Bill McDaniel, who initially thought the social media announcement was a political ploy with almost no potential to become reality.

“I am very disappointed,” McDaniel said during Tuesday’s Council meeting.

Collier County Commission Chairman Burt Saunders was most concerned about hurricane safety and response, he said. After all, the invasive Burmese pythons killing most of the mammals in the Everglades were due to a release following a hurricane. Despite Uthmeier’s threats that the



Photos by Kelly J. Farrell

A gate was erected to keep people out of the area being proposed for Alligator Alcatraz. Although Collier County Sheriff’s Office officials were at the site guarding the gate with Miami Dade Police, Collier County has no jurisdiction over the matter, Saunders Collier County Commission Chair Burt Saunders.

snakes could kill the immigrants, Burmese pythons are not aggressive to humans.

“We’re in the middle of a hurricane season, everybody knows that. It becomes our problem with thousands of people out there,” Saunders said.

“I’m going to address that,” Summers replied.

Florida Division of Emergency Management Director Kevin Guthrie is to be the communications point person on the project, they said. So, public information will not be made available through Collier County government.

Instead, people are urged to communicate with state, federal and Miami-Dade officials. Miami-Dade made a real estate deal with the state to use the land for the Alligator Alcatraz immigration detention center.

Although Collier County Sheriff’s Office officials were at the site guarding the gate with Miami Dade Police, Collier County has no jurisdiction over the matter, Saunders said.

County Attorney Jeff Klatzkow is confirming that the county could have no say in the matter as of Tuesday.

Legal Questions Raised by Alligator Alcatraz

The process or lack of process has many individuals and organizations questioning the legality of Alligator Alcatraz, despite its stemming from the state’s legal authority.

Declaring in communications to Collier and Miami-Dade counties after the plans were already put into motion that the state’s use was emergency related, and because they are using what are described as temporary facilities, several legal and environmental assessment processes have been avoided thus far.

“What really stands out to me is that it’s the state of Florida that’s initiating this detention center. The states should not be in the business of building detention centers for immigrants that are awaiting deportation,” immigration attorney Hector Diaz said.

“These detention centers are for processing and for temporarily housing them if they are not eligible for a bond or cannot be immediately deported,” Diaz continued.

Florida has authorized Florida Highway Patrol and local sheriffs to arrest undocumented immigrants.

“Pretty soon, before you know it, the state will start appointing immigration judges and prosecutors, and have their own immigration system,” Diaz warned.

Meanwhile, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida was reviewing all potential steps that could be taken to protect the site and the Tribe. Several Seminole and Miccosukee families live near the site and are concerned.

“The Miccosukee Tribe is opposed to the use of our ancestral lands in Big

Cypress as a detention facility. The State would save substantial taxpayer dollars by pursuing its goals at a different location with more existing infrastructure and less environmental and cultural impacts to the Big Cypress and Tribal lands,” said Miccosukee Tribal Chairman Talbert Cypress in a prepared statement issued Monday.

Hundreds of people, and some estimating nearly 1,000 attendees, gathered for an educational protest on Sunday along U.S. 41, opening with indigenous ritual and prayer and carrying signs of opposition. Vehicles lined the Tamiami Trail and people stood along the side of the road.

Alligator Alcatraz Contacts

- Gov. Ron DeSantis at (850) 717-9337
- Florida Attorney General’s Office (850) 414-3300 or (800) 226-6667
- Project updates are available to the public through Florida Division of Emergency Management Director Kevin Guthrie, kevin.Guthrie@em.myflorida.com or call (850) 294-8250.
- Friends of the Everglades set up a link everglades.org/no-alligator-alcatraz to communicate efficiently to Gov. Ron DeSantis and Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier.
- Betty Osceola, who has a strong social media presence on FB.com/buffalotiger.airboattours, is likely to announce updates, including the possibility of another event.



Clyde Butcher speaks to the crowd gathered in protest of the planned Alligator Alcatraz.

Florida Court Clerks Issue Warning

Fraudulent PayFLClerk Website and Social Media Spoofing

Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers (FCCC) has become aware of unauthorized and fraudulent activity involving the spoofing of the official website, www.PayFLClerk.com. A malicious actor has created look-alike domains and deceptive social media accounts in an attempt to mislead the public and redirect users to illegitimate platforms.

Spoofed domains include:

[payflclerk\(.\)com\(.\)com](http://payflclerk(.)com(.)com)
[www-payflclerk\(.\)com](http://www-payflclerk(.)com)

Fraudulent social media accounts include:

Facebook: [facebook\(.\)com/payflclerk](https://facebook(.)com/payflclerk)

Twitter/X: [X\(.\)com/payflclerks](https://X(.)com/payflclerks)

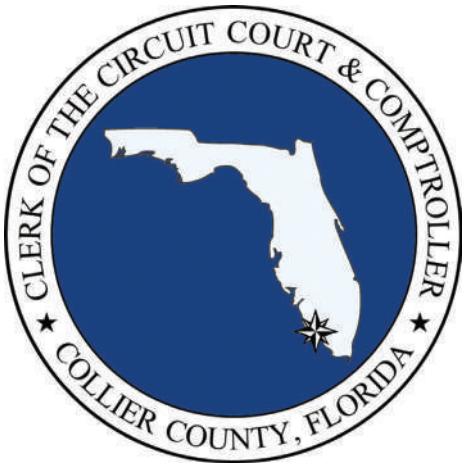
These spoofed websites and accounts mimic the visual identity of the official PayFLClerk payment platform and deceptively incorporate links to legitimate government agencies such as the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (FLHSMV) and Toll-By-Plate,

increasing the risk of user confusion and data compromise.

FCCC is working closely with General Counsel John K. Londot, Esq., to investigate the matter, pursue takedown efforts, and notify impacted state agencies. Law enforcement and cybersecurity partners have also been alerted, and actions are being taken to safeguard Floridians from this ongoing threat.

Important Reminder:

FCCC urges Clerks, state agency



partners, and the public to only use the verified and secure website, www.PayFLClerk.com, for all official court-related payments. Do not engage with suspicious domains or social media accounts.

For more information, visit www.collierclerk.com.

‘Operation Dry Water’ Targets Boating Under the Influence



Over the July Fourth holiday weekend, law enforcement agencies across the United States will focus on preventing impaired boating as part of the annual Operation Dry Water heightened awareness and enforcement weekend, taking place July 4 - 6, 2025. Operation Dry Water (ODW) is a national initiative aimed at reducing alcohol- and drug-related incidents and fatalities on the water. As part of the campaign, Law Enforcement Officers will be on heightened alert for violations of boating under the influence (BUI) laws, promoting the safety of all boaters.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), in collaboration with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) and the U.S. Coast Guard, will kick off the 2025 ODW weekend with a national launch event. The three-day Operation Dry Water heightened awareness and enforcement weekend will be taking place nationwide July 4 - 6, 2025. The year-round campaign raises awareness about the dangers of boating under the influence (BUI) and reminds boaters that impaired boating by both the operator and passengers is dangerous and can cause serious injuries and fatalities.

“Operation Dry Water is crucial in reminding boaters that safety on the water starts with sober boating,” said NASBLA Chair Lieutenant Curt Lewis. “Operating a boat while impaired is dangerous and can have fatal consequences. It’s essential for both operators and passengers to stay sober to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience on the water.” Alcohol use is the leading contributing factor in recreational boater fatalities and a



leading factor in recreational boating incidents. The goal is to combine education and enforcement to significantly reduce alcohol- and drug-related boating incidents. In 2024, Florida reported 685 boating accidents, resulting in 81 fatalities, according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife

Conservation Commission. This marks a 26-accident and 22-fatality increase over 2023 incidents.

The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary promotes safe recreational boating in many ways. We teach safe boating classes. We provide free Vessel Safety Examinations to ensure that

recreational boats have all the required safety equipment and that it is in good working order. For further information about other U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary programs, please contact the Naples Flotilla at (239) 261-7375 or visit us at: <https://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=070-09-03>

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Restaurants & Bars

Everglades City

Camellia Street Grill
Mon-Thurs 12-9
Fri-Sun 11-9
(239) 695-2003

Captain Morgan's Seafood Grill Corp
Thur-Mon 11 am – 8 pm
(239) 232-0041

City Seafood
Mon-Fri 8 am – 3 pm
Sat & Sun 8 am – 4 pm
(239) 695-4700

Diving Pelican
Sun-Thur 11 am – 8 pm
Fri-Sat 11 am – 8:30 pm
(239) 232-0475

Gator Hole Bar
Wed-Thur 11 am - 7pm
Fri-Sat 11 am – 12 am
Sun 11 am – 7 pm
(239) 232-0475

Island Cafe
Daily 6 am – 9 pm
(239) 695-0003

Nely's Corner (Inside EFC)
Fri-Sun 6:15 am - 3 pm
(239) 695-4222

Rod & Gun
Daily 11:30 am - 7:30 pm
(239) 695-2101

Triad Seafood Market & Cafe
Closed for Summer

Wildman's Pizza Pasta & Pythons
Wed & Thurs 12 pm – 8 pm
Fri-Sat 12 pm – 9 pm
(239) 426-9453

Chokoloskee

HavAnnA Cafe
Closed until October 24th
239-695-2214

Goodland

Crabby Lady
Tues-Sat 11 am – 6 pm
Sun 11 am – 5 pm
(239) 394-5663

Kirks Fish House
Closed for Season
(239) 394-8616

Little Bar
Daily 11:30 am – 12 am
(239) 394-5663

Paradise Found
Thur-Sun
(239) 330-7773

Stans Idle Hour
Fri-Sun 11 am - 6:30 pm
(239) 394-3041

Ochopee

Subway
Daily 7 am – 7 pm
(239) 695-0949

Joanies Blue Crab Cafe
Mon, Tues, Thur, Fri. Sun
10:30 am - 5 pm
Closed Wednesday
(239) 695-2682

CR92 & US41 (Naples)

Gator's Crossing
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(239) 394-0288

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Glades Haven General Store
Daily 9 am – 7 pm
(239) 232-0486

Grimm's Stone Crab
Closed until October
(239) 695-3222

Worship

Chokoloskee Family Church
Sun: 10 am School & Worship, 6 pm Service
Wed: Youth 7 pm
1236 Demere Ln, Chokoloskee

Everglades
Community Church
Sun: 11 am Worship
101 Copeland Ave, Everglades City

First Baptist Church
Sun: 9:45 am School, 11 am Worship & 6 pm Service
Wed: 6 pm Bible Study
416 E School Dr, Everglades City

Holy Family Catholic Church
Closed for Season
200 Datura St E, Everglades City

Goodland Baptist Church
Sun: 10 am Worship
Wed: 6 pm Bible Study
410 Mango Ave. Goodland

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Housing

FOR RENT: Second floor 2-bedroom/1 bath apartment, WiFi, washer/dryer, screened-in porch, fully furnished. Great location in Everglades City. Annual rental. Email us for details at bonniewoodward@gmail.com.

Help Wanted

Captain Morgans Seafood Grill Corp., has open positions for Full and Part Time Preparation Cooks, Dining Room/Cafeteria Attendant and Bartender, and Chefs and Head Cooks. Send your information to captainmorgansseafoodgrill@gmail.com. We are located in 102 South Copeland Avenue Everglades City, Florida 34139. Our phone number is 239-352-0202.

Help Wanted

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Help Wanted

Looking for Help to water plants at Everglades National Park.
Call 239-671-9860.

VOLUNTEER: The Big Cypress Gallery is looking for volunteers to help with litter pick-up along Tamiami Trail surrounding the gallery. Participants will need to be 12

years of age or older. An adult will need to be present to supervise any participants under the age of 16.
This activity is a part of the program: Adopt-a-Highway. Please respond to the following email if you would like to be a part of reducing human impact on this rich ecosystem. Safety training videos are available. <https://www.fdot.gov/maintenance/aahinfo.shtm> bcg@clydebutcher.com

Clubs

Everglades Lions Club
2nd Thursday of the month | 6 pm
September - May
Jinkins Fellowship Hall behind Everglades Community Church
101 S. Copeland Ave, Everglades City
evergladeslionsclub@gmail.com

Ladies Coffee
Thursdays | 8:30 am
Rotates Everglades City Restaurants
snookcity@gmail.com
(239) 719-0020

Goodland Civic Association
3rd Tuesday of the month | 6:30 pm
Goodland Community Center
417 Mango Ave, Goodland
(239) 776-1372


Helpful Numbers

EC Airpark: (239) 252-6298
EC City Hall: (239) 695-3781
EC Public Library: (239) 695-2511
EC Trash Pickup: (239) 252-2380
EC Visitor Center: (239) 232-0473
Goodland Recycle: (239)252-2380

Post Office
Everglades City & Chokolosee:
(239) 695-2174
Ochopee: (239) 695-2099
Goodland: (239) 394-7387

Local Parks
Big Cypress: (239) 695-2000
EVG National Park: (305) 242-7700
Fakahatchee Preserve:
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