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SUNSHINE POST

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From \$26 and the dream of a movement that reshaped communities – discover the origins of Credit Unions.

O'zapft is! The German-American Social Club celebrates four decades of bringing authentic Munich magic to Southwest Florida.

Drama, passion and team spirit: Why the Ryder Cup electrifies the golf world every two years!

In this series, powered by our tech team and AI connoisseurs, we'll show you how to benefit from AI in daily life.



Frank Rahlf, Daria US. Photo courtesy of Daria US Holding LLC.

Every person can be a firework: Inside the vision of Daria US

With heart from Southwest Florida – Daria US is redefining what it means to be a German-American company while blending innovation, values, and opportunity into a model that aims to spark economic independence and quality of life for all.

It's a day on which somebody who's not from Florida might think a tsunami has hit the old back roads of Downtown Fort Myers, when I hastily make my way into the Headquarters of Daria US – an evermore prominent face in the already busy and bustling landscape of Main and Hendry St. I have a meeting with a key figure of the company, Frank Rahlf. The other key figure is Patrick Lauber, his partner. Together, they have developed a company, a value-based mindset and a community, which has been supporting families from the US and Germany in gaining financial freedom for three years now. Today, Frank Rahlf is our inaugural interview partner for this series called "Business Talk", where we speak to local business owners, entrepreneurs, and managers about their day-to-day life, success, values, and much more.

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Letter From the Editor

In an era of global news overload, Southwest Florida needs a voice that's close to home. The Sunshine Post connects neighbors, supports local businesses, and tells the positive stories that get lost in other media. We believe strong communities are built where people see, understand, and support one another. [Page No. 2 →](#)

SUNSHINE POST

HERO OF THE MONTH

Do you know someone who makes our community a better place?



A neighbor, a volunteer, a mentor or just someone whose kindness inspires others? We at Sunshine Post would love to share their story.



Nominate your Hero of the Month today and help us shine a light on the people who truly make a difference.

Send us your suggestion at info@sunshine-post.com.

Let's celebrate the everyday heroes among us together



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Stories That Connect – Welcome to the First Edition of the Sunshine Post

Welcome to the first edition of the Sunshine Post. A newspaper from Florida – for everyone who lives, works, and dreams here. Our goal is simple: to tell positive stories that connect. People, ideas, and experiences that show just how diverse Southwest Florida truly is.

Our most prominent article in this issue is part of a series about entrepreneurial stories from the region (p. 4). Frank Rahlf from Daria US talks about the Daria US community, his journey from Germany to Fort Myers, about responsibility, values – and why for him, it’s the people in Florida that matter most. A conversation that shows: success has a lot to do with integrity.

We continue with a celebration that has been bridging worlds for four decades: the Oktoberfest at the German-American Social Club in Cape Coral (p. 8). Dirndls, brass bands, pretzels – and a few thousand people celebrating as if Bavaria were just around the corner. What started as longing for home has become much more: a meeting place for generations, cultures, and neighbors who might otherwise never have crossed paths.

Also in this issue: the remarkable series about Credit Unions (p. 7). What once began with \$26 and a handful of people has transformed entire communities – and continues to shape how we think about solidarity and mutual support. An idea that’s more relevant than ever in times like ours. Stay tuned for more exiting facts in our November issue!

We’re looking ahead: In a new series, our tech team shows how artificial intelligence can make your daily life easier (p. 14). Whether in the office, at home, or in small businesses – the opportunities are vast when used wisely.

Before that, things get competitive with the Ryder Cup (p. 10). Every two years, this tournament captivates golf fans worldwide. We explain why passion, drama, and team spirit make the Ryder Cup an exceptional event – and why it’s more than just a competition.

Community matters most to us. That’s why we highlight projects that inspire us and our community to do good every day (see below). In this issue, we are introducing a column called “The Kindness“, which will be your Sunshine Post guide to helping your community in various ways.

Built With You:
The Sunshine Post is created with input from residents and business owners who know Southwest Florida best.
This is *your* newspaper.

Plus, there’s a culinary tip for anyone craving authentic German delicacies (p. 3): At Rock’n Rolls in Cape Coral, tradition is served – with patience, time, and plenty of dedication.

We at the Sunshine Post have curated our list of topics for this issue to bring joy and the freshness of a positive mindset to you!

Locally written, locally edited, locally printed and distributed – because we believe the best stories begin right on our doorstep.

Enjoy reading!
By Rouven Zietz, Sunshine Post Editorial Board

Quality journalism for everyone. Find the Sunshine Post at many locations across Cape Coral and Fort Myers.

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The Kindness: Give a Home, Change a Life

Each one of us has the chance to bring a little kindness into our community. It doesn’t have to be costly or complicated — even the smallest actions can make a difference.

In this column, we share simple ways to give back and spread goodness right here in our beautiful region.

Perhaps what you’re missing is a four-legged friend by your side. If so, consider adoption. You don’t need to go to a breeder — local shelters are filled with wonderful animals waiting for a second chance. Adopting doesn’t just change their lives — it can transform yours, too.

Even small acts of kindness — adopting, volunteering, donating, or sharing — make a big difference for local shelters.

But adoption is also a lifelong promise. Welcoming a pet means being ready for responsibility: through all of life’s changes, your companion depends on you. Thinking ahead ensures that your choice is filled with joy, not regret.

In our region, several shelters work tirelessly and often at full capacity: Cape Coral Animal Shelter (capecoralanimalshelter.com), Lee County Domestic Animal Services (leegov.com/animalservices/adopt), Gulf Coast Humane Society (gulfcoasthumaneociety.org), and the Animal Refuge Center in North Fort Myers (animalrefugecenter.com). Visit their websites, but even more: stop by, meet the animals, and feel the connection.

If adoption isn’t possible right now, you can still help: volunteer, donate, or spread the word. Every small act makes a difference.

On page 11, don’t miss our new feature *Hidden Sparks*, where we introduce two special pets from local shelters each month. *By J. Heartley*



Adoption doesn’t just change an animals life — it can transform yours, too.



These two cuties have found love and a forever home – with us! Photos courtesy of J. Heartley.

Hidden Gem in Plain Sight

One of Cape Coral's finest culinary treasures is tucked just off Del Prado Boulevard: Rock'n Rolls German Bakery & Bistro. Since opening its doors in May 2024, this family-founded bakery has quickly won the hearts (and taste buds) of locals and visitors alike.

Step inside, and you are immediately welcomed by the warm aroma of fresh bread, buttery croissants, and delicate pastries that are baked every morning. The display cases offer an irresistible variety of cakes, fruit-filled doughnuts, and classic German specialties crafted with authenticity and care. Seasonal treats, such as confections made with traditional German plums, highlight the bakery's dedication to heritage and quality.

At Rock'n Rolls, every item tells a story. Using only the finest natural ingredients like fresh yeast, pure water, salt, carefully selected flours, and, most importantly, time, the bakery preserves the art of traditional German baking. No shortcuts, no preservatives, just honest craftsmanship passed down through generations of family recipes. This philosophy extends beyond their bread and rolls: their homemade lunch specials have become a sensation in Cape Coral, introducing the community to authentic dishes such as sauerkraut and tender beef roulades. Each meal is prepared fresh to order, offering a genuine taste of Germany that simply cannot be replicated.

It's this blend of passion, tradition, and quality that sets Rock'n Rolls apart. Customers often remark that the bistro is unique in Cape Coral, a one-of-a-kind destination where you can enjoy a morning pastry, return at lunch for a hearty homemade meal, and soon – thanks to upcoming expansions – linger into the evening for bistro-style dining. Plans are already underway for a *new bakery in Downtown Fort Myers*, as well as a full German restaurant. Even the original Cape Coral location is preparing for a makeover this year, with a fresh new look, extended hours, and exciting additions to the menu. Rumor has it, Rock'n Rolls may even introduce *Döner Kebab*, a move that would make it the only spot in Cape Coral offering this beloved dish.

The community has already taken notice. *With 4.8 stars from 105 reviews on Google*, Rock'n Rolls German Bakery & Bistro ranks among the highest-rated establishments in Cape Coral and its surroundings. Day after day, the team proves that excellence is not just a goal - it's their standard.

For anyone seeking a taste of tradition, a freshly baked roll, or an authentic German lunch prepared with heart, Rock'n Rolls is more than a

bakery. It's a celebration of culture, quality, and community – truly a hidden gem in plain sight.
By Jacob Kugmun



The wonderful and hard-working Rock'n Rolls Team.

At Rock'n Rolls, there are no shortcuts – just honest craftsmanship, fresh ingredients, and the true taste of Germany.



Photos courtesy of Rock'n Rolls German Bakery & Bistro.

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Business Talk: Frank Rahlf from Daria US

With heart from Southwest Florida – Daria US is redefining what it means to be a German-American company while blending innovation, values, and opportunity into a model that aims to spark economic independence and quality of life for all.

It's a day on which somebody who's not from Florida might think a tsunami has hit the old back roads of Downtown Fort Myers, when I hastily make my way into the Headquarters of Daria US – an evermore prominent face in the already busy and bustling landscape of Main and Hendry St. I have a meeting with a key figure of the company, Frank Rahlf. The other key figure is Patrick Lauber, his partner. Together, they have developed a company, a value-based mindset and a community, which has been supporting families from the US and Germany in gaining financial freedom for three years now.

Today, Frank Rahlf is our inaugural interview partner for this series called "Business Talk", where we talk to local business owners, entrepreneurs, and managers about their day-to-day life, success, values, and much more.

I am greeted with a warm „Welcome!“ by Mr. Rahlf himself, who awaited me in the conference room on the second floor of a building one might confuse for something that came straight out of an industrial <me machine but was taken over by some high-tech, almost Star-Wars-esque robot invasion (the previous owner of the office). But even as I make my way up to the elongated and brightly lit space our interview's gonna take place in, I am also greeted by many smiling faces, one warmer than the previous one.

Warmth. Perhaps not a direct value, but definitely a feeling you get walking into the Daria US building on Hendry Street for the first time.

Winston: First of all, thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I have to admit, I can hear a little bit of an accent – are you originally from Germany?

Rahlf: Yes, that's right. I was born and raised in Germany, and even after many years abroad, a bit of the accent always stays with you.

Winston: I think it gives the conversation character, and of course, it ties in perfectly with the fact that Daria is a German-American company. So let me start with something that many people might be curious about: what was the real background, the motivation, behind moving to Florida and starting this immense project? Seems like a big decision to make.

Rahlf: Well, that is fairly simple to answer. The reason why

“Every person can be a firework of creativity, productivity, and happiness if they find themselves in the right position.”

Frank Rahlf,
Co-Founder and
CEO Daria US



Frank Rahlf, Co-Founder and CEO of Daria US. Photo courtesy of Daria US Holding LLC.

I moved to Southwest Florida was – surprisingly – not the sun shining so often here. I also did not move here for the truly magnificent and fascinating nature – I'm sure there are animals and creatures a German might never imagine to see in his life that I see daily in Florida, truly a privilege! Clear waters, beautiful beaches, etc.. That is the Florida charm I always enjoyed – for all 35 years that I've been visiting before I finally moved. But no, it was not for that. The biggest and most important reason is that the people here are just so friendly and open and kind. You just feel very welcome and at ease when you're here.

Winston: Exactly my thoughts when I came into your office!

Rahlf: Goal accomplished! Something else I love about Floridians is that you can build-contact very easily, because the people are very heartily and always ready to help you out. But to answer your question briefly: The people were the most important reason for me to start Daria US and consequently also start my life here in Florida. And now that we've achieved that, we want to give back to the people of Florida in exactly the same way and with the exact same kindness they treated us with. This is very important to us. In Germany, we say: "Es liegt uns am Herzen". It means it lies at our heart, I feel like that envisions how important it is to us.

Winston: Absolutely. German is such a beautiful language, I am now noticing. So many warm and feeling words! Mr. Rahlf, just when you were talking about your company's mission of giving back, I couldn't help but wonder, where and how exactly did Daria US start? And also: Daria sounds familiar in a way. Do you mind telling me more about how you came up with that?

Rahlf: Of course! And also, Anna, please, call me Frank.

Winston: Noted.

Rahlf: Now, where did it all start...

For a moment, it seems like the world had gone quiet. I just knew there was something so exciting and inspiring to be told in that very room I was sitting in, and I would have the privilege to hear it firsthand.

Rahlf: Let's start with my daughter.

I open my eyes wide.

Rahlf: This is Daria.

He shows me a picture of a dark-blonde girl smiling widely at the camera with dimples at the mouth and eyes sparkling from joy. Probably a picture taken on a family vacation.

Rahlf: Daria. She is, together

with my beautiful wife Viktoria, the most important person in my life. That is why we chose to name the company after her. And also because the name is so melodious and beautiful. I am very happy that my partner Patrick Lauber and I were able to decide on this particular name because it makes running this company all the more special for me. But there's also a little story to it.

See. I told you so.

Rahlf: In 2022, after we were able to visit the States again – that is after Covid-19 –, we boarded a plane with a wild group of twenty friends in Germany and went to Florida. Then and there we decided: "We want to build something right here.". Not everyone had the financial resources to engage in the project with a big investment right away, so we decided to create a solution based on Fractal Ownership. That means, to put it simply, multiple people in our friend group were able to build a house together here in Southwest Florida. We just thought it was a great solution and started professionalizing it, which now turned into one of the most modern investment models currently available in the real estate sector. Very flexible and especially suitable for those who wish to engage in real estate but do not yet have enough money to afford their own home, with or without support from a

bank.

Winston: With that kind of a starting point, I can imagine that there has to be some kind of value-based spirit at Daria. What would you say, what does Daria US stand for?

Rahlf: You see, Daria is actually more of a community than it is a standard company. We have clear rules of how we interact with each other here at Daria US and have built a philosophy which carries our day-to-day operations as well as our long-term goals. That is why it is crucial for us to act within the values we have internalized in our community. Those are: Trust. This is a major one, we have to trust one another here as much as we can. Supporting each other. Being responsible. Doing what's best and then more for everyone who is part of our community but also everyone who isn't. We have made it our philosophy to communicate and bond on a positive level with any of the people we get in contact with. We have made it our philosophy to not generate success at the expense of others. The success we have achieved so far and the success we are 100% sure to achieve in the near future comes from things that we know will help other people as well. A further core value of ours is: family. Daria US is a family in itself. But even more so, we are a family-oriented community, which means that the support of

families and especially children and young adults on their life-path is of very high importance to us.

Winston: And why didn't you just create a community to get something started together?

Rahlf: The background to this is actually very simple. We are convinced that the foundation for freedom is economic independence. That's why one of our main goals is to achieve economic independence for each individual, each member within our community.

Winston: So the focus is both on community for its own sake,

and on creating financial foundations for independence?

Rahlf: Exactly. Florida, and especially the opportunities here, are particularly well-suited for this. This is particularly true for Fort Myers and Cape Coral – an incredibly beautiful area with enormous potential that we want to help bring to the surface. We are proud to have our headquarters here in Cape Coral and Fort Myers. Our aim is to contribute to making this region even more successful and attractive. That is why we do everything with the clear intention of connecting it directly to the economic independence of our members.

Winston: So in the end, is it really just about real estate? Is Daria US essentially a development company?

Rahlf: Daria is, again, much more than a real estate company. Real estate is, to some extent, a means to an end – helping each individual to become economically stable and, in the medium term, economically independent.

Winston: So property is more of a tool rather than the whole story?

Rahlf: Correct! Beyond real estate, we are actively creating service companies, restaurants, and entertainment concepts. The goal is to provide a qualitative addition – and in some areas even an improvement – to what the market currently offers. We have set ourselves the standard of only pursuing projects if we can deliver them at an exceptionally high level of quality. Over time, we decided to es-

tablish independent business solutions in a variety of sectors. So far, this has worked out very well, and we are genuinely proud of it. Our team continues to grow month by month, and that growth is clear proof that what we are doing is being successfully received and embraced.

Winston: And how do you see the growth of the company in the future? Do you have enough manpower to actually make all this happen?

Rahlf: In fact, we are already working with both German and American employees in many areas today, and we are continuing to expand all sides of the businesses. Anyone who is interested in becoming part of our community – whatever the role may be – can apply. On our website, people will soon be able to see which positions are open.

Winston: So there are currently opportunities available for people who want to join?

Rahlf: Absolutely. I think it's a great chance to find a very interesting job and the opportunity to become a leader and entrepreneur yourself, whether you're younger or older. As I mentioned, we truly welcome every application, and every applicant will eventually have a conversation with us.

When I leave the headquarters later that afternoon, I take with me not only the impression of an innovative business but also of a truly German-American company, one that builds bridges in culture as much as it does in innovation, commerce, and quality of life. Daria US doesn't just want to employ

people and help entrepreneurs; it wants to discover where their true strengths lie and help them find a space which fits those strengths like a glove – because, as mentioned by Frank Rahlf during our interview, "Every person can be a firework of creativity, productivity, and happiness if they find themselves in the right position."

It's a philosophy that echoes in every corner of the office: the careful effort to find the best possible match between a person and their role, so that motivation, joy, and success can thrive naturally. The company's drive is constant improvement – never satisfied with the status quo, always pushing boundaries to redefine services, to place quality at the very heart of what they do, and to deliver more than anyone expects.

Built on values such as trust, truthfulness, loyalty, quality, and social competence, Daria US balances being innovative and modern with being conservative at its core. That duality is what makes it unique. And whether you're a client, an employee, or a leader, the aim is the same: to bring joy through the progress. For anyone seeking a fresh start, a career path with perspective, or simply the chance to reinvent themselves, Daria US offers a door wide open. Opportunities are always just a message away.

And as I step back into the late Florida sun, one thing is certain: whatever firework might light up the evening sky over Fort Myers, there are others being ignited inside these walls every single day.

By Anna Winston

Built on trust, quality, and responsibility, Daria US strives not just to grow, but to improve people's lives and the region it calls home.



Frank Rahlf, Co-Founder and CEO of Daria US. Photo courtesy of Daria US Holding LLC.

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From Village Savings to a Global Movement: The Origins of Credit Unions in Germany and Canada

On a cold winter night in 1900, a small group of working families gathered in the parish hall of Lévis, a modest town across the St. Lawrence River from Québec City.

They were not wealthy merchants or bankers. They were shopkeepers, farmers, and laborers—people who lived paycheck to paycheck, often forced to borrow money at ruinous rates just to make it through the season. That evening, under the guidance of journalist and reformer Alphonse Desjardins, they pooled their meager savings into something entirely new in North America: a *caisse populaire*, or people's bank.

It was a modest start—just \$26 in deposits from a handful of neighbors—but it marked the birth of the first credit union on this side of the Atlantic. For the families present, it was an act of hope: it was proof that ordinary people could take control of their financial lives. For the movement as a whole, it was the seed of an idea that would cross borders, reshape communities, and eventually give rise to the credit union system that millions of Americans belong to today.

Yet to fully understand that moment in Québec—and why credit unions resonate so strongly across North America—we must travel back a half-century earlier to rural Germany, where the movement's true origins lie.

Germany in the 19th Century: Banking for the Forgotten

The mid-1800s were years of profound change in Germany. The Industrial Revolution had brought wealth to some but left vast stretches of the population behind. In villages and small towns, farmers, artisans, and laborers found themselves locked out of traditional banking. With little collateral and irregular income, they were deemed too risky for loans. Their only recourse was local moneylenders who charged crippling interest rates, trapping families in cycles of debt. It was into this world that two reformers, *Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen* and *Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch*, stepped forward.

Raiffeisen, a deeply religious mayor in the Westerwald region, was haunted by the poverty he saw among farmers. His solution was rooted in Christian charity and collective responsibility. In the 1860s, he began organizing Rural Credit Cooperatives where neighbors pooled their savings to extend loans to one another. These cooperatives were bound together by trust and solidarity—if one member defaulted, the community absorbed the loss. Schulze-Delitzsch, a lawyer and politician, operated in more urban settings. He championed People's Banks for artisans and shopkeepers, emphasizing democratic control, self-help, and economic education.

Unlike Raiffeisen's faith-based cooperatives, Schulze's banks were explicitly secular and leaned on the Enlightenment values of rationality and civic responsibility. Though their philosophies diverged, their institutions shared key

principles that still define credit unions today. Firstly, member ownership: Depositors were not just customers; they were stakeholders with equal say. Democratic governance: One member, one vote, regardless of wealth. And lastly, community focus: Profits were reinvested locally rather than siphoned to outside investors.

By the late 19th century, Germany's cooperative banks numbered in the thousands. They offered more than credit; they offered dignity, giving working people access to fair financial services for the first time.

Crossing the Atlantic: The Canadian Adaptation

Half a century later, across the ocean, another reformer took notice. Alphonse Desjardins, a journalist in Ottawa and clerk of the Canadian House of Commons, had spent years reporting on financial struggles among ordinary Canadians. He was particularly outraged by cases where families were ruined by usurious lending practices. In one instance, he discovered a laborer saddled with \$5,000 in interest on a loan of just \$150—a debt trap that shocked even seasoned politicians.

Desjardins began studying European cooperative models, poring over accounts of Raiffeisen's and Schulze's experiments. But he also understood that any North American version would need local adaptation. Québec, with its tightly knit Catholic parishes and traditions of mutual aid, offered fertile ground.

So in 1900 on that fateful winter evening, Desjardins founded the Caisse Populaire de Lévis, North America's first credit union. His innovation was not only institutional but cultural. Unlike German cooperatives, which were often tied to secular or Protestant traditions, Desjardins anchored his credit union movement in Catholic social teaching. Parish priests frequently served as leaders or advocates for caisses, and the language of thrift, morality, and solidarity resonated deeply with Québec families.

Desjardins was tireless. Over the next two decades, he traveled extensively, helping to found more than 200 *caisses populaires* across Québec and parts of Ontario. He also turned his eyes southward. French-speaking immigrant communities in New England, struggling with the same financial hardships as their Canadian relatives, invited him to share his model.

In 1909, with Desjardins' guidance, St. Mary's Cooperative Credit Association opened in Manchester, New Hampshire. It became the first official credit union in the United States, setting the stage for a broader American movement.

What Made Credit Unions Different

At their core, these German

and Canadian experiments challenged the prevailing logic of finance. Traditional banks measured value in collateral and profit. Credit unions measured it in trust and community.

They were inclusive, designed for people who had been systematically excluded from mainstream finance. They were democratic, ensuring that no single wealthy member could dominate decision-making. They were sustainable, recycling local savings into local loans, strengthening the very communities that supported them. These qualities gave credit unions a moral resonance that extended beyond financial services. In both Germany and Canada, joining a cooperative was not just an economic decision—it was a declaration of solidarity. Members weren't merely clients; they were co-owners, responsible for one another's welfare.

Why This History Still Matters

More than a century later, it may be tempting to see credit unions as simply another financial option, differentiated mainly by lower fees or higher savings rates. But their roots remind us that they were born in times of deep inequality and financial exclusion.

The German farmers of the 1860s, the Québec families of 1900, and the Franco-American immigrants of New England all faced a common dilemma: traditional institutions had left them behind. Their response was not resignation, but invention. They created something new—financial institutions that belonged to them, answered to them, and served their collective needs. That DNA remains visible today. When credit unions in the U.S. talk about “people helping people,” they are echoing Raiffeisen's vision of rural solidarity and Desjardins' dream of mutual aid. When boards emphasize democratic elections or member dividends, they are carrying forward principles first articulated in German villages and Canadian parishes over a century ago.

A New Series on the American Story

This article opens a series that will explore how those European and Canadian ideas took root in the United States and evolved over the decades. Future installments will trace:

- The role of immigrant communities in spreading credit unions across the Northeast.
- The legislative breakthroughs of the 1930s that gave credit unions legal recognition.
- The ways credit unions navigated challenges from banking competitors, regulatory changes, and economic crises.

- How digital transformation, fintech, and globalization are reshaping the cooperative model in the 21st century.

By revisiting the origins of credit unions in Germany and Canada, we gain perspective on why these institutions matter. They were never intended to be just another set of banks. They were, and remain, instruments of empowerment—tools that communities forged for themselves when no one else would help. As we look to the future of American credit unions, that history provides not only context but also inspiration. Just as German villagers and Canadian parishioners once did, today's members are called to imagine what finance could look like if it placed people, rather than profit, at its heart.

By FTF, Sunshine Post Editorial Team

Credit unions were never just banks — they were tools of empowerment, created by people when no one else would help.

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Oktoberfest Cape Coral 2025

Get all the insights you need for a celebration of 40 years of Bavarian tradition in paradise

Event Details

- ▶ **October 17-19 and 24-26** (final two weekends of October)
- ▶ **German-American Social Club**, 2101 SW Pine Island Rd, Cape Coral
- ▶ **Tickets:** \$8 advance, \$10 at the door
- ▶ **VIP Experience: \$100-125** for exclusive tents with private bars, restrooms, and separate entrance

O'zapft is'! The German-American Social Club celebrates four decades of bringing authentic Munich magic to Southwest Florida. This milestone year promises the largest celebration yet, transforming Pine Island Road into a slice of Bavaria under the Florida sun.

The world's most famous beer festival originated in Munich, where millions gather annually in traditional beer tents run by legendary Bavarian breweries. While Munich's Oktoberfest draws global crowds for two weeks each fall, Cape Coral's version captures that same spirited atmosphere with a distinctly Florida twist.

Authentic German Experience

Cape Coral's Oktoberfest welcomes 30,000 visitors across three stages and dance floors, featuring live bands flown directly from Germany alongside local acts. Traditional German beer flows freely while visitors dig into authentic specialties: crispy schnitzel with German potato salad, tangy sauerkraut, warm pretzels, and a trio of wursts—bratwurst, bauernwurst, and weisswurst.

The festival encourages traditional dress, with lederhosen and dirndls adding colorful authenticity to the

festivities. Families find plenty to enjoy in the dedicated carnival area, complete with rides, games, and activities designed for younger festival-goers.

Event Details

When: October 17-19 and 24-26 (final two weekends of October)

Where: German-American Social Club, 2101 SW Pine Island Rd, Cape Coral

Tickets: \$8 advance, \$10 at the door

VIP Experience: \$100-125 for exclusive tents with private bars, restrooms, and separate entrance

This 40th anniversary celebration promises to be Cape Coral's most ambitious Oktoberfest yet, combining decades of tradition with the energy that comes from milestone moments. Whether you're seeking authentic German culture or simply a great party under the palms, this festival delivers both in equal measure.

By Miley, Sunshine Post Editorial Team

Cape Coral's Oktoberfest celebrates its 40th anniversary by blending authentic Bavarian tradition with Florida flair, promising the largest and most vibrant festival yet.



A group of men in traditional German clothing with marching band instruments. Photo: Pixabay/Picryl.

Halloween in Southwest Florida

Southwest Florida celebrates Halloween with a distinctly tropical twist. From ghost tours through mangrove forests to trunk-or-treat events under swaying palms, Cape Coral and Fort Myers offer spine-tingling experiences that blend ancient traditions with Florida flair.

Centuries of folklore, Roman influence, and Christian traditions shaped what we celebrate today. In Southwest Florida, those traditions take on their own character: trick-or-treating in flip-flops, pumpkin patches beside palm trees, and haunted trails where alligators lurk alongside ghosts.

The Scares and Thrills

Gator Mike's Frightmare on 78 returns this year with its signature blend of terror and local flavor. Whether you brave the haunted trail (complete with chainsaw-wielding clowns) or prefer sipping cider while watching others scream, this weekend destination delivers authentic scares for all courage levels.

Fort Myers' 51st Annual Haunted Walk at Calusa Nature Center transforms a moonlit boardwalk into spine-tingling theater. The wooded trail promises encounters with something—or someone—lurking just beyond the path. This half-century tradition proves that the best scares often come from the places we least expect.

Family-Friendly Options

The Lakes Park Fall Festival runs throughout October, offering bounce houses, spooky train rides, and food trucks that keep parents happy while kids collect thrills. The month-long



Photo: Pixabay.

celebration ensures multiple opportunities for family fun without the single-night pressure.

Cape Coral and Fort Myers host numerous trunk-or-treat events, transforming parking lots into safe, festive Halloween destinations. Local businesses and families convert their vehicles into elaborate displays—pirate ships, haunted castles, and themed spectacles that rival professional decorations. The Trunk-or-Treat at City Hall (October 25) features costumed characters, interactive games, and vehicles transformed into movie sets, complete with a drone show and Hotel Transylvania screening on the lawn.

Halloween traces back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, when people believed the veil between two worlds grew thinnest on October 31st.

Southwest Florida's Halloween scene offers something for every scare preference—from heart-pounding haunted trails to family-friendly festivities under the stars. Whether you're seeking genuine frights or showcasing your pet's costume creativity, the region delivers Halloween magic with a uniquely Floridian twist. Pack your costume, stock up on candy, and prepare to experience Halloween where the moon shines over palm trees instead of bare branches.

By S. Mehalick

Island Hopper Songwriter Fest 2025

A musical journey remembered.

Southwest Florida’s most scenic music festival transformed beaches and downtown venues into intimate concert stages, where country stars and emerging artists created magic against the backdrop of Gulf Coast sunsets. Last month, Southwest Florida witnessed something extraordinary. When September’s golden light danced across the Gulf of Mexico and warm breezes stirred the palms, the region transformed into a living soundtrack of voices, guitars, and stories told through music.

From September 19-28, the Island Hopper Songwriter Fest delivered ten unforgettable days of handcrafted melodies spanning Cape Coral, Fort Myers, and the barrier islands. The festival began on Captiva Island (September 19-21), where songs blended with ocean waves in perfect harmony. The celebration moved to Cape Coral (September 22-23) with LOCASH headlining at the Westin Resort for an unforgettable night under the stars that had fans talking long after the final chord.

Downtown Fort Myers (September 24-25) became the festival’s beating heart as bars, hotels, and intimate venues transformed the River District into a vibrant musical landscape. From poolside singer-songwriter concerts to cozy tavern shows and creative workshops, the entire downtown pulsed with sound and energy.

The grand finale unfolded at Fort Myers Beach (September 26-28), where sand met symphony in spectacular fashion. Country star Chris Young capped the festival with a pool party concert at Pink Shell Beach Resort, delivering a stunning conclusion beneath the tropical sky that perfectly captured the magic of the past ten days.

Where Festival-Goers Found Their Perfect Moments

Between sets, visitors discovered Southwest Florida’s most captivating spots. Bowman’s Beach on Sanibel provided pristine tranquility where festival-goers let ocean waves echo the melodies still ringing in their ears.

Fort Myers Beach offered vibrant energy, perfect for those spontaneous post-concert barefoot dips in the Gulf. Cape Coral’s Yacht Club Public Beach became a favorite among families, delivering romantic sunset views over the Caloosahatchee River that provided the perfect scenery for reflecting on the day’s performances.

The festival atmosphere extended beyond the stages into the region’s dining scene. Doc Ford’s Rum Bar & Grille at both their Fort Myers Beach and Sanibel locations buzzed with festival-goers sharing stories over legendary seafood and cocktails. The Bubble Room on Captiva charmed visitors with its eccentric décor and towering cake slices, becoming an essential stop between shows. Rumrunners in Cape Coral drew crowds with its waterfront setting, where fresh fish, steaks, and sunset cocktails created the perfect intermission to a day filled with the joy of music.

The Island Hopper Songwriter Fest has given our community much more than concerts—it wove music into the very fabric of Southwest Florida, where every venue told a story and every performance became part of the region’s rhythm.

By Tanja Muenster

Sunshine Post Recommendation: Beaches

- Bowman’s Beach (Sanibel):** Untouched, peaceful, and perfect for music lovers who want to let the sound of the ocean linger.
- Fort Myers Beach:** Lively and colorful — ideal for a barefoot dip in the Gulf after a concert.
- Yacht Club Public Beach (Cape Coral):** Family-friendly with views of the Caloosahatchee River

Sunshine Post Recommendation: Restaurants and Bars

- Doc Ford’s Rum Bar & Grille (Fort Myers Beach & Sanibel):** Famous for seafood, cocktails, and a relaxed festival atmosphere.
- Rumrunners (Cape Coral):** Located right on the water, serving fresh fish, steaks, and the perfect sundowner.
- The Bubble Room (Captiva):** A cult favorite with eccentric décor and oversized slices of cake — a must between concerts.
- Ford’s Garage (Downtown Fort Myers):** The quick burger stop between songwriter sessions — complete with vintage old timer flair.



Photo: Pixabay.

Whats happening? The Sunshine Post Event Calendar

Searching for the next big party or perhaps a sophisticated soirée? Look no further! The Sunshine Post Culture Department has all the latest tips on where to go, who to see and what to do in and around Fort Myers. Enjoy!

Cape Coral Art League October Show and Classes

Ongoing exhibitions and art classes in Cape Coral for October
fortmyersbeach.org

October

09
30

Nights at Sidney’s: Motown and Martinis

Musical evening at Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center
sbdac.com

October

10

Edison & Ford: Fall Festival

myriverdistrict.com

Downtown Fort Myers / Edison & Ford Winter Estates – Seasonal festival with themed activities and programs.

October

18

The Rock Orchestra by Candlelight

bbmannpah.com

Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall, Fort Myers – Rock & metal anthems reimagined in a dramatic orchestral show.

October

21

Annual Quilt Show

myriverdistrict.com

Downtown Fort Myers / River District – Quilt exhibition, part of the cultural happenings in the River District.

October

25

Send Us Your Event
Recommendations!
info@sunshine-post.com

The Ryder Cup Myth

Drama, passion and team spirit: Why the Ryder Cup electrifies the golf world every two years!

When the best golfers from Europe take on the best from the United States, a golf course transforms into a stage for raw emotion, fierce rivalry, and unforgettable moments: the Ryder Cup. Every two years this prestigious showdown takes place, alternating host sites between the continents. In 2025, America's Bethpage Black will turn into an arena where not only birdies and putts matter, but also nerves of steel, unity, and national as well as continental pride.

"There's nothing like it," raved Rory McIlroy. "When you celebrate with eleven teammates, it feels a hundred times more intense than winning a Major on your own." Tiger Woods, who has represented the U.S. multiple times, once stressed: "Here, you don't play for yourself – you play for your country and your continent. That makes the pressure unimaginable." Words that capture the unique essence of the Ryder Cup.

A Competition with Tradition

The Ryder Cup was founded in 1927, named after British businessman Samuel Ryder, who donated the silver trophy. Initially, it was the U.S. against

Great Britain, later joined by Ireland. In 1979, the team was expanded to "Europe" to break American dominance – a decision that turned the Cup into one of the most dramatic sporting events in the world. Since then, the U.S. and Europe have traded victories, with nearly every edition writing its own dramatic story.

Spanish legend Seve Ballesteros, who shaped the competition like few others, once said: "The Ryder Cup is not a normal tournament – it's war, in a sporting sense." His passion and fighting spirit made him, especially in the 1980s, a lasting symbol of the European team.

The Match Format

The Ryder Cup uses the match play format. Players or pairs compete hole by hole. Winning a hole puts a player "1 up". If the lead grows, it becomes "2 up", and so on. If opponents tie a hole, no points are awarded. With 18 holes, a match can end early if a player is mathematically unbeatable – for example, "4 & 3" means four holes ahead with only three remaining. Matches can also end in a tie, with each side earning half a point.

Friday & Saturday: Two sessions per day (morning and afternoon). Each session has four matches, all in pairs. That means only 8 of the 12 players per team are active at any one time. Captains' pairings and tactics are crucial – chemistry often beats rankings.

Morning: Foursomes (alternate shot), widely considered the toughest format. Two golfers play one ball alternately.

Afternoon: Fourball (best ball), where each golfer plays their own ball and the better score counts.

Across Friday and Saturday, 16 points are up for grabs.

Sunday: 12 singles matches, worth 12 points total.

That makes 28 points overall. Europe, as the defending champion, needs 14 points to retain the Cup, while the U.S. needs 14½ to win it back.



Why the Ryder Cup is Unique

Unlike traditional golf tournaments where silence reigns, the Ryder Cup is a cauldron of noise. Fans in blue-and-gold or red-white-and-blue chant, cheer, and boo. "The first tee at the Ryder Cup feels like the Super Bowl – only you're all alone over the ball," explained Justin Rose.

The Americans often set the tone with fiery talk, while Europeans strike with quieter but just as powerful words. Ahead of 2025, U.S. captain Keegan Bradley made it clear: "I've been doubted my whole (...) life. That's when I do my best work. We are gonna go to Bethpage to kick their (...)."

Traditionally, there was no prize money – players competed for honor and history alone. But in 2023, Team USA controversially introduced a \$200,000 appearance fee per player (donated to charity). European captain Luke Donald countered: "I asked all 12 guys in Rome what they thought. Not one of them even considered playing for money. That's not what this event is about. We know what we're playing for – and that's enough."

The Cup thrives on team spirit in a sport built on individuality. As Sergio García put it: "When you know ten guys

have your back, you automatically give a little more."

But the pressure is immense. Even Scottie Scheffler, world No. 1, faltered in 2023, earning just one point from four matches. His 9&7 foursomes loss with Brooks Koepka against Viktor Hovland and rookie Ludvig Åberg was the heaviest defeat in cup history.

Ryder Cup 2025

This year's venue: Bethpage Black, Long Island, New York – one of the toughest courses in the world with narrow fairways, deep bunkers, and lightning-fast greens. "This is no place for the faint of heart," said former U.S. captain Zach Johnson.

Team Europe: Veterans like Rory McIlroy and Jon Rahm, paired with rising stars.

Team USA: Anchored by Scottie Scheffler, Jordan Spieth, and Collin Morikawa.

The Ryder Cup is more than a tournament. It's a celebration of passion, rivalry, and sporting drama. It proves that golf can be loud, emotional, and bigger than any individual. Or, as Jack Nicklaus once said: "The Ryder Cup shows us that golf is more than just a game – it shows us what it means to be part of something greater."

By John Heinrich



All Photos in This Story: Pexels.

For the Ages

1969 – "The Concession": Jack Nicklaus conceding a putt to Tony Jacklin – a timeless act of sportsmanship.

1999 – "The Battle of Brookline": U.S. fans storming the green before the last match had finished.

2012 – "The Miracle at Medinah": Europe staging one of the greatest comebacks in golf history.

Hidden Sparks – Pets Looking to Shine

In this feature, we introduce you to two wonderful animals each month – this time from the Cape Coral Animal Shelter. Many of them have been waiting far too long for the chance to find a home of their own. Sometimes it’s because they have a truly special character. And sometimes it’s simply because no one has yet recognized their beauty, their sparkle, or their unique potential.

Yet, these animals already carry something truly wonderful within them – and they deserve to be seen. With this column, we want to give them a voice and connect them with the people who are the perfect match. Maybe you will discover your new best friend right here.

By J. & J. Heartley

Hours of Operation:

Tuesday & Thursday:
12:00–5:00 pm

Friday through Sunday:
12:00–4:00 pm

Monday & Wednesday:
Closed



Photos courtesy of Cape Coral Animal Shelter.

Cape Coral Animal Shelter
325 SW 2nd Avenue
Cape Coral, FL 33991

More information and all adoptable animals at:
www.capecoralanimalshelter.com

TAMERLANE (LUNA)

is a 3–5-year-old Domestic Short Hair female. She is spayed, up to date on vaccines, and current on flea/tick and heartworm medication. Tamerlane (but her friends call her Luna) is sweet, sassy, and full of things to say—just ask her! She’ll grumble, chatter, and throw in a little sass to keep things interesting. She likes affection, but on her terms—queen behavior only, thank you very much. She’d do best as your one-and-only. She’s got a big personality in a fluffy little package, waiting to bring her unique charm to the right home. Tamerlane (Luna) has been with us for almost 100 days! Her adoption fee is \$70, making her a charming little queen ready to brighten the right home with her presence.

TIANA

is a 5–7-year-old Chihuahua mix female. Tiana is a fierce little girl and a tiny powerhouse with a big attitude! She’s got plenty of personality, and she’s not afraid to show it—this girl is all sass, all the time. She’ll thrive in a home full of love and laughter, especially if it’s one with strong women who can match her energy. If you give her love, patience, and snacks (of course!), she is bound to spice up your life in the best way possible! Tiana is dog selective (she prefers small male dogs), so any interested person would need to bring their dog to meet her. Tiana has been with us for over 800 days! She is up to date on all vaccines, spayed, and kept current on flea/tick and heartworm medication. Her adoption fee is just \$20, making her an incredible little treasure waiting for a second chance.



Rock'n Rolls
GERMAN BAKERY & BISTRO

“Best Breakfast Sandwiches in Town”

Breakfast & Lunch Specials
Danish Royal Pastries
German Bread & Rolls
3512 Del Prado Blvd S, #104, Cape Coral

Trust – The Quiet Foundation of All Greatness

It always begins quietly. Trust. It needs no applause, no headlines, no show. It arises in the space between people, in the unspoken “I see you” – and often reveals itself when something does not go according to plan.

Trust is the invisible foundation on which everything great is built – whether in relationships, teams, organizations, or societies. Without trust, everything remains fragile.

With trust, even the shaky can become stable.

How trust manifests itself – or what happens when it is lacking You can recognize it by how people interact with each other in different circumstances. Whether mistakes lead to blame – or to an invitation to learn together.

Where trust is lacking, insecurity, withdrawal, and competitiveness grow. Where trust lives, cooperation, courage, and genuine connection arise.

Trust is not blind – it is conscious
Contrary to many misconceptions, trust does not mean being naive. It means consciously choosing what I build my expectations on. It means seeing my counterpart in their integrity – even if I cannot guarantee it. And it means living my own integrity in such a way that others can feel secure in it.



Photo: Pixabay.

Trust creates momentum – not through pressure, but through clarity
Those who trust don’t need to double-check. Those who trust waste less energy on control and mistrust. Trust creates space for ideas, dialogue, and speed – because the ground is solid.

Trust is the basis on which people can open up and reveal themselves. In a world that is moving ever faster, trust is not a luxury. It is infrastructure. For everything that is meant to last.

The gift of lived trust
When trust is not just a value but an attitude, something precious emerges: People begin to take responsibility, not because they have to, but because they want to. Teams begin to open up, not because they are perfect, but because they feel safe.

Trust is quiet. But its impact is loud.

What does this mean for us socially?

If we learned to trust more consciously again – not blindly, but clearly, with an open heart and an alert mind – then our society would not only become more stable, but also more humane.
Less fear, more togetherness. Less control, more responsibility. Less withdrawal, more genuine encounters.

By Angelique Souларыs

How can *you* tell that you trust – really trust – someone?

And how can *others* feel that they can trust you?

Sunshine Post Recipe of the Month: Key Lime Cheesecake

October is here! The cozy season of the year when we all love to treat ourselves. While pumpkin and apple are the classic staples of any autumn dinner table, our Key Lime Cheesecake brings a refreshing twist. The combination of zesty lime, silky cheesecake, and a crunchy crust makes it a true showstopper for any fall gathering. It’s easy to make ahead and chill overnight. Join us in making a dessert that feels just right on both sunny fall afternoons and cozy evenings.

INGREDIENTS (for a 9-inch springform pan)

For the crust:

- 2 cups graham crackers or butter cookies, crushed (we used Animal Crackers)
- ½ cup melted butter

For the filling:

- 2 cups Greek yogurt
- 1 cup cream cheese, room temperature
- 2 eggs
- ¾ cup sugar (or ¼ cup Monk Fruit sweetener for a sugar-free version)
- ¼ cup all purpose flour (if the filling isn’t thick enough)
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoon lime juice
- Zest of 2 limes (Key Limes if available)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

For the topping:

- ¾ cup heavy cream
- 1 tbsp powdered sugar (or ¼ tbsp powdered Monk Fruit sweetener for a sugar-free version)
- Lime slices or zest for garnish

Enjoy a perfect dessert for golden October days...
Fresh yet cozy – our Key Lime Cheesecake!
By Anna Winston, Sunshine Post Editorial Team



Sunshine Post Key Lime Cheesecake. Photo: Anna Winston

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Mix the cookie crumbs with melted butter. Press firmly into the base of the springform pan and chill for 15 minutes.
2. Beat filling ingredients until smooth (if needed in a blender). Add the eggs one at a time. Stir in lime juice and zest.
3. Pour the filling over the crust. Bake in a preheated oven at 325°F (fan) for 50–55 minutes. Let it cool slowly in the oven with the door slightly open.
4. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours, ideally overnight.
5. Whip cream with powdered sugar or sweetener, spread over the cheesecake, and decorate with lime slices or zest.

SUNSHINE POST TIP

Add a pinch of cinnamon to the crust mixture! It pairs beautifully with the fresh lime and gives the cheesecake a subtle autumn touch.

Professional PLUMBING SERVICES

Revolutionary: How AI Can Transform Your Day

Artificial intelligence is not science fiction – it hasn’t been for a long time.

More and more people are using AI tools to master everyday challenges – from weekend trips, to what’s for dinner, to budgeting. In this series, powered by the insights of our tech team and seasoned AI connoisseurs, we will show you how you too can benefit from this technology.

Weekend Planning Made Easy

“Plan a fun, family-friendly weekend in and around Fort Myers for two children (ages 8 and 11) that includes more than just the beach.”

- AI suggests:
- 1. Visit Manatee Park
 - 2. Explore Edison & Ford Winter Estates
 - 3. Shell Factory & Nature Park

Travel Planning Assistant

“I have a 4-hour layover in Chicago O’Hare. What can I realistically do or see without missing my connecting flight?”

- AI suggests:
- 1. Visit the Art & Exhibits Program displays
 - 2. Relax at the Yoga Room (Terminal 3)
 - 3. Try local Chicago food at Tortas Frontera
 - 4. Allow 90 minutes for return to gate

What’s your everyday AI Question?

Whether it’s a recipe, travel dilemma, or practical tip, send us your most used

info@sunshine-post.com

Subject: “AI Prompt Submission”

Creative Cooking with AI

“I need a quick dinner recipe. I have chicken breast, broccoli, red bell pepper, onions, and coconut milk.”

- AI suggests:
- A “Quick Chicken Vegetable Coconut Curry”. Sauté ingredients, add coconut milk and spices, simmer. Perfect with rice!

Smart Saving

“I want to save an extra \$200 this month... give me three simple, concrete tips.”

- AI suggests:
- 1. Create a weekly grocery budget
 - 1. Create a weekly grocery budget
 - 2. Make coffee at home
 - 3. Find free leisure alternatives

DID YOU KNOW?

The best AI prompts are specific! Specificity = Better results!

Instead of: “Help me cook”
Try: “Quick 30-min dinner for 4 with chicken”

TECH QUOTES OF THE DAY

“AI is not here to replace humans, but to empower them.”

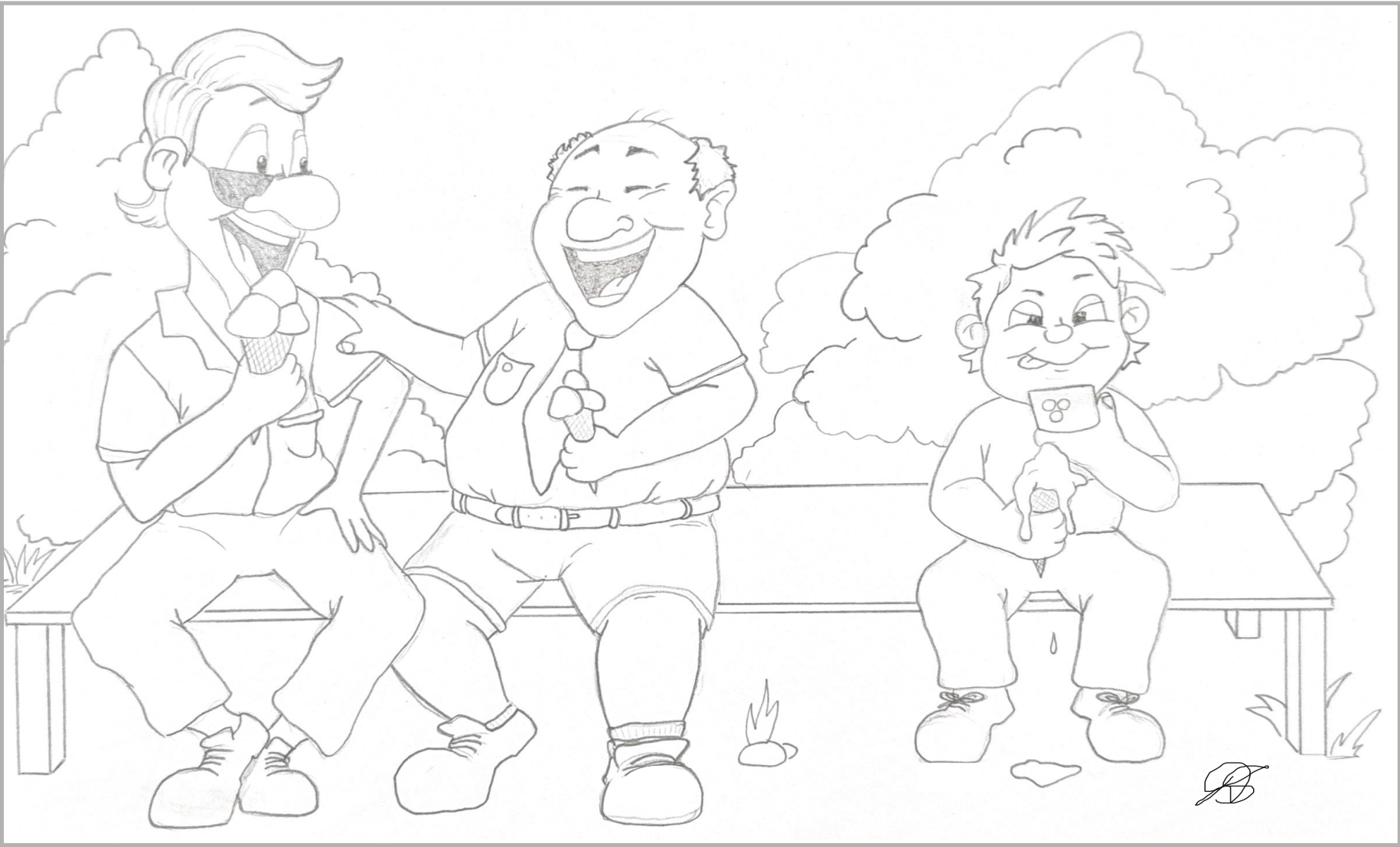
Marc Siewert, MJ & Sons

“The future of AI is not about replacing humans, it’s about augmenting human capabilities.”

Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google

Caricature of the Month: October

“Like the Moment, Not the Feed”



By DiSi, Sunshine Post Editorial Team

The Sunshine Post Crossword Puzzle

Happiness, Culture & Sunshine Florida

1. The “Sunshine State” of the USA
2. City famous for Art Deco architecture and pristine beaches
3. Largest theme park in Orlando: ___ ___ World
4. Vast swamp region in southern Florida
5. Popular fruit featured on Florida’s state flag

Happiness

6. Opposite of negativity
7. Short uplifting motto: “___ thinking”
8. Feeling of happiness or satisfaction
9. English word for a cheerful facial expression

Culture

10. Greek word meaning “love of wisdom”
11. A famous German-British Baroque composer: George Frideric ___
12. A city known for Richard Wagner
13. UNESCO World Heritage site in Egypt: ___ of Giza

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7.

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11.

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6.

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8.

9.

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3.



Photo: Pixabay.



DARIA

dreams come easy



INVEST IN YOUR DREAMS

