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SUNSHINE POST

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The girl had left, and Emma was staring at the kitchen table. She looked up, with a sad smile, an expression that was new to me on her beautiful face.

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A new Sunshine Post series on what it really takes to found a state-chartered credit union in Florida, told through the eyes of one fictional founding team in Southwest Florida.

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The Tampa Bay Rays have put together a season in Major League Baseball that has surprised even seasoned baseball observers.

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



Source: Pexels

For many Germans, Thanksgiving is one of those American holidays we know from movies. We see the enormous turkey, pumpkin pie, football on television and a big family gathered around a beautifully decorated table. But when you live in America, you begin to realize that Thanksgiving is really not about the turkey at all.

It is about coming home.
Every year, on the fourth Thursday in November, families across America make their way back to one another. Grown children drive or fly home. College students return with bags of laundry. Grandparents arrive with a favorite dish they have probably been making for decades. Friends are invited because nobody should have to spend Thanksgiving alone. And for one day, everyone tries to be in the same place.
There are no presents under a tree. There is no expectation of finding the perfect gift. Thanksgiving is simply about sharing a meal with the people who matter to you. Maybe that is why it can feel so special.

Read more on Page No. 8 →

**Lieber auf Deutsch?
Scan here for our exclusive
digital German edition.**

A New Chapter Begins

Dear Readers,

Last month, we celebrated a very special milestone: the first anniversary of Sunshine Post. It was a wonderful moment to look back on our journey so far, but even more exciting to think about everything that still lies ahead.
And now, here we are in November, beginning our second year together.

A first anniversary is something to be proud of, but it is also a reminder that the best stories are never really finished. They grow, change, and lead us toward new adventures. Our hope is to continue bringing a little sunshine into your everyday life with stories that inspire, ideas that make you smile, people worth getting to know, and moments that remind us what makes our community so special.
Most of all, we want Sunshine Post to remain something we share with you. Because a newspaper is only as meaningful as the people who read it, support it, and make it part of their lives. So, as we turn the page and begin this new chapter, we do so with gratitude, excitement, and plenty of ideas for the months ahead.

Thank you for being part of our first year—and for joining us on the journey into our second.
Here's to more stories, more connections, and more sunshine!

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

Sunshine Post

HERO OF THE MONTH



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

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

Send us your suggestion at info@sunshine-post.com
Let´s celebrate the everyday heroes among us together.



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Sunny regards,

Rouven Zietz Editor-in-Chief

Sunshine Post

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The Kindness – When Taxes Become a Gift

Buying a car is exciting. Choosing the model, finding the right fit, imagining the places it will take you. Whether it's brand-new or simply new to you, there's something special about getting those keys in your hand.

Then comes the paperwork. Signatures, registration, taxes — all part of the process.
But what if one of those ordinary formalities held an unexpected opportunity to do something wonderful? One that wouldn't cost you a single dollar extra.

A Choice You Probably Didn't Know You Had
We rarely get to decide exactly where our tax dollars go. They support countless public services we all depend on, but their destination is usually out of our hands.Every once in a while, though, we get a choice.
Florida offers one of those opportunities with almost every ordinary car purchase, whether new or used.
Through the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program, you can direct up to $105 of the 6% state sales tax you already owe toward educational scholarships for children in Florida.
No additional donation. No extra charge.
No change to the total amount you pay.
At a taxable purchase price of $1,750, the full $105 can already be directed toward scholarships. If the state sales tax is lower, that smaller amount can be contributed instead.
Think about that for a moment.
The money is already part of your purchase. Yet Florida gives you the opportunity to make a deliberate choice about where some of it goes.
And that choice can help open doors for a child.

Every Child Learns Differently
Think back to your own school days.
Perhaps there was a subject that came naturally to you. A teacher who made something difficult suddenly click. Or a moment when you discovered an interest you never knew you had.
Now imagine a child who hasn't found that moment yet.
Children are wonderfully different. They have different strengths, personalities, interests and ways of learning. What helps one child flourish may leave another struggling to find their footing.
Sometimes the right educational environment can make all the difference.
Not because one school or learning method is universally better than another, but because having options matters.
Florida Tax Credit Scholarships help eligible K–12 students access participating private schools or personalized education programs. Depending on the educational path, scholarship funds can support tuition or approved expenses such as learning materials, curriculum and tutoring.
For some children, that may mean discovering a way of learning that finally makes sense to them. For others, it may mean having more freedom to explore their abilities and interests.
And sometimes, the greatest gift education offers isn't an answer.
It's the confidence to keep asking questions.

When Children Benefit, Families Can Breathe
Behind every child is a story. And often, a family trying to make the best possible decisions with the resources available to them.
Most parents want to give their children every opportunity they can. But wanting something and being able to afford it are not always the same.
Educational choices can come with difficult financial decisions. A scholarship may ease some of that pressure, giving families more room to choose what works for their child.
And financial relief can mean more than numbers on a household budget.
It can mean fewer worries, a little more breathing room and more energy for the relationships and everyday moments that matter.
Those benefits don't necessarily stop at the family's front door.
Because the way we support children and families today also helps shape the kind of community we share — one where people have opportunities to grow, where different needs are recognized and where caring for one another is part of everyday life.

Two Organizations. One Shared Purpose.
When making your contribution, you can choose between two state-approved nonprofit scholarship-funding organizations: Step Up For Students and Sunshine State Kids.
Both receive these contributions for the same Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program. So there's no need to worry about choosing between two different causes. Whichever organization you select, your contribution supports educational opportunities for Florida children.
And making that choice is remarkably simple.
At a dealership, or when registering a privately purchased vehicle through your county tax collector or a private tag agency, you can complete Form DR-HS1.
Choose an organization, enter the contribution amount and sign.
That's it.
The form should be offered as part of the process. But if it isn't, don't hesitate to ask for it.
Because a wonderful opportunity shouldn't go unnoticed simply because nobody mentioned it.

More Than a Set of Keys
There is something genuinely encouraging about a program like this.
Florida has created a way for people to support children's education without asking them to spend more, give up their time or take on another commitment.
And while $105 won't solve every educational challenge, it can become part of something meaningful when people recognize the opportunity and choose to participate.
Perhaps you'll never know which child benefits from your decision. You'll never see the classroom, the books, the moment of understanding or the smile of a parent who feels a little less worried.
But the possibility is there.
So the next time you buy a car, don't just ask for the keys.

Remember that somewhere among the paperwork, there may be a chance to open another door — one that isn't meant for you, but for a child whose future is still full of possibilities.

By Jennifer Hagemeister



Photos courtesy of: Jennifer Hagemeister

What? Direct up to $105 of Florida state sales tax toward educational scholarships, at no additional cost.

When? When buying a new or used car in Florida and paying the applicable state sales tax.

How? Complete Form DR-HS1 and select Step Up For Students or Sunshine State Kids.

Where? At your dealership, county tax collector or private tag agency.

Remember: If the form isn't offered, ask for it!

Official information: floridarevenue.com/taxes/taxesfees/Pages/sfo_hope.aspx

Form DR-HS1: floridarevenue.com/Forms_library/current/drhs1.pdf

Rise of a Star

Part 4

What happened so far
Katie is in a deep depression. For years she has numbed her senses with drinks, drugs and junk food. Her kids Gabby and Philip try to live their own lives, as their mom has neglected them. They keep a secret: they hide their unhappy situation at home from the public. They fear to be taken to a children's home , and nobody knows about their mom's huge problems.
With Henrys cap on her head, Gabby sends a big wish to the universe. She asks for help for her mom. The incredible miracle happens and the next day her mom ‚wakes up' and tries to find a way out of this misery back into life.

Gabby finally finds someone who listens to her, Emma. She is the aunt of her friend Henry, and she really likes her. She gets very emotional and tells Emma everything about her mom, and the problems at home.
Her brother Philip has no-one to talk to. He is unhappy and feels very ashamed of his ‚terrible' mom.
Emma wants to help the family.

Kurus

The girl had left, and Emma was staring at the kitchen table. She looked up, with a sad smile, an expression that was new to me on her beautiful face. We have been together for a year now, and I discover new sides of her every day. She is my angel. She became my angel the very first moment I saw her, in the restaurant on Römerstrasse here in town. What a lucky star led her into my uncle's restaurant and to the table next to ours. I will never forget the moment our eyes first met.
"What is up, honey?" She slowly shook her beautiful blonde curls and sighed. And she told me about Gabby's mum, Katy. I listened carefully. To me it was crystal clear. Katy was an extremely unhappy, lonely woman. A woman who needed love and acceptance. She needed people to support her. You see, where I come from, in my home town in Iran, if someone is unhappy, we go to them and embrace them. We invite them into our house. My mum would cook something for them. She would sit down and listen to them. She would do anything to make them feel better. Here in Germany so many people live alone and are alone. Someone lives in a house and dies slowly. Nobody knows. How is that possible? Do the neighbors not wonder what happened to the woman, if they never see her? Apparently not.



So for me it was clear: Katy needs help. I said to Emma: "Let us invite her to our house." Emma laughed: You say that so easily. She cannot even get up from her bed and walk down the stairs to leave her flat. She would not do it even if she could, as she would be too embarrassed for anyone to see her like this.
"In that case, we go to see her, and we help her to get into a condition where she feels better about herself. You are a coach, you have proven a few times already that you can help people. You can help her too." Emma looked at me with big eyes and an open mouth. She nodded slowly. "Yes, you are right. That is exactly what we should do."
"We will need some medical advice, or some advice on nutrition. I will ask a friend of mine. I have heard of a method for very overweight people to lose weight. Either she will have to go to a clinic, or she will need someone at her home, cooking the meals according to the diet." I thought she meant me. "Ok, I will do it." Emma shook her head: "No, no, no, I did not mean you. You cannot go there three times a day, washing her, cooking for her and all these things. You do not even know her. You have never met her." I did not care; she is the mother of this desperate girl. We will get her back on her feet. "Yet, you know, my German is not so good. I am not sure I will be able to talk to her." Emma started laughing. "That is a real understatement. Your German is still very basic, you have not been here long enough to speak the language well." "Yes, honey, I will get there, and I already have a great idea how to improve it."
Later that day Emma made some phone calls and finally found a doctor who was prepared to go and see Katy. Shortly after two o'clock Gabby came by on her bike. I saw her and said: "Emma is in the shop. Go and see her. She has some good news for you."

Ellen

Excited, I run into the shop. "Hi, how are you, Emma?" Emma looks at me. "I am fine. And you?" "I am excited. This morning my mum again only wanted some tea and bread and cheese. No ham, no sugar, no honey. Yesterday she had nothing sweet, and she does not want all the snacks anymore." I do not know whether it is good that she is changing her diet so drastically, but I am happy that she is making an effort. I think she really means it!
Then Emma tells me about Ellen. Ellen is a traditional healer; she knows a lot about healthy nutrition and special dietary needs. She does not judge people. She just helps. And she always sees body, mind and spirit as a whole. When she visits a patient, she takes her time to get to know them and their suffering.
This sounds so good to me, yet I do not know how much it costs. This healing lady surely does not do it for free. I ask Emma how we are supposed to pay for it. Emma reassures me that I should not worry. We will get it sorted.
So my task is to go and see my mum and convince her to meet Ellen. I am so excited. This is a real chance. I really hope Mum will agree to our idea.
On my way home I see Henry walking past. He does not see me, as he is walking along with his mobile in his hands, his head bent down. So I just cycle past him and quickly arrive at our house.
I run upstairs, throw my school bag into a corner, take off my trainers and go to my mum's room. As soon as I enter, I realise something is different. There are lots of tissues on the floor, and her red, swollen eyes stare at me, swimming in tears.



I sit down on the chair next to the bed. "Mum, what is wrong?" She looks at me through a curtain of tears and takes a little while to realise that it is me. She sobs: "I am really trying, but this is hard, I can hardly move, I am so fat and so ugly, and I do not know how to get out of this." I take her hand. It is hot and moist. "Mum, I know you want to change. And I am very happy about it. I spoke to Emma, and Emma knows a healer who can help you. Can she come and see you?"
Mum looks at me. "What's the point? Who is Emma? Who is Ellen? I don't want strange people in my house." I look at her, in tears now. "You are my mum, and I want you to live." She grabs my hand and nods, ok, lets do it!
I cycle over to Emma's place and give her the good news. She calls Ellen immediately. Ellen is quite booked up, but agrees to come by the next evening after seven, as she has appointments in Heidelberg that day anyway.
That night I can hardly sleep. For years I have lived without a family. My brother just makes fun of me. My mum was vegetating. My dad non-existent. Now I have a new friend. Yes, it feels as if Emma is a friend. She helps me without asking for anything in return. She arranged for Ellen to come to our place. I told Philip. Even he seems excited. He said he would even be there tomorrow evening, when this doctor comes to see Mum.
I hope, I pray, that from now on things will change. Will Ellen be able to help Mum? It will be very difficult. Maybe she has never had such a big patient. Maybe she will not be able to do anything. Maybe Mum will have to go to a clinic, and then they will take us to a children's home. I am very scared. And hopeful. At the same time. There is a light at the end of the tunnel.

The Beginning

The hours crawl by. The minutes, even the seconds. Since that bug bit me, a lot has changed. My life is upside down. I know I cannot live like this any longer. I really do have the will to change. I owe it to the kids. Yet it is so damned hard.
I am so used to eating, to numbing myself. The pain is so huge. Whenever I feel this pain, I just start eating or drinking. Now that I have sworn to myself I will not do that anymore, I do not know where to turn. Time passes so incredibly slowly. I only want to eat three times a day, not more often. So I watch TV most of the day. I cannot stand all these rubbish programs anymore. These stupid talk shows, they are boring. I need to talk to someone. I do not want to go mad. I am so useless. The kids do not want to see me. Well, at least Gabby comes and sees me sometimes. She is a good girl. I should not blame her, I have been a really bad mum. I know I am feeling sorry for myself, and I should not. Yet how do I get out of it?
I hope this woman who is coming round tonight will be able to do something. She will probably look at me and feel contempt. I am ugly, I am fat, I am worthless. Why would she even bother to help me? Still, Gabby promised she is a nice lady. So I will give it a try.
Finally. The evening arrives. I had fallen asleep and now wake up, as I hear the doorbell and then voices. Gabby's voice, even Philip's voice, and a voice I have not heard before. After a short while I hear footsteps on the stairs, coming closer. God, I am scared. I am sweating. She will condemn me, I dread a look of disgust. It will be painful. No one has seen me like this in ages. I feel so vulnerable. Why did I agree to such an idiotic idea, letting a stranger into the house? I have to tell Gabby to send her away before she sees me. My pulse is racing, my heart is pounding, sweat is dripping down my forehead. NO! I do not want this to happen! It will be so humiliating. NO!
The door opens. Gabby, Philip and the woman fill my small room. I feel so overwhelmed. I look at them with angry eyes; Gabby looks at me, shocked. "Mum, what is wrong? You look like a ghost. You are whiter than the wall." I cannot look the woman in the face. I turn my face away towards the wall. Tears run down my cheeks. I feel so ashamed. So small. So big at the same time. So bad. I have no words for it.
I hear the door close. Hope they have all left. Slowly I turn my head. I see a tall, slender woman with long brown hair, big hazelnut-brown eyes and a kind, gentle look. Instead of make-up she wears the hint of a smile on her face. Not mocking, just friendly. Friendly and curious.
She looks straight into my eyes. "Hello.



My name is Ellen Engel. I have come because your daughter Gabby asked for help." "Engel? Like 'angel'? You really do look like one." She just smiles calmly. "Oh, thank you. That is very kind of you to say. I am a healer. I help people to find the source of their problems, whether they are of a physical, mental or spiritual nature. Then we look for a way to overcome the problem and become healthy again. How are you feeling right now?"
"How am I feeling? I do not know. I…" How can I say what I am feeling? I suppose I will tell her the truth. It does not matter now anyway. Either she can help me, or she cannot.
"Well. To be honest, I am quite scared. I want to change my life, and at the same time I feel pretty powerless to do so. You can see the problem I have. I am fat as a whale, and I cannot look after myself anymore. I am dependent on other people, like my kids. So I suppose I will have to change something and lose weight, so that I can look after myself and after the kids."
Ellen answers: "You look pale and scared. Do you mind if I measure your blood pressure? I am a little worried about you." I just nod. "Yes, please, go ahead." She opens a bag she had brought into the room, takes out a blood-pressure monitor and wraps one part of it around my arm. After a minute she looks at me: "Your blood pressure is very high. Are you in any pain right now?" Pain? Me? Of course, my whole body is pain. I am sure that is not what she means. I shake my head. "I just want to lose weight. Can you help? What should I do?"

You surely cannot do a miracle, Mrs Engel, can you?"

To be continued in our next issue...
Text and Illustrations by Ina Rodewald

Hero of the Month

I am honored to nominate Algernod Lanier Washington—known to the world as the artist Plies—for the Sunshine Post Hero of the Month. While his accomplishments in the music industry are widely recognized, his most meaningful work is the unwavering commitment he maintains toward his roots in the Fort Myers and Cape Coral area. Algernod is an everyday hero who consistently uses his platform to bring hope and "higher love" to Southwest Florida. His dedication to local outreach and his vocal pride in his hometown serve as a powerful inspiration to our youth and community members alike.
He embodies the principle that true leadership is defined by the ability to rise to great heights while remaining grounded enough to lift up the neighborhood that raised you. Through his consistent support and community engagement, Algernod proves that he is not just a local icon, but a dedicated advocate for the people of this region. It is my privilege to recommend him for this honor as we celebrate those who work tirelessly to uplift others.
Sincerely,
Eretta Y. Brown

Founder, Resilient and Brave Leadership Enterprise, LLC

President, Love And Hope For Our Heroes, Inc. (501(c)(3))
713–882–2562

Why Would Anyone Start a Credit Union Today?

Building From Scratch

A new Sunshine Post series on what it really takes to found a state-chartered credit union in Florida, told through the eyes of one fictional founding team in Southwest Florida.

Four Coffees and a Crazy Idea

It's 6:40 p.m. on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. The ovens at Hanna Brandt's bakery in downtown Fort Myers are finally cooling. The display case holds the survivors of a long day: two slices of Bienenstich, a lonely pretzel and one pumpkin pie nobody claimed. Hanna sets four coffees on a flour-dusted table. Across from her sits Rosa Delgado, 63, who taught fifth grade in Cape Coral for thirty-one years and still corrects grammar on restaurant menus. Next to Rosa is Marcus Bell, 29, a software developer who works from home and orders the same almond croissant every morning. And at the end of the table, reading glasses pushed up on his forehead, is Bruce Lindqvist, who spent 27 years as the CFO of a credit union up north before retiring to the Gulf Coast. On her phone is an email from a large national bank. Her application for a $40,000 loan to buy a second oven was declined. The decision took four minutes. Nobody ever called her. "Eleven years," Hanna says. "Eleven years I bake for this town. Every Christmas Stollen, every wedding cake. And a computer in another state says no in four minutes."

There's a pause. Rosa stirs her coffee. "You know," she says slowly, "in 1908, a group of French-Canadian mill workers in New Hampshire had the exact same problem. The banks wouldn't lend to them. So they started their own." Marcus laughs. "Rosa, nobody starts a bank anymore."

"Not a bank," Bruce says, lowering his glasses. "A credit union."

The table goes quiet. Bruce looks at each of them in turn. Then he says something they'll all repeat later, when the story gets told at the grand opening: "It's hard. It takes years. And it's one of the best things a community can do for itself." Welcome to Building From Scratch.

Rarer Than a Parking Spot on Fort Myers Beach in March

Marcus isn't entirely wrong. New credit unions are rare. As of June 2026, there were 4,214 federally insured credit unions in the United States. A year earlier there were 4,370. Most of that difference isn't failure. It's mergers: smaller credit unions joining larger ones to share costs and technology. Meanwhile, the number of brand-new credit unions can be counted on one hand. In all of 2025, the National Credit Union Administration issued exactly three new federal charters: one in Houston, one in St. Louis and one in Santa Clara, California.

Three. In a country of 340 million people. Here in Florida, the drought is even longer. Not a single new state-chartered credit union has opened in the Sunshine State in the past 32 years. The last time it happened, most of us were still connecting to the internet with a dial-up modem. In the industry, a newly chartered institution is called a de novo, Latin for "from the new." And a de novo credit union is a bit like a sea turtle hatchling on Sanibel. Few of them make it to the beach. The ones that do are cheered on by everybody watching. Here's the part that surprises most people: the system is still growing. Those 4,214 credit unions served 146.1 million members in mid-2026, 2.3 million more than a year before. Americans clearly want what credit unions offer. There just aren't many people building new ones. That's exactly what makes this story worth telling. If Mangrove Commons makes it, it won't just be a new credit union. It will be a small piece of Florida history.

So Why Bother?

Back at the bakery, Marcus asks the obvious question. "There are already credit unions in Lee County. Why not just join one?" Bruce has heard this one before. His answer comes in three parts. First, you get to design it from a blank page. An established credit union carries decades of history: old computer systems, old branch leases, old habits. A de novo carries none of that. If the founders want account opening to take five minutes on a phone, they can build it that way from day one. Readers of our last series will remember Emma and her "Portugal 2026" savings bucket. Somebody has to build credit unions like that. Why not here?

Second, you can serve the people others overlook. Every community has groups that fall between the cracks: newcomers without a U.S. credit history, gig workers with uneven income, small family businesses like Hanna's. A new credit union can be built around them rather than squeezing them into someone else's rules. Third, the members own it. This is the part Rosa likes best. A credit union has no outside shareholders. Every member gets one vote, whether they have $50 in savings or $500,000. The board is made up of volunteers elected by the members. Earnings come back to members as lower loan rates, better savings rates and fewer fees. "People helping people," Rosa says. "That's not a slogan. That's the business model." Hanna looks at the declined loan on her phone, then turns it face down. "In Germany we have a word for this. Genossenschaft. A cooperative." She shrugs. "Raiffeisen did it with farmers in 1864. How hard can it be?" Bruce smiles. He knows exactly how hard. That's what the next nine issues are about.

Why Florida, and Why a State Charter?

If you wanted to design the perfect place to start a credit union, you could do worse than Southwest Florida. People keep arriving: retirees from the Midwest, young families from the Northeast, entrepreneurs from Germany and Latin America.

Each newcomer needs a place to keep their paycheck, finance a car and, eventually, buy a home. Many arrive without local banking relationships. Some arrive without any U.S. credit history at all. That's not a problem. For a new credit union, that's a reason to exist. There's also an early choice to make. A credit union can be chartered by the federal government or by its home state. Mangrove Commons, as you'll soon see, is staying local. A state-chartered Florida credit union is organized under Chapter 657 of the Florida Statutes and supervised by the Florida Office of Financial Regulation in Tallahassee. The process begins with a formal application to that office for authority to organize and operate a credit union. But the state isn't the only referee. Before a single member can deposit a dollar, the new credit union also needs federal share insurance from the National Credit Union Administration. That insurance protects members' deposits up to $250,000, backed by the full faith and credit of the United States government. It's the same level of protection you'd expect at any bank. Two referees. One dream. We'll spend all of Part 5 on how the founders keep both of them happy. Why go the state route at all? For a group as local as this one, it simply feels right. Their regulator will know what a hurricane season does to a local economy. It will know the difference between Lehigh Acres and Naples. And it will be a phone call, not a time zone, away.

Meet the Founders, and the Road Ahead

By the time the pumpkin pie is gone, the four have a working name scribbled on a napkin: Mangrove Commons Credit Union. Mangroves, Rosa points out, survive storms because their roots hold each other together. Marcus says it sounds like a coworking space. He is outvoted three to one, which, as Rosa reminds him, is how cooperatives work.

Founder	Who they are	What they bring
Rosa Delgado	Retired Cape Coral teacher, 63	Community trust, and the patience to explain things
Marcus Bell	Software developer, 29	The digital-first vision, and the Gen Z point of view
Hanna Brandt	Bakery owner in Fort Myers, born in Bavaria	The small-business perspective, and the coffee
Bruce Lindqvist	Retired credit union CFO	Knows the rules, and where every pothole is

Over the next nine issues, we'll follow Mangrove Commons from napkin to opening day:

1. Why start one at all? (you are here).
2. The founding team. Who sits on the first board, and what regulators look for in organizers.
3. The business plan. The New Year's resolution regulators actually read.
4. Field of membership. Deciding exactly who the credit union is for.
5. Two referees. Working with the Office of Financial Regulation and NCUA.
6. The money. Startup capital, sponsors and grants.
7. The engine room. Technology, vendors and the systems members never see.
8. Hurricane prep for the balance sheet. Compliance and risk management.
9. Fireworks on a budget. Marketing an institution nobody has heard of yet.
10. Opening day. And the first thousand days after it.

But every credit union in America, including the giants with billions in assets, started exactly like this: a few neighbors at a table, deciding they could do better together.

By FTF

Founder's Toolkit: Who's Who in Starting a Florida Credit Union

- Florida Office of Financial Regulation (OFR): grants the state charter and supervises state-chartered credit unions under Chapter 657, Florida Statutes.
- National Credit Union Administration (NCUA): provides federal share insurance, protecting member deposits up to $250,000.
- The organizing group: the founding volunteers who build the plan, recruit the first board and sign the application.
- The field of membership: the defined group of people the credit union is allowed to serve. (More in Part 4.)

Myth vs. Reality

Myth: "You need to be a millionaire to start a credit union."

Reality: Credit unions have always been started by ordinary people: mill workers, farmers, teachers, neighbors. You do need serious capital, a solid plan and a lot of patience. But the core ingredient has never changed: people willing to work together. (Where the money actually comes from is the subject of Part 6.)

Milestone Tracker

Done: Napkin sketch (Step 1 of 10)

Next up: Founding team

Still ahead: Business plan · Field of membership · Charter application · Capital · Technology · Compliance · Launch marketing · Opening day

In our next issue: Mangrove Commons needs a board of directors, and Bruce has a list of questions that makes Marcus very nervous. Who gets to sit at the table, and what do regulators want to know about the people who start a financial institution? Find out in December.



Source: Perxels

More than Numbers

"It's Tax Deductible" Does Not Mean It's Free

How Smart Business Owners Decide Whether an Expense Is Really Worth It

"Buy it this year -then you can write it off." That sentence has convinced many business owners to spend money they otherwise would never have spent. Because "tax deductible" can sound almost like the government is paying part of the bill.

It isn't. If you spend $10,000, $10,000 still leaves your bank account. The tax benefit only reduces part of the cost -assuming the expense actually qualifies for a deduction.

The $10,000 Trap

Your business earns $100,000 in profit. You spend $10,000 on something that is fully deductible. If that reduces taxable profit to $90,000 and saves you, for example, $2,500 in taxes, you did not "save" $10,000. You spent $10,000 to save $2,500 in taxes. Your real economic cost is still $7,500.

That can be a great decision -if the expense creates more than $7,500 of value for your business. If it does not, it may simply be an expensive way to pay less tax.

The better question is not:

"Can I deduct it?" It is: "Would I still make this purchase if there were no tax benefit?" If the answer is no, take a second look.

Expense or Investment?

Not every expense is equal.



Photos courtesy of: Alexandra Welsch

A computer can save time. Software can prevent mistakes. Marketing can bring in customers. Training can improve what you offer. The tax treatment matters. But the business question comes first: What does this expense actually do for me?

I would look at four things:

1. Does it create or protect revenue?
2. Does it save time or reduce costs?
3. Does it lower a real business risk?
4. Does it improve efficiency or growth?

The more often the answer is yes, the more likely you are looking at an investment -not just an expense with a tax label.

The December Effect

At year-end, I often hear: "I need to spend more or I'll pay too much tax." Sometimes that makes sense. But December is not a free pass for bad decisions. You may need the cash more in January. The purchase may not be immediately deductible. Or stronger reported profit may matter more for financing or investors. And sometimes the best tax strategy is actually to pay the tax -because your business is profitable and the cash can create more value elsewhere.

That is where strategic thinking begins.

Three Numbers Instead of Gut Feeling

Before making a larger purchase, you need three numbers: Purchase price. Tax effect. Economic value.

If one is missing, the decision is not strategic -it is incomplete. A $10,000 purchase with a $2,500 tax benefit and $20,000 of added value can be brilliant. The same purchase with a $2,500 tax benefit and almost no business value is not. And one more thing is often overlooked: A tax-efficient expense can still be the wrong cash-flow decision.

Taxes and cash flow have to be considered together.

The goal is not to pay the least tax possible.

The goal is to keep the most value after tax. So when someone presents me with a "great write-off," my first question is not: "How much can we deduct?"

It is: "Would we still buy this if nobody had mentioned taxes?"

Because good tax strategy supports a good business decision. It does not replace one.

Next issue: Why a "Great Year" Can Create a Tax Surprise -and What Business Owners Should Be Watching Before December.

By Alexandra Welsch

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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!

November means cooler evenings, outdoor events, returning snowbirds and the beginning of Florida's beautiful winter season. Hurricane season officially ends November 30—and Southwest Florida's outdoor season is just getting started.

FORT MYERS ART WALK

Where? Downtown Fort Myers | Free
When? 5–9 PM
Enjoy an evening of local art, galleries, street vendors, restaurants and live entertainment throughout the historic River District.

06

CAPE CORAL VETERANS DAY PARADE

Where? Cape Coral Parkway
When? 11 AM–1:30 PM
Cape Coral honors U.S. military veterans with its annual parade featuring veterans, community organizations and patriotic displays.

07

CONNECTION IN THE PARK

Where? Cultural Park, Cape Coral
When? 2–6 PM
A relaxed community afternoon in Cape Coral—easy to combine with the Veterans Day Parade earlier in the day.

07

ILLUMINATIONS PARADE

Where? Fort Myers Beach
Fort Myers Beach lights up with illuminated floats, lanterns and island atmosphere as the first hints of the holiday season arrive.

07

VETERANS DAY

Where? Throughout the United States
An important American holiday honoring the men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Look for ceremonies and special events throughout Southwest Florida.

11

MATLACHA ART WALK

Where? Matlacha
When? 5–8 PM
Explore colorful Matlacha while enjoying local artists, galleries, shops, vendors and live music.

13



Photos courtesy of: S. Mechalik

FALL FESTIVAL

Where? Oasis Elementary South, Cape Coral
When? 4–8 PM
A local fall celebration and a nice November outing for families with children.

14

AMERICAN SAND SCULPTING CHAMPIONSHIP

Where? DiamondHead Beach Resort | Fort Myers Beach
Master sculptors create incredible works of art from sand during this popular five-day beach event, with entertainment, activities, food and vendors.

19 23

FORT MYERS MUSIC WALK

Where? Downtown Fort Myers | Free
When? 6–10 PM
Live music fills the River District with local and regional performers. Combine it with dinner or drinks downtown for an easy Friday night out.

20

CAPE CORAL TURKEY TROT 5K

Where? Rotary Park, Cape Coral
When? 8–11 AM
Get into the Thanksgiving spirit with a morning 5K—or simply come out and cheer on the runners.

21

THANKSGIVING

Where? Throughout Southwest Florida
One of America's most important family holidays. Expect traditional turkey dinners, special restaurant menus and plenty of pumpkin pie.

26

BLACK FRIDAY

The traditional start of the Christmas shopping season, with special offers and extended shopping hours at many stores and shopping centers.

27

DOWNTOWN FORT MYERS FARMERS MARKET

When? EVERY SATURDAY
Fresh produce, local foods, baked goods and artisan products make November a great time to enjoy Southwest Florida's outdoor markets.

Thanksgiving - When the Most Important Thing Is Who Is at the Table

For many Germans, Thanksgiving is one of those American holidays we know from movies. We see the enormous turkey, pumpkin pie, football on television and a big family gathered around a beautifully decorated table. But when you live in America, you begin to realize that Thanksgiving is really not about the turkey at all.

It is about coming home.

Every year, on the fourth Thursday in November, families across America make their way back to one another. Grown children drive or fly home. College students return with bags of laundry. Grandparents arrive with a favorite dish they have probably been making for decades. Friends are invited because nobody should have to spend Thanksgiving alone. And for one day, everyone tries to be in the same place. There are no presents under a tree. There is no expectation of finding the perfect gift. Thanksgiving is simply about sharing a meal with the people who matter to you. Maybe that is why it can feel so special.

The day often begins early. Somewhere in the house, a turkey is already in the oven. The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade is playing on television while people wander in and out of the kitchen. Someone is peeling potatoes, someone is setting the table, and somebody is probably asking for the third time when the food will finally be ready. Every family has its traditions. There may be stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, sweet potatoes, green beans, cranberry sauce and warm dinner rolls. And later, of course, pumpkin pie. But there is usually something else on that table too: memories.

A recipe from a grandmother. A dish that has been served every Thanksgiving since the children were little. A story everyone has heard a hundred times but somehow still tells again.

And then everyone finally sits down.

Some families hold hands. Some say a prayer. Others simply go around the table and answer one question:

"What are you thankful for this year?"

The answers can be surprisingly simple.

"My family." "My children."

"Our health." "A new beginning."

"Having everyone here."

A child might say the family dog or even dessert, and everyone laughs.

But perhaps those few minutes are the real heart of Thanksgiving. Because most of the year, we are busy thinking about what comes next. What needs to be fixed. What we want to achieve. What we still need to buy. Where we need to go. Thanksgiving asks us to stop for a moment and look at what is already there.

Thanksgiving Under the Palm Trees

Here in Southwest Florida, Thanksgiving can feel a little unusual to those of us who grew up in Germany. It is November, but there may be palm trees moving in a warm breeze outside the window. The air conditioning might be running while the turkey is roasting. Children may jump into the pool before dinner, and families might eat outside on the lanai wearing shorts instead of sweaters. There is no cold November rain, no heavy coat hanging by the door and certainly very little chance of snow.

And yet, the feeling around the table is remarkably familiar.

Because family is family, whether the view outside the window is a gray November sky or a Florida palm tree.

For many people in Southwest Florida, Thanksgiving also means welcoming people back. Snowbirds are returning for the winter. Friends who haven't seen one another since spring meet again. Neighborhoods become busier, restaurants fill up and another Florida season begins.

More Than an Old American Story

Many of us in Germany learned that Thanksgiving began with the Pilgrims and Native Americans sharing a harvest meal in 1621. That gathering did take place, but the history surrounding it is much more complicated than the simple story many generations of American schoolchildren were taught. Native peoples had traditions of giving thanks long before Europeans arrived, and the history that followed included enormous suffering and displacement for Indigenous communities.

Today, Thanksgiving can therefore mean different things to different Americans. But in millions of homes, its modern meaning has become deeply personal.

Family. Friendship. Gratitude. Togetherness. And perhaps also an understanding that having the people we love around one table should never be taken for granted.

The Chair at the Table

Maybe that becomes clearer as we get older. When we are children, Thanksgiving is mostly about food, cousins, playing and wondering when dessert will finally be served.

Later, we begin to notice the chairs.

The child who used to sit at the little kids' table is suddenly grown.

Someone brings a new boyfriend or girlfriend for the first time. A baby has joined the family. A friend who once came as a guest now feels like family.

And sometimes there is a chair that is empty. Someone who was there last Thanksgiving may no longer be there this year. That is part of Thanksgiving too.

It reminds us that families change. Children grow up. People move away. Life keeps moving, whether we are ready for it or not. And perhaps that is exactly why this holiday touches so many people. For one afternoon, we stop. We put our phones down. We pass the potatoes. We tell the same old stories. We laugh about things that happened years ago. We eat far too much and somehow still find room for pumpkin pie.

And we look around the table.

Not everything in life is perfect.

It doesn't have to be.

Because Thanksgiving isn't really about having the perfect table, the perfect turkey or the perfect family.

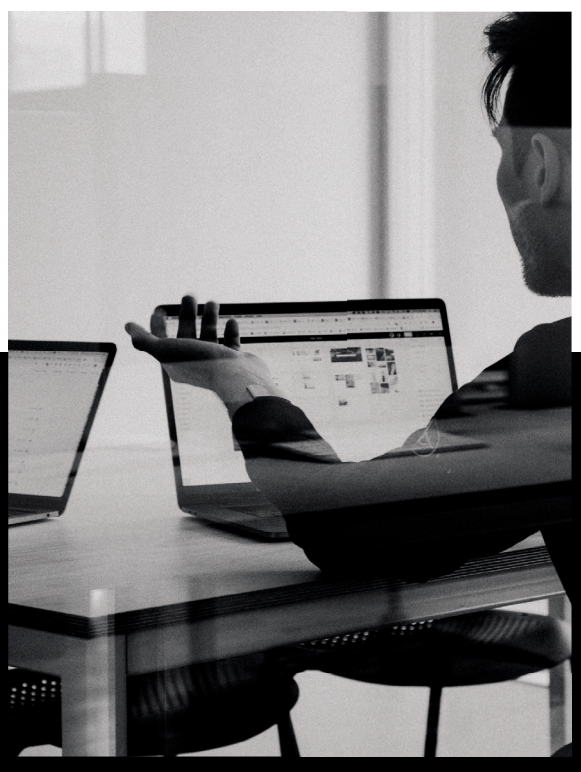
It is about being grateful for the people who pulled up a chair.

And maybe, in the end, that is the most beautiful Thanksgiving tradition of all.

By S. Mechalik

Source: Perxels





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What Remains?

On Transience, Remembrance, and the Hope That Sustains Us



Source: Perxels

November raises questions we often prefer to avoid in everyday life. The days grow shorter, the trees lose their leaves, and darkness seems to fall earlier each evening. This month is also marked by memories of people who are no longer with us. We visit cemeteries, light candles, and pause for a moment. Perhaps we find ourselves asking: What remains when a person dies? What remains of a life, an encounter, or all those little moments that have shaped us? In a world so focused on speed, achievement, and constant renewal, November reminds us of a truth we cannot simply ignore: our lives are finite. Yet this realization need not lead to sadness alone. It can change our perspective and help us see what truly matters. Those who know that time is precious may learn anew to share it. Those who recognize life's fragility discover the value of an honest word, an outstretched hand, and a reconciliation no longer postponed. Transience is not merely a limit to our lives. It can also invite us to live more consciously.

The Christian tradition responds to this experience with days of remembrance and hope. On All Saints' Day, we remember people whose lives were shaped by faith, love, and humanity. On All Souls' Day, we commemorate the departed and bring our grief before God. This is about more than preserving personal memories. Christian faith trusts that a person does not simply disappear when their voice falls silent. Every human being possesses a dignity that does not depend on success, health, or social standing. And every person remains held in God's love. In his Letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul writes that neither death nor life can separate us from the love of God (Rom 8:38–39). This is no simple answer to the painful experience of parting. It does not take away the tears of those who grieve, nor does it treat death as an insignificant episode. Instead, it keeps hope alive precisely where our own words reach their limits. Remembering also means refusing to reduce a person to their death. We may be grateful for what was, mourn what is missing, and still trust that God's story with us extends beyond our own lifetime.

This hope finds its centre in Jesus Christ. In John's Gospel, Jesus says: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). He speaks these words not in a world where death has already been overcome, but at the tomb of his friend Lazarus. Jesus weeps. Therein lies a remarkable message: Christian faith does not demand that we overcome grief by pretending it is not there. God meets us not only in our strength, but also in our vulnerability. The resurrection is therefore more than a comforting thought or the idea that some part of us somehow lives on. It is the trust that God himself stands against death and opens a future for life. The Christian understanding of eternity is not simply an endless extension of our time. It speaks of communion with God, in which our lives reach their fulfilment. What this reality looks like remains beyond our imagination. Faith need not explain every mystery in order to offer hope. Rather, it can trust that God's possibilities are greater than our limitations. In this way, the resurrection becomes a perspective that matters not only at the end of our lives. It already transforms the present: those who hope in God's future need not surrender to darkness, but can set signs of life today.

Perhaps this is precisely where November gives us something to do. We can light candles not only in memory of the departed, but also as we reflect on how we ourselves wish to live. We can call people whose names have been on our minds for a long time, settle an old dispute, or give our time to someone who feels alone. We can be grateful for what has been entrusted to us without pretending that everything is perfect. Christian hope is, after all, no escape from reality. It is the strength to face reality, even when it hurts. The light of a candle does not dispel all darkness, but it changes the space in which we find ourselves. Perhaps this is a fitting image of faith: we do not receive an answer to every question, but we need not walk our path without light. November reminds us that much passes away. Christian faith adds that not everything that passes away is lost. What we have done in love, the humanity we have shared with one another, and what God has begun in our lives all stand beneath his promise. Thus we may remember, grieve, and hope—not because we make light of death, but because we dare to trust life more than death. And perhaps, in the end, the most important question this month is not simply: What remains? It is also: What do we want to leave behind through our lives—in kindness, in peace, and in hope? For as long as we live, we can make visible something of that love which, according to Christian faith, endures even beyond death.

By Tobias Leinesser



Sunshine Post Series on Healthy Aging

Part 11



Photos courtesy of Clemens Müller

Our guest today for our series on healthy aging is a specialist in mental performance by profession. Andreas is an instructor for special operations units of the German Federal Police. For us, this offers a completely new perspective on health and resilience. Enjoy the interview!

1. Career Start & Inner Calling

You're a tactics trainer for special forces and responsible for human performance at the Federal Police—a field that integrates mental coaching, healthy living, and operational readiness under extreme pressure. How did you end up in this very specific line of work—and what fascinated you about focusing on the person behind the officer?

After returning from extended overseas deployments, I was drawn to working in a specialized role.

After several years of active duty, I was asked if I could imagine transitioning into the role of a trainer.

From that point on, it became a calling for me to pass on my own experiences and to guide my younger colleagues on their path toward their new career goals.

And to do so in a different way than I had been taught.

I entered this specialized field through various instructors and their lectures, as well as by participating in various seminars that covered both practical and theoretical aspects. My supervisor was very open to new training approaches.

I really enjoy seeing how people develop positively even under extreme stress and working with them to achieve the required goals.

2. Mental Coaching & Motivation Under Pressure

In extreme situations, it's often not physical fitness that matters most, but mental state. In your experience, what is the key difference between emergency responders who think and act clearly under maximum pressure—and those who fail to do so? And can this be trained—or is it a matter of character?

One's own mindset is certainly a major factor here. To what extent am I willing to push beyond my own performance limits, and what am I willing to do to achieve that? Someone who has already decided to pursue a specialized role has a different mindset than a patrol officer.

A major difference, of course, is individual stress resilience.

Some cope very well with stress, while others need more time to do so, but there are also those who fail for other reasons.

It's important during training to allow for mistakes and not to put too much pressure on trainees at the beginning.

This makes it easier to instill learning patterns and allows trainees to develop their own problem-solving strategies.

Such information tends to be retained better in the brain and can therefore be recalled more quickly.

To this end, I like to have trainees practice "mental scenario simulation."

What is that?

Possible familiar scenarios are visualized in the mind and thought through tactically, in images, step by step. These can be repeated on their own at any time in any situation that arises, no matter where you happen to be.

Surprisingly, the brain cannot distinguish between training and a real-life situation.

However, it is important that neural structures are created in the brain for this purpose.

These "neural pathways" become increasingly solidified through repetition.

Such trained patterns reduce stress symptoms in the user during training or actual operations, thereby freeing up resources for other important areas.

3. Human Performance as a Concept

Our Healthy Aging Framework is based on five key components—exercise, nutrition, sleep, breathing, and nature. You integrate these into your concept of human performance for special forces. Where do you see the greatest overlaps—and how does your approach for first responders differ from the traditional health concept?

We definitely also find overlaps in all the areas you mentioned, which we apply in our work as well. We also use elements from the fields of Life Kinetics (a registered term) and neuroathletics.

These are actually relatively simple exercises designed to enhance parallel processing and concentration, thereby enabling faster decision-making.

4. Sleep & Stress Management on the Job

Shift work, on-call duty, extreme psychological stress—the nature of special forces work is inherently at odds with healthy recovery. What specific techniques and routines do you recommend to your team members to keep their bodies and minds performing at their best, even during periods of high stress?

You're absolutely right. Sleep is a very important factor—one that, of course, can't be maintained regularly during shift work or when on call—but it must always be a priority.

If you do find yourself with a sleep deficit, we've had very good results with power napping.

Usually, 5–10 minutes are enough to regain strength and energy.

For me, thermogenesis is an excellent way to regulate stress in the body.

This sudden exposure to cold causes stress in the body.

Many people start breathing frantically when exposed to cold water.

They then experience stress—but it's deliberately induced.

This is where breathing comes into play; I recommend "box breathing," which involves inhaling for 4 seconds, holding your breath for 4 seconds, exhaling for 4 seconds, and holding your breath for 4 seconds.

This breathing technique can be practiced several times a day and should then be applied in a sudden crisis situation so that, ideally, breathing is regulated automatically, allowing for safer police decisions to be made in the shortest possible time.

5. What You Pass On to Younger Officers

You're shaping people during a phase when the course is set for their entire future health behavior—both physically and mentally. What is the one message you pass on to every young law enforcement officer—not just for duty, but for a long, healthy, and fulfilling life?

Young colleagues, in particular, still place the highest physical demands on themselves.

That's why rest breaks and smart training are absolutely essential—after all, there's still a life after their specialized assignment, and there's little point in completely exhausting yourself for a certain period of time only to have to cope with physical limitations later in life.

I appeal to their sense of personal responsibility. As a rule, this works because they've already chosen a specialized role and were willing to overcome several hurdles to get there—which means they already possess a high degree of discipline.

With the younger ones, you often have to rein them in, which of course isn't always easy.

My message is that they have only this one body, in which they need to live as long as possible without physical complaints.

7. Aging Healthily in a Demanding Profession

Physically demanding professions take their toll—on joints, the back, but above all on the mind. You think professionally about human performance while simultaneously living this profession yourself. What are you personally doing today to ensure you'll still be full of energy in 20 years—and looking back, what would you have done differently earlier on?

I see a daily routine as the best way to stay healthy as you age; however, routine also means discipline, without which nothing in life works well.

My day starts out relatively simply.

My first little exercise happens while I'm brushing my teeth, when I try to do a balance exercise with my eyes closed; this is followed by a 2–3-minute cold shower—but only cold!!

Then I drink one or two glasses of warm water with a splash of lemon to stimulate my metabolism before enjoying my black coffee. I'll admit, I'm a coffee junkie.

After that, I do about 5–10 minutes of mobility exercises

as well as 1–2 minutes of breathing exercises.

That's a maximum of 15 minutes that I invest in my morning routine.

For me, it's been a ritual for several years now, and there's no reason for me not to do it.

I also practice intermittent fasting, not to lose weight, but to take advantage of the positive effects of autophagy.

I do strength training and endurance sports 3–5 times a week.

Looking back, I could have started this holistic training earlier, but otherwise I think I've done a lot right in this area.

By Clemens Müller



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Tampa Bay Rays

From Surprise Team to World Series Contender

The Tampa Bay Rays have put together a season in Major League Baseball that has surprised even seasoned baseball observers. After posting losing records in each of the previous two seasons, the Florida club has made an impressive comeback. With 98 wins and just 64 losses, the Rays claimed first place in the American League East and secured the top seed in their league heading into the postseason. They followed that achievement with a convincing sweep of the New York Yankees, sending another clear message to the rest of baseball. Now, the World Series is within reach. But how realistic is a championship run? Which players are driving the team's success, and what obstacles stand between Tampa Bay and the first World Series title in franchise history?

The outlook is promising. Tampa Bay has demonstrated that it can compete with the league's best teams over the course of an entire season. Sweeping the Yankees has provided an additional boost of confidence. At the same time, the most important stretch of the year brings an entirely new set of challenges. Injuries, the quality of opposing starting rotations, and the ability to win close games in the late innings could determine whether this outstanding season ultimately ends with a historic championship.

A Season That Has Renewed Hope in Florida

The foundation for Tampa Bay's success was laid in the spring. While many preseason projections gave the Rays limited chances against the strong competition in the American League East, the team developed into one of the most consistent clubs in all of MLB. Between April 22 and May 22, Tampa Bay won 22 of 26 games. That remarkable stretch was more than a temporary hot streak. It gave the team a clear identity and transformed the Rays from an underdog into a serious contender for the top spot in the league. On June 28, Tampa Bay took sole possession of first place in the division and never relinquished it.

The Rays finished the regular season with 98 wins and 64 losses. That record made them the American League East champions and earned them the top seed in the league. The achievement is particularly impressive given the previous two seasons, when Tampa Bay finished with losing records and placed fourth in the division. In just a few months, the club completed a remarkable turnaround.

The Rays' success is not built solely on individual star performances. Instead, several elements work together: a dangerous offense, a strong starting rotation, a dependable bullpen, and a defense capable of making the difference in close games. That balance becomes especially important in the postseason, when mistakes carry greater consequences and a single bad inning can change the course of an entire series.

The regular-season numbers further illustrate the team's quality. Tampa Bay scored 736 runs while allowing 650. With a team OPS of .728, the Rays ranked among the eight most productive offenses in MLB. OPS combines on-base percentage, which measures how frequently a player reaches base, with slugging percentage, which reflects a hitter's power. As a result, Tampa Bay can put pressure on opponents through sustained offensive rallies while also possessing enough power to change a game with one swing.

Junior Caminero: The Man for the Big Moments

If one player symbolizes Tampa Bay's offensive resurgence, it is Junior Caminero. The 23-year-old third baseman emerged in 2026 as one of the most dangerous hitters in the league. With 42 home runs and 101 runs batted in, he produced numbers that placed him among baseball's premier power hitters. His .276 batting average and .884 OPS also demonstrate that his value extends beyond hitting home runs.

Caminero can turn a game around in a matter of seconds. His ability to drive even high-velocity pitches into the outfield forces opposing pitchers to approach him with extreme caution. They cannot afford to give him too many hittable pitches without risking a game-changing home run. At the same time, his teammates benefit because opposing pitchers must devote considerable attention to one of the most dangerous hitters in the lineup.

Caminero experienced what may have been the most emotional moment of his regular season on September 11. Against the Houston Astros, he launched a walk-off home run that traveled approximately 417 feet. The ninth-inning blast secured a 3-1 victory for Tampa Bay and clinched the team's postseason berth. It was his 40th home run of the season and his first walk-off homer in the major leagues. The fact that Caminero delivered the decisive blow was a fitting moment for a Rays team built around resilience and timely performances.

Caminero will be under even greater scrutiny in the postseason. His power is a major weapon, but opposing pitchers will vary their pitch selection, limit hittable offerings, and attempt to get him to chase pitches outside the strike zone. The key will be whether he can remain patient even when opportunities to deliver a big hit become less frequent.

How Realistic Is a Trip to the World Series?

Tampa Bay enters this stage of the postseason in a stronger position than it has enjoyed in years. The Rays finished the regular season with 98 wins, eliminated the Yankees without losing a game in the Division Series, and have the added advantage of playing at home. Taken together, these factors give Tampa Bay a realistic opportunity to reach the World Series.

The expert projections published by MLB.com also reflect that confidence. Of 30 experts surveyed, 27 picked the Rays to win the American League Championship Series. That represents 90 percent of the expert votes. It is important to note, however, that this figure reflects an expert poll rather than a mathematically calculated probability of Tampa Bay actually winning the series.

World Series Title: What Are the Odds?

A market snapshot from Kalshi in mid-October placed Tampa Bay's estimated chance of winning the World Series at approximately 22 percent. That figure is a snapshot rather than an objective prediction, and market estimates can change as results, injuries, and expectations surrounding the remaining teams evolve.

A title probability of roughly 22 percent may initially seem low, especially given Tampa Bay's favored position against Cleveland. However, it illustrates just how difficult the road to a championship can be. Even if the Rays win the American League Championship Series, they would still have to defeat a National League opponent that has also survived two rounds of postseason competition.

Potential opponents could include the Los Angeles Dodgers or the Milwaukee Brewers. Both teams rank among the strongest clubs in the National League. The Dodgers entered the postseason with a regular-season record of 100-62, while Milwaukee finished with an even more impressive 103-59 record. In the October 12 market snapshot, the Dodgers had an estimated 34 percent chance of winning the World Series, while the Brewers stood at approximately 33 percent. Both teams were rated ahead of Tampa Bay in that assessment.

For the Rays, reaching the World Series would be a major accomplishment, but it would not guarantee a championship. Against a strong National League opponent, the quality of the starting rotation, the durability of the bullpen, and the offense's ability to produce against elite pitching would once again be decisive.

Nevertheless, Tampa Bay should not be underestimated. Its 98 wins, balanced roster, and convincing sweep of the Yankees demonstrate that the team's success is not simply the result of a short hot streak. The Rays performed consistently over several months and have continued to deliver under postseason pressure. That combination makes them a legitimate championship contender.

Could October Become Historic for Tampa Bay?

The franchise has experienced its share of memorable postseason moments. In 2008, the Rays reached the World Series for the first time but lost to the Philadelphia Phillies. They returned to the Fall Classic in 2020, only to fall to the Los Angeles Dodgers. Since their first postseason appearance in 2008, the Rays have repeatedly shown that they can compete with some of MLB's wealthiest and most established organizations. However, a World Series championship remains missing from the franchise's history.

The 2026 season now offers an opportunity to change that narrative. Caminero gives Tampa Bay a young power hitter, Díaz provides consistent contact hitting, and Rasmussen offers a starting pitcher capable of dominating in high-pressure games. Beyond those individual strengths, the Rays have quality throughout the roster rather than relying exclusively on a handful of stars.

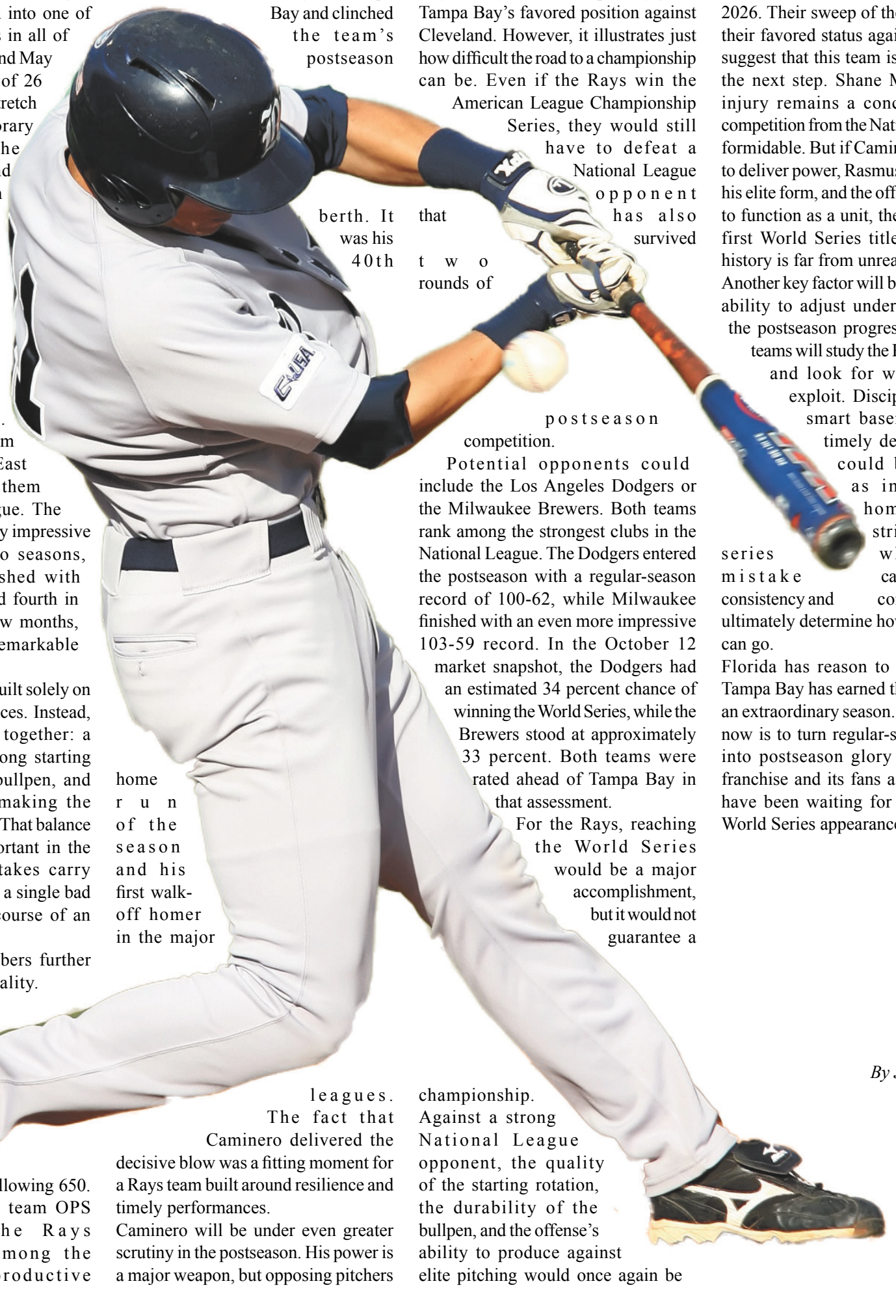
The Bottom Line

The Tampa Bay Rays are among the serious championship contenders in 2026. Their sweep of the Yankees and their favored status against Cleveland suggest that this team is ready to take the next step. Shane McClanahan's injury remains a concern, and the competition from the National League is formidable. But if Caminero continues to deliver power, Rasmussen maintains his elite form, and the offense continues to function as a unit, the dream of the first World Series title in franchise history is far from unrealistic.

Another key factor will be Tampa Bay's ability to adjust under pressure. As the postseason progresses, opposing teams will study the Rays' strengths and look for weaknesses to exploit. Disciplined hitting, smart baserunning, and timely defensive plays could become just as important as home runs and strikeouts. In a series where every mistake can prove costly, consistency and composure may ultimately determine how far the Rays can go.

Florida has reason to believe—and Tampa Bay has earned that belief with an extraordinary season. The challenge now is to turn regular-season success into postseason glory and give the franchise and its fans a moment they have been waiting for since its first World Series appearance in 2008.

By John Heinrich



Source: Pixabay

Hidden Sparks
Pets Looking to Shine

There's no one-size-fits-all kind of love—especially when it comes with four paws and a tail! Some of us dream of a quiet companion for cozy evenings, while others would happily trade the couch for a daily adventure. But falling in love with a furry face is only the beginning. A good match means looking beyond those irresistible eyes and thinking about the animal's needs, our lifestyle, and what we can truly offer. After all, even the cutest bundle of energy might not be happy with a life built around afternoon naps, while a shy soul may prefer peace and patience over a house full of excitement. And that adorable dog you've always admired? Its needs might be a world away from your daily routine. Choosing a companion isn't just about finding an animal we love; it's about making sure we can offer the care, time, and environment that animal deserves. The best match makes life better on both ends of the leash—or both sides of the scratching post. Sometimes, that perfect match is the one we least expected. A little honesty before adoption can lead to a much happier life together.

By Jennifer Hagemeister

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





Photos courtesy of Cape Coral Animal Shelter.

PUDDING

Imagine a Corgi and a Bull Terrier having a very enthusiastic brainstorming session. The result? Pudding! This 3–5-year-old girl is fun-loving, absolutely adores people, and seems to run on an endless supply of zoomies. If there's room to race around and humans to shower with affection, she's ready for action! Her enthusiasm isn't something she saves for special occasions; it's simply part of who she is.

Pudding needs a family that can keep up with her energy, give her space to run, and won't be surprised by the occasional full-speed lap through the house. For the right people, all that excitement is part of the fun. And after the action? A soft place to crash sounds just about perfect. She's looking for people who will love her lively spirit rather than wish she came with a pause button. Life with Pudding promises plenty of affection, joyful chaos, and very little boredom. She has so much love to give and hopes to share it with people who can keep up. Pudding's adoption fee is $225.

RAMEN

Meet Ramen, a fluffy, handsome gentleman with a luxurious coat and a little extra love around his middle! This 5–7-year-old fellow isn't one to rush into new friendships. He can be shy at first and needs someone patient enough to let him settle in at his own pace. But once he feels safe and comfortable, his sweet personality begins to shine. Getting to know Ramen may take a little time, and that's part of what makes finding the right person so important.

His beautiful coat needs daily brushing to keep him looking and feeling his best, and those extra pounds mean he'll need a caring adopter committed to helping him reach a healthier weight. So his dream home comes with a few essentials: patience, a good brush, and plenty of love.

If you appreciate a gentler pace and understand that trust can't be rushed, this fluffy gentleman might be your purrfect match. It's a commitment, but one that starts with understanding exactly what he needs. Ramen's adoption fee is $70.



Holy Schnitzel

The Kleinmanns Are Coming to Cape Coral!



Photos courtesy of: Jacob Kugmun

First, Daria's traveled to Cologne to discover the secrets behind the legendary schnitzels of "Bei Oma Kleinmann". Now, the Kleinmann family itself is coming to Cape Coral. Meet Ralf and Alexandra Kleinmann, the husband-and-wife team bringing generations of German hospitality, professional American football experience and one extraordinary family legacy to Daria's German Restaurant. Apparently, importing the schnitzels was only the beginning.

Some stories are simply too good to end after one chapter. And some culinary legends, it seems, are too delicious to remain on just one side of the Atlantic. Earlier this year, Daria's leadership traveled to Cologne, Germany, on what was officially described as a culinary research mission. Their destination was the legendary restaurant Bei Oma Kleinmann, famous for its exceptional schnitzels and unmistakable hospitality. Fourteen different schnitzel variations were tested, including three filled creations, as Daria's explored the inspiration for its upcoming German restaurant in Cape Coral. It was demanding work, admittedly, but somebody had to do it. What nobody could have anticipated was that this culinary expedition would eventually lead to something considerably more extraordinary than a new menu. The Kleinmann family itself is now becoming part of Daria's future.

Ralf and Alexandra Kleinmann have joined the Daria US Gastro Group to take over the management of the upcoming Daria's German Restaurant at Entrada PLaza in Northeast Cape Coral. And anyone familiar with the remarkable history of "Bei Oma Kleinmann" will immediately understand why this is such an exciting development. Because the Kleinmann name is not simply connected to German gastronomy. It is part of its history.

Born in Cologne in 1971, Ralf Kleinmann practically grew up in a restaurant. His family operated a traditional Cologne establishment for an impressive 53 years across three generations, with Ralf himself managing the business during its final four years, from 1999 to 2002. His first experience in hospitality came considerably earlier. At just 13 years old, Ralf was already pouring beers and serving guests. While most teenagers were discovering their first summer jobs, young Ralf was apparently discovering the finer points of Kölsch and customer service.

After completing school, he trained as a wholesale and foreign trade merchant and gained valuable sales experience working with Cologne's restaurant and hotel industry, commercial kitchens and corporate cafeterias. His career later expanded into key account management, marketing, event management, hospitality and senior procurement positions, where he developed extensive leadership experience. But the restaurant business never really left him. In 2001 and 2002, Ralf and Alexandra also operated the Sünner Brewery beer garden in Cologne, with an impressive 350 seats. Their decision to step away from self-employment came with the birth of their son Tom in 2002.

And Alexandra was never merely watching from the sidelines. Born in Cologne 51 years ago and raised in a nearby suburb, she trained in office communications and built a successful professional career, spending the past 18 years working as assistant to the technical management of an industrial steel construction company while also organizing corporate events. Through Ralf, she discovered the hospitality industry and developed her own passion for creating memorable experiences for guests. Together, the two bring something that cannot simply be taught in a management seminar: the experience of having lived and breathed hospitality, not merely studied it.
And then there is another rather unusual ingredient in their story. American football.

If someone were writing a romantic comedy about Ralf and Alexandra Kleinmann, the producers might reject their love story for being a little too perfectly scripted. He was an American football player. She was a cheerleader. They met through the sport 34 years ago and fell in love. Yes, sometimes life really does follow the Hollywood screenplay.

Alexandra discovered cheerleading at the age of 11 and quickly became fascinated with American football. At 13, she visited the United States with her father for the first time and immediately fell in love with the country. Ralf, meanwhile, took his football career considerably further than the average weekend enthusiast. He became a professional player, spending eight years with Frankfurt Galaxy in NFL Europe and even participating in a training camp with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers of the NFL. Their son Tom continued the family tradition, starting tackle football at just six years old. Apparently, flag football was not quite physical enough for his taste at the time.

For this family, football has never been just a sport. It has been a shared passion, a way of life and one of the reasons the United States always felt like a natural destination. A former professional football player, a lifelong cheerleader and a football-playing son moving to the country where the sport was born? Some dreams practically come with their own soundtrack.
And after decades of imagining what life in America might look like, the Kleinmann family finally found its opportunity. Through Daria.

The connection began with David Odenthal, who has known the family for more than 30 years and learned that Ralf was considering new professional opportunities. What initially began as a conversation about a possible role in sales soon developed into something much more interesting. In March, Ralf traveled to Cape Coral to discover the Daria world firsthand. After extensive discussions with Daria founder Frank Rahlf, David Odenthal and Maximilian von Garnier, it became clear that the couple's experience could contribute something particularly valuable to Daria's growing hospitality division.
The chemistry was immediate. And Alexandra did not even need to be in Florida to notice it. During a WhatsApp video call on Ralf's second evening in Cape Coral, she and Tom could see the excitement in his eyes. According to Alexandra, that moment practically made the decision for them. Her own visit in May only reinforced what the family already suspected: this was where they wanted to build their future. Alexandra fell in love with Cape Coral's waterways, the climate and the lifestyle. As someone who describes herself as a true summer person with very little enthusiasm for cold weather, Southwest Florida was always going to have a considerable advantage. A house near the water had long featured on her personal vision board. Cape Coral, with its seemingly endless canals, was hardly going to discourage that ambition.

On October 7, 2026, their visas were approved, turning a decades-long dream into reality. Today, the Kleinmann family is beginning a new life in Cape Coral, and their intentions could hardly be clearer. They have come to stay. Their son Tom is preparing to begin his studies in sports management in January, and for Ralf and Alexandra, providing him with a secure and promising future is every bit as important as their professional ambitions.

The arrival of the Kleinmanns represents another remarkable milestone in what has already been an extraordinary development for Daria's hospitality operations. What began with the transformation of Rock'n Rolls into Daria's German Bakery & Bistro has become one of Cape Coral's most remarkable German food success stories. Under the culinary leadership of Jörg "Joe" Domscheit, the bakery has built a loyal following through freshly prepared German specialties, traditional craftsmanship and genuine hospitality. The recognition has followed accordingly, from being named the No. 1 Bakery in the Caloosahatchee Region and receiving recognition among the Best Places to Eat in Florida to winning the title of Best Bistro in Cape Coral - Winner 2026.

And the story has never been exclusively about food. It has also been about people like Nicole Tundo, whose remarkable journey from Swiss world traveler to valued bakery employee and future Deputy Manager of Daria's German Restaurant demonstrated how quickly opportunity, dedication and the right team can transform a career. Now, with Ralf and Alexandra taking over restaurant management and Nicole helping shape the new operation, Daria's is bringing together experience, enthusiasm and a shared vision for hospitality.

But the Kleinmann connection adds something particularly special. Alexandra and Ralf want to recreate the feeling that made the original family restaurant in Cologne so memorable: a place where people feel welcome, where good food brings strangers together and where guests leave already looking forward to their next visit. Their culinary vision combines German tradition with a modern fusion kitchen designed to appeal to both American and German guests. And naturally, there will be one undisputed star. The Schnitzel. After all, when your family history includes one of Cologne's legendary schnitzel institutions, serving an ordinary schnitzel would be a rather questionable career decision.

Daria's German Restaurant at Entrada PLaza is being designed to bring a new dimension to German dining in Southwest Florida. The approximately 3,500-square-foot location will combine an authentic German restaurant and bakery with a spectacular 33-foot bar, a stage, live music, DJs, dancing and facilities for private events. Apparently, opening just a restaurant would have been too easy.

For Ralf and Alexandra, however, the most important part of the concept is not the size of the bar, the stage or even the number of schnitzels on the menu. It is how people feel when they walk through the door. Their ambition is to create a place where American and German guests alike feel at home, where hospitality is personal rather than mechanical and where every visit becomes an experience worth repeating. With Ralf's extensive management background and Alexandra's organizational experience, event expertise and personal connection to the family's gastronomic traditions, the couple brings complementary strengths to their new responsibilities.
And perhaps the most touching part of this entire story is the one that reaches furthest back into the Kleinmann family's past. For Alexandra, the name Oma Kleinmann is more than a restaurant or a reminder of the famous schnitzels that helped inspire Daria's newest project. It is a family legacy that deserves to live on. She already dreams of one day creating an "Oma Kleinmann 2.0" in Cape Coral, as a tribute to the original Oma Kleinmann, whose name was Paula. Alexandra likes to imagine that Paula is watching from her cloud above, looking down on everything that is happening and feeling enormously proud.

And perhaps that is the most beautiful connection between Cologne and Cape Coral. A restaurant tradition that began generations ago in Germany is finding an opportunity to inspire something new beneath the palm trees of Southwest Florida.

There will be schnitzels inspired by Cologne, German favorites prepared with passion, a long bar, live entertainment, dancing, private celebrations and plenty of opportunities to make new memories. There will be Joe Domscheit, Nicole Tundo and the growing Daria team. And now there will be Ralf and Alexandra Kleinmann, bringing their history, experience, passion and unmistakable enthusiasm to the table.

From a family restaurant in Cologne to a new home in Cape Coral, from professional football fields to restaurant floors, from a childhood dream of America to the responsibility of opening one of Daria's most ambitious projects yet, their journey has been anything but ordinary.

Some families pass down recipes. Others pass down businesses. The Kleinmanns have inherited something perhaps even more valuable: a passion for bringing people together.
And if the legendary Oma Paula really is watching from her cloud above, one can only imagine what she might be thinking.

"First they came all the way to Cologne for my schnitzels. Now they're taking the whole family to Florida!"
Somewhere up there, she must be smiling.
And somewhere in Cape Coral, the next great schnitzel story is about to begin.

By Jacob Kugmun

A Florida Birthday Party

Where Flip-Flops, Pool Floats and Pizza Are Part of the Celebration

Children's birthdays are special everywhere. There is a cake, candles, presents, excited children and at least one parent wondering how the house became quite this loud.
But celebrating a child's birthday in Florida can look a little different from what many of us grew up with in Germany. Here in Southwest Florida, the weather, pools and outdoor lifestyle open up an entirely different world of birthday possibilities. A party might take place at a trampoline park, bowling alley or arcade—but just as easily around the backyard pool, at a park or even out on the water. And sometimes, the simplest parties become the ones children remember the longest.

The Backyard Pool Party
For many Florida children, a birthday party doesn't require a special venue at all. If there is a swimming pool in the backyard, half the entertainment is already taken care of. Add a few giant pool floats, water balloons, music and a group of children in swimsuits, and you have a party. Pizza is ordered, a cooler is filled with drinks, and the birthday cake waits inside in the air conditioning—hopefully far enough away from wet children running through the house.
There is something wonderfully uncomplicated about it. The children swim until their fingers wrinkle, someone invents a jumping competition, another child loses their goggles for the fifth time, and eventually everyone comes out of the pool hungry enough to eat almost anything. For German parents, celebrating a November or even December birthday with children jumping into a swimming pool can still feel slightly strange.
In Florida, it can feel completely normal.

When the Party Leaves the House
Of course, not every parent wants ten excited children running through the backyard. That is where America's birthday-party venues come in. Trampoline parks are especially popular. Places such as Sky Zone offer birthday packages where children can jump, climb and burn off an impressive amount of energy before everyone gathers for pizza and cake. Bowling is another classic. Add bumpers for younger children, turn on the music and suddenly nobody seems particularly concerned about the score.
Arcades are also a big hit. Children receive game cards, disappear among flashing lights and racing games, and eventually return proudly carrying the collection of tiny prizes they won with their tickets. For parents, these parties have one major advantage: much of the entertainment is already organized.
And often, so is the cleanup.

Parks, Playgrounds and Picnics
One thing I particularly like about children's birthdays in Southwest Florida is how easy it is to celebrate outside. Families can reserve a pavilion at a local park, decorate a few picnic tables, bring food and cake and let the children spend the afternoon on the playground or playing games on the grass. It doesn't have to be elaborate. A football, bubbles, sidewalk chalk, a few outdoor games and a cooler can sometimes entertain children longer than an expensive party program. And there is something very Florida about celebrating a birthday underneath palm trees while everyone is wearing shorts.

A Birthday on the Water
Then there are the birthday parties that would have seemed almost unimaginable to many of us growing up in Germany.
A day on the boat. For families who own or rent a boat, a birthday can become an entire adventure. Pack lunch and birthday cupcakes, bring swimsuits and towels and head out onto the waterways.
Perhaps dolphins appear beside the boat. Maybe everyone stops somewhere to swim or have lunch. Older children and teenagers might prefer kayaking, paddleboarding or another water activity. The birthday celebration suddenly isn't just a party—it becomes a day everyone experienced together. And those are often the birthdays that are remembered years later.

The Very American Birthday Party
There are also little differences that German parents may notice. American children's birthday parties can sometimes feel more organized around a theme.
Princesses, superheroes, sports, gaming, dinosaurs, mermaids—if a child loves something, there is a good chance the entire party can be built around it. The invitations match the plates. The plates match the balloons. The balloons match the cake. And somehow the cake matches a table decoration that somebody probably spent half the previous evening putting together. Then there are the goodie bags.
At the end of many American children's parties, guests leave with a small bag filled with candy, stickers, little toys or other surprises. For someone who grew up thinking the birthday child was supposed to receive the presents, the first encounter with this tradition can be amusing. Apparently everybody gets something.

Germany and Florida – Different, but Not So Different
Of course, children's birthdays in Germany have changed too. Trampoline parks, bowling and themed parties certainly aren't uniquely American anymore. But many of us remember birthdays that were a little more home-based. A few school friends came over. There was cake in the afternoon, games were played, perhaps there was a treasure hunt, and later everyone had Abendbrot or something simple to eat before going home. Florida simply adds another ingredient: the Florida lifestyle itself.
Pools, sunshine, palm trees, boats and warm evenings become part of childhood celebrations. But underneath all those differences, children's birthdays are remarkably similar. A child wakes up knowing:

Today is my day.
There are balloons somewhere in the house. Friends are coming. There will be cake. Someone will sing "Happy Birthday." And for one afternoon, being one year older feels like the biggest thing that has ever happened.

The Parties They Remember
As parents, it is easy to get caught up in making birthdays perfect. The decorations should look right. The cake should be special. There should be enough food. Everyone should have fun. But children often remember something completely different. They remember Dad getting pushed into the pool with his clothes on. They remember the dolphin that suddenly appeared beside the boat. They remember laughing so hard with their friends that their stomach hurt.
They remember staying in the pool until it was almost dark. They remember blowing out the candles while everyone they loved sang too loudly and completely out of tune. And perhaps that is the nicest thing about a Florida birthday. It can be big or small. At home or somewhere special. Expensive or incredibly simple. Sometimes all you really need is a few friends, a pizza, a birthday cake—and a Florida afternoon that feels like it might last forever.

By S. Mechalik



Conversations with God

Part 5: What Makes a Community Strong?



Source: Perxels

In Part 5 of Conversations with God, I continue my conversation with Pastor Marty Luchterhand. He is a pastor here in Southwest Florida, about something that affects all of us: community. What makes a community strong? Why can we be surrounded by people and still feel lonely? And how much difference can one honest conversation make?

Alexandra:
Marty, you are part of several groups and communities around Fort Myers. What do you value most about them?

Marty:
One of the things I like about Fort Myers is that life moves at a somewhat slower pace compared to the eastern part of Florida. Even though it is a growing area and a mix of many different people, there is still a strong sense of community here.
I also value the people I meet through networking. People like you who genuinely want to make the community better. You can usually tell when someone is in business only for the money. But in many of the groups I'm part of, I meet people who truly want to help others. And when you become a blessing to somebody, very often that gets reciprocated.
I see the same thing in ministry. There are people who genuinely want to be of benefit to others rather than simply looking at what they can get for themselves.

Alexandra:
What do you think people in our community need most right now?

Marty:
I see a lot of anxiety. I see depression. I see people asking, "What should I do with my life?" God doesn't tell you exactly what job to take or how many hours you should work. What God gives you in the Bible is His plan of salvation and promises you can hold on to.
When I think about what to do with my own life, I have this solid foundation of forgiveness in Jesus. And then I have these promises that tell me that whatever I do, God is going to see me through. That doesn't mean God will bless every venture I'm involved with. Something may not work out the way I hoped. But I trust that somehow God will help me get back on my feet.
I see so much unrest today. Political anger. Uncertainty. Fear.
I have a lot going on in my own life too, but I still have that solid foundation. And because I do, I sleep well at night. For me, it all comes from God's Word and the Bible.

Alexandra:
What are some simple, practical ways neighbors can support one another?

Marty:
My neighbor is an elderly Haitian gentleman. He didn't really know what to do with some of his plants, so my wife and I went over and helped trim them. He also had knee surgery, so we help carry things for him when he needs it. If somebody's dog is missing, go for a walk through the neighborhood and look for the dog.
I think it is really about being aware and present. Listen to people. Pay attention to what is happening around you. And when you recognize something you can appropriately help with, be there.
Sometimes it is as simple as looking over the fence and saying hello.
But don't just say, "How are you?" because that is what we automatically say. Actually listen.
This morning I was drinking coffee and noticed that my neighbor James had left the window of his truck open. He hasn't driven that truck in a while, and I thought, "I hope it hasn't rained in there."
So when I see him, I'll tell him.
It's a tiny thing. But it means you noticed. Be present and care.
When people know that you genuinely care, they will eventually tell you what they need. And if you can help, you help. I say that humbly because I think I could do a better job of that too.

Alexandra:
For me, communication is a big part of this too. Sometimes we hold an image of someone that was created by something that happened in the past. But people change. Who someone was yesterday doesn't necessarily tell us who that person is today.

Marty:
Yes. The Bible teaches, "Blessed are the peacemakers."
If you actually seek peace, then you can forgive something that happened weeks or even years ago. Sometimes you may even discover that the other person isn't thinking about what happened anymore. When there has been contention between two people and they can still find a way to love one another, be there for one another and become a blessing to each other again, that is a beautiful thing.
When you can create a bond with someone after there has been conflict, that is almost like heaven on earth.

Alexandra:
Do you think people are lonelier today than they used to be?

Marty:
Absolutely.
People are on their phones all the time, especially younger people. And people work all the time too. Even when you are surrounded by people, you can still feel lonely because we don't always have the connections we used to have. People used to sit on their front porches. Now we often live much more privately.
Even as a pastor, I can sometimes feel lonely because there are things I cannot tell everybody. There are thoughts I keep to myself. I'm never completely alone because I have God, and I have a wonderful wife.
But I absolutely think loneliness has become a big issue.

Alexandra:
I see that too. Someone recently told me, "I'm around so many people, but inside I still feel lonely."
And I think one of the problems is that we often ask, "How are you?" without really wanting to know the answer.
Recently I've also been talking to God a lot more. And I think sometimes it can begin with something as simple as a prayer, and then taking one step toward other people.
Find a church, a sports group, a dancing group or something else you enjoy.

Marty:
That's right.

Alexandra:
So what role can a church play in a modern community?

Marty:
I think it is much of what we have already been talking about, but on a more intimate level. As a pastor, people tell me things in confidence. Those things stay with me. There is a balancing act, though. I want to know how I can help you, but I don't want to be nosy. Sometimes people in churches can become too involved because they genuinely want to help. Their intention may be good, but that doesn't automatically mean the help itself is healthy. I think the question that guides us is: Why am I doing what I'm doing? Is it done out of love? Am I helping because this person needs me?
Or am I helping because helping makes me feel good about myself? Those are not necessarily the same thing.
Sometimes what looks like helping another person is actually more about ourselves. As a pastor, there are times when I have to tell someone, "Stop. You're not helping that person anymore."
I sometimes think of it like a bullseye. The closer you are to the center of someone's life, the greater your responsibility may be. If I am the pastor of someone who trusts me and loves me, I may be in an inner circle. Close family may be there too. Extended family moves further out. A neighbor may be further out again. Where you are in that circle can help determine how much involvement is appropriate. If I am close to the center, I may need to be there. If I am further outside, maybe my role is simply to pray and be ready when an opportunity to help comes.
Humility and love help determine where we belong. And if the church represents God, then we need to be both appropriate and loving. I say all of this humbly because I certainly don't have everything figured out.

Alexandra:
And I like that you say that, because none of us is perfect.
So coming back to our original question: What can every person do this week or this month to make someone else's life a little better?

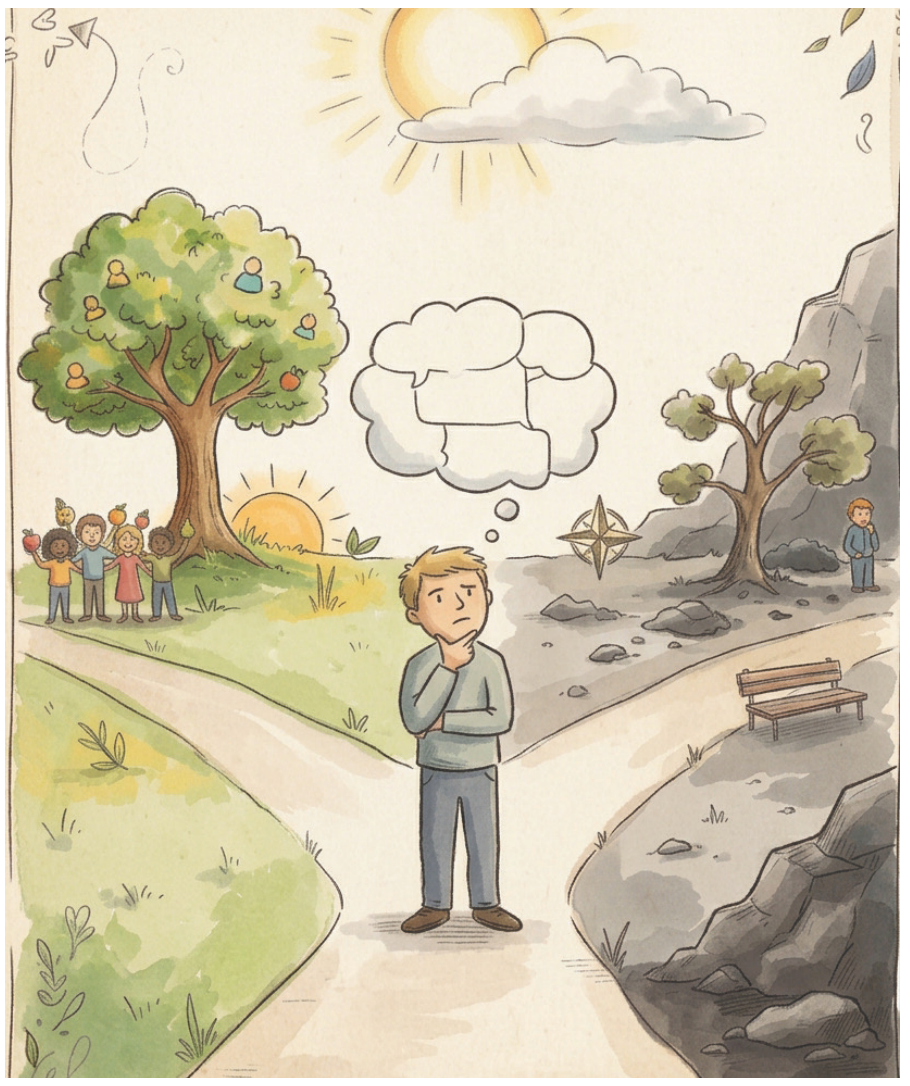
Marty:
Make the phone call. Talk to your neighbor. When I walk my dog and see somebody outside in their yard, I talk to them. As a pastor, I would also say go to church. Get involved in a Bible study. Create opportunities to communicate with other people around God's Word. But ultimately, look at the opportunities God has given you. What gifts has God given you that can be a blessing to somebody else? Who is around you right now? Who needs help?
We all have a lot on our plates, and we may not be able to do everything.
So look at what is most important and ask yourself where you can be of the greatest benefit. We've talked before about how God works through people. So I think a very simple question is: "What can I do today to help somebody?" Who can I call?
Who can I encourage? Ask yourself: "Who can I be a blessing to today?"

Alexandra:
Maybe making our community stronger doesn't begin with another organization, another program or another big initiative. Maybe it begins much smaller. With one person.
One conversation. One phone call.
One neighbor. Or one question asked from the heart: "How are you - honestly?"
And then…
don't immediately answer for them.
Don't judge. Don't fix. Don't look at your phone. Listen. Because sometimes the greatest gift we can give another human being is the feeling:
Someone sees me. Someone hears me. Someone cares. And perhaps that is where community really begins.

Coming next in Part 6
In our next conversation, we are going even deeper.
We'll talk about gratitude, legacy, hope, and the lessons God has taught through a lifetime.
Because after talking about work, service and community, there is another beautiful question waiting:
What do we ultimately want to leave behind?
Conversations with God
A Sunshine Post interview series about faith, everyday life, community and the quiet wisdom we can find in unexpected places.

By Alexandra Welsch

The Happiness Formula



Photos courtesy of: Matthias Erbacher

If you are hoping or expecting me to deliver the ultimate recipe—a concise equation for happiness—I have to disappoint you, at least to some extent.

I don't have a solution that is short and punchy—like a mathematical formula—partly because I've never been a brilliant mathematician...
However, there is a fairly simple "formula"—albeit one that takes a bit more explaining—that I would like to describe here.

But before we get into that... a question: Why do we like concise formulas so much? Why do we want things explained and presented as briefly as possible? Why do we prefer the quickest route? Why do we love shortcuts and enjoy being told exactly *what* to do to reach a goal?

We'd rather take a pill than embark on a path that might be arduous, even if it is more rewarding—why is that?
"Human beings are inherently lazy and love shortcuts."

Perhaps it is because we are constantly focused on goals, hoping that achieving them will bring us fulfillment. Yet, so much knowledge and joy can often be found along the journey itself...

This has also been scientifically studied: In prehistoric times, conserving energy was vital for survival, ensuring we always had enough reserves for fight-or-flight scenarios.

Changing routines or altering a habit requires conscious mental effort, which consumes a huge amount of energy (our brain uses about 20% of our energy, even though it accounts for only about 2% of our body weight). Swallowing a pill, by contrast, costs almost no energy. So, we aren't chronically lazy; we are simply evolutionarily optimized energy savers. The problem is that our civilized world creates challenges—such as lifestyle diseases and complex career paths—that can no longer be adequately managed using the lessons learned in the Stone Age.

But let us return to our formula for happiness:
Depending on the situation, I categorize the components of this formula based on basic needs (primary motives: food, reproduction, shelter, etc.) and secondary motives—needs that emerge once survival has been secured through the fulfillment of basic needs.

This means that happiness is neither a static concept nor a universal state, but rather a social variable.
A farmer in Guinea is likely overjoyed when, after months of drought, rain finally falls and irrigates his fields—while, at the same moment just a stone's throw away in the Ivory Coast, a tourist is miserable because the rain has spoiled their day trip.

In another country on the same continent, a super-wealthy individual might be considering using geoengineering to buy good weather for their birthday party, feeling happy because they can count on it not raining...
Happiness can be defined in such vastly different ways.

And it is definitely linked to our needs! It depends on our status, our expectations, and our awareness of our own needs—and, above all, on whether we satisfy them.
"I am the happiest person when I'm dancing."

If you know that dancing brings you immense joy, there are two possible scenarios: You go dancing—fulfilling that need—and feel happy. If, despite having that need, you don't go dancing, you become unhappy. Of course, one would have to pinpoint exactly *what* the need associated with dancing is: movement? connection? self-expression?

In other words: if your health is secure and your status is far removed from the struggle for survival, your happiness depends heavily on the fulfillment of your needs. Have you ever stopped to consider the full range of human needs? – A whole lot:
Adventure, variety, acceptance, recognition, stimulation, aesthetics, attention, balance, exchange, authenticity, autonomy, equilibrium, regard...

Happiness manifests itself—when needs are met—in feelings such as: enthusiastic, relaxed, delighted, pleased, relieved, expectant, euphoric, fascinated...
Just as—when needs are NOT met—it appears in feelings such as: frustrated, stunned, inhibited, bored, irritated, indifferent, helpless...
Thus, we can actually set up a sort of equation:
Happiness = Health + The fulfillment of your needs (which remain to be defined)

It seems we *did* find a simple formula for happiness after all, doesn't it? Well—experience shows it isn't always so clear what *my own* needs actually are! Unfortunately, we often only become aware of this during a life crisis—when old patterns no longer hold up, systems fall out of balance, or everyday life (leisure activities included) no longer feels fulfilling.
It is a bit like that old sailing—or life—maxim by Seneca: "If one does not know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable."
That is why I advocate this path: if I explore and define my needs, happiness is usually just a decision away!

By Matthias Erbacher





Sunshine State of Mind

Part 5: Settled into Routine – Milestones, Rodeos, and the First Real Florida Summer



Photos courtesy of: Marc Siewert

After an extended break, I am reporting back from the Sunshine State. The last few months have been a veritable whirlwind of appointments, business developments, and significant family milestones. When I reflect upon our very first authentic summer here in Florida, one word primarily comes to mind: wet. The often-invoked, seemingly endless rain hit us full force, but fortunately, we were spared from any major storms or hurricanes. While people in Germany look forward to hot days in the summer, we are now eagerly anticipating our first Floridian winter here—which hopefully will feel exactly like a perfect German summer. But before we can get comfortable in the cooler months, an intense and incredibly successful period lies behind us, in which many plans finally turned into tangible reality.

Probably the most important update right up front: The wait was absolutely worth it. Our trip to Frankfurt in the early summer, which we were able to wonderfully combine with Finn's high school graduation ball, was a complete success. The final visa interview went pleasantly smoothly, and we were able to return shortly after with the long-awaited stamp in our passports to our home—our new home. A totally joyful event is that our eldest son Finn, who is covered by our visa until he turns 21, has now permanently moved in with us in Florida. The family is completely united under one roof again, and that gives all of us an enormous sense of peace and of finally having arrived.

A lot has also happened with our younger boys. As life often goes, we completely overhauled our original school plans once more. Ultimately, we opted for a different school, which our colleague Diana's children also attend. This choice has proven to be an absolute stroke of luck. Lio now goes to preschool there and Lenn attends kindergarten. We made a very conscious decision to hold both boys back academically by one single year. This strategic step takes the pressure off them and gives them the necessary time to playfully immerse themselves in the new language and culture at their very own pace. Seeing how carefree they now navigate their American school routine, we know that this was exactly the right decision.

Parallel to settling in privately, our daily business operations have also rapidly picked up speed. The IT company that I am building together with my business partner Lydia is growing continuously. We have now hired our first permanent employee and are already holding promising talks with three more potential team members. The summer was additionally defined by two massive milestones: Just in time for the big summer festival, we successfully launched the new DariaConnect app, and only one week later, Daria TV went live. Since then, we have been working tirelessly in the background on the further development of these platforms and are already preparing the next exciting projects. The fact that we were able to spend an extremely productive and inspiring work week in Miami Beach in between was the proverbial icing on the cake of our startup phase.

Despite all the hard work, the American Way of Life naturally cannot be neglected. We are soaking up the local culture to the fullest, and that inevitably includes American sports. In the past few months, we have experienced a genuine program of contrasts: We attended ice hockey games of the Florida Panthers, flew all the way to Minneapolis with a few colleagues for a magnificent Vikings NFL game, and just yesterday—already for the second time since April—visited a local rodeo. Bull riding, lasso throwing, and the incredible atmosphere in the stands are experiences that unmistakably make it clear to you: We are truly in America now.

Alongside all the fantastic experiences and what we are allowed to build here, there is a very personal realization for Janine and me. When we look back on this journey, we realize: after taking such a massive step, you are practically no longer afraid of anything. The world is open to us—even though, of course, we want to stay exactly here for now. Now we are looking ahead to the end of the year with great anticipation. Over Christmas and New Year's Eve, we will travel to the Smoky Mountains in North Carolina. A bit of forest, high mountains, and maybe even a touch of real winter chill—the perfect balance to our new, sunny life in the Sunshine State.

By Marc Siewert

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Between Control and Finding Your Own Rhythm



Photos courtesy of: Alexandra Welsch

Being quiet is not always a sign of disinterest or arrogance. Sometimes it simply means that someone feels deeply, thinks deeply, and does not carry everything on the outside."

Do you know that feeling too?
You wake up in the morning and before you have even really arrived in the new day, your mind is already somewhere else. There are appointments, messages, people who need something, decisions, things left from yesterday, and all those little things that absolutely cannot be forgotten today. You only meant to check your phone for a second. Really, just for a second.
And suddenly you are right back in it. One message. Another question. A decision. And then some new issue appears that somehow did not even seem to exist the night before.
So you do what you are good at. You think, sort things out, find a way, and keep going.

Maybe that is one of your strengths. You see connections quickly, take responsibility, keep things moving, and usually still find a solution even when everything around you starts to feel a little messy. And when something does not work, you do not wait long for someone else to solve it. You look at what is needed and take care of it.
Over the years, you become pretty good at that. So good that sometimes hardly anyone notices how much you are actually carrying.

And somewhere in between all of this, life reminds you from time to time that there is more than functioning, planning, and getting things done. Sometimes very quietly.
You suddenly miss someone who is far away, and you do not want anything big. You simply want to be together, have a completely ordinary conversation, or feel like this person could walk through the door at any moment. And sometimes that reminder does not come quietly at all. It comes very directly.

A message. A phone call. A moment that rearranges everything within seconds. And suddenly the email can wait. The appointment can wait too. And something that seemed urgent five minutes ago suddenly does not feel that important anymore. Maybe those are exactly the moments when life reminds us that we are not here only to organize it. We are also allowed to experience it. To feel it. To enjoy it. To share it.

And maybe that is why we sometimes need something that takes us out of our heads and brings us back into the moment. For me, dancing has become exactly that kind of place. When I dance, I do not need to know the next ten steps. I only need to be present enough to feel the next one. And honestly, if you are used to thinking ahead, that is not always easy.

The more I try to predict which movement will come next, the less I am really in the music. Then I start thinking more than feeling. I try to control instead of truly allowing myself to experience what is unfolding. And that is exactly where something interesting happens. I get to become quieter. To listen without anyone saying a word. To wait for an impulse. To move when it is really there. To trust without losing myself.
And eventually something else appears too: space for your own interpretation, your own style, your own movement. That sounds a lot like freedom. And surprisingly, that kind of freedom can be difficult. Because what happens when nobody tells you which step is the right one? How do you move when you are not trying to copy someone else?
What is actually your own rhythm? I think that question applies to far more than dancing. How much of our lives actually follows a rhythm we truly chose? And how much of it comes from expectations, responsibility, habits, and all the things that simply need to get done? Maybe freedom does not begin with having no obligations. Maybe it begins with being able to hear your own rhythm again. And surprisingly, I also see a connection here to finances. Because there too, we look for security. We want to know what tomorrow will bring. Whether the money will be enough. Whether the decision is right. Whether an investment will work.

Good financial planning cannot control the future, of course. And maybe that is not really its job. What it can do is create something else: a stable framework. When we know what comes in, what goes out, what obligations we have, what reserves are available, and what options we have, we do not need to predict every possible outcome. We know where we stand today. And that can create freedom. Freedom to travel. To spend time with people we love. To take an opportunity. To try something new.

Or simply to pause when life suddenly becomes more important than the next appointment. Maybe that is why we need both: structure and trust, planning and flexibility, security and a little curiosity. And maybe we are also allowed to stop constantly copying other people's steps. Not in dancing. Not with money. And not in life either. Because eventually the question becomes:
What is actually my own rhythm?
Maybe you know this story. Maybe while reading it you thought about yourself or about someone who carries a lot, appears strong, and rarely asks. And the person I am talking about?
That is me.

The last few weeks have brought some of these questions very close to me again. There have been moments when distance suddenly felt more present, news that shifted priorities within seconds, and situations that reminded me: not everything can be solved, planned, or controlled.

And that is exactly why I would like to invite both of us — you and me — to something. Not to become less strong. Instead, to make more room beside our strength for the part of us that does not always need an immediate solution, that is allowed to share sooner, receive help, feel deeply, and not always know what the next step will look like.

Let us create a solid framework, take responsibility, and within that framework allow ourselves to live more. Ask more. Share more. Feel more. Try more. And maybe sometimes take a step that does not look perfect and still feels completely like us.
Because we do not need to know our own rhythm before we begin.
Maybe we discover it precisely by finally allowing ourselves to dance it. So turn on the music and dance to your own melody and rhythm...

By Alexandra Welsch

High-Protein Potato & Ground Beef Casserole with a Golden Cheese Crust

Quick to make. High in protein. Fresh. And incredibly delicious.

Golden potatoes, flavorful ground beef, and a creamy, golden cheese topping. This casserole combines the comforting flavors of traditional home cooking with a modern, protein-focused approach to nutrition. Perfect for meal prep and just as delicious the next day.

by Dina Veronique Scheve

INGREDIENTS
(SERVES 2)

- 400 g pre-cooked potatoes
- 300 g lean ground beef (5% fat)
- 150 g plain Skyr yogurt
- 80 g shredded reduced-fat cheese
- 1 small onion
- 100 g tomato passata
- 1 tsp olive oil
- Salt, pepper, and paprika
- Fresh parsley

NUTRITIONAL VALUES
(APPROX. PER SERVING)

- Calories: 620 kcal
- Protein: approx. 59 g
- Carbohydrates: approx. 47 g
- Fat: approx. 20 g

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C (392°F), using conventional top and bottom heat.

2. Cut the pre-cooked potatoes into thin slices.

3. Finely dice the onion and sauté it with the ground beef in olive oil until nicely browned. Season with salt, pepper, and paprika.

4. Stir in the tomato passata and let simmer briefly.

5. Mix the Skyr with a little water until smooth and creamy. Season to taste.

6. Layer the potatoes and ground beef alternately in a baking dish. Spread the Skyr mixture evenly over the top and sprinkle with shredded cheese.

7. Bake for approximately 15–20 minutes, until the cheese is golden brown. Garnish with fresh parsley before serving.



Photos courtesy of: Dina Veronique Scheve

The planks that mean the world.

For a long time, theater stages around the world were constructed from solid wooden planks—long, thick boards sawn from tree trunks and planed smooth. Was this simply because it was the easiest method? Because wood was readily available? Or perhaps because it was the most cost-effective option?

Far from it: it is the exceptional properties of wood that made it the material of choice for theater stages. "Made"—does that mean it is no longer used today? On the contrary, it is still used, albeit in a different form. What are the specific qualities that make wood so unique and well-suited for theater flooring, and how do these properties arise?

* Depending on the direction of the grain, wood is remarkably elastic. It can withstand stress without breaking—time and time again. This is due to the internal structure of the wood, which is both strong and flexible along the axis of its fibers (the direction in which the tree grew).

* Wood is also hygroscopic—meaning it has the ability to absorb moisture from the air and release it again. This is directly linked to the structure and chemical composition of the wood cells (the cell walls are composed primarily of cellulose).

* It offers excellent acoustics; thanks to its open pores (exposed wood cells), wood absorbs sound waves, thereby reducing reverberation. The result is a highly transparent sound.

* It possesses a certain capacity for "self-healing" (when damaged by screws). In a theater environment, it is often necessary to quickly secure scenery to the floor using nails or screws. Certain types of wood used there, such as "Oregon Pine," are highly resinous; when exposed to moisture, they can actually seal such holes on their own… So, when it comes to using wood for stages, you are certainly not

"on the wrong track" (or, in German, *nicht auf dem Holzweg*).

The latter expression—literally "on the wood-path"—originally referred to those who, out of ignorance, followed a trail created by forest workers; such a path would lead into the woods toward a felling or storage site, but it was, in fact, a dead end… The positive properties of wood are still utilized in stage construction today—though the way it is used has evolved. It is now employed in a more resource-efficient manner, while also being made more durable. This is achieved through a specialized system: the so-called composite panel. The resinous wood is now used only as a thin top layer, applied to a multi-layered panel in which the grain direction alternates between layers. The lower layers, in turn, can be made from wood of lower visual quality, since only the structural properties are required here.

This makes it possible to achieve a surface capable of bearing greater loads while using less high-grade timber—incidentally, European black pine is now frequently used in Europe, as it is more affordable than imported varieties like "Oregon pine" (Douglas fir) or "pitch pine," some of which are even subject to export bans.

A mere building material, or a living organism?

Beyond the properties of wood already mentioned, it is essential to consider its origin—its very growth—and to touch upon one of the most contentious scientific debates in modern biology.

How, then, is wood formed? How does a delicate seedling transform into a mighty tree that continues to grow both taller and thicker? The secret lies in the *cambium*—a layer that (when viewed in a cross-section of the tree trunk) produces wood cells toward the inside and phloem cells (which form the inner bark) toward the outside. This process occurs more rapidly during the warm summer months than during the nutrient-poor winter season, resulting in the distinct, differently colored annual rings. Within the new wood cells, nutrients are transported upward through capillary action and the "transpiration pull" generated by the leaves. In the leaves, photosynthesis takes place, producing liquid sugars and starches.

These substances are then transported back down through the phloem cells to the roots, completing the cycle.

In early spring, humans take advantage of this cycle to harvest a well-known treat: maple syrup. Because the maple tree produces large quantities of sugar during the summer—storing it as starch in its roots and the wood cells of its trunk—a farmer can tap the tree during this brief window to collect the pressurized sap. The sap flows out readily through a spout. Only about 10% of the tree's total sap is extracted, an amount that causes the tree no harm. The freshly tapped sap is boiled for days, as it is initially as thin as water and has a sugar content of only about 2–3%. Through evaporation in enormous pans, the sugar concentration increases to around 66%; it caramelizes slightly, transforming into a viscous, amber-colored syrup.

Does the "wood wide web" exist?

Leading scientists from international universities are debating whether the wonder of trees—and of the forest as a whole—is even greater than previously assumed.

As early as the 1990s, Dr. Suzanne Simard demonstrated that tree root systems facilitate a form of exchange (supporting younger trees) and communication (regarding pests). She coined the term "mother trees"—a choice for which she was accused of over-sentimentalizing the scientific facts. One can only hope that the parties involved do not resort to the "sledgehammer method" in their dealings with one another.

P.S.: In the days before anesthetic drugs existed, this method was actually used prior to surgery—despite the immense health risks—by quite literally striking the patient over the head with a wooden mallet to render them unconscious for the operation. Alternatively, perhaps the "sledgehammer" is made of a very light, fragile wood like balsa—which consists of up to 90% air within its cellular structure and would therefore cause little damage. Because of these properties, it is primarily used in model-making. At the other end of the spectrum, the heaviest known type of wood, *lignum vitae* (or "pockwood"), has such a high density that it sinks in water.

The range is truly vast—and for many, wood means the world (and not just in the form of stage floorboards). Take a closer look at all the places where wood is used or incorporated, and immerse yourself in this mystery made of cellulose. For, as the first President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Theodor Heuss (1884–1963), once remarked:

"Wood may be just a simple, one-syllable word—yet behind it lies a world full of magic and wonder!"

By Matthias Erbacher



Photos courtesy of: Matthias Erbacher





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 budgetig. 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"

Boxing Basics & Beyond

"I'm interested in boxing but don't know much about the sport. Explain the basics, what makes a great boxer, and how beginners can start following the sport."

AI suggests:

1. Learn the basic scoring system, rounds, weight classes, and rules
2. Watch a few classic fights to understand different boxing styles
3. Learn the difference between offense, defense, footwork, and ring strategy
4. Follow one current fighter to make the sport easier to understand
5. Remember that boxing is as much about strategy and discipline as physical strength

German Bundesliga Guide

"I'm new to German football. Explain how the Bundesliga works, what makes it unique, and which traditions every new fan should know."

AI suggests:

1. Learn how the league table, promotion, relegation, and European qualification work
2. Follow one club to better understand the rivalries and traditions
3. Learn about famous German football cities and their historic clubs
4. Experience the importance of the fans, chants, and matchday culture
5. Watch a full match to appreciate the pace and atmosphere of German football

Labor Day Weekend Planner

"Help me make the most of Labor Day weekend in Southwest Florida. Suggest ways to relax, spend time with family, and enjoy the final days of summer."

AI suggests:

1. Plan a relaxed beach morning before the afternoon heat
2. Organize a backyard barbecue with friends and family
3. Look for local events, live music, or community celebrations
4. Take a sunset walk and enjoy one of summer's final golden evenings
5. Leave some time completely unplanned—sometimes that's the best part of a long weekend

Start Fall the Right Way

"I want to start the fall season feeling refreshed, organized, and motivated. Create a simple plan for resetting my routines after summer."

AI suggests:

1. Re-establish a consistent sleep and morning routine
2. Choose one health or fitness goal for the next three months
3. Declutter one area of your home rather than trying to do everything at once
4. Plan something to look forward to each week
5. Reflect on your favorite summer memories before focusing on what's next

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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.



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.

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 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

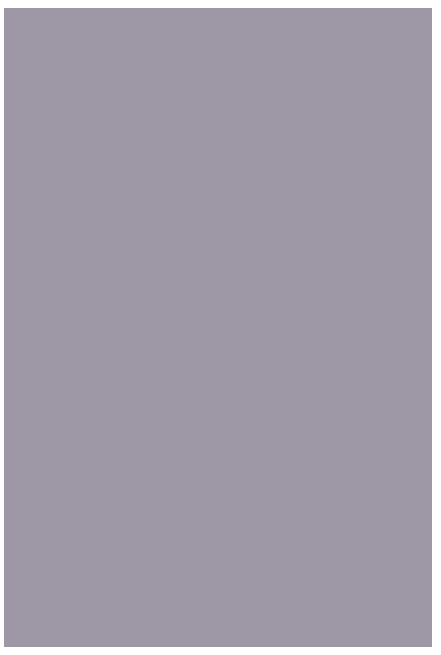


The Sunshine Post Community wishes a Happy Birthday to....

Alexandra Welsch

Andreas Lehner

Moritz Heidler







Would you like to congratulate someone special?

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Subject: "Celebrating Life"



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