

And the Best Chili Goes to....

Submitted

Saturday, October 11, was full of fun activities to start off the fall season. The fifth annual Chili Cookoff was held in the morning at McLeod Park with kids playing on the swings, shooting basketballs, and splashing in the blow-up waterslide. There were nine locals who participated in cooking their favorite recipes: Casey Whiles, CJ Marchese, Wesley Mitchell, Dr. Cherie Allison, Diana Valdes, Helen Brown, HavAnnA Café, Alex Thompson, and Jessica Oliver. It was a hard decision for judges Wes Narin, Logan Wagner, and Shaina Zatz who announced HavAnnA Café (for the second time) as the first place winner, Dr. Cherie Allison took second place, and Diana Valdes third place. In addition to enjoying delicious chili and desserts, the Women’s Ministries hosted a raffle with generous donations from the following: Island Café, Win-Car General Store, Glades Haven, Everglades City Airboat Tours, Everglades Fishing Company, Outdoor Resort Marina, City Seafood, Parkway Motel, HavAnnA Café, Diane and Mike Merritt, Shannon Mitchell, CJ Marchese, Terri Lewis, Angela Nicholson, Right Choice Supermarket, Betty Brown, Wildman’s Pizza, Captain Craig’s Adventures, Mike Reark, Rodney Raffield, Jessica Anshow of Island Girl Tours, Beth Whigham, Chokoloskee Island Resort, Captain Jerry Hooks, Jodi Brown, Karen Kramser, Kelly Borza, Brock & Maureen Wagner, John & Georgia Ehrlund, Robbie Richter, Ward Michaels, Hi Love, Skunk Ape Headquarters, C1Catch1Python Hunting Trip, FLSCA, Grimms Stone Crabs, and Ernest Hamilton’s Fish House. THANK YOU all!



HavAnnA Café with the first-place trophy.



Chili samples from HavAnnA Café.



Kids enjoy waterslides, basketball and the playground.



Volunteers with items donated by Everglades City and Chokoloskee businesses.



Tukey Oliver talking with Aaron of HavAnnA Café.



Diana Valdes offers homemade desserts.

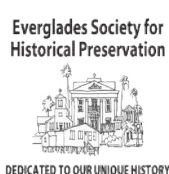
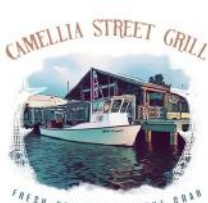


The first place trophy went to HavAnnA Café.



Cherie Allison, David, Aaron’s mom, Aaron, and Diana Valdes.

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FREE



Everglades Fishing Company Thanks Community

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E-City Falls in Championship

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Golden Apple Teachers of Distinction Announced

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Calendar						
NOVEMBER 2025						
Sunday, November 2	Monday, November 3	Tuesday, November 4	Wednesday, November 5	Thursday, November 6	Friday, November 7	Saturday, November 8
		Rep. Diaz-Balart Office EC Office – 2:30 – 5:00 PM City Council Meeting – 7:00 – 9:00 PM	Food Pantry 9:30-12 Noon	Ladies Coffee - 8:30 AM HaVannA Cafe	First Friday Social Gathering 5:00 – 7:00 PM Historic Bar at the Rod and Gun Club Hook 'em in the Glades	Hook 'em in the Glades
Sunday, November 9	Monday, November 10	Tuesday, November 11	Wednesday, November 12	Thursday, November 13	Friday, November 14	Saturday, November 15
		Book Club Meeting – 10:00 AM Connie Barker's home "Nature Girl"	Food Pantry 9:30-12 Noon	Ladies Coffee - 8:30 am Island Café Lions Club Membership Meeting – 6:00 PM Jinkins Fellowship Hall next to Community Church.	Today is the AD DEADLINE for December Mullet Rapper Edition.	Airpark Aviation Day – 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM McLeod Park
Sunday,November 16	Monday, November 17	Tuesday, November 18	Wednesday,November 19	Thursday, November 20	Friday, November 21	Saturday, November 22
		Code Enforcement & Planning and Zoning Meeting – 6:00 – 7:00 PM City Hall	Food Pantry 9:30-12 Noon	Ladies Coffee - 8:30 AM City Seafood Third Thursday Lecture Series – 2:00 – 3:00 PM "Defending the Sacred" Museum of the Everglades		
Sunday, November 23	Monday, November 24	Tuesday, November 25	Wednesday, November 26	Thursday, November 27	Friday, November 28	Saturday, November 29
	CCPS Fall Break No school through November 28		Food Pantry 9:30-12 Noon	City Hall Closed 	City Hall Closed	
Sunday, November 30						

Airpark Day Takes Off November 15

By Harry Henkel

The Friends of Everglades Airpark, Inc., welcomes the community to learn about careers and hobbies in aviation on Saturday, November 15th from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM for the very first

Airpark Day. We are fortunate to have the Everglades Airpark as part of our town. This event is planned to celebrate the history and future of Everglades Airpark. An Air Tour Company will be on hand. Patrons will have opportunities to win plane and helicopter rides. Food and entertainment will be provided. Lorenzo Walker Technical College will be on site to do demonstrations along with the Civil Air Patrol, flight instructors, EEA Young Eagles Flight

Program, Caloosa Country Music and Cool Cruiser Antique Car Club. Donations will be accepted. With the opening of the new Everglades Visitor's Center, the future is bright for Everglades City and its Airpark. Come enjoy this family event. Airpark Day, November 15th at McLeod Park, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM. Golf carts will transport any fly-ins to the park. Brought to you by Friends of the Everglades Airpark.



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Sun. Kids Church10:00 AM

Sun. Renewal6:00 PM

Wed. Youth Renewal7:00 PM

Thurs. Bible Study7:00 PM

Fall Festival Fun



Photos by Patty Huff



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Breeze News

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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



STORIES FROM THE HEART

Pastor Jesse Wilson

Real Neighborhood Hero

Growing up in the 70s and 80s, there was an old cartoon that aired on Saturday mornings. Saturdays were every kid’s favorite day; it was the day all three major networks showed cartoons! I know what you’re thinking, three networks?? Yes, flipping the channel was pretty easy back then, and at midnight, they played the national anthem and went off the air. Good times, good times indeed! So, every Saturday the networks played cartoons, and one of my favorites was one from the 60s. It was called Underdog. It has been said that Underdog was a jab at Superman, but I don’t believe it. Superman had nothing on Underdog, with his humor and wit, and superpowers to boot. Who could resist such a cool superhero? And his



Ms. Hazel with her favorite Pastor...me (lol)!

favorite line was “Have no fear, Underdog is here!”

Based on the box office numbers for the Marvel and DC Comics movies that Hollywood puts out, it appears a lot of people like a good superhero. People like it when someone stands up for the little guy. In high school, I did not like bullies, so I often put a stop to them if I saw someone being bullied. That is the blessing of coming from a large family of cousins and having an older brother. Plus, I had a lot of friends and thought everyone should be nice and enjoy life. I was not a jock, nor did I play sports; instead, I enjoyed acting and being the class clown, and getting a good laugh was fun.

So naturally, I enjoyed cartoons like Underdog because he not only did good, but things worked out when he came on the scene. What was a good cartoon and storyline from Hollywood, though, does not even come close to real-life heroes. Oh, you won’t find their names in the news; they don’t seek the attention. You also won’t see them out front. Often times real-life heroes go unnoticed, and they are ok with that, because what they do flows from a heart of servanthood and a desire to just want to be a blessing.

What I love about our community is the closeness that only a small community can experience. Oh, there are issues at times, but when the chips are down, when someone needs help, we come together. And what I really love about our community is that we have a real-life hero among us. She doesn’t wear a cape or some fancy superhero costume. She dresses quite normally and blends in well.

Yet if you find yourself in the hospital or going through a challenging time, you have probably met this person, this real-life hero. Her name is Ms. Hazel. She’s the one from our church who seems to know what’s going on around town. And she’s often the first one to know before anyone else. So, whether



Ms. Hazel with her daughter Donna.

she’s putting on a bake sale for the ladies’ ministries or organizing a dinner for a family because someone was in the hospital, you’ll catch a glimpse of her doing the hero thing, because that’s Ms. Hazel, that’s who she is. When I’m at a minister’s conference and I meet a pastor in despair over too much happening in their church to keep up, I just let them know right then, “You just need a Hazel.”

I will often get a strange look, but I enjoy bragging about Ms. Hazel. And if I could clone her, I would have a church full of Hazels. To be honest, if I could clone her, I would sell every family in America a Hazel. I think the country would be better off, because to know her is to be better off. So, if you find yourself out and about town and you come across a kind lady selling baked goods or delivering a food basket or even planning a dinner for someone, chances are it’s Ms. Hazel. She’s our neighborhood hero, and I wish we had many more like her!

Jesse currently pastors Chokoloskee Family Church on Chokoloskee Island along with his wife, Charity. Their growing congregation keeps them busy with local outreaches and community events. They have two grandkids who live in the area who also attend their church, along with their daughter and son-in-law.

Cecil Barker Receives Lions Club Award
By Harry Henkel

The Everglades Lions Club recognized its immediate past president, Cecil Barker, with an engraved award on October 9th. Lion Vicky Wells, a longtime member and past club president, presented the award. She mentioned Cecil’s many achievements during his six year tenure, including his famous barbecued chicken among many other menus he has served to the Everglades Community. We surely are a better community for all his efforts on behalf of the Everglades Lions Club. Thank you, Lion President Cecil Barker, 2019-2025. We won’t forget your famous chicken!




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Corvette Club Visits EC

Submitted

The chili cookoff wasn't the only thing happening on October 11th! Twenty-six members of the Southwest Florida Corvette Club drove their 14 Corvettes from Ft Myers to enjoy lunch at the historic Rod and Gun Club before visiting the Museum of the Everglades and the Smallwood Store in Chokoloskee. The Southwest Florida Corvette Club is headquartered in Fort Myers.



Photos by Patty Huff

Update on the Bank Building

By Patty Huff

First of all, ESHP would like to thank our city and our community for their patience and support of our efforts in rehabilitating the Bank of Everglades Building. This historic structure was built by Barron Gift Collier in 1927 and was the only bank in our county until 1949. It continued to serve our residents as a bank until its charter was moved to Immokalee in 1962, when the county seat was relocated to Naples. However, many businesses continued to operate in this building until 2017, when Hurricane Irma made it uninhabitable. Bob Flick, the owner, worked for years trying to restore the building, but eventually decided to donate it to our historical society in 2021.

ESHP then took on the challenge of raising the funds through grants and donations. With federal assistance and generous contributions by so many, we were able to make significant progress in removing the non-historic sections of the building and start the rebuilding of the foundation.

The first step of the construction process was to store the original Dade County pine floors and beadboard covering the first-floor walls. Classic Carpentry, our contractor, specializes in restoring this heart-pine wood. The next step was repairing the foundation. Over the past several months of working through high tides and rainy days, Consel (the same company that worked on City Hall after Hurricane Wilma in 2005) completed the installation of all the micropiles in mid-October. This required dewatering the site. Since it was not possible to use our current drainage system, the only option was to carry the water through above-ground pipes from the building site to the river. This dewatering needs to be

continued through the next stage, which is the pouring of the concrete. Commercial Concrete Systems will soon be starting this last, and most important, part of Phase I.

It is now that we once again reach out to our supporters and donors to join us in completing this project, which will benefit not only the visitors coming to our area to learn about the many amenities, tours, and opportunities, but it will also be a gathering space for the whole community. This rehabilitated building will have enough space to hold events (both inside and outside), educational programs, art exhibits, and much more. ESHP wants this to be a focal point of the community, a place where our community can take pride that they are a part of saving history for our current and future generations. ESHP continues to apply for federal, state, and county grants, but we need your support. For naming opportunities and more information, visit our website www.eshp.org or call me at 239-719-0020. Thank you!

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E-City Takes on Seacrest in Sweet 16



By Scott H. Shook

The young Everglades City volleyball team exceeded expectations, advancing to the Sweet 16 in the state volleyball tournament with an exciting five-set win at Foundation Christian Academy in Brandon on Tuesday, October 21. The Gators then lost in straight sets at Seacrest Country Day on Saturday, October 25, a team under investigation by the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) for alleged recruiting violations, to end their season.

The Gators’ Sweet 16 loss was to be expected, as Seacrest plays a schedule loaded with state and local

powers and has won the past four state championships. The Gators acquitted themselves well against Seacrest, falling 25-14, 25-16, 25-6. Seacrest’s 4-23 record is misleading, however, given the program recently forfeited nine matches in the wake of an FHSAA investigation centered around the alleged recruitment of a player from out of state. The majority of the Everglades City roster is comprised of freshmen and sophomores.

In their win over Foundation Christian (17-7), the Gators handed their foe their first home loss of the season, 25-22, 23-25, 26-24, 19-25, 15-9.

EC District All Stars

Courtesy of CCPS



Michael McComas Selected as 2025 Leadership Legacy Award Winner

Submitted

The Leadership Collier Foundation, an affiliate of the Greater Naples Chamber, has announced that Michael A. McComas and Naples Comprehensive Health (NCH) have been selected as the recipients of the 2025 Leadership Legacy Award. McComas and NCH were recognized at the Leadership Collier Foundation Celebration Luncheon in October.

This special gathering, hosted by the LCF Advisory Council and honorary

chair Collier County Sheriff’s Office Undersheriff Col. Jim Bloom, spotlights exceptional alumni and community partners that strengthen leadership in Collier County.

The Leadership Legacy Award is given annually to a business and an individual leader who have been instrumental in furthering the LCF’s mission through their support and engagement. Past winners of the Leadership Legacy Award include Jim and Kim Kantor, Aysegul Timur and Karl Sheffield. Past businesses that have been honored are STOCK

Development, Sunshine Ace Hardware and Arthrex, Inc.

McComas is one of the co-founders of the Leadership Collier program and has remained deeply involved in the LCF since the foundation’s inception. McComas currently serves as an honorary member and previously served as the chairman of the LCF Advisory Council. Originally from Cleveland, McComas moved to Naples in 1974, before ultimately settling in Everglades City. He currently serves on the Everglades City Council.

With two hospitals and an alliance of more than 900 physicians and medical facilities in Collier County and Southwest Florida, NCH is committed to helping everyone live a longer, happier and healthier life. The healthcare network regularly supports LCF activities, including hosting Leadership Collier, Associate Leadership Collier and Youth Leadership Collier participants for tours and encouraging NCH team members to participate in LCF programming.

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Everglades Fishing Company Thanks Community

Submitted

The day of the Chili Cookoff featured another great meal at the Everglades Fishing Company, with Jimmy Wheeler and his family cooking a BBQ dinner for the community to celebrate their sixth anniversary and to thank everyone for their support through the years! Gator Nate entertained the large crowd and Jill and Geri sold tickets to raise funds for the upcoming Hook ‘em in the Glades fishing tournament to support school activities.



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THE ADVENTURES OF THE
SALTWATER COWBOY

Jon Edward Edwards

Better Than Twins

I was flying by the time I reached the last stop on my marathon errand trip that I’d put off since Thomas and I visited Smallwood’s Store last July after a fishing trip of a lifetime that I wrote about in my previous story – “Silver King.”

Everglades Fishing Company (EFC) has the best swag, tackle, gear, and breakfast sandwiches for anglers in Collier County. Every person who walks in is a potential reader. Everglades City is home base for the 10,000 Islands, my nirvana, and the Everglades City Mullet Rapper gave me a start printing these stories. There couldn’t be a better-suited location to display a poster of my book– an artist’s rendering of an original print of me looking astern of my Beavertail at the famed Cape Romano Dome Houses. From the camera angle, the houses are surrounded by water, giving the photo an “apocalyptic” vibe.

I was sorry Jimmy Wheeler, the owner, wasn’t in, so I could thank him in person. “I’ll have him call you,” said Josh, Jimmy’s man behind the counter. Holding the 18” x 24” print, he said, “I’ll go ahead and put this up, too.”

A Sheriff’s Deputy had come in. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see him standing flatfooted in the center of the thoroughfare, to my west/southwest at about 110 degrees. What had I done now? I ran through my mental checklist, all systems go, then it occurred to me. I must be behaving erratically.

A brief rundown on the chemistry of my brain, as I understand it. The manic side of my bipolar two diagnosis can manifest in a similar fashion to being high, stoned, or zooted, because this wasn’t the first time that someone, usually in a position of authority, has stopped me and forced me to prove to them that I was “of sound mind.” You’d think I would be offended by this point, but I get it; sometimes I act and look crazy. It’s a good thing I ended up being a writer, or I’d be weird for no reason.

The behavior also manifests upon a splendid mood, the creativity is flowing, and my jokes are killing – all characteristics of the manic side of a bipolar brain. On this day, I had much to be grateful for and many reasons to be happy.

It makes sense when you think about it. A sense of euphoria is associated with indicators that a dream is coming true. Strange to say, the interaction looming with the man in my peripherals was the crescendo of the most self-gratifying and confidence-building hour and a half of my writing life. Mega affirmation for my craft – something that has consumed

thousands of hours of my life since I began writing.

Beginning at Smallwood’s Store, where I looked out over Chokoloskee Bay, and waited for the precious young lady behind the counter to finish with her customers so that I could drop off the stack of books titled, Adventures of the Saltwater Cowboy, to sell in their collection of literature related to the area. Once she was free, I told Ava, the great-great granddaughter of Ted Smallwood, the Postmaster on the Island back in the infamous days of the outlaw, Edgar Watson, “I spoke with Lynn a few days ago, she’s expecting these,” and handed her the books. “Don’t worry about the paperwork. I’ll deal with that later.”

She wasn’t tracking my story, a common occurrence while communicating with humans. I explained to her that my friend, Thomas Woods, and I had been in the store a few weeks prior and had arranged the transaction. She laughed at my bizarre humor as I asked her a few historical questions before moving to my next errand, the Everglades Visitor’s Center, to see Patty and check how book sales were doing.

Patty wasn’t in, but I spoke to Don. They’d sold all but two of my books, more good news. “Fantastic,” I said, leaving instructions for Patty to call me. My next stop was the ‘The Everglades Museum, to check on some post-Hurricane Ian storm repairs related to my day job.

I walked into an omen – a Randy Wayne White display I did not know was happening. A black poster with a smoldering cigarette caught my eye - Tampa Burn. That book cover is responsible for me writing creatively. I wasn’t a fiction reader until I picked up a copy in the airport and headed to NOLA for a fishing trip. The cover enticed me. I read the book jacket: a carny psycho versus a marine biologist/ assassin, set on the coast of SWFL and the Caribbean, written by a tarpon fishing guide out of Sanibel. What? I’m in.

I read every book, the Randy Stryker novels, and the non-fiction books. I read RWW’s influences, including John D. MacDonald and Peter Mathiessen. One day, I had an idea for a thriller and wrote a plot summary for a novel called Gulfstream featuring the character, Captain Max Dean. When I was done, I read it as if I hadn’t written it, and knew I was a writer. I didn’t have to run it by anyone. I created a world inside my head; I knew each character by heart and could answer any question a person might have about them.

To this day, RWW remains my most significant influence, along with James Lee Burke, and he knows it, I’ve told him. There would be no Captain Max Dean without Doctor Marion P. Ford, as I imagine there would be no Doc Ford without Travis McGee (John D. MacDonald), no Scott Harvath (Brad Thor) with Mitch Rapp (Vince Flynn R.I.P.), etc.

Back at EFC, “May I help you?” I

said, no attempt to hide my contempt for the Sheriff’s Deputy, whose name I don’t remember, with a milder-mannered partner. He figured he had me dead to rights on something, I reckon, the way he stood, blocking my egress from the establishment.

“Are you alright?” he asked, with what we call a S’ eating grin.

“Well, hell yes,” I responded in cheer. “Did I park illegally?”

“No.

“Jaywalk?”

“No.”

“Am I behaving erratically again?” I went ahead and asked, knowing what he was getting at.

He didn’t respond, yet his body language answered. The game commenced. He had me nervous as a blind cat walking on tin foil with Scotch tape stuck to its paws, peppering me with questions. Where am I coming from, where am I going, blah, blah, blah. He was getting nowhere fast; therefore, I asked, “Well, what’d I do?”

He said, “Nothing.” What in the wild world of sports is going on here?

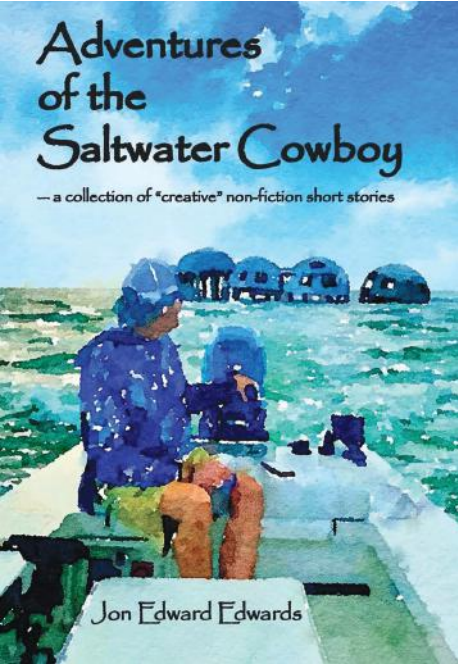
I could tell by the questions he asked and the way he asked them that he thought I was impaired. I was not, so I decided to push the envelope—caution to the wind. “Then why are you jacking me around?” One of my gifts that can also be a curse is that I’m incapable of not saying what I feel compelled to say.

“I just want to make sure you’re ok,” is all he could say. Slowing down, I explained the nature of my personal business related to my book and the various stops along the way.

He patronized me further, “I’d like for EMS to come check you out, if that’s alright,” leading me to a lounge area at the front of the store, setting me down while he called the paramedics to ensure that I was “ok.”

“Man, I don’t have time for that,” I said, sitting down, as if I had a choice. He stood board straight, intimidatingly close. A few seconds passed, and I said, “Man, back up.” He looked surprised. “Why are you crowding me, dude? Back up,” I said again. His partner now looked alive and had moved close but remained quiet. So far, it was just Officer Blow Hard, his partner, and Josh, Jimmy’s Counter Man – no one had come in. That was good. He didn’t move an inch. My redneck blood boiled. “You’re going to feel silly when you find out I’m just bipolar and in a good mood.” Boy, I was, too, riding a natural fifty-foot-high wave. Again, he didn’t respond, which I thought was well-played.

The Collier County EMTs, three of them, showed up just in time. They were my saviors, the voices of reason, the Three Wisemen. However, it was one wise woman. When they realized that I was not only not impaired but sharp enough to hold court, they began asking the Deputy questions that meant, “Why did you call us?” Without asking directly, presumably to save face for



their contemporary, admirable.

I addressed the elephant and stated the obvious. “Yeah, why did you call them?”

“To ensure that you were ok, sir.”

With a nod and a wink, I said, “Right, right, exactly.” Who knows why he was busting my balls, but not for the reasons stated. All the Sheriff’s Deputies I know are cool dudes, and probably he is, too. We’ll see.

I’d already explained, ad nauseam, why I was there and what I was doing. A poster of my book was visible on the counter; a copy sat on the coffee table a few feet away. I said, “Exhibit A: a collection of published short stories here and on Marco Island, 30-something. Some are about fishing, a couple are fictional prose, but most are accounts of things gone awry, fails, follies, accidents, near misses, and brush ins with authority figures.”

I’d yet to realize the gravitas of the situation, that I was living out a story in real time. Then it hit me. “Don’t you see?” I asked them, “This story is writing itself.” Aside from one person, the EFC collective erupted in raucous cheer, prompting my following comment, which came fast and sharp. Looking at the deputy, I watched his swagger morph to doubt as his posture changed, and he faded towards the back. I said, “You may want to be careful, Bubba. What you do in the next few moments could seal your fate in local pop culture.” (More laughter).

Adventures of the Saltwater Cowboy prints in the Mullet Rapper and the Coastal Breeze News, which are outside of the stores (all kinds), restaurants, parks, and offices. It’s the local rag typical of every community. People are gonna read it. I told him on my way out, “Don’t sweat it. I’ll go easy on you.” And I have.

My life is a series of short stories fueled by a steady flux of events uncommon to most people. I’m a Gonzo journalist (Hunter S. Thompson) covering the rip-roaring roller coaster ride that is my life.

Jon Edward Edwards is the local author of “The Adventures of the Saltwater Cowboy: and avid sportsman.



Everglades City coach Jason Mayberry gets the most from his seven-player roster.



Marissa Antonucci sets the ball.



Kaiya Kidder bumps the ball straight up in the air.

Photos by Scott H. Shook

E-City Falls in Championship

By Scott H. Shook

Everglades City faced Marco Island Charter Middle School in the SW Florida Athletic Conference Middle School Volleyball Championship in October, losing 25-12 and 25-14. The EC squad played with a roster of just seven players, while the Eagles fielded two separate lineups.

Everglades City coach Jason Mayberry was proud of the effort his lean roster put forth. He admits that just having one substitute makes things challenging.

“It always does,” Mayberry said, «but they»re a great group of girls, and they work hard. They show up every day. They always do their best. And I»m super proud of them. We»re a tiny, tiny, tiny community, tiny school. But they play volleyball. They love it. They have a passion for it. And you can tell.”



Camila Fernandez finds this shot a little too hot to handle.



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The 2025-2026 Collier County Teachers of Distinction. Can you see Everglades City’s own Peter Lettner? Hint: He’s in the back row!

Golden Apple Teachers of Distinction Announced

Submitted

The Education Foundation of Collier County – Champions For Learning is pleased to announce the

2025-2026 Collier County Teachers of Distinction, and Everglades City’s Peter Lettner is among those listed! On Monday, October 20th, they came together for the Teacher

of Distinction Kickoff Event, the starting point for the Golden Apple Program, Collier County’s premier educator recognition program.

Golden Apple unites the community in honoring, thanking, and celebrating teachers who inspire their students and exemplify the very best of the teaching profession. At the request of our community, parents, students, and colleagues had the opportunity to thank a teacher by nominating them to represent their school as a Teacher of Distinction with Thank-A-Teacher Nomination Cards. Over 5,700 Thank-A-Teacher submissions for nearly 1,500 educators were made in just a few weeks. This community-wide outpouring demonstrates a deep appreciation for our educators and how they change lives inside and outside of classrooms. Based on community nominations, these 59 teachers from 59 Collier County schools have been selected as this year’s Teachers of Distinction.

This group of educators will present their best practice to Champions For Learning’s volunteer selection committee. The committee will identify and select six educators to honor as the Golden Apple recipients in March 2026. The process culminates in April with the Golden Apple Celebration of Teachers, a first-class community



event that shines a spotlight on educators.

The 36th Annual Golden Apple Celebration of Teachers Dinner will be held on April 17th at Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa. This year’s event will return as an elegant dinner event celebrating the 2025-2026 cohort of Collier County Teachers of Distinction and Golden Apple Recipients, who exemplify teaching excellence.

“We are so excited for the 2026 Golden Apple Celebration of Teachers to return as an elegant, sit-down dinner to honor our outstanding educators for the incredible work they achieve in their classrooms and within our community,” said Eric Williams, President and CEO of Champions For Learning. “This dinner reflects our partnership with Collier County Public Schools and our commitment to serve as a catalyst for educational success.”

Details regarding tickets and sponsorship opportunities for the Golden Apple Celebration of Teachers will be coming soon. Please visit Championsforlearning.org/goldenapple/ for the most up-to-date information.

About The

EVERGLADES SEAFOOD FESTIVAL

The 2026 Everglades Seafood Festival marks its 56th year of celebrating the Stone Crab Capital of the World and local businesses. This legacy event attracts **50,000-70,000 people** from all over the world during the course of three days, featuring live music, carnival rides, handmade arts and crafts, unique vendors, and all sorts of mouth-watering seafood, including fresh gulf shrimp, fish, stone crab claws and fried gator. For the fifth year, the Everglades Seafood Festival is being hosted by the Florida Stone Crabbers Association, a 501(c)3.

The Everglades Seafood Festival is dedicated to investing in education and providing opportunities to students at Florida’s last K-12 school while also supporting local charities, hurricane disaster relief, and our commercial fishing industry. By partnering with sponsors, we promote local culture and support the community of Everglades City. Join us in creating a memorable event that strengthens the Everglades and fosters a sustainable future for all. We are looking forward to a record-breaking year, let’s make memories together!

About the Event

Friday, February 13 – Sunday, February 15, 2026
102 Copeland Ave. N., Everglades City, Florida 34139

Friday, Feb. 13 4pm-10pm | Saturday Feb. 14 10am-10pm | Sunday, Feb. 15 11am-6pm

Now in its 56th year, The Everglades Seafood Festival is an annual charity event benefiting the Everglades City community.
For additional details, please visit EvergladesSeafoodFestival.org

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Defending the Sacred

Mullet Rapper Staff

November is Native American Heritage Month, and in observance, the Museum of the Everglades Third Thursday series will focus on the Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes with guest speaker Betty Osceola, environmental educator and member of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians. Osceola will talk about the indigenous population’s spiritual connections to the land and their determination to honor, protect, and defend it as sacred ground – the Seminole and Miccosukee have long been stewards of the Everglades.

Osceola received the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Defender of the Everglades award in 2024, is a tribal judge and has appeared in documentary films and television shows.

Make plans to come to “Defending the Sacred,” on Thursday, November 20th from 2:00 – 3:00 PM. Museum of the Everglades, 105 West Broadway Avenue, Everglades City, FL 34139.



Photo by Lisette Morales



Photos by Capt. Mike Merritt



**FISHING THE
EVERGLADES**

Capt. Mike Merritt

November in the 10,000 Islands

The Redfish certainly showed up in October. We have been steadily catching good Reds. This should continue into November, and the bite should stay strong all month. The trick to catching a good bite has been the incoming tide. About two hours into the incoming tide and the water is up enough to fish shorelines without the fish being back in the roots is a good time to try. Cold fronts can become a problem and can shut the bite down. Strong SW winds can also be a problem. These

can stir up the water so bad it will be impossible to fish the outside. But, as long as things hold out and the weather is mild, the Reds should continue to cooperate. As the month progresses, these fish should move up the rivers and into the backcountry. This means we should catch fish all winter long back there.

The Snook bite has been so much better inshore finally! I am hoping this holds out as well. These fish really turned on in October, and I have had some 40 fish days, which is good. Some really nice fish, but plenty of juveniles too. November should see more of these fish moving into the backcountry, also. Baitfish such as Mullet, Pilchards, Threadfin Herring, and Glass Minnows have inundated the islands. And this is what has fueled the bite! This year, the mullet have come in really nice and Snook, Reds, and Tarpon are feeding on them as the tide rises. If you find a good push of baitfish, you should find a good feed! The one on the hook is always easier for the fish to find, so use what they are eating if you are live bait fishing.

Tarpon are passing back through the Islands also.

November has been the month that I have landed some of my biggest. Large Mullet are what they are targeting this time of year, but they can be caught on a variety of baits and artificials. It’s always great to get out when the bite is hot! There are fish scattered all through the Islands this time of year, and if you just keep moving and working, you are bound to have a great day on the water catching!

With the Islands teeming with life, keep your options open and be ready! You never know what is going to happen! Good luck this month!


Captain Mike Merritt was born in Coral Gables, Florida, lived in Australia as a child, and then moved back to Everglades City, Florida, where he graduated from Everglades City High School. He caught his first snook at the age of eight and has been catching them ever since. He is a third-generation fisherman and has been guiding in the Everglades National Park for over 30 years. While the glades are his primary fishing grounds, he also owns The Amazon Prime Ecolodge and has been fishing in Brazil’s Amazon for the last 12 years.

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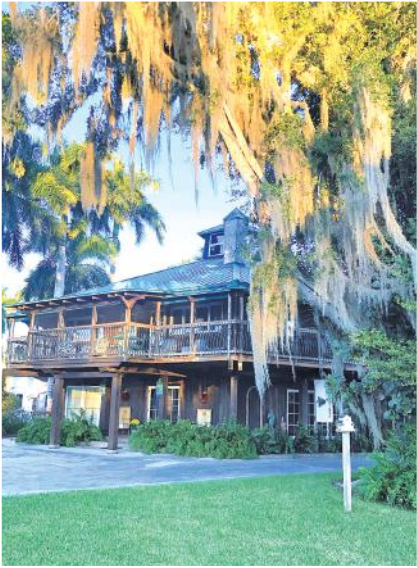
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Captain Morgan's Seafood Grill Co.
Fri, Sat 11 am - 9:30 pm
Sun-Thurs 11 am - 8 pm
239-695-4700

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

Diving Pelican
Sun - Thurs 11 am - 8 pm
Fri, Sat 11 am - 9:30 pm
Bar until 1:00 am
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

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239-235-7933

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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
Daily 11 am – 11 pm
(239) 394-0288

Markets

Right Choice Supermarket
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(239) 695-4535

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

Grimm's Stone Crab
(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
200 Datura St E, Everglades City

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

For Lease

FOR LEASE: Annual Lease of 600 sq. ft. Cafe space next to the Everglades City Visitors Center, with heavy tourist traffic. Restaurant equipment also available for sale. Also potential use as a gift shop, tourist office, etc. Email us for details at bonniewoodward@gmail.com.

Housing

FOR RENT: Apartment for monthly rent on Dupont St. No Pets- No children- Max two People. \$1000 a month includes 5x10 Storage unit and small fenced outside spill out area. It has galley kitchen, bathroom and living room/ bedroom area. Includes normal water, electricity and parking for two vehicles. Must pay First, Last and \$500 security deposit. Call 239.695.0695

Help Wanted

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@clydebutter.com

KAYAK ECO-TOUR GUIDE – TOP PAY Seasonal position (Dec./Jan. 2025 – April/May 2026) with management and full-time potential for a motivated individual. Join Jenny's Eco Everglades Wilderness Tours small, family-owned Everglades business known for its intimate educational tours. Compensation: Highly competitive pay, \$125–\$200/per tour PLUS tips, can work up to two tours per day (4-hours of work per tour). Paid training provided. Required: Must be strong, safety-minded, and passionate about conservation. Requires lifting kayaks (56–70 lbs), valid driver's license/vehicle, and willingness to obtain First Aid/CPR/ACA certifications, and be able to pass a background check. Apply today by sending resume to: ecoeverglades@gmail.com to lead 5-star Everglades experiences!

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.

The Mullet Rapper is looking for an advertising salesperson and a part-time freelance writer. Send your resume to val@coastalbreezenews.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 & Chokoloskee:
(239) 695-2174
Ochopee: (239) 695-2099
Goodland: (239) 394-7387

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