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SUNSHINE POST

★ 1st Anniversary Special Edition ★

03 RISE OF A STAR 09 CALENDER 10 HALLOWEEN 20 AI-PROMTS

I need to talk to someone. I don't know with whom. I cannot tell Henry. He would not understand, no way. His mum is so slender, beautiful, graceful; I am sure she is a caring mother.

Our calendar is bursting with an exceptional number of local events this month. Check out the overview so you don't miss a thing!

For some families in Fort Myers and Cape Coral, Halloween doesn't begin on October 31st. It begins weeks — sometimes even months — before.

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

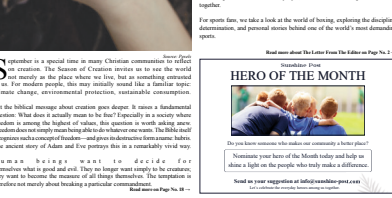
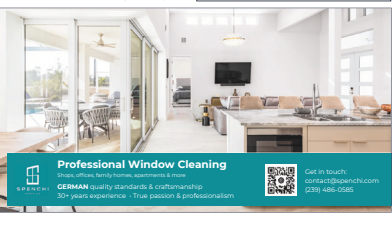
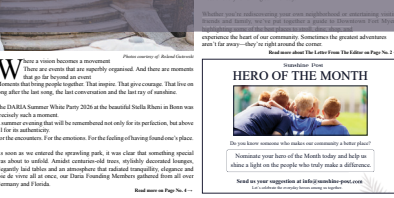
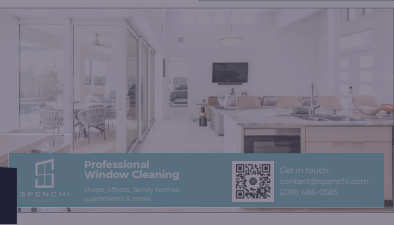
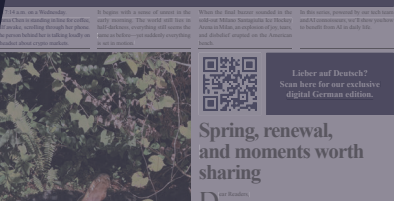
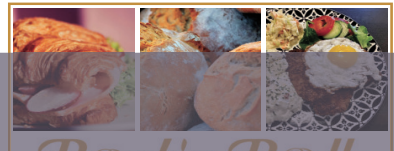
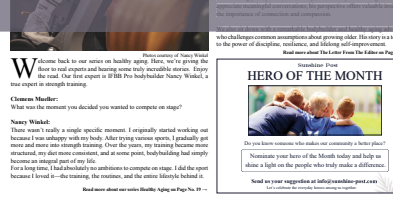
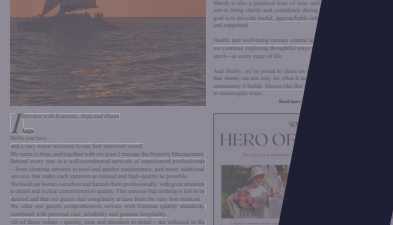
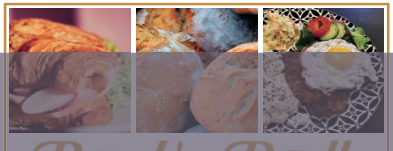
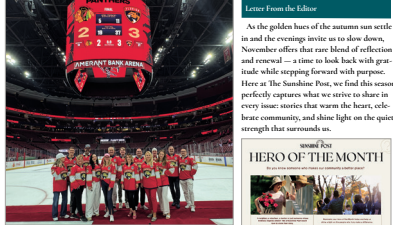
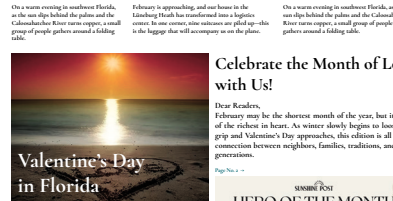
One Year of Sunshine

One year has passed. Let's look back! It is a simple little phrase, but when we glance back at everything that has happened since the very first issue of Sunshine Post, it feels like so much more.

Read more about The Letter From The Editor on Page No. 2 →



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Anniversary Special Edition

One Year of Sunshine

Dear Readers,

One year has passed. Let’s look back! It is a simple little phrase, but when we glance back at everything that has happened since the very first issue of Sunshine Post, it feels like so much more.

Twelve months of stories. Twelve months of conversations, discoveries, recipes, celebrations, local voices, and countless moments shared with you. And today, as we open the pages of our first anniversary edition, we want to take a moment to say something that is perhaps more important than any article we could write: Thank you!

A newspaper is never truly about the pages themselves. It is about the people who fill them with their stories and the people who take the time to read them. Over the past year, you have welcomed us into your homes, your

mornings, your coffee breaks, and your conversations. You have made Sunshine Post more than a publication. You have made it a part of a community.

And what better month to celebrate than October? There is something wonderfully symbolic about this time of year. The season changes, the air becomes a little crisper, pumpkins appear on doorsteps, and we begin to look both backward and forward. It is a perfect moment for reflection and for a little celebration.

In this anniversary issue, we continue that journey with stories that challenge us, inspire us, and perhaps introduce us to something completely new. But as we celebrate this first year, our thoughts naturally turn toward the year ahead.

There are still so many people to

meet, stories to tell, places to discover, and ideas to share. We hope you will continue this journey with us as Sunshine Post grows, evolves, and finds new ways to be part of the community we are so fortunate to serve.

So, from our entire team to you: happy anniversary, and thank you for making this first year possible.

Here’s to the first twelve months and to all the stories still waiting to be written.

Sunny regards,

Rouven Zietz Editor-in-Chief

Sunshine Post

Editor-in-Chief/Managing Editor
Rouven Zietz

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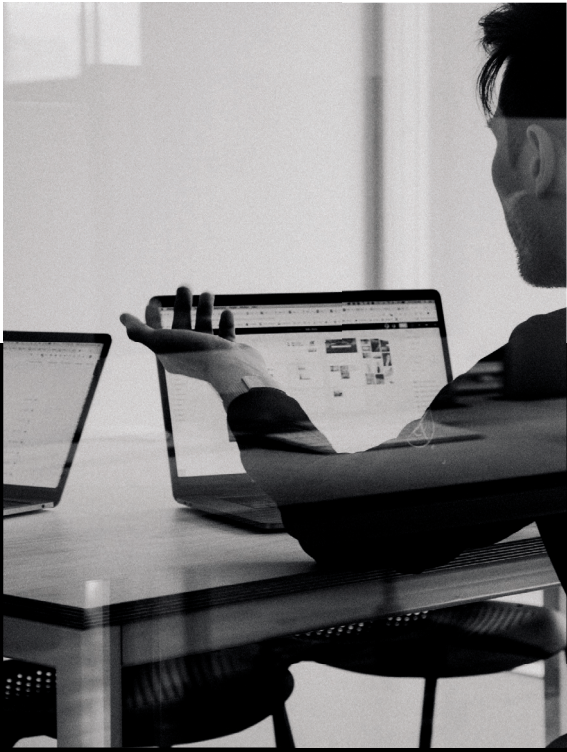


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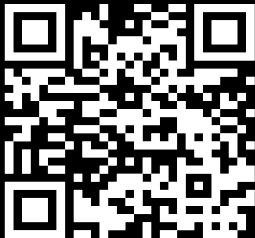


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Rise of a Star

Part 3

What happened so far:

Katy is depressed. She lives with her children in an apartment, but hasn't looked after them for a long time. She is still mad at her ex-husband who left her a long time ago. Without a job, living on social support she doesn't manage her own life. She covers her frustration with binge eating, drinking alcohol and taking pills. She is trapped in her pain. Her life changes, after she had a strange encounter with a beetle, who bit her. With the help of her daughter Gabby she decides to start living a healthy life again. She also admits for the first time that she does need help for changing her life. Gabby wants nothing more than having her mum back in her life. She does not talk with any one about it, as she feels ashamed of her mum, and fears to be taken into foster care. Her brother Philip does not trust his mum. He is skeptical as he had suffered for too long from this situation. He tries to be cool, yet inside he is very hurt. The strange thing is, that the day before this happened, Gabby went to see her friend Henry. He had given her his magic cap, and encouraged her to use it. Gabby put on the cap and had sent a profound wish to the universe that her mum becomes healthy again. Was it just coincidence, or could it be that her wish was heard by someone??

Gabby

I need to talk to someone. I don't know with whom. I cannot tell Henry. He would not understand, no way. His mum is so slender, beautiful, graceful; I am sure she is a caring mother. How am I supposed to explain that my mum is a stranded whale, unable to move? It is so embarrassing. I am so ashamed. Henry is such a nice guy, I don't want to shock him. He would probably not want to be my friend anymore if he finds out what a horrible family I have.



I take my bicycle and ride through the streets of Heidelberg. I ride and ride. It feels good to be moving. I like moving my body. I like feeling myself. My heart beating, the sweat on my forehead. The sun is shining. I cycle towards the river. By the Neckar there are people on the lawn, sunbathing, reading, playing frisbee or volleyball. Some are already unpacking their food and drinks, getting the barbecue ready. I see people from many different places. Heidelberg has become very international. Not only students who come here to study from all over the world, but also immigrants, people who have left their countries to find refuge here.

Suddenly I feel like a refugee myself. I feel lost, lonely, with nowhere to turn, and at the same time I feel hope, as it is the first time in months, no, in years, that I feel this nightmare might stop.

I cycle through the streets towards the ‚Heiligenberg‘, the holy mountain. I could try to climb it on my bike. But I am hungry. My stomach starts making noises. I come past the shop of Henry's aunt, Emma. It is called Emma's shop.



Funny. I have been there a few times with Henry. Emma is really nice. Each time

she asked us in for those very yummy drinks and biscuits. I stop there, drawn in by the shop window. I look inside. So many lovely things, beautifully arranged. With care. I stare at it.

Then suddenly I hear a voice, saying in a bad accent: “Hello. You are Henry’s friend, aren’t you?” I turn around and look into this man’s eyes.

Kurus



He is Emma's boyfriend. I have met him before. He is a refugee from Iran. This is strange. I just felt like someone without a real home, like a refugee, and now I am meeting him, a real one.

“Yes, my name is Gabby.” “And you came to see Emma! Come in, I will call her.” I try to protest. “No, no. It is just a coincidence. I was not going to see Emma. I was just passing by.” But he only smiles, holds the door open and, with a movement of his head, asks me to come into the shop. I am not sure whether he does not understand or does not want to understand. So I chain my bike to a lamppost and go into the house. I will explain the misunderstanding to Emma and then leave quickly.

Emma



There she comes, with her long, waving blonde hair, in tight blue jeans, in an orange top with red flowers on it. She comes towards me with a big smile. “Oh, Gabby, what a nice surprise! How kind of you to visit me on a Sunday. I know it is already late morning. We were just about to have breakfast. Would you join us, so we can talk?” I do not dare to tell her that I had not meant to visit her, and I hear my stomach growling. I do not want to be rude, and I nod in agreement. We go upstairs to her kitchen. She calls her boyfriend. “Kurus, could you please cut some of the yellow flowers in the garden? We have a guest, so I would love to have some flowers on the table.” “What would you like? Tea, hot chocolate or coffee?” “Oh, whatever you are having. I do not want to be a bother! And I did not mean to invite myself! I was just coming to say hello.” “Gabby, do not be silly! You did not invite yourself. I invited you. It is a pleasure to see you and to hear how things are going. I heard you have been studying with Henry and that you have improved a lot in maths. So please sit down while I make some coffee. How is life? How are things? How are you?” Kurus is in the doorway with a bunch of yellow flowers, smiling at me. I look at Kurus, the flowers, than at Emma, and I burst into tears.

I feel two arms around me and a soft, sweet-smelling body holding me. I am sobbing, crying, the tears are everywhere; it seems as if not only my eyes are crying but my nose, my mouth, my ears, everything. Flooding my head. Emma just holds me. She murmurs: It is fine. Do not worry. Let it all come out! Just cry. It is good that this pain is coming out of you. She strokes my back.

After what feels like an endless time,

and many tissues, I calm down. Emma looks at me kindly. Now sit down. Have a cup of tea. Eat something, and after that tell me what happened. Kurus grabs a sandwich, mutters something about the garden. Emma smiles at him as he leaves the room, waving to us.

Between sips of tea I look at her: “Now I have ruined your Sunday morning breakfast.” She laughs and replies: “Do not worry. We have many breakfasts together. You are more important right now.” I almost start crying again. “What would you like on your bread? Cheese, tomato-and-nut spread, jam? Just help yourself.” I do not dare to say that I have not had such nice things to eat in a long time. When Philip and I eat, we usually have packaged food that we can heat up in the microwave. I cannot cook very well. And Philip is even more lost in the kitchen.

So I put whatever looks nice on my slice of bread, and I eat. Oh my! Yummy. After a while, as my stomach fills up, I start to feel better and calm down. Emma just looks at me with a kind smile. I have never told anyone about my mum. It is just too terrible. Would she understand? She could not help me anyway. I feel so ashamed. But who knows. Maybe she can. What the heck. I have to tell someone, and I owe Emma an explanation after this outburst of tears. So I start to tell her my story. Well, my mum's story.

“Now you know our secret. You see, we are in a bit of a hopeless situation. My mum does not want anyone to know about her situation. People made fun of her so often, even when she was still up and moving on her own. I do not know what to do. Do you have any idea what I could do?”

Emma sits there and shakes her head. “All these years, when you needed your parents, you and your brother were alone in this very difficult situation. How did you cope with it? You must have been very sad and angry. You must have been desperate, dealing with all this on your own. I am amazed you could bear it for so long. And all this time you were looking after your mum, going shopping, cooking, bringing her meals and drinks. That must have been such a huge burden for you.”

“Yes, the truth is, it was hell! Always scared someone might find out. Scared we might have to move to a children's home somewhere, maybe not even in Heidelberg, but somewhere else. Even if I do not have many friends, at least I know this city inside out, I like it, and I do not want to go.

I was also scared someone might find out, and then all the neighbors and other people would know what bad shape my mother is in. It is so embarrassing. And the worst thing is to see her getting worse and worse, bigger and bigger, and I cannot do anything about it. I do remember times, many years ago, when she was beautiful. I have a really lovely photo of us, when Philip and I were small. She looked so pretty then. And now .. she looks so terrible. She could die. And I cannot help her anymore. And yet, Henry's cap woke her up. Can you believe that?”

“Yes, you firmly made your wish, and it was heard. It was the best thing you could do. Gabby, it is over now! From now on things will get better. I will think about it, and we will find a solution. I will help you to sort this out. Your mum has already made the first move. She is willing to change! That is the most important first step that needed to happen. And she made that one all on her own. Give me some time and I will get back to you soon. Would you like to give me your phone number, so I can send you a message?” I feel so bad. I do not have a mobile. I am probably the only teenager who has no phone. There is no money to buy a mobile. What can I say?

“I will come by your place tomorrow after school, if you do not mind, around two o'clock. It only takes me a few minutes to get there by bike. And Emma, please don't tell anyone about my mum. It was really hard for me to tell you my secret. And I do not want to live in a children's home.” “I will make some

phone calls and find out what can be done in such a case. I can do that without giving any names. I would like to talk to Kurus about it, and I know he will not tell anyone if I ask him. Is that all right with you?” “Yes, I suppose he saw me crying anyway. So you can explain to him what it was all about. But please, please do not tell Henry. And please, no authorities.” “I promise, I will not. Only Kurus.”

Philip



Can you imagine? It is so tough not to tell anyone. None of my pals know. No one suspects that it might not be true. I have this ugly, fat mother. She is useless. She just orders Gabby around. She makes her buy food, cook for her and serve her. She even forces her to bring her wine or whiskey sometimes. She yells at her, she screams at her, she bad-mouths everything all the time. She never says a kind word. Why us? We should tell the social authorities. Yet they might put her in an institution, and then? Then they will take us out of this apartment.

Gabby does not want to move from here. And she does not want anyone to know about it. Maybe we would have to live with Dad. Dad does not care about us at all. He never has. It's useless to talk with Dad and his fancy girlfriend. I have seen her once. Oh my God, she looks so young, she could be my older sister. She is the complete opposite of Mum. She dresses like a Barbie doll. Worried about her hair and her long painted fingernails, and her clothes, and her fancy handbag. She just talks nonsense all the time and looks at Dad as if he were a superhero. How disgusting! No way would I live with them. And they live across the border, in France. I do not speak French. My dad is useless!

They might put us in foster care. No no no!

We don't even know how to cook. At least, Gabby knows how to make pancakes. And she does that every now and then. Well, Gabby said this morning that Mum wants to change and get up. I don't believe it. She cannot get up. And even if she could, what difference would it make? She cannot get anything right! Why can't we have a normal mum? Well, no point in complaining about it. As long as nobody finds out, I do not care.

Emma

Wow, that was an exhausting morning. Gabby's story really upset me. These poor kids have had to handle such a difficult situation. Their dad was not there. Their mum had given up. She was about to die. It must be cruel to watch your own mum dying and to feel unable to help.

And yet I am so glad that Gabby finally found the courage to confide in me, to let it all out and to draw hope that things could get better.

Stories like these happen right here in our society, maybe in our neighbors' house, and we don't even realize what a drama is going on inside. No one had noticed anything, not the authorities, nor the school, and probably not even friends, if she has any. Hmm, what can I do?

To be continued ...

By Ina Rodewald

Illustrations courtesy of: Ina Rodewald

The Kindness – Home Is Where We Teach People What Kindness Feels Like



Photos courtesy of: Jennifer Hagemeister

Over the past issues, *The Kindness* has taken us to many different places. We have looked at people who volunteer their time, organizations that support others, opportunities to help animals, protect our environment, strengthen young people and make our community a little better.

For this anniversary issue, I wanted to take a moment to reflect — and perhaps think about kindness one step further. Because when we talk about making our community a better place, we usually look outward. But perhaps one of the most important places to begin is much closer.

At home. Home is the first small community many of us ever experience. It is where children begin to learn what trust feels like. What respect sounds like. Whether boundaries matter. Whether difficult things can be spoken about. Whether mistakes can be admitted. Whether conflict can be repaired. And perhaps most importantly: whether belonging remains even when things are not perfect. Home is where we teach people what kindness feels like.

Sometimes safety looks surprisingly ordinary

A safe and loving home does not always reveal itself through big gestures. Often, it is visible in tiny moments. Someone opening the refrigerator without asking because it feels completely natural to do so. A teenager singing badly in the kitchen. Someone dancing for a few seconds even though they usually insist they cannot dance. Laughter that is not careful. Silence that is not uncomfortable. The freedom to sit at the table without feeling the need to impress, perform or constantly wonder how you are being perceived. These moments may seem insignificant. They are not. Sometimes they are signs that a person has stopped asking themselves how they need to behave in order to be accepted — and has started feeling safe enough simply to be. Maybe that is one of the quietest forms of kindness we can offer: a place where another person can lower their guard.

Safety does not mean having no boundaries

A safe home is not a home where everything is allowed. Children and teenagers need adults who set boundaries, who protect them, who expect responsibility and who are willing to say no. Kindness is not permissiveness. There are very good reasons for rules: safety, health, age, trust, respect, responsibility or sometimes simply the fact that a young person is not ready for something yet. But every now and then, it may be worth looking at our own rules a little more closely. Why do I believe this? What am I actually trying to protect? Is there a real risk behind my reaction? Or is part of it something I inherited from my own upbringing, culture or environment and

have never really reconsidered? That does not mean traditional values are wrong or that every newer way of thinking is automatically better. It simply means choosing our values consciously rather than following them automatically.

Make room for the conversations that matter

Young people do not need safe adults only when life is easy. They need them when life becomes complicated. Friendships, first love, rejection, school, failure, peer pressure, alcohol, drugs, relationships, sexuality, body image, personal boundaries, fear, mistakes. Being someone a young person can talk to does not mean approving of every decision. It does not mean removing consequences. It does not even mean having the right answer. Sometimes it simply means allowing the conversation to happen before judgment closes the door. A few extra seconds before reacting. One more question before reaching a conclusion. Enough calm for someone to finish the sentence they were nervous to begin. And sometimes even a little humor and lightness around subjects that do not need to become shameful simply because they are personal. Young people are allowed privacy, too. Openness should never become surveillance disguised as closeness. The goal is not to know every detail. The goal is for important truths not to have to be hidden out of fear of humiliation, rejection or losing someone’s love.

Boundaries are allowed to move

Growing up also means discovering your own boundaries. A young person may not feel ready for something today and feel differently later. They may change their mind. They may need more time than their friends. Or less. A safe environment does not dictate that personal timeline. It respects it. A no should be allowed to remain a no without persuasion. And if that boundary genuinely changes later, the new answer deserves respect as well. Learning that your boundaries matter — and that other people’s boundaries matter just as much — is one of the foundations of every healthy relationship that follows.

When we manage to pause

There are moments when someone tells us something we did not expect and the first reaction rises almost instantly: fear, anger, disappointment, shock, a desire to fix, forbid or control. When we can, perhaps kindness begins in the tiny space between hearing something and responding to it. A moment to ask: What has actually happened? What does this person need from me right now? What is the real risk? And which part of my reaction belongs to my own fear, history or expectations? The answer may still be no. There may still be consequences.

Reflection does not mean weakness. It simply means that our first emotion does not automatically become our final response.

And then there are the times when we do not manage it

Because real families are not made up of endlessly patient, perfectly regulated people. Adults get tired. We become hurt. We feel ignored, disappointed, overwhelmed or afraid. Sometimes we speak before we think. Sometimes we react unfairly. Sometimes what comes out of our mouth is not even what we truly meant. And maybe this is one of the most important parts of the entire conversation: A safe home is not a home where nobody gets it wrong. It is a home where getting it wrong can be repaired. Adults are allowed to say: I reacted badly. That was unfair. You did not deserve the way I handled that. Let me try again. Children are often expected to apologize, take responsibility and learn from mistakes. Perhaps one of the most powerful ways to teach them how that works is to let them see adults do exactly the same thing. An apology does not remove authority. It demonstrates accountability.

Repair without making someone else responsible for your feelings

Even an apology can become complicated if we are not careful. When we feel guilty, we often want to explain why we reacted the way we did. But repairing a relationship should not mean handing the other person the responsibility for making us feel better again, especially when that other person is a child or teenager. Sometimes the most important message is simply: My reaction was mine. You do not have to fix it for me. And perhaps another sentence matters just as much: You are still wanted here. Because a safe home is not necessarily a permanently happy home. People argue. Parents become disappointed. Children make mistakes. Consequences happen. Sometimes everyone needs a little distance. But underneath all of that, there should ideally remain one certainty: This conflict does not decide whether you still belong here.

And sometimes our home reaches further than our own family

The lessons created inside a home do not stop at the front door. Sometimes our homes are entered by young people we did not raise: friends, classmates, boyfriends or girlfriends, kids who may spend only an afternoon around our kitchen table. We may know very little about what another young person experiences elsewhere. But we can still influence what they experience with us. Maybe they notice that disagreement does not automatically become disrespect. Maybe they realize they are allowed to laugh loudly. Maybe they feel comfortable enough to get something from the refrigerator. Maybe they discover that an adult can listen without immediately making them feel foolish. You do not have to lead a youth organization or formally become a mentor to be an important adult in the life of a young person. Sometimes creating a place they are happy to walk into matters more than we realize.

Why this belongs in The Kindness

Kindness is easy to recognize when it comes with a volunteer shirt, a donation box, a nonprofit or a community project. And all of those things matter. But perhaps kindness begins even

earlier. At the kitchen table. In the car after school. During an uncomfortable conversation. In the moment someone says no. In the few seconds after we hear something we did not expect. And sometimes it begins a few minutes later — when we realize our first reaction was wrong and choose to repair it. Because what young people experience in their homes does not stay there. They carry it into friendships, into relationships, into classrooms and workplaces, into the way they handle conflict, the way they respect boundaries, the way they apologize, the way they forgive, the way they take responsibility — and perhaps one day into homes of their own. This is why creating safety, respect and dignity inside our homes is not separate from building a kinder community. It is one of the places where that community begins. We cannot solve every division in the world from our living rooms. But we can influence what the people growing up inside them learn about honesty, dignity, boundaries, responsibility, compassion and love. And perhaps that is one of the most meaningful contributions we can make.

By Jennifer Hagemeister

From the author:

I am deeply grateful to my family — and to my wonderful daughter in particular — for giving me the opportunity to experience, reflect, learn and grow alongside them. Some of the most important lessons about kindness are the ones we are fortunate enough to learn — and live — at home.

THE KINDNESS – AT HOME

LISTEN

Give someone the chance to finish before deciding what you think.

PAUSE

When you can, create a little space between emotion and reaction.

QUESTION

Ask yourself whether a rule has a meaningful reason — or is simply one you have always followed.

RESPECT

Take another person’s boundaries seriously, even when they are different from your own.

OWN IT

If you reacted unfairly, say so.

REPAIR

Apologize without making the other person responsible for your feelings.

REMIND

Even during conflict, let the people you love know that they still belong.

More than Numbers

Your Business Can Be Profitable - and Still Run Out of Money



Photos courtesy of: Alexandra Welsch

Why Revenue, Profit and Cash Flow Are Not the Same Thing

Your company just had its best month. Sales are up, invoices are going out, and your accountant says the business made a profit. Then Friday arrives - and you are wondering whether there is enough cash for payroll. How can a profitable business feel broke?

Because revenue, profit and cash are three different stories. And if you only watch one of them, your business can surprise you.

Sales Can Be Deceiving

Revenue tells you what you sold. It matters - but it is only the beginning. A business can generate \$500,000 in revenue and still keep little of it. Payroll, rent, insurance, marketing, software and interest all compete for the same dollars. High sales can look impressive. But

revenue alone does not tell you whether your business is healthy. Fast growth can even create pressure when higher sales require more spending before the money comes in.

The better question is not only: “How much did we sell?” It is: “How much did we keep - and when did we receive it?”

Profit Is Not the Money in Your Bank

Profit is what remains after expenses are deducted from revenue. It tells you whether the economics of your business are working. But profit on paper does not mean the same amount is sitting in your bank account. Imagine you invoiced a customer for \$30,000 in September. Depending on your accounting method, that revenue may already appear in your reports, even though the customer has 60 days to pay.

Your profit may look great. Your cash has not arrived. Meanwhile, payroll, rent and taxes are still due. That is why a profitable company can run into trouble if nobody is watching cash flow.

Cash Is What Gives You Time

Cash flow shows when money actually enters and leaves your business. You may use cash to buy equipment, repay loans, pay taxes or cover expenses before customers pay you. Those movements matter even when the profit-and-loss statement looks good. And this is why I often say: Profit tells you that your business made money. Cash tells you whether you can sleep tonight.

The Number That Gives You Breathing Room

There is another number I want every business owner to know: your minimum cash reserve. How much money does your company need to safely cover payroll, taxes, fixed expenses and the unexpected? If you do not know that number, your bank balance has no context.

\$50,000 may be an excellent cash position for one company and a warning sign for another. It depends on monthly obligations, how quickly customers pay and how predictable revenue is. A healthy cash reserve does more than pay bills.

It buys you time.
Time to wait for a customer payment.
Time to handle an unexpected expense.
Time to survive a slow month.

Time to make a good decision instead of a desperate one. Your Numbers Should Warn You Before Your Business Has To Good accounting is not about looking backward once a year at tax time. Used properly, your financial reports are an early-warning system. Revenue tells you whether customers are buying.

Profit tells you whether pricing and costs work. Cash flow tells you whether the timing of money is becoming dangerous. Your cash reserve tells you how much room you have to respond. The real value is understanding how these numbers work together.

Strong revenue with weak margins is one problem. Profit with slow-paying customers is another. Healthy cash today with declining profit is a different warning sign.

The goal is not to become obsessed with numbers. It is to understand them well enough to see what is coming. Because the best time to make a financial decision is before your bank balance makes it for you.

Next issue: “It’s Tax Deductible” Does Not Mean It’s Free - How Smart Business Owners Decide Whether an Expense Is Really Worth It.

By Alexandra Welsch

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What Is Your Lee County Home Really Worth?

Online estimates offer speed and convenience. A property-specific market analysis adds local context that can matter when it is time to make a major financial decision.

A homeowner in Cape Coral opens a real estate website, enters an address and, within seconds, sees an estimated home value. The experience is simple. But the next question matters more: How closely does that number reflect what informed buyers might pay for this particular property today?

Automated home-value estimates have become a normal part of real estate. Most are based on an Automated Valuation Model, or AVM—a computer model that analyzes data such as public property records, prior sales, nearby transactions, tax information, property characteristics and historical market trends. Their advantage is obvious: they are fast, convenient and available instantly. For a homeowner seeking a rough starting point, an AVM can be useful.

The limitation is that a computer may know a home’s recorded square footage, year built and sales history without fully understanding what a buyer sees at the property. Renovation quality, deferred maintenance, the age of major systems, view, street appeal and lot orientation can all influence demand. In Southwest Florida, a pool, flood exposure, canal type, bridge restrictions or the quality of Gulf access can materially change how buyers compare one home with another.

A Comparative Market Analysis, or CMA, serves a different purpose. A CMA is a customized market analysis prepared by a real estate professional. It typically evaluates recent comparable sales together with active competition, pending sales when reliable information is available, price reductions, days on

market and the specific characteristics of the subject property. It may also consider living area, garage size, age and design, renovations, major components, neighborhood, exact location, flood-zone considerations, utilities or assessments, waterfront features and current supply and demand within the relevant submarket.

The key word is interpretation. Good market analysis is not simply a spreadsheet assigning the same dollar adjustment to every pool, remodeled kitchen or extra garage bay. The question is how buyers are actually valuing those differences in today’s market.

Lee County makes that especially important because it is not one uniform housing market. It is a collection of micro-markets. A home in Lehigh Acres is influenced by a different competitive set than a home near the river in Fort Myers, on Fort Myers Beach or in Estero. Even within Cape Coral, two houses that look similar on paper may not be close substitutes. A direct Gulf-access property may compete differently from one on a freshwater canal; bridge clearance, distance to open water, canal width, exposure, neighborhood, construction age and condition can all affect demand.

Current conditions reinforce the need for precision. Florida Realtors reported that in August 2026 the Cape Coral–Fort Myers MSA, which corresponds to Lee County in its report, recorded 1,218 single-family closed sales and a median sale price of \$380,000, up 2.8% and 2.7%, respectively, from August 2025. Freddie Mac reported an average 30-year fixed mortgage rate of 6.95% for the week of September 17, 2026. Those figures do not determine the value of any individual home, but they illustrate a market in which buyers must weigh price carefully alongside

financing costs.

That is why the listing price matters. When buyers have choices and financing remains expensive, an overpriced property can lose momentum. It may receive fewer showings, sit longer and require repeated price reductions. After enough time passes, buyers may begin asking why the home has not sold. The first weeks on the market—when a new listing receives its greatest initial attention—cannot be recreated later.

Underpricing creates the opposite risk: a homeowner may leave money on the table. The objective should not be, “What is the highest number we can put on the listing?” A better question is, “What price does the available market evidence support today?”

It is also important to separate three concepts: asking price, market value and eventual sale price. They are not the same. A seller can choose virtually any asking price. Market value reflects what informed buyers are willing to pay under current conditions. The final sale price is shaped by the

property, competing listings, buyer demand, financing, negotiation and seller circumstances.

An AVM, a CMA and a licensed appraisal also serve different purposes. An AVM is a fast automated estimate. A CMA is a customized broker or agent analysis of the property and its current competitive market. A licensed appraisal is a formal valuation prepared by a state-licensed or certified appraiser, often for lending or other specific purposes.

For homeowners, the takeaway is simple: an online estimate can be a useful first look. But when a sale, pricing decision or financial plan depends on the number, local property-specific analysis can provide context an automated model may not fully capture.

By Kevin Tremmel

Curious what your home may actually be worth in today’s market? Scan the QR code to request a complimentary, customized home valuation and Comparative Market Analysis from Daria US Brokerage.

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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!

Photos Source: Pexels



Fort Myers Art Walk

Downtown Fort Myers comes alive with local artists, galleries, music and a lively evening atmosphere. A nice event for adults, couples and older teens.

02

Candlelight: Tribute to the Beatles

A special live-music evening in Fort Myers featuring the music of the Beatles. A good choice for adults and older teenagers.

10

Music Walk

One of the most popular monthly traditions in downtown Fort Myers. Streets fill with live music, dancing and performers. Great for families, teenagers and adults.

16

Candlelight: Queen vs. ABBA

An evening celebrating two iconic music groups, presented by Gulf Coast Symphony.

16

Gulf Coast Youth Orchestra Fall Concert

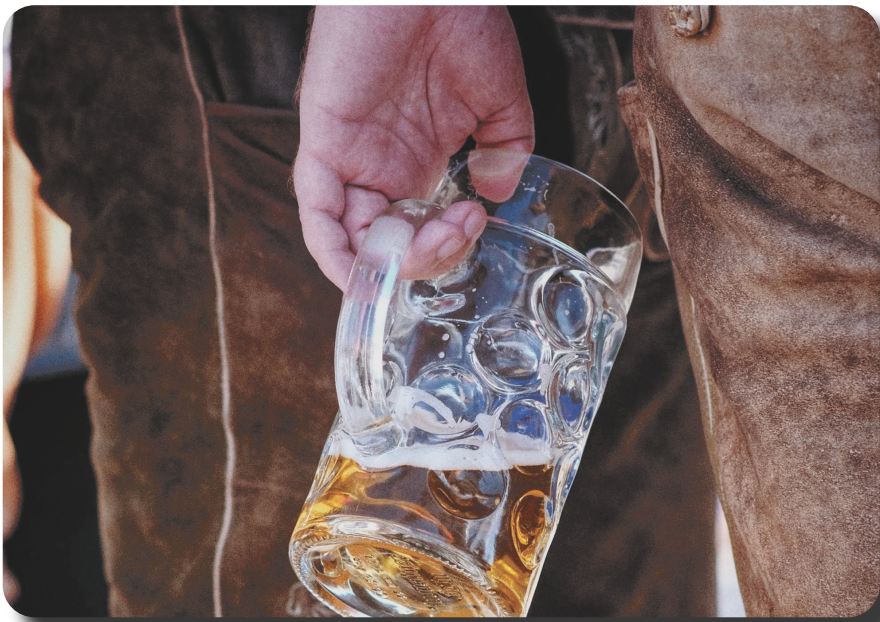
A great opportunity to support young local musicians and enjoy an afternoon of live orchestral music.

17

Arts & Crafts Fair at Bell Tower

Local crafts, shopping and a relaxed Saturday outing for families and adults.

24



Fort Myers Oktoberfest

Downtown Fort Myers hosts a Munich-style Oktoberfest with German food, beer, live music, pretzels and stein-hoisting contests. All ages are welcome until 6 p.m.; after that it is 21+.

0204

Cape Coral Oktoberfest

The German-American Social Club turns Cape Coral into a little piece of Germany with live bands, dancing, German food, beer and festival tents. There are also activities for families. (Fridays-Sundays)

1624



Bargains at Rotary Park

A Saturday morning outing at Rotary Park for those who enjoy browsing and finding local bargains.

03

National Night Out

A community event at Cultural Park in Cape Coral bringing families and local law enforcement together.

03

JCPenney Kids Zone

Free children's crafts and activities at Edison Mall.

10

Fall Fest

A family-friendly fall festival with crafts, games and activities for both children and adults.

17

PRESS PLAY: A Gamer's Halloween Family Concert

A particularly fun event for kids and teens. Gulf Coast Symphony combines Halloween with video-game music, including themes from Super Mario Bros. and The Legend of Zelda, plus Halloween treats and a costume contest.

18

Halloween Spooktacular at Bell Tower

A family-friendly Halloween celebration with costumes, spooky surprises and sweet treats.

24



OctoBeerFest

An Oktoberfest-style beer festival in Fort Myers with live music, food trucks and stein-hoisting. Definitely more suited to adults and older teens.

10

Trunk or Treat & Halloween Movie – Cape Coral

Cape Coral City Hall hosts a family Halloween evening with decorated cars, candy and a Halloween movie. There is also a separate Trunk or Treat at Oasis Elementary South that evening.

23

An Evening with CAKE

Live music at Caloosa Sound for fans of the alternative-rock band CAKE.

24

Spooktacular Storytime

A Halloween-themed storytime with music and a seasonal craft for younger children.

23

Lord of the Rings Symphony Pops

The Gulf Coast Symphony performs the sweeping film music from The Lord of the Rings. A particularly nice choice for teenagers who love the movies and fantasy.

24

Little Boo Bash

A Halloween dance party designed especially for little ones ages 0–5, with costumes encouraged.

30

Ghost of the Coast Fun Run

A Halloween-themed 5K and 1-mile fun run in Fort Myers—perfect for people who would rather start Halloween morning with some exercise.

30

Symphony Pops: Horror Movies

For older teens and adults: Gulf Coast Symphony performs music from famous horror films.

30



Boo at the Farm

Southern Fresh Farms offers a farm-wide trick-or-treat experience with decorated candy stations, a pumpkin patch, animals and vendors. A great family alternative to traditional neighborhood trick-or-treating.

31

Cape Coral Bike Night

The streets around SE 47th Terrace become a gathering place for motorcycles, music, food and people. A particularly fun evening for teenagers and adults.

10

Fall Festival at Edison & Ford Winter Estates

A daytime Halloween alternative with craft vendors, food, music, pumpkins and activities. The festival runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

31

Guided Kayak Tour at Four Mile Cove

A more peaceful way to enjoy Southwest Florida’s nature as the weather begins to become more comfortable in October.

09

Haunted Walk at Calusa Nature Center

For teenagers and adults looking for something considerably scarier, the Haunted Walk takes visitors through the nature center after dark.

WE

Cape Coral Farmers Market

The market is a nice recurring addition to the calendar for fresh produce, local vendors and a relaxed Saturday morning with the family.

Sat

Halloween in Southwest Florida

When the Neighborhood Comes Alive

For some families in Fort Myers and Cape Coral, Halloween doesn’t begin on October 31st. It begins weeks — sometimes even months — before.

As soon as September arrives, the first pumpkins appear on front porches. Then come the skeletons, ghosts, witches and giant spiders. Little by little, ordinary homes are transformed into haunted houses. And before long, neighbors start wondering: Who has the biggest display this year? Who has the most decorations? And whose lights and spooky sounds can be heard from the farthest away?

In some neighborhoods, Halloween almost becomes a friendly competition. One house may have a few pumpkins and a smiling scarecrow. The next has skeletons hanging from the trees. And then there is the house that seems to have turned its entire front yard into a scene from a horror movie — complete with fog, flashing lights, music and things that suddenly move when you walk past.

For children, all of this builds the excitement long before Halloween night arrives. But eventually, the big day comes. As the afternoon turns into evening, children begin getting ready. Costumes are pulled out, faces are painted and the excitement grows. A little princess, a superhero, a witch, a ghost or perhaps

something much scarier suddenly stands in the living room instead of the child who was there just a few minutes earlier. Parents check the candy supply one more time. Flashlights are found. Shoes are put on. And then the front door opens. Outside, the neighborhood feels different. The streets that are normally quiet are suddenly filled with children. Groups begin moving from house to house, their costumes glowing under porch lights. Younger children hold tightly onto their parents’ hands. Older kids walk together with their friends, laughing, talking and comparing costumes.

Then comes the familiar knock on the door. “Trick or treat!” And suddenly, a bowl of candy becomes the most exciting thing in the world. For children, there is something magical about walking through their own neighborhood on Halloween night. Every house holds a little surprise. Which house will have chocolate? Which one gives out the big candy bars? Which house has the scariest decorations? And how full can that bucket possibly get?

For parents, Halloween is something different — but just as special. They watch their children run up the walkway, knock on doors and proudly

say those three little words. They see their children’s excitement, hear their laughter and remember what it was like to be a child themselves. Some parents walk alongside their little ones all evening. Others sit outside their homes with a large bowl of candy, waiting for the next group of children to arrive. Neighbors talk across driveways and front porches. Someone compliments a costume. Someone else asks where the giant skeleton came from. For a few hours, people who may normally only wave to each other while driving past suddenly spend time together. And as the children get older, Halloween changes again. Teenagers may no longer need Mom or Dad walking beside them. They head out with their friends, sometimes in elaborate costumes, sometimes in something funny, and sometimes with just enough Halloween spirit to join the crowd. They take pictures, laugh together and enjoy the freedom of walking through the neighborhood with their friends.

But no matter their age, there is still that same feeling of anticipation. The excitement of seeing the decorated houses. The sound of children laughing somewhere down the street. The glow of porch lights. The rustle of candy wrappers.

And the sight of a little hand reaching into a candy bucket. That may be what makes Halloween in Southwest Florida so special. It isn’t only about candy or costumes or who has the biggest decoration. It is about a neighborhood coming alive.

It is about children making memories they may remember years from now. It is about parents watching their children grow, year after year, from the little ones who need to be carried home when they get tired to the teenagers who eventually head out on their own. And perhaps that is why so many families put so much time and effort into Halloween. Because for one evening, the neighborhood becomes a little more magical. The houses glow. The streets fill with laughter. Parents become children again for a moment. And children get to experience the simple excitement of walking from one house to the next, never quite knowing what will be waiting behind the next door. By the end of the night, the costumes may be coming off and the candy buckets may be overflowing. But the memories stay. And next year, when September arrives and the first pumpkins appear on a porch in Cape Coral or Fort Myers, it will all begin again.

By S. Mechalik



Photos courtesy of: S. Mechalik

A Day at the Pumpkin Patch

More Than Just Picking a Pumpkin

For many American families, October means one thing: it is time to visit the pumpkin patch. It may begin with a simple question — “Which pumpkin should we get?” — but a trip to a pumpkin patch can easily turn into a full day of family fun. In Southwest Florida, farms and fall festivals bring a little taste of autumn to Cape Coral, Fort Myers and the surrounding communities, even when the temperatures still feel more like summer than fall. And the best part? The pumpkin you bring home is only the beginning.

Finding the perfect pumpkin
Give the children a basket, wagon or simply a little time to explore and let them choose their own pumpkin. There will be the giant pumpkin that is almost impossible to carry, the tiny one that fits perfectly in a child’s hands, and the funny-shaped one that nobody else wanted — but that one child absolutely loves. Take a family photo with the pumpkins before heading home. These simple pictures often become some of the best memories of the season.

Make it an adventure
Many Southwest Florida fall farms offer much more than pumpkins. At Farmer Mike’s U-Pick in Bonita Springs, families can pick pumpkins and sunflowers, take a hayride, explore a family-friendly five-acre corn maze and enjoy slides, swings, bounce activities and farm food. During select evenings, there is also a haunted maze for older children, teenagers and adults. The 2026 Fall Festival runs from

September 26 through October 31. Southern Fresh Farms in Fort Myers offers another more relaxed farm experience, with a working farm atmosphere, animals and family activities. Its address is 8500 Penzance Blvd. And for families looking for an autumn outing without traveling far from Fort Myers, Lakes Regional Park has also been part of the area’s fall and pumpkin traditions. Visit Fort Myers highlights the park’s seasonal scarecrow displays as another family-friendly October activity.

Take the pumpkin home — and get creative
Once you get home, the fun doesn’t have to end. Set up an outdoor table or cover the kitchen table with newspaper and let everyone decorate their pumpkin. For younger children:

- Paint pumpkins in different colors
- Use stickers and glitter
- Glue on googly eyes
- Turn small pumpkins into funny faces
- For older children and teenagers:
- Carve traditional jack-o’-lanterns
- Create more elaborate designs
- Try a spooky face, a favorite character or even the family name

And don’t throw away the pumpkin seeds!

Don’t throw away the seeds!
Pumpkin seeds are one of the easiest Halloween treats to make at home. Separate the seeds from the pumpkin

pulp, rinse them well and pat them dry. Toss them with a little melted butter or olive oil and your favorite seasoning. For a classic version, simply add salt and a little garlic powder. For something sweet, try cinnamon and a little sugar. Spread the seeds on a baking sheet and roast them at 350°F for about 15–20 minutes, stirring once or twice, until golden and crunchy. Suddenly, the pumpkin has given you a decoration and a snack.

And then there is the pumpkin itself
If you choose a pumpkin that is suitable for cooking, there are even more possibilities. Pumpkin can become:

- Pumpkin bread
- Pumpkin muffins
- Pumpkin soup
- Pumpkin pancakes
- Pumpkin pie
- Pumpkin cookies
- Pumpkin cheesecake

Or, for a very American October afternoon, make a batch of Pumpkin Bread, fill the kitchen with the smell of cinnamon and nutmeg, and enjoy a slice with coffee or hot chocolate.

Make memories, not just decorations
One of the nicest things about a pumpkin-patch day is that it doesn’t have to be expensive or complicated. Take pictures in the pumpkin patch. Let the kids run through the corn maze. Stop for a hayride. Pick some sunflowers. Share a snack. Let everyone choose their favorite pumpkin. Then come home, decorate together and roast the seeds.

By the end of the day, you haven’t just bought a Halloween decoration. You’ve created an entire October memory. And perhaps that’s what these American fall traditions are really about. The pumpkin will eventually be thrown away. The jack-o’-lantern will disappear. Halloween candy will be eaten. But the photographs, the messy kitchen table, the laughter in the corn maze and the memory of a warm October day spent together — those are the things that stay.

A little tip for Southwest Florida families: October can still be hot, especially during the afternoon. Go in the morning when possible, bring water, sunscreen and comfortable shoes. And if you’re heading to a farm after rain, remember that fields and unpaved parking areas can become muddy.

By S. Mechalik

Where to Find Pumpkins Around Southwest Florida

Farmer Mike’s U-Pick – Bonita Springs

26031 Morton Ave., Bonita Springs

Sept. 26–Oct. 31, 2026

Southern Fresh Farms – Fort Myers

8500 Penzance Blvd., Fort Myers

Lakes Regional Park – Fort Myers

7330 Gladiolus Drive, Fort Myers

Daria Kung Fu

A New Fighting Style or a Way of Life?

What does Daria have to do with Kung Fu? That is probably the question that comes to mind when reading this headline. From the perspective of this author, who has been a member of the Daria community since January 2022 and has practiced martial arts since childhood, the answer is, simply everything.

In Western culture, the term “Kung Fu” often evokes images and memories of spectacular fight choreography from martial arts films starring actors such as Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, and Jet Li. Let us first take a look at what “Kung Fu” actually means in Chinese.

Kung Fu (correctly written in Pinyin: Gōngfū) essentially refers to continuous, “hard” work aimed at achieving a high level of skill or mastery. This principle can be applied and lived in virtually any field, from sports and craftsmanship to science, the arts and entrepreneurship. In the West, it is often confused with or equated to the term “Wushu” (Pinyin: wǔshù), which means “martial arts.” A famous quote by Bruce Lee sums it up perfectly.

“I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times.” So where can we find this connection between Kung Fu and Daria? When we look at Daria’s guiding principles, the value area of “Excellence and Performance” stands out in particular in connection with Kung Fu. In fact, it is already sufficient to define the essence of Kung Fu.

It is no coincidence that Frank Rahlf, founder of Daria, often tells an anecdote from his childhood in his presentations on “Power Selling.” In the story, he recalls what was, at the time, rather boring passing practice at his soccer club. One coach, whose competence he only learned to appreciate fully in retrospect, placed great emphasis on consistently repeating the movements in every training session. What seemed monotonous to him as a child has stayed with him to this day and helped him maintain a high level of passing accuracy.

For me, Kung Fu is based on two qualities: “Concentration/Focus” and “Perseverance,” represented here as calligraphies by my teacher, Yonghui Deistler-Yi, M.A. (<https://taijiarts.at/>).

Often, all it takes is a glance at them to immediately motivate me to train and thus resist the countless distractions and temptations of everyday life. But how does genuine, sustainable motivation arise? What helps us stay committed to something and pursue

it over the long term instead of merely getting started?

The most important prerequisites for continuous action are the decision to simply give something a try and finding joy in the activity itself. Talent can be beneficial, but it is by no means a guarantee of sustained commitment. As part of Daria’s established “Young Leadership Academy,” the principle of Kung Fu is taught alongside all the other values of Daria’s guiding principles (see <https://daria-us.com/werte/>). Experienced role models from entrepreneurship, sports, and other areas of life share their experiences with the young people in the Daria community. A specially developed curriculum covers topics ranging from communication and personal development to business management and economic issues.

This creates a foundation on which development can unfold. Apprentices become journeymen, and with growing experience, eventually masters of their craft.

As part of my own personal development and through taking an honest look inward, I have also realized how valuable it is to recognize my own sources of motivation and, above all, to consciously embrace them.

I have discovered that my passion for martial arts training does not arise solely from the physical challenge. Above all, it is fueled by the fact that training represents an ongoing journey of discovery, with and toward myself.

The desire to be accepted by those around me as an individual with all my different facets, while at the same time being able to pass on my knowledge and skills as a teacher, completes this inner drive.

At present, I see myself at the transition from journeyman to master. Daria provides the ideal environment and the necessary fertile ground for taking this step toward mastery through personal growth, sharing insights, and finding joy in what I do. I do not see mastery as an endpoint, but rather as another milestone on a journey that still offers many opportunities for personal and professional development.

Bruce Lee described it this way. “There are no limits. There are only plateaus, and you must not stay there; you must go beyond them.” Perhaps this article has changed the way you look at Kung Fu and sparked the question of what might also be possible in your own life. If you would like to pursue this thought further, immerse yourself in the world of Daria and discover your very own path to mastery.

By Helmuth Lauring



“Perseverance”



“Focus”

Photos courtesy of: Helmuth Lauring

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Alexander Zverev: From Perennial Finalist to Grand Slam Champion

Alexander Zverev has accomplished what German tennis has been waiting for for nearly a decade. First Roland Garros, then Flushing Meadows: The 29-year-old has won two Grand Slam tournaments in 2026, writing the most important chapter of his career. Behind the success are years of pressure, injuries, setbacks, personal headlines—and a life shaped by a disease he has lived with since childhood.

It is the moment Alexander Zverev has been waiting for for so long. As the final ball lands out at Arthur Ashe Stadium, the German throws his arms into the air. US Open champion. For the first time in his career. Just a few months earlier, he had already triumphed in Paris. Two Grand Slam titles in a single season—and suddenly, the perennial finalist has become one of the most successful German tennis players of his generation. In the New York final, Zverev defeated American home favorite Ben Shelton 6-3, 7-6, 5-7, 6-2. It was his second major triumph of the year after winning the French Open. More importantly, it represented a form of sporting redemption. The US Open had haunted Zverev for years. In 2020, he had already reached the US Open final and even led Dominic Thiem by two sets before eventually losing the match. Now, the circle is complete.

The Boy Who Was Destined for Greatness

Zverev was born on April 20, 1997, in Hamburg, Germany. Tennis was practically in his blood. His father, Alexander, was a professional tennis player who represented the Soviet Union in the Davis Cup, while his mother, Irina, also competed professionally. His older brother Mischa later enjoyed a successful career as a professional tennis player as well. Alexander was already considered an exceptional talent as a junior. In 2014, he won the Australian Open junior title and then made the transition to the professional ranks at remarkable speed. In 2016, he captured his first ATP title. Just one year later came his definitive breakthrough: Zverev won the Masters tournaments in Rome and Montreal and established himself among the world’s elite.

In 2018, another milestone followed. At the ATP Finals, Zverev defeated none other than Novak Djokovic in the championship match and became the season-ending champion. What looked at the time like the beginning of a great Grand Slam career would prove to be much more complicated than expected. Zverev reached the top of the world rankings, won Masters titles and became a permanent fixture among the game’s elite. But at the four Grand Slam tournaments, the ultimate breakthrough continued to elude him.

The Grand Slam Dream and the Fall in Paris

Zverev came close again and again. In 2020, he reached the US Open final. In 2024, he made the French Open final. But the title remained out of reach. Then came 2022. In the French Open semifinal against Rafael Nadal, Zverev suffered a serious ligament injury to his ankle. The images went around the world: The German had to leave the stadium on crutches. His career suddenly appeared to be at a crossroads. But Zverev came back. Perhaps that experience helped shape the player he is today. At 6-foot-6, the German possesses one of the most dangerous serves on the tour. Add his enormous reach, two-handed backhand and physical presence, and he becomes an extremely difficult opponent, particularly in long matches. In 2026, everything finally seems to be coming together.

Paris—The First Major Breakthrough

At the French Open, Zverev finally made history. In Roland Garros, he won his first Grand Slam title, becoming the first German men’s player since Boris Becker in 1996 to win a major championship. For Zverev, the victory meant far more than another trophy. It was the answer to the questions that had followed him for years. Could he win a Grand Slam final? Could he handle the pressure? Could he play his best tennis when everything was on the line? Paris answered those questions with a resounding yes. Zverev repeatedly spoke afterward about how important it had been to rediscover his enjoyment of tennis. After difficult periods, particularly around Wimbledon in 2025, he had

at times felt emotionally drained and burned out. In 2026, however, everything changed. It became the year of his sporting and mental comeback.

And Then Came New York

Just a few months later came the next breakthrough. At the US Open, Zverev played with a combination of patience, power and mental toughness. He had to survive a five-set battle in the opening round and then advanced through the tournament one round at a time. In the semifinals, he defeated Karen Khachanov before facing Ben Shelton in the championship match. The atmosphere was electric. Shelton had the crowd behind him, was the great American hope and wanted to make history on home soil. But Zverev remained calm. After four sets, the American dream was over. For Zverev, it was his second Grand Slam triumph in just 98 days. That made 2026 the year in which Alexander Zverev finally stepped out of the shadow of his own expectations.

Olympic Gold Against Djokovic

And then there is the other title that holds a very special place in Zverev’s career. In 2021, he won the men’s singles gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics. In the semifinals, he defeated Novak Djokovic, even though the Serbian was considered almost unbeatable at the time. Djokovic had won the first set and was leading by a break. But Zverev turned the match around and then defeated Karen Khachanov in the gold-medal match. Olympic gold against Djokovic was, even before his Grand Slam triumphs, the biggest title of Zverev’s career. Today, that achievement almost feels like a preview of what was still to come.

A Life With Diabetes

Behind the elite athlete is also a man whose career has been shaped by a very personal challenge. Alexander Zverev has lived with Type 1 diabetes since the age of four. For many years, he rarely spoke publicly about his condition. In 2022, he finally made his illness public and established the Alexander Zverev Foundation, which supports children and young people living with Type 1 diabetes.

For a professional tennis player, diabetes represents an additional challenge. Training, nutrition, physical exertion and insulin levels must constantly be coordinated. Even during a match, Zverev has to monitor his blood sugar and, when necessary, administer insulin. His mother, Irina, played a decisive role in helping him deal with the disease. When her son was diagnosed as a child, she refused to accept that diabetes should determine his dreams. Her attitude can be reduced to one simple idea: The disease should be part of his life—but it should never define his life. Today, that story has become part of his sporting identity.

Finally, He Has Arrived

Alexander Zverev is a different player in 2026 than he was several years ago. Not necessarily faster. Not necessarily more talented. But more mature. He has said himself that he may not be the most talented player in the world. But he works extremely hard. Now, that commitment appears to be paying off. With two Grand Slam titles in a single season, Olympic gold, multiple Masters titles, an ATP Finals championship and years spent among the world’s elite, Zverev has firmly established his place in German tennis history. And yet, his story does not feel like an ending. It feels much more like the beginning of a new chapter. Perhaps that is the greatest lesson of this extraordinary year: Alexander Zverev did not have to learn to become a different tennis player. He had to learn to trust his own game when the pressure was at its highest. In Paris, he won his first Grand Slam. In New York, his second.

And somewhere between the pain of lost finals, the devastating injury, living with diabetes, personal setbacks and extraordinary victories, the once-promising prodigy has become a champion who, with his two Grand Slam titles, has established himself as the second-most successful German men’s tennis player behind Boris Becker (6 Grand Slam Titles). Alexander Zverev waited a long time for his moment. In 2026, he got it twice.

By John Heinrich



Source: Pixabay



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Sunshine Post Series on Healthy Aging: Part 10

Without health, nothing is worth anything anyway.”



Photos courtesy of: Clemens Mueller

Marcell Jansen—former national team player, HSV president, and founder of the STATICS GROUP
For twelve years, he was cared for by Germany’s top medical professionals—today, he wants to make this privilege available to every employee in companies. Marcell Jansen, former national team player, World Cup bronze medalist, and European Championship runner-up, talks with Clemens Mueller about his history of injuries, his bold decision to retire at age 29—and why he believes that everyone is a competitive athlete in their everyday life. With the STATICS GROUP, he has turned this into a system for companies.

Your career was marked by great successes, but also by several serious injuries. What did that time teach you about your own body that you didn’t know as a young player?
Being a competitive athlete is a great privilege—the diagnostics, the rehab, the recovery; all these resources are available to you to help you quickly return to your former level of performance. I learned that back in my youth, after breaking my shinbone: how physical therapy works, how plans are explained to me on an equal footing. That was my first major revelation. And over the last ten to twenty years, athletic training in soccer has evolved massively—much of it came from the U.S., from track and field and football. Germany used to be ridiculed for that, with the rubber bands

and weird athletic trainers. Today, it’s standard practice.

You ended your professional career at age 29 and have openly said that you never loved the soccer business, but accepted it. How did you find a new professional identity afterward?
Turning a hobby into a career also means that, at some point, your hobby is gone. I asked myself what actually lay ahead for me in my mid-to-late twenties—and realized how limited my network and personal development were outside of soccer. I could easily have played at the top level for another two or three years. But I was no longer willing to spend another year or two building an emotional connection to a new club. So I chose the harder path: not taking the money, but throwing myself headfirst into a new life right away. Ten years later, I can say: It was absolutely the right decision. And the best part—I got my hobby back and played in the Oberliga for another six and a half years. That was the most amazing time because I was able to enjoy it from a completely different perspective.

We focus on five key areas for long-term health: exercise, nutrition, sleep, breathing, and nature. Which area was your biggest challenge—and has your perspective on it changed?
For me, exercise and nutrition are the real keys. I myself had a gluten intolerance that went undiagnosed for a long time—a

complete change in my diet visibly reduced inflammatory processes in my body. But I’m not a fan of one-size-fits-all solutions. When it comes to sleep, I make a point of looking at the underlying causes. Sleep is extremely important for recovery, but poor sleep is often a sign that something else is off—such as stress, exercise, diet, or mental strain. And cold therapy—sure, that comes from competitive sports and is now becoming accessible to the general public through ice baths and cryochambers. But you don’t need a chamber—a cold shower works just as well. It’s about awareness: consciously regenerating. Without regeneration, there’s no performance—and that’s also the problem with our society.

You’ve been cared for by the best medical professionals for decades. What was the moment when you realized that, in fact, everyone needs this kind of professional care for body and mind?
I asked myself: Why doesn’t everyone actually get this? Is it a matter of money? That would be understandable if it were. But I believe it’s primarily a problem of expertise and education—on both sides, among people themselves and among doctors. Doctors are great when you’re sick. But the holistic, preventive approach is almost completely missing. In competitive sports, prevention is a constant concern: How far am I from a potential risk, and how do I avoid getting into that situation in the first place? This principle applies to everyone—every person reacts differently to the same diet, has a different tolerance for stress, and a different spine. What’s missing is education on an equal footing, the kind we athletes receive from a young age. And this measurable progress is truly motivating—it’s not a matter of discipline at all, but of the sense of achievement.

It was precisely this insight that led you to found the STATICS GROUP. What exactly do STATICS BODY and STATICS MIND offer—and why do you consider these two areas together?
There’s actually a third area: LEAD, meaning leadership and behavior. Our core philosophy: Employees are the company’s elite athletes. A soccer club like Bayern Munich is also a company—but one that manages itself ruthlessly based on performance KPIs. A typical company doesn’t do that. There are isolated, individual measures—a bit of leadership development, a bit of workplace health management, a bit of employee benefits—but no system. We’ve adapted the approach from elite sports: measure, understand, train—across the three pillars of Body,

Mind, and Lead. Over a hundred KPIs, from which we derive individualized recommendations for action: first for the individual—confidentially and personally—then for teams, and finally for the organization. That’s exactly the order that works in elite sports—never the other way around.

What do you say to people in the company who initially struggle with this kind of measurability?
It starts with appreciation. The moment a manager realizes—I’m being seen here as a competitive athlete—something clicks. Second: It’s confidential; it’s not about showing who’s good or bad, but about optimization. We elite athletes have experienced this positive feeling throughout our lives—the way we’re treated, that sense of space and trust. Employees usually haven’t experienced that. And then comes the crucial part: don’t leave them on their own. A one-time assessment with a fifty-page evaluation form doesn’t help anyone. It requires support, just like in elite sports—then this measurability doesn’t become a tool for control, but rather a tool that people trust.

What does healthy aging mean to you personally—and how do you see STATICS’ role in keeping people healthy not only today, but also in twenty or thirty years?
There’s no such thing as anti-aging—there’s only slow aging. It’s about the quality of aging: What will I still be able to do in old age because I’ve taken preventive measures beforehand? Competitive athletes develop a sense of this very early on because we’ve been focused on our bodies our whole lives. A personal example: I have a flatfoot with a dropped arch that I can’t train away. I had it corrected twenty years ago. Of course, competitive sports have left their mark over many years—after all, prevention doesn’t mean you can stop wear and tear or injuries. But you can take early action and try to maintain as much mobility and quality of life as possible. That’s exactly what healthy aging means to me: not about still competing in sports at 60 or 70, but about being able to do what brings you joy for as long as possible. That’s exactly where STATICS comes in: The workplace is the ideal setting for this kind of education because employers and employees share a common interest here—both want people to remain productive for as long as possible. Aging with dignity—that’s the ultimate goal.

By Clemens Mueller

High-Protein Steak Bowl

Fresh · Satisfying · Protein-Packed

Extra Protein:
If you want to reach more than 65 g of protein per bowl, use 400 g of steak for two servings and choose skyr instead of Greek yogurt.

By Dina Veronique Scheve

- INGREDIENTS
SERVES 2
- 300 g beef tenderloin or lean sirloin steak
 - 150 g edamame
 - 1 avocado
 - 150 g strawberries
 - 100 g pomegranate seeds
 - 150 g mixed leafy greens
 - 1 small zucchini
 - 1 red bell pepper
 - 1 tsp olive oil
 - Salt, pepper & a little garlic
 - Optional: fresh herbs

- NUTRITIONAL VALUES
(APPROX. PER SERVING)
- 600–650 kcal
 - 55–60 g Protein
 - 30–35 g Carbohydrates
 - 25–30 g Fat

- For the Dressing: Mix 150 g skyr or Greek yogurt, 1 tbsp tahini, 1 tsp honey, 1 tbsp lemon juice, tsp soy sauce, a little water, salt, and pepper until smooth and creamy.
- Cut the steak into thin strips and sear briefly in a very hot pan with a small amount of oil. Season with salt and pepper. Add the zucchini and bell pepper and sauté briefly, keeping the vegetables slightly crisp.
- Divide the leafy greens and edamame between two bowls. Top with the sautéed vegetables and steak strips.
- Add half an avocado to each bowl and finish with strawberries and pomegranate seeds.
- Drizzle the creamy high-protein dressing over the top or serve it on the side.



Photos courtesy of: Dina Veronique Scheve

Hidden Sparks Pets Looking to Shine

One year. Twenty-four furry faces. Twelve dogs, twelve cats—and twenty-four very different stories we’ve had the privilege of sharing with you. When Hidden Sparks first appeared in the Sunshine Post one year ago, the idea was simple: to shine a little extra light on some of the wonderful souls at the Cape Coral Animal Shelter waiting for someone to see them. Month after month, new paws found their way onto these pages, each with a different face, personality, and story—but always with the same hope of finding a place to call home.

We met playful youngsters and super seniors enjoying life at a gentler pace. Big dogs with even bigger personalities, quiet cats who needed time to reveal their softer side, cuddle experts, little adventurers, and furry friends who needed some extra care. Some stole the spotlight immediately. Others carried a quieter spark that only appeared when someone took the time to look a little closer.

Hours of Operation:
Tuesday & Thursday:
12:00–5:00 pm
Friday through Sunday:
12:00–4:00 pm
Monday & Wednesday:
Closed

Cape Coral Animal Shelter
325 SW 2nd Avenue
Cape Coral, FL 33991
More information and all adoptable animals at:
www.capecoralanimalshelter.com

And there is wonderful news: most of the dogs and cats we introduced have since found homes of their own. Behind every one of those happy endings is someone who chose adoption. Someone who made room in their home and heart and gave a shelter pet the chance to belong. To everyone who has adopted from the Cape Coral Animal Shelter — or given a homeless pet from any shelter or rescue a second chance — thank you. Every adoption matters. But the story never really ends. While one furry friend heads home, another arrives. New paws keep walking through shelter doors: young and old, big and small, outgoing and shy. They may not all appear on these pages, but each one deserves to be seen. And if you’ve visited a shelter before

without feeling that special spark, go back. The faces change, new residents arrive, and the connection you didn’t find the first time may be waiting on your next visit. Somewhere out there, your perfect match is waiting for you. There is also something exciting ahead for the Cape Coral Animal Shelter itself. Construction on its expansion will begin soon, bringing to life plans that have been carefully developed for the shelter’s future. Things may be a little busier there for a while, but once the work is complete, the result will be a wonderful step forward for the shelter, the furry guests in its care, its visitors, and the Cape Coral community. This anniversary is also our chance to say thank you to everyone at the Cape Coral Animal Shelter. Day after day, you care for those who are lost,

surrendered, overlooked, or simply haven’t met their person yet. Hidden Sparks may give a few of them some extra visibility, but you are the ones giving them care, safety, and another chance while they wait. So, have you already found your four-legged companion? If not, keep an eye on Hidden Sparks in the year ahead—or visit the Cape Coral Animal Shelter during the hours below. And if adopting isn’t possible for you right now, perhaps volunteering is. Helping hands, time, attention, and kindness can make a difference too. After one year and 24 unforgettable faces, one thing hasn’t changed: there will always be more sparks waiting to be discovered. And we’ll keep helping them shine.

By Jennifer Hagemeister

Adopt Support Share Be the Spark!

Small Sparks Change Lives

Hidden Sparks-Cats

REAL CATS BRIGHTER TOMORROWS



Tamerlane
Oct 2025



Moo
Nov 2025



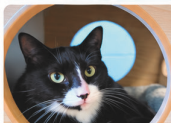
Prancer
Dec 2025



Dara
Jan 2026



Peaches
Feb 2026



Jupiter
Mar 2026



Sarai
Apr 2026



Sophia
May 2026



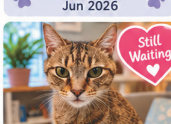
Sir Chonk
Jun 2026



Puff
Jul 2026



Mothra
Aug 2026



Bella
Sep 2026

Different stories. Brighter tomorrows. Hidden Sparks.

Rescue Adopt Belong

Different Dogs Brighter Tomorrows

Hidden Sparks-Dogs



Tiana
Oct 2025



Jingle
Nov 2025



Goldie
Dec 2025



Dinghy
Jan 2026



Cenicienta
Feb 2026



Liliana
Mar 2026



Haflinger
Apr 2026



Rachel
May 2026



Sir Wiggles
Jun 2026



Cardiff
Jul 2026



Linnie
Aug 2026



Bentley
Sep 2026

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Florida, Brötchen & Big Dreams

The Nicole Tundo Story



Photos courtesy of: Jacob Kugmun

She grew up in Switzerland, traveled the world, fell in love with Florida, left Florida, came back, walked into a German bakery looking for proper bread – and somehow ended up helping build one of Cape Coral’s most exciting new restaurants. Meet Nicole Tundo, the woman who proves that sometimes the best career plans begin with a craving for a decent Brötchen.

Every great success story eventually becomes a story about people. And after two remarkable years for Daria’s German Bakery & Bistro, there are quite a few stories worth telling. There has been the transformation from Rock’n Rolls into Daria’s, the growing menu of German favorites, countless enthusiastic customers and an impressive collection of recognition - from being named the No. 1 Bakery in the Caloosahatchee Region and one of the Best Places to Eat in Florida to being crowned Best Bistro in Cape Coral – Winner 2026. There was even the now-famous culinary expedition to “Bei Oma Kleinmann” in Cologne, where Daria’s leadership tested 14 different schnitzels in preparation for the future restaurant. Difficult research, admittedly, but somebody had to do it. Now Daria’s is preparing for its biggest chapter yet: Daria’s German Restaurant at Entrada PLaza in Northeast Cape Coral, combining an authentic German restaurant and bakery with a 33-foot bar, stage, live music, DJs, dancing and private events. And right in the middle of that next chapter is Nicole Tundo. Nicole is 39, happily married and the mother of an 11-year-old daughter and six-year-old son. She grew up in Switzerland, where hiking, biking, skiing and ice skating were part of childhood. Her family also traveled frequently, sparking an early fascination with other countries, cultures and people. That passion eventually became her profession. After school, Nicole completed a three-year commercial apprenticeship at a travel agency, learning about destinations around the world and getting plenty of opportunities to discover them herself. She later moved into the insurance industry, where she met her future husband.

The couple eventually did something many people dream about and considerably fewer actually do: they quit their jobs and traveled around the world for 11 months. One stop was particularly memorable. Bora Bora had always been Nicole’s dream destination – and it became even more unforgettable when her future husband proposed there. Their honeymoon later took them to the Maldives and Florida, where Nicole fell in love with the lifestyle, climate, palm trees, beaches and ocean. Annual Florida vacations followed, and eventually visiting was no longer enough.

In 2017, the family moved to Fort Myers. But living thousands of miles away from family and friends proved difficult, and after only a year, homesickness brought Nicole back to Switzerland. Florida, however, never really left her. She missed it increasingly, and after the birth of her second child, the family began planning Florida 2.0. During a trip to Cape Coral and Fort Myers in December 2023, they looked at businesses, schools and houses and made their final decision. Their E-2 visa arrived in April 2024, and by July they were back in Florida. The new beginning was not always easy. There were plenty of organizational and personal challenges. Then, in September 2024, Nicole encountered a considerably more manageable problem. She wanted real bread. An Instagram story led her to Rock’n Rolls German Bakery & Bistro. Nicole immediately loved the small bakery and its selection, and when Jörg “Joe” Domscheit came out of the kitchen, the two began talking. Then Nicole noticed a sign: “We are looking for you.”. She asked Joe whether he was hiring. He told her to come back around mid-October when season was beginning. Joe did not quite make it that long. One Sunday in early October, Nicole stopped by with her family to pick up Brötchen on their way to the beach. Joe recognized her and spontaneously offered her a job. On October 16, 2024, she started her new adventure.

Working in a bakery and kitchen was completely new territory for Nicole, but she quickly discovered how much

she enjoyed it. She learned fast, took on new responsibilities and developed an excellent working relationship with Joe. Today, the two complement each other naturally, supported by two additional team members who have turned the bakery into a close-knit operation where everyone knows what needs to be done – usually before anyone has to ask. And Nicole’s job has certainly never been boring. She serves customers, cooks dishes, prepares sandwiches, bakes cakes, develops new creations and helps manage the countless daily tasks that keep the bakery running. It is precisely this variety that she loves. Even more important are the people. Through her work, Nicole has met customers from countless countries and cultures, listened to their stories and shared experiences with them. One encounter even developed into a close friendship, while many other customers have become familiar regulars whose return visits are genuinely appreciated. For Nicole, the greatest reward is remarkably simple: serving good food and watching guests leave happy, satisfied and full. That philosophy has become even more meaningful as the little bakery Nicole discovered through Instagram has undergone an extraordinary transformation. Today, Daria’s German Bakery & Bistro has become an award-winning Cape Coral destination, while Joe’s German cooking and the bakery’s commitment to quality have created the foundation for something considerably bigger.

And German food certainly has a receptive audience in Southwest Florida. Cape Coral’s long-established Oktoberfest, for example, prominently features traditional favorites such as Schnitzel and Sauerbraten alongside German music and culture. Apparently, Schnitzel and palm trees make a surprisingly good couple. For Nicole, however, the biggest transformation has been her own. Over the past two years, Joe has continuously challenged and encouraged her, trusted her with new responsibilities and given her opportunities to grow. Nicole is deeply grateful for that support. What began as completely unfamiliar territory gradually became experience, confidence, responsibility and, ultimately, genuine passion.

In April 2026, that development reached another milestone when Nicole was offered the position of Deputy Manager of the future Daria’s German Restaurant. For someone whose Daria career began because she wanted proper bread, that is a rather impressive return on carbohydrates. Her new role will include responsibility for employees and staff leadership, supporting the daily operation, helping ensure that everything runs smoothly and serving as an important point of contact for both employees and guests. Together with the restaurant management, she will also help maintain the quality and service standards that have become central to Daria’s success. In reality, the job has already begun.

Nicole is currently heavily involved in preparing the new restaurant, from selecting dishes and cutlery

to developing menus, searching for employees, contacting suppliers and comparing offers. What excites her most is the opportunity to be part of the project from the very beginning and help shape a restaurant from the ground up. She can contribute her own ideas while learning from and working closely with Daria Gastro CEOs Jörg “Joe” Domscheit and Maximilian von Garnier, whose support and experience she particularly values. And Nicole already knows what kind of restaurant she wants to help create.

For employees, it should be a workplace where people enjoy coming to work, feel appreciated and remain motivated. For guests, the promise is equally straightforward: they should be welcomed with a smile, receive excellent food and service and leave satisfied, happy and preferably with very little room left for dessert. Or, as Nicole’s philosophy puts it perfectly: “Come hungry, leave happy!”

There is, however, one important ingredient still missing from the new restaurant. More people. Daria’s is continuing to build the team for its new Entrada PLaza location, and perhaps this time the usual “We’re Hiring” is not quite the right question. How about:

Who wants to join Team Nicole? The opportunity is unusual because new employees will not simply walk into an established restaurant. They will become part of it before the first Schnitzel reaches a table, before the first drink is served across the 33-foot bar and before the first band takes the stage. They will have the chance to help create the culture of the place from day one - alongside someone who knows firsthand how quickly an unexpected opportunity can become something much bigger. After all, less than two years ago Nicole was the person who saw a “We are looking for you” sign in a little German bakery.

Today, she is helping look for the people who will write the next chapter. And that next chapter promises to be quite a story. Daria’s German Restaurant is intended to become much more than another place for German food. Nicole’s ambition is for it to become known far beyond Cape Coral and establish itself as one of Southwest Florida’s outstanding restaurants – a place where authentic food, hospitality, entertainment and a great team come together under one roof.

There will be Schnitzel inspired by some very serious research in Cologne. There will be a bakery, a 33-foot bar, live music, DJs, dancing, private events and plenty of German hospitality. And somewhere in the middle of all of it will be Nicole Tundo. A Swiss traveler who fell in love with Florida twice, crossed the Atlantic twice and walked into a bakery looking for bread - only to discover an entirely new career. Some people carefully plan every step of their professional lives. Others stop for Brötchen on the way to the beach. Sometimes, apparently, that works even better.

By Jacob Kugmun



Puppetry in Jail

“The Art of Interviewing: Voice, Vision, Vocation”

A community exhibition of puppets created by 13 women incarcerated at Osceola County Corrections, for the purpose of practicing job interview skills: serious fun, employability, successful reintegration

Funded by a Community Impact Grant from United Arts of Central Florida, Leah Basaria and Dr. Tyler Fisher, in collaboration with Open Scene, a bilingual performing arts non-profit, used puppetry to teach job interview skills to women in jail. The puppetry project at the Osceola County Corrections Department (OCCD) enhanced their existing curriculum to prepare incarcerated individuals for successful reintegration into society. New College of Florida students Jones Hogsed and Alicia Byrne contributed to the project with creative scriptwriting and visual design. Together with Open Scene, Fisher and

co-teacher Basaria specially designed puppet-building materials for students in the carceral classroom setting to assemble as functional puppets for job interview practice. Open Scene created the parts for the puppets (of safe, soft foam, felt, and polyester) which the incarcerated students assemble, with permutable appendages, accessories, and rearrangeable facial features to facilitate meaningful self-representation. The puppets then served as the vehicle through which the students practiced job interviewing skills and techniques in a series of three workshops across three weeks.

Artistic Self-Expression & Interview Practice for Reintegration
The distinctive nature of these purpose-built puppets is key. While maintaining puppetry’s essential capacity for playfulness, these are instruments for serious fun and creative expression. They do not look like children’s toys, and, while being anthropomorphic or

human-like, they are of non-human colors, so as to avoid any racial connotations. In mock interviews for jobs, the puppets serve as an empowering extension of the self, equipping the students to overcome inhibitions, shame, and self-consciousness by speaking and gesturing through the puppet persona. Making the puppets and performing with them afford confidence-building agency. These are strategically normalizing activities, allowing students to perceive themselves as potential artists, makers, performers. The puppet, as a constructed, artificial persona or second self, promotes a greater degree of openness; the added distance relieves the pressure of the personal dimensions of job interviews (e.g. criticism regarding the interview practice is not directed at the person but can be third-person, directed at the puppet). As the students practice the social and cultural norms of the interview interaction, this critical distance also

grants them scope for critical reflection on the mock interview. The puppetry is simultaneously subjective and objective. Following the series of workshops, the puppets the students create will be exhibited at Hart Memorial Central Library, Sep-Oct 2026. As the incarcerated students prepare to reenter society, this display of their self-portraits in puppetry presents them to the public as artful makers, creators, and performers — a positive display of anti-“mugshots,” as it were.

By Tyler Fisher

Photos courtesy of: Tyler Fisher



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Conversations with God

Part 4: When Work Becomes Service. Service, Humility, Dignity and the Deeper Meaning of Everyday Work



Photos courtesy of: Martin Luchterhand

In Part 3 of Conversations with God, Alexandra and Marty spoke about faith, work, integrity and the different ways a calling can unfold throughout life. Their conversation naturally led to another question: What if our everyday work itself is part of our calling? In this fourth conversation, Alexandra and Marty explore vocation, service, humility and the dignity of work - and why even the most ordinary profession can carry a deeper meaning when it is approached with faith and a genuine desire to serve.

Alexandra:
You mentioned earlier that perhaps being a pastor is no longer your calling in the traditional sense, but that you can still serve people in another way. You used the word vocation. What does vocation mean to you?

Marty:
For example, I am a husband - but actually, first I am a child of God. Then I am a husband, a dad to four boys, and I am also in business. I have all of those callings. As long as my calling with God remains number one, I can be a better husband, a better dad and better in business. What God really wants from people is faithfulness. You work hard, Alexandra. God has given you a plate, and there are many things on that plate. You may not be able to do everything. So you have to decide what is most important and ask yourself: How do I show the love of God through all the things I have been given to do? There is a well-known theological saying: “God milks the cows through the handmaids.” So, in your case, God does the taxes through you. God does His Financial Angel work through you. You become a conduit for God’s blessings. You could even look at someone working at McDonald’s and say that God is feeding people through that person. We normally do not think about work that way. But when we do, almost any job can have meaning. If I understand that I am a conduit through which God can serve someone else, I take what I do seriously. That is what I love about the biblical teaching of vocation.

Alexandra:
And that brings us directly to Part 4 of our conversation: When Work Becomes Service.

We are talking about service, humility, the dignity of work and practical faith. So let me start with a big question: What does service mean to you?

Marty:
Service means that I am not the hero. You may have a problem and I may have a solution. If that solution fits your situation, I am happy to be part of solving that problem. But I am not the hero. I am not the star of the show. I am here as God’s representative, and I have been given a really neat opportunity through business. And when it comes to spirituality, ultimately I point back to Him as the giver of every good and perfect gift.

Alexandra:
How do you react when someone decides not to use the solution you offer? For example, someone may decide to buy an entirely new roof and then come back two years later and say, “I wish I had heard about you two years ago. I could have saved a lot of money.” What does that do to you personally?

Marty:
Sometimes I shake my head and think, “Really?” You are going to spend \$30,000 on a roof when I gave you an estimate for \$3,700? Of course, I shake my head sometimes. But I also understand that it is business. This is still newer technology. Roof rejuvenation has been around for several years, and we have sprayed a lot of square footage of roofs. But many people simply do not know that this option is out there yet. And I understand that it is the roofer’s business to sell a roof. People first have to know that alternatives exist before they can make that decision.

Alexandra:
Life is changing. The way we do business is changing and the way we live is changing. There is an evolution happening, and there are new solutions for people to discover. So what has hands-on work taught you about humility?

Marty:
I cannot do anything without His blessing. At 58 years old, I still need to be able to get up and down a ladder. I cannot fathom success in any aspect of my life without His blessing. And you can probably tell that this

means a lot to me. Humility comes when you realize: You cannot do everything yourself. You need His help, and you need the help of other people. I think I understand my limitations. And somehow God continues to say, “Here you go - another blessing. Here you go - the ability to do it.” That realization keeps you humble.

Alexandra:
When we talk about work becoming service, I think service can take many different forms. There is mental service, physical service and professional service. And we are now living in a time where even AI provides forms of service. So what do you think our modern world has forgotten about the dignity of work?

Marty:
I feel that if people had a genuine heart of service, they could do very well in business - whatever they chose to do. If you look at business and think: “I am here to serve you with a solution that you really need,” that is going to go a long way. But if I enter the relationship thinking I am the star of the show, nobody really cares about that. I also see people sometimes taking the easy way out instead of going that extra step. Sometimes that additional step is exactly what creates greater confidence and trust with a client. Once you have that confidence from the client, it is often because you have lived with humility. You have offered not only a heart of service, but also a business that is genuinely service-oriented.

Alexandra:
Our series is called Conversations with God. So how can people bring more purpose into their daily work through that connection and through their own conversations with God?

Marty:
By remembering that I serve a higher purpose. No matter what I do, even if I do not explicitly talk about Jesus, I can still be the avenue through which God helps another person. When I spray a roof and help someone save money, I can see God working through that. Whatever opportunity I have in business came from Him. If I do well, I put everything I have into it. But He gave me the energy and the intelligence to do the job. And I think something else is really important: No matter what you do, and no matter what conversation you are having - with a friend, a family member or a business associate - if you are walking hand in hand with God, that brings about the humility and the spirit of service that are needed. And I believe those qualities also help us do well in business.

Alexandra:
That leads directly to my last question. What would you say to someone who feels that their work does not matter? Sometimes people go through weeks, months or even years when they think, “I am not worthy. I am not getting anything out of this. What I do does not matter.” What would you say to that person?

Marty:
I am going to go into the spiritual side here. I would say: Look at the cross where Jesus died. Did He die for you? Yes. God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son.

So you have worth simply because Jesus died for you and took away your guilt before God. If you have nothing else, you still have that. I have bad days too. And sometimes I remind myself, “Okay, I know You love me. So I am going to be okay.” And then, when I can help somebody - man, that is a good feeling. You deal with numbers all day, Alexandra. But you are helping your clients because people do not know how to do what you do. You are a gift from God to your clients. They may not look at you that way, but you are providing a service that is genuinely valuable. Think again about the McDonald’s example. I do not really eat at McDonald’s anymore, but if I am hungry, I can be grateful for the people preparing the food. God is feeding me through those people. And when I understand that, I treat those people differently too. So keeping my focus on God does not only help me serve better. It also helps me appreciate the service other people provide for me. My dog was groomed yesterday. Someone came to my house and did that for me. I can look at even something as simple as that and recognize it as a gift from God. That perspective changes how you see people and how you see everyday work.

Alexandra:
So even if someone does not love what they are doing right now, the work and the journey can still have meaning?

Marty:
Absolutely. You can dislike what you do. It does not matter where you start. The journey is important. The journey can help you eventually arrive where God wants you to be. That is why I tell people all the time: Just work. Do it. God will bless it. And if you do not like the opportunity you have right now, He may give you another opportunity. But start where you are.

Closing Thought
Perhaps the dignity of work is not determined by the title on a business card, the size of a paycheck or how impressive a profession looks from the outside. Perhaps it begins with a much simpler question: Who can I serve with what I have been given today? When work is approached with humility, responsibility and faith, an ordinary task can become something more. It can become service. And service can become a way of living our faith.

Coming Next: Conversations with God – Part 5
In our next conversation, Marty and Alexandra turn their attention to Fort Myers, community and neighbors. We will explore a question that reaches far beyond business or faith alone: What do people need most from each other today?

By Alexandra Welsch

Who would want to be a “lucky mushroom”?

“Favored by fate – once a term of disparagement”



Photos courtesy of: Matthias Erbacher

In the late 18th century, the term was used pejoratively to describe people who had attained rapid wealth, fame, or status completely unexpectedly and—usually—without any hard work of their own. Such social climbers were disparagingly labeled **Emporkömmlinge** (upstarts). It stemmed from society’s sheer envy—a refusal to begrudge the individual their sudden success. The imagery arose because, in the right environment, mushrooms shoot up from the ground overnight... It was not until the end of the 19th century that usage shifted toward a positive connotation—the meaning we know today: someone who unexpectedly gains a major advantage or emerges unscathed from a situation that could easily have caused them serious (physical) harm.

A shift in meaning over time

Yet, even with this positive meaning, the question remains: Why do so many myths, rituals, and idioms revolve around lucky charms? Although clear thinking, planning, and caution are valuable tools for a secure life, our reasoning has its limits. Our

brains attempt to compensate for this using evolutionary mechanisms.

- Where logic fails (e.g., I cannot actively influence how my surgery goes), the talisman or lucky charm steps in.
- Then there is the tendency to forge connections where none exist: in prehistoric times, the human brain learned to survive by making such associations. If bones were lying on the bank of a waterhole, it signaled that danger might lurk in the water. And today—the origins of superstition: I was wearing this particular sweater when my team won, so I don’t wash it and wear it again for the next game.
- And self-efficacy: The boost in belief regarding one’s own capabilities when “using” or carrying a lucky charm.

This makes the basis of the human longing for lucky charms and magical thinking clear. Or does it? Wouldn’t you think that—given how advanced we are—simply understanding these mechanisms would be enough? Far from it! One of the most sought-

after symbols in today’s fashion world and pop culture is the “Nazar,” or blue eye. It is a lucky charm—or rather, a ward against misfortune—that has been used in the Orient for millennia. According to mythology, it fends off the “evil eye” (an envious, spiteful, and malevolent gaze); today, it features in many pieces of jewelry and is worn in a wide variety of styles by figures from the world of show business and entertainment. The use of positive affirmations has even become a TikTok trend: known as “lucky-girl syndrome” (or “lucky-guy syndrome”), it involves constantly telling oneself that one is the luckiest person in the world. However, this can easily backfire when it comes to events beyond one’s control, as the individual may then blame themselves for their own misfortune...

“Let’s knock on wood,”
hoping it works...

There—it happened again. Why knock on wood?

While pre-Christian cultures knocked to rouse good spirits within trees to grant wishes—or to drown out evil spirits so they wouldn’t hear the wish—a more pragmatic, modern explanation comes from the world of sailing: captains would knock on a ship’s hull and mast to test structural integrity based on the sound. Today, people use the ritual hoping their streak of good luck continues. And if no wooden ship or other wood is handy, some jokers might just knock on their own heads...

This implies that, with certain rituals and lucky charms, we consciously prioritize quick and easy availability. This stands in stark contrast to rare phenomena like shooting stars or four-leaf clovers. Here, too, the reason lies within us: Our brains have developed a perfectly balanced system: On one hand, there is immediate availability for everyday “minor catastrophes”—situations where no one has time to wait for nightfall and a shooting star, but can instead use this little helper to calm their nerves.

Minor catastrophes

On the other hand, rarity serves as a symbol of great value. Anyone who finds or sees something rare must be privileged—and can hope for something truly great. It must sound quite baffling to someone

unfamiliar with the phrase

“Break a leg” (literally: “Break your neck and leg”)!
—Especially if it’s shouted with a grin on the speaker’s face. What on earth is that supposed to mean? Personally, it only strikes me as odd upon second thought, because I grew up hearing this phrase as a wish for good luck and a safe return. But how did it come about that we wish the exact opposite upon someone? This stems from an ancient folk belief that Fate is a jealous and treacherous entity. It was believed that evil spirits, demons, or goblins were lurking everywhere, waiting to place obstacles in people’s paths. The logic of superstition holds that demons only take notice when you wish someone good luck—for an exam, for instance. They immediately spring into action to sabotage the endeavor. However, if you wish the person a disaster—such as “breaking a neck and a leg”—fate is effectively tricked; the spirits assume the calamity is already sealed, so they depart satisfied and leave the intended victim alone.

Hals- und Beinbruch

Beyond the psychological theory of warding off bad luck, linguists offer a well-founded linguistic explanation. According to this theory, the phrase “Hals- und Beinbruch” (break a neck and a leg) arose from a misunderstanding of the Hebrew-Yiddish blessing “Hatzlacha u’bracha,” which translates to “Success and blessing!” When this expression entered the German-speaking world in the 19th century via Jewish theater circles and the jargon of merchants, the general public did not correctly grasp the foreign words. People simply transformed the Yiddish sound of “Hatzlacha u’bracha” into the similar-sounding but drastically German phrase “Hals- und Beinbruch.” The principle of outsmarting fate ensured that this apparent “curse” fit perfectly into the realm of theatrical superstition and was subsequently adopted.

“I’ll keep my fingers crossed for you”
That the Thanksgiving roast tastes good in Germany and the “wishbone” snaps correctly on Thanksgiving...

By Matthias Erbacher

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One Year on the Journey

– and Still Far from the Destination



Source: Janet Brooks-Gerloff (1992), *On the Road to Emmaus*. Oil painting

One year. Twelve months. Countless stories, encounters, questions, and answers. One year since this newspaper was published for the very first time. Back then, the first issue was still in the future. Today, an entire year already lies behind us. And suddenly a question arises that is larger than any anniversary: What remains when a year has passed? Perhaps this is one of the strange experiences of time. While we are living through it, time seems to pass slowly, and sometimes even heavily. Only when we look back do we realize how quickly it has gone. A year can feel like a moment – and at the same time like a long journey. The Bible knows such journeys. One of its most beautiful begins not with a destination, but with disappointment. In the Gospel of Luke, we meet two disciples who are leaving Jerusalem. They are walking to Emmaus. Behind them lies the story of Jesus, his crucifixion, his hope – and the ending they never expected. They walk on. Perhaps that is all they can do at first. They talk with one another about what has happened. They try to make sense of their story. And while they are on the road, a stranger comes near and walks with them. They do not recognize him. This may be the most remarkable sentence in the whole story: Jesus is with them, but they do not know it. They tell him about their disappointment. They tell him about their hope. They even tell him that some women found the tomb empty that morning. But for them, none of it yet forms a complete picture. Only later will they understand. Only later will they say: “Were not our hearts burning within us as he spoke with us on the road?” Perhaps this is a good story for an anniversary. For a year, too, can be understood as a journey.

When we are in the middle of it, we rarely know where it is leading. We do not know which encounter will become important. We do not know which word will remain in our memory. We do not know which seemingly small story may later suddenly take on meaning. Only in looking back do some things begin to come together.

A newspaper tells stories of such journeys. Behind every story there are people. Behind every report there is an encounter. Behind every photograph there is a moment that might otherwise have passed away unnoticed. A newspaper does not simply collect information. It preserves a piece of time. In a way, this is a deeply human activity. We tell stories because we want to remember. We remember because we want to understand who we are. And we tell our stories because we hope that what has become important to us will not simply be lost. Perhaps this is also one of the special tasks of a newspaper: It gives a community a memory. A year, therefore, is more than the number twelve. It is twelve months of lived reality. People have celebrated and mourned, planned and improvised, begun again and said goodbye. Some things have changed. Others have remained. And much of it becomes visible only when we look back. The same is true of our own lives. We do not remember only the great events. Sometimes it is precisely the small things that remain: a conversation that lasted longer than expected; a sentence someone said at exactly the right moment; an encounter that became friendship; a moment when we felt: This is where I belong. Perhaps such moments are what truly make up a year. The story of Emmaus tells us something that is essential to Christian

faith: God does not meet us only at the destination. He walks the road with us. That makes a difference. Our thinking is often focused on goals. We want to arrive. We want to see results. We want to know how things will end. We count years, achievements, editions, and milestones. We ask: What have we accomplished? Faith asks a different question: Who is walking with us? Perhaps that is the deeper perspective on an anniversary. After one year, we can gratefully look at what has been accomplished. We can rejoice in the people who have filled this newspaper with life. In those who have written, photographed, designed, organized, and read. In stories that have brought people together. But Christian gratitude does not stop with what has been achieved. It also recognizes that we do not have everything in our own hands. That some paths turn out differently than planned. That some doors open unexpectedly. That sometimes we only realize in hindsight how good it was that a particular path did not unfold as we originally wanted. And perhaps this is part of the hope of faith: We do not have to know the whole route in order to take the next step.

An anniversary invites us to look back. But it must never be only a backward glance. For a newspaper is made of pages. And a page is something special: It preserves what has passed and at the same time opens space for something new. The next page is still blank. That can be unsettling. But it can also give us hope. For a blank page means that the story has not yet been written. Perhaps this is a fitting thought for October. Autumn makes visible that change belongs to life. The days grow shorter, the leaves change color, and some things withdraw. Nature reminds us that not everything has to remain as it is. But change does not automatically mean loss. Sometimes it means transformation. Christian faith, too, lives from this hope. Easter is, after all, the great reminder that even what looks like an absolute ending does not have to have the final word. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus believed that their story was over. They were wrong. In the end, they turn around. They return to Jerusalem. Disappointment becomes a new beginning. Looking back becomes looking ahead. And perhaps that is the most beautiful message for a first anniversary: We may look back. But we do not have to remain there. One year of a newspaper therefore means,

above all, one year of a shared journey. Perhaps not everyone read every issue. Perhaps not every article reached every person. And that is all right. A newspaper is not a finished monument. It is an invitation to conversation. It asks: What moves us? What sustains us? What gives us hope? Where do we need to look more closely? And where may we simply be grateful? After one year, therefore, we should not only say: This is what we have accomplished. We can also say: Thank you for walking this road with us. Thank you for the stories. Thank you for the thoughts. Thank you for the criticism. Thank you for the encouragement. Thank you for every encounter that has turned a page into more than printed paper. And perhaps, in the end, we may even take up the question of the disciples on the road to Emmaus: “Were not our hearts burning?” For perhaps that is the true measure of a newspaper – and perhaps even of a meaningful year: not how much we have produced, but whether something has moved people. Whether a thought has remained. Whether a story has given courage. Whether someone has felt seen. Whether a word has given hope.

One year lies behind us. But the journey continues. We do not know what the coming months will bring. We do not know which stories will still be written, which people will cross our path, or what surprises the future may hold. And perhaps that is a good thing. For Christian hope does not mean already knowing the future. It means being able to trust it. The God of the Bible is not a God who waits only at the end. He is the God of the journey. The God of Abraham, who sets out without knowing the destination. The God of Israel, who leads through the wilderness. The God of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, who makes himself known in the middle of the journey. Perhaps that is why an anniversary is not, first and foremost, an ending. It is a stopping point along the way. A moment in which we turn around, look back with gratitude at the road we have traveled, and then look forward once again. One year has passed. The next page is waiting. We are on the journey. And perhaps someday, when we look back again, we will discover that on this next part of the road, someone was walking with us whom we did not recognize at first. For the story is not yet over. We are still far from the destination.

By Tobias Leinesser

Pumpkin Bread – An American Fall Classic

A little taste of American fall

When October arrives and pumpkins begin appearing on front porches, the warm aroma of cinnamon and pumpkin spice fills kitchens across America. Pumpkin bread is a favorite fall treat in many American homes. Moist, flavorful and easy to make, it is perfect for breakfast, afternoon coffee, or as a little treat after a night of trick-or-treating.

By S. Mechalik

INGREDIENTS (SERVES 2)

- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup pumpkin purée (100% pumpkin, not pumpkin pie filling)
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup water or milk
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1½ teaspoons cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease a loaf pan or line it with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, combine the pumpkin purée, sugar, oil, eggs, water or milk, and vanilla extract. Mix well.
3. In a separate bowl, combine the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and ginger.
4. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the pumpkin mixture. Stir just until everything is combined. Avoid overmixing to keep the bread moist and tender.
5. Pour the batter into the prepared loaf pan and bake for approximately 50–60 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
6. Allow the bread to cool in the pan for 10–15 minutes, then remove it and let it cool completely before slicing.

Halloween Twist

For a festive Halloween version, drizzle the cooled pumpkin bread with a simple cream cheese glaze. For an extra American touch, fold a handful of chocolate chips into the batter before baking. Tip: Pumpkin bread often tastes even better the next day, when the warm spices have had time to develop.



Photos courtesy of: S. Mechalik

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.

by Marc Siewert

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”

What’s your everyday AI Question?

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

info@sunshine-post.com

Subject: “AI Prompt Submission”

Kung Fu

“I’m interested in learning more about Kung Fu. Explain its origins, different styles, and the physical and mental principles behind the practice.”

AI suggests:

- Explore the historical roots of Kung Fu in China
- Explain how different Kung Fu styles developed
- Look at the importance of balance, movement, and breathing
- Explore how training develops patience and concentration
- Explain how Kung Fu can be practiced as both a martial art and a personal discipline

Tennis Tournament

“Give me an introduction to the US Open tennis tournament. Explain its history, unique atmosphere, famous traditions, and what makes it one of tennis’s major events.”

AI suggests:

- Explain where the US Open fits within the four Grand Slam tournaments
- Explore the tournament’s history and evolution
- Describe the atmosphere and traditions of the New York event
- Highlight the importance of hard-court tennis
- Explore the physical and mental demands placed on professional players

Discipline

“I want to develop more inner discipline. Give me practical ways to become more focused, patient, consistent, and resilient in everyday life.”

AI suggests:

- Set small goals and build consistent daily habits
- Practice staying focused on one task at a time
- Learn to recognize distractions before acting on them
- Use exercise or meditation to strengthen mental discipline
- Focus on progress rather than perfection

Pumpkin Season

“It’s pumpkin season! Give me creative ideas for decorating, cooking, and enjoying pumpkins throughout October.”

AI suggests:

- Carve a classic jack-o’-lantern or try a more creative design
- Roast pumpkin seeds as an easy seasonal snack
- Make pumpkin soup, pumpkin bread, or a seasonal dessert
- Use small pumpkins as natural table decorations
- Create a pumpkin-themed family activity or autumn gathering

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Testimonials

My name is Ernie Durham, I am a Christian and a Navy (Combat) Veteran, a 100% Disabled man. I started receiving your wonderful newspaper and enjoyed it immensely! I, too, am an optimist and agree with your values. (Honey attracts, whereas vinegar repels in relationships! Like toxic people!) THANK YOU for giving me your kind, understanding, informative paper. As you know, there are not very optimistic things sometimes. But, we can shine in the dark like the Sun coming in the dawn!

-Ernie D.

To Katharina Kaufmann,
I enjoyed your well written article last month about downtown Ft. Myers Jimmi Melton, and I have saved it.

-Linda H.



I’m not quite sure how I got on your mailing list but this is the third publication I’ve received from you and it just makes me happy. I only wish there were more other avenues to receive positive news stories like yours. It is very appreciated!

-Rebecca J. C.

I enjoyed the first edition of the Sunshine Post and appreciate your mission. We could all use a dose of optimism in our lives and it’s refreshing to read a publication that does not address politics and the state of our world. (...)

-Phyllis D.

Celebrating Life’s Milestones with the Sunshine Post!

Honoring birthdays, anniversaries and special moments from our community!
We want to shine a spotlight on the people whose special days remind us why milestones matter. Birthdays, anniversaries, and personal achievements mark the chapters of our shared story. Join us in congratulating the friends, families, neighbors, and colleagues who are celebrating important moments in their lives.

Source: Pexels



The Sunshine Post Community wishes a Happy

Birthday to....

Patrick Lauber

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