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SUNSHINE POST

CREDIT UNIONS 03 XMAS SPIRIT 06 AI-PROMPT 11 HEALTHY AGING 12

On a gray March morning in 1933, as panic swept across the United States, a small credit union in Massachusetts faced its first true test. Find out all about it in our new episode on credit unions!

Read about what it's like when Christmas feels like stepping into a movie scene, where palm trees sparkle with fairy lights and Santa might just arrive in a boat.

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

The average percentage of the US population engaged in sports, exercise, and recreation per day is 21.5%. How does one become one of them?

Celebrate the merriest season of all with the Sunshine Post



Goldie, read more about her on page 8. Photo courtesy of Cape Coral Animal Shelter

As December rolls in, our town is buzzing with holiday cheer, and here at the Sunshine Post, we're excited to share this festive spirit with you through the pages of our latest issue. This month we're celebrating the season in all its warmth, joy, and community connection. Our feature articles capture the spirit of togetherness that makes this time of year so special.

SUNSHINE POST

HERO OF THE MONTH

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

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

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

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We warmly invite you to celebrate the merriest and greatest season of all with us!

Dear Readers,

As December rolls in, our town is buzzing with holiday cheer, and here at Sunshine Post, we're excited to share this festive spirit with you through the pages of our latest issue. This month, we're celebrating the season in all its warmth, joy, and community connection.

Our feature articles capture the spirit of togetherness that makes this time of year so special. In the third episode of our season, we explore the fascinating historical origins of Credit Unions—a reminder of how communities can come together to support one another.

For those dreaming of a sunny Christmas, our piece on celebrating the holidays in Florida brings the magic of the season to life under blue skies and warm sunshine—proof that festive traditions thrive, even when it's hot outside! And for sports fans, our deep dive into the history of the Florida Panthers offers a look at local pride and the stories that unite us all.

Throughout this issue, you'll find stories that highlight the joy of giving, the richness of our local heritage, and the simple moments that bring us together.

From all of us at Sunshine Post, we wish you warmth, happiness, and countless reasons to celebrate with family, friends and neighbors.

With a festive cheer,
Sunshine Post Editorial Board



Photo: Pixabay

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

Sunshine Post
Editor-in-Chief/Managing Editor Rouven Zietz
Contact Information info@sunshine-post.com
Advertising Department advertising@sunshine-post.com
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The Kindness – the beauty of giving

When the holiday lights begin to glow and festive music fills the air, we're reminded once again how precious "home" truly is — a safe place, warm meals, and people who care. The wish to give something back lives in us all year long, but during this season it seems to speak a little louder, touching us in a way we can't ignore. And every year around this time, many of us feel that gentle pull to share what we have and brighten someone else's moment.

Giving isn't just about decluttering; it connects us, grounds us, and shows us how much of a difference we can make — right here in Cape Coral and Fort Myers.

Every item you pass on carries a story: the children's book once read at bedtime, the blanket that kept you warm on countless movie nights. The moment you donate it, that story continues — with someone who might be hoping for exactly that small piece of comfort. And something beautiful happens to you as well:

you realize how rich you truly are — not only in things, but in heart.

Gently used, deeply appreciated – support for Adults & Families

Giving doesn't have to mean buying brand-new items. Especially during the holiday season, local thrift stores and community resale centers appreciate well-kept secondhand treasures: clothing, shoes, décor, kitchenware, small furniture, books, toys, and classic board games — almost anything that is clean, functional, and brings joy.

Many of these stores in Fort Myers and the surrounding area use their proceeds to support families in need, individuals recovering from hardship, or households that simply can't afford new items.

Donating is simple: sort your items at home, pack them into boxes or bags, and drop them off during business hours. Some organizations rely solely on drop-off donations, while others may offer limited pick-up options for larger furniture items — but availability varies, so it's best to check with the individual store. Something that has become "just extra" in your home can become a little miracle for someone else — a warm coat, a working toaster, a framed picture that finally makes a room feel like home.

You'll find several addresses in our Infobox — just a small selection of the many locations in Cape Coral and Fort Myers.

Where Joy has Paws – Donations for local Shelters

The holiday season is emotional inside our local animal shelters as well. While we decorate our homes and gather with family, countless dogs and cats are still waiting — to be seen, cared for, and, with a little luck, adopted.

Shelters throughout Cape Coral and Fort Myers truly appreciate donations that make everyday life a bit more comfortable for their animals. Even though it's warm outside, kennels and holding areas can often feel bare, hard, and impersonal. Soft blankets, towels, beds, bowls, and gently used toys help create spaces that feel cozier and more comforting — places where a dog can curl up or a cat can settle in and feel safe.

High-quality food, treats, enrichment toys, and items for senior or sensitive pets are especially helpful. They support animals with unique needs and ease the financial pressure on shelter staff who work tirelessly to give every animal the best possible care.

For the teams inside the shelters, every donation is a reminder that the community sees them and stands behind their work.

And for the animals, it's simple: a softer place to lie down, a moment of play, a feeling of gentleness — sometimes that's all it takes to make their day a little brighter. You'll find several example shelters in our Infobox.

Toy Drives – Christmas Wished for Children

One of Cape Coral's most heartfelt holiday traditions is the annual Toy Drive organized by the Cape Coral Fire Department. Every year, firefighters collect new toys and gifts for children and



teens whose families are struggling — including kids in foster care, children with chronic illnesses, and households that simply can't afford presents during the holidays.

What makes this Toy Drive especially meaningful is its long donation window. While many holiday drives end early in December, Cape Coral's continues all the way through December 19.

Donations should be new and unwrapped, suitable for all ages from babies to teens. Gifts for older kids are always especially appreciated: sports items, craft kits, headphones, self-care sets, books, or gift cards.

You can drop off your donations at any of Cape Coral's 13 fire stations or directly in the lobby of City Hall. Both locations have clearly marked collection boxes and are easy to access during regular hours. And because not everyone reading may be in the position to give:

If you or someone you know needs support this Christmas, you can quietly apply for assistance through the Fire Department's website: <https://www.capecoralfire.com/toy-drive>

Your Contribution matters –No Matter how Small it may Seem

Whether you donate a box of clothing, a bundle of blankets for the shelter, or a new toy for a child — every contribution is a quiet yet powerful act of kindness.

Maybe this year it's your box in the trunk that makes a family's holiday brighter.

Your blanket that lets a shelter dog finally sleep softly.

Your small gift that brings joy to a child on Christmas Eve.

And the best part? Kindness spreads.

When neighbors, friends, and our community begin to share, something priceless begins to grow — genuine connection.

So perhaps this December is the perfect moment to open your closets with intention — and pass a little warmth forward.

By J. Heartley

Local Donation Centers

SuperThrift
15121 S. Tamiami Trail, Fort Myers

The Salvation Army Family Store
10291 McGregor Blvd, Fort Myers

Goodwill Retail & Dnónation Center
1499 SW Pine Island Rd, Cape Coral

Kiwanis Thrift Store,
708 SE 47th Terrace, Cape Coral

Local Animal Shelters

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

The Animal Refuge Center
18011 Old Bayshore Road, North Fort Myers

Lee County Domestic Animal Services,
5600 Banner Dr., Fort Myers

Gulf Coast Humane Society,
2010 Arcadia Street, Fort Myers

Weathering the Storm: How America’s Credit Unions Survived Banks, Bureaucrats, and Busts

On a gray March morning in 1933, as panic swept across the United States, a small credit union in Massachusetts faced its first true test. The Great Depression had already shuttered thousands of banks. Newspapers screamed about foreclosures and bankruptcies. But inside the parish hall of St. Joseph’s Credit Union, a dozen worried members gathered around a table. Their assets totaled just \$12,000 — a sum laughably small by Wall Street standards — but it represented the collective savings of their entire Franco-American neighborhood. They didn’t talk about profit margins or interest spreads that morning. They talked about people.

One woman had lost her husband’s mill job and needed help paying rent. Another man’s hardware store was on the brink. The board decided — unanimously — to approve both loans.

“That’s what we’re here for,” said the chair, closing his ledger. “We take care of our own.”

It was a simple statement, but it captured the spirit that would carry credit unions through every economic storm that followed — from the Great Depression to the savings and loan crisis, from deregulation in the 1980s to the Great Recession of 2008. While competitors stumbled, merged, or collapsed, America’s credit unions managed, again and again, to survive — and often thrive — by remembering why they existed in the first place.

From Basements to Washington

By the early 1930s, credit unions had already spread far beyond their immigrant roots in New England mill towns and Midwestern parishes. The concept — people pooling savings to lend to each other — had proven astonishingly resilient. But the movement was still fragmented. Each credit union was a local experiment: some run by churches, others by factories, still others by neighborhood groups. They lacked a unified legal structure. In some states, they operated under vague cooperative laws; in others, they existed in legal gray zones.

That changed in 1934, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Federal Credit Union Act, establishing a national framework for these institutions. It was part of the New Deal’s broader push to stabilize and democratize finance. The Act authorized the creation of federally chartered credit unions, allowing ordinary citizens to form cooperatives to promote thrift and provide credit “for provident purposes.”

Almost overnight, the basement operations gained legitimacy. But new legitimacy brought new competition — and scrutiny.

The Bankers’ Backlash

Commercial banks had long dismissed credit unions as quaint “penny clubs,” not

serious competitors. But as credit unions began drawing millions in deposits through the late 1930s and 1940s, the bankers started to notice. Their first complaint was simple: credit unions didn’t pay taxes the same way banks did. As nonprofits, they reinvested surplus earnings back into member benefits — lower loan rates, higher savings yields — rather than distributing profits to shareholders. Bankers argued that this gave credit unions an unfair advantage.

Lobbying battles flared in state legislatures and in Washington. The American Bankers Association (ABA) warned of “unregulated amateurs” threatening the soundness of the financial system. Credit unions, in turn, portrayed banks as profit-hungry monopolies afraid of a little competition. In the press, it became a populist duel. On one side: community volunteers in church basements, helping neighbors buy homes and pay for school.

“Looking back over a century, it’s remarkable how credit unions — institutions born in church basements and factory floor — have survived where so many others have fallen”

On the other: men in pinstripes railing about “unfair competition.”

The credit unions won — not through money or influence, but through public sentiment. Americans trusted them. By the 1950s, millions of workers had joined credit unions through employers, unions, or communities. The image of the credit union as a “people’s bank” was cemented in the public imagination.

The Golden Age: Trust, Growth, and the Middle Class

If the 1930s were about survival and legitimacy, the 1950s and 1960s were about growth. Postwar America was booming, and credit unions were perfectly positioned to ride the wave. Employers saw them as a fringe benefit that promoted loyalty and thrift among workers. Car manufacturers, utilities, and even military bases sponsored credit unions for their employees. By 1960, there were more than 10,000 credit unions nationwide, serving over six million members. They financed first homes, college educations, and—most famously—cars. The average American’s first car loan likely came from a credit union, not a bank. The culture was distinct. Credit unions weren’t intimidating. They often knew their members by name. They sent newsletters with recipes and family budgeting tips. They ran savings contests for children. Some even offered “Christmas Clubs,” where members deposited a few

dollars each week to ensure a stress-free holiday season.

It was community banking at its most human scale.

But the very things that made credit unions personal — small size, volunteer boards, community focus — would also make them vulnerable in the decades to come.

Deregulation and the 1980s Roller Coaster

By the late 1970s, inflation was raging, interest rates were volatile, and the entire financial industry was under pressure to modernize. Banks, savings and loans, and credit unions were all bound by Depression-era rules that capped interest rates on deposits and restricted lending. When market rates soared above those caps, depositors fled traditional institutions for money-market funds and brokerage accounts. For credit unions, which depended on small savers, it was an existential threat.

Then came deregulation.

In 1977, Congress authorized the National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund (NCUSIF) to protect members’ deposits — the credit union version of FDIC insurance. A few years later, in 1980, the Depository Institutions Deregulation and Monetary Control Act removed interest rate ceilings and opened the door to a new era of competition. At first, credit unions rejoiced. Finally, they could compete head-to-head with banks on rates. But deregulation was a double-edged sword. Freed from the old limits, credit unions rushed to expand their services — offering credit cards, checking accounts, and mortgages. The line between “community cooperative” and “bank” began to blur. Regulators tightened oversight. Some credit unions stumbled into riskier lending. Others merged to gain scale. By the late 1980s, the number of credit unions had fallen sharply, even as total assets rose.

Yet, amid the turmoil, the movement’s cooperative ethos endured. When the Savings and Loan crisis hit in the late 1980s, taking down more than a thousand thrift institutions, credit unions weathered it with relatively little damage. Conservative lending, member loyalty, and local focus had once again proven their worth.

The Bankers Strike Back (Again)

By the 1990s, credit unions were thriving again — and the banks were furious about it.

The spark this time was membership expansion. Traditionally, each credit union had a defined “field of membership” — a single employer, parish, or community. But as industries consolidated and workforces changed, many credit unions began seeking “multiple common bonds.” A teacher’s credit union, for instance, might start serving nearby hospital workers. Banks cried foul. “They’re becoming banks without paying taxes!” the American Bankers Association thundered in 1996. Lawsuits

flew, culminating in a 1998 Supreme Court case (National Credit Union Administration v. First National Bank & Trust Co.), which briefly sided with the bankers and ruled that credit unions couldn’t expand membership so broadly. Credit unions didn’t back down. Their members — millions strong — flooded Congress with letters. Within months, lawmakers passed the Credit Union Membership Access Act of 1998, restoring their ability to serve multiple groups.

It was a defining moment. The movement’s strength wasn’t money or lobbying power. It was people — ordinary Americans who valued their cooperative institutions enough to defend them.

Surviving the Great Recession

When the 2008 financial crisis hit, few financial institutions escaped unscathed. But the credit union story was again one of quiet resilience. While banks like Lehman Brothers collapsed under mountains of risky mortgage-backed securities, most credit unions had avoided such speculative investments. Their focus on member lending and conservative risk management insulated them from the worst. Still, they weren’t untouched. A handful of corporate (wholesale) credit unions suffered heavy losses on mortgage-related assets, threatening the system’s stability. The National Credit Union Administration stepped in, merging failing corporates, guaranteeing deposits, and creating the Temporary Corporate Credit Union Stabilization Fund. It was a rough few years, but the credit unions survived — without taxpayer bailouts or the political fury that engulfed Wall Street. In fact, membership grew. Americans disillusioned by big banks’ behavior turned in droves to credit unions, drawn by their stability and integrity. By 2015, credit unions served over 100 million members — a milestone that would have astonished the mill workers in Manchester back in 1909.

The Modern Era: Digital and Diverse

Today’s credit unions face a new landscape. The competition isn’t just banks anymore — it’s fintech startups, online lenders, and even big tech firms offering financial services. Yet, the core challenge remains the same: how to stay competitive while staying true to their cooperative mission. Some

have embraced technology aggressively, offering sleek mobile apps and digital-first experiences that rival commercial banks. Others have doubled down on personal service, community sponsorships, and financial education. There’s also been a quiet but profound demographic shift. Where early credit unions served largely white, working-class communities, today’s institutions often focus on inclusion — helping immigrants, minorities, and low-income families access affordable credit. It’s a return, in many ways, to their original purpose. Take, for example, the Latino Community Credit Union in North Carolina, founded in 2000 after a wave of robberies targeting unbanked Latino immigrants. Today, it serves more than 100,000 members, providing not just financial services but also education, trust, and empowerment. It’s the same cooperative DNA — just updated for the 21st century.

The Unlikely Survivors

Looking back over a century, it’s remarkable how credit unions — institutions born in church basements and factory floors — have survived where so many others have fallen. They have faced everything: banker opposition, bureaucratic red tape, inflation, recession, and technological upheaval. Each time, their strength has come from the same place — the trust of their members and their refusal to abandon their purpose. In an era when financial institutions often seem faceless, credit unions remain personal. When the economy trembles, they become anchors. When regulation shifts, they adapt without forgetting who they serve. As one long-time credit union manager in Ohio put it during the 2008 crisis: “We don’t measure success by profit. We measure it by how many families we keep afloat when times get rough.” That philosophy, unchanged since 1909, is what has made credit unions the quiet survivors of American finance.

Looking Ahead in This Series
In the next article, we’ll explore how credit unions are transforming in the digital age — balancing technology with human connection, and how new generations are rediscovering the power of cooperative finance in a world dominated by algorithms. Because even now, amid smartphones and instant payments, the most revolutionary financial idea remains the simplest one: people helping people.

By TTF

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A gift for the Future: How One Consultant Reimagines Financial Freedom at Christmas

When the festive season arrives and the streets glow with warm lights, many people pause to look back on the year that has passed. Yet for others, this reflective time becomes something else: a turning point, a moment to rethink not only what has been, but what could be. For Senior Consultant Bernd Roebers, this period marks more than celebration. It is an opportunity to talk about the idea that guides his work at DARIA—a new way of shaping financial futures and reclaiming personal freedom.

In an interview with Dina Veronique Scheve, Roebers describes his role in simple terms, though the implications run deeper. He accompanies people who want to break free from the traditional narrative of money, work and security. His mission, he explains, is not to fuel short-term profits, but to help individuals rediscover control over their lives by redefining their relationship with finances. For Roebers, the modern workplace is increasingly a “hamster wheel” that accelerates while personal energy declines. DARIA, he says, offers something different: an alternative that brings perspective, agency and community back into the lives of its members.

What fulfills him most is not the technical side of consulting but the human element. He speaks of members who, after weeks or months of development, return with pride and gratitude. The spark in their eyes, the shift in mindset and the growing confidence in shaping their own futures — these milestones, he says, are what make the work meaningful. It is not a profession but a mission: to strengthen and uplift people, to remind them that change is possible when someone believes in them and when they learn to believe in themselves.

Roebers insists that DARIA is not an exclusive club. It is for anyone longing to escape a life defined by obligation rather than aspiration. Many hardworking individuals, he argues, struggle not because they lack effort, but because traditional structures leave them little room for growth. In this context, DARIA aims to open doors — to financial autonomy, self-realization and renewed optimism.

The belief in long-term change recently shaped a deeply personal decision in the Roebers family. Unlike most people shopping for gifts that will brighten the holidays for a moment, Bernd and his wife Birgit chose something radically different for their children. Instead of presents that would gather dust, they gifted them COE (Codes of Empire, a financial freedom programme by DARIA) — a contribution toward their financial freedom and future. The choice rested not on extravagance, but on a parental instinct shared by many: the hope that life will treat their children well and that they will be safeguarded for the years ahead.

The response at home was emotional. Roebers’ children interpreted the gift not as a financial gesture but as a symbol of autonomy and possibility. His son Simon, analytical and numbers-oriented, saw structure and logic — a tangible foundation for stability. His daughter Linda, more intuitive and emotionally driven, perceived the freedom embedded in the gesture: the permission to shape life on her own terms. In both reactions, Roebers recognized what he believes makes DARIA powerful — it connects equally with rational thinkers and emotional dreamers, with the young and the experienced, with those seeking clarity and those seeking meaning.

His children value the community aspect as much as the financial one. At DARIA, they say, every member is treated as an equal — united not by status but by a shared desire to live more fully and more intentionally. The message is that everyone can learn and progress at their own pace, and nobody walks the path alone. The warmth of this principle resonates especially during the holiday season: growth is possible, hope has meaning, and togetherness matters.

Though the decision to gift COE was unusual, it was not impulsive. It reflected careful thought and a determination to equip the next generation with tools for independence and resilience. In its essence, it echoed the spirit of Christmas in a modern form: passing on something that can truly make life better, giving what endures instead of what fades, nurturing what wants to

grow. “Invest in your dreams,” Roebers says — a phrase that sounds less like advice than an invitation to imagine a different future.

His work, and the philosophy behind it, challenge the conventional definition of a gift. A present, he suggests, does not have to be something wrapped with ribbons. It can be a direction, a foundation, a step toward becoming who one wants to be. At a time when many people count the minutes of holiday joy before the new year resets them to routine, Roebers reminds us that the most valuable things we give one another are not objects, but opportunities to change — choices that help shape a life rather than decorate a moment.

Article and photo courtesy of Dina Veronique Scheve, DARIA US

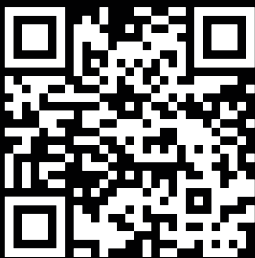


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A Sunshine Christmas

For many Europeans, Christmas means snowy rooftops, candlelight, and the comforting smell of cinnamon and pine. But in Southwest Florida Christmas feels like stepping into a movie scene, where palm trees sparkle with fairy lights, neighbors compete for the brightest house, and Santa might just arrive in a boat instead of a sleigh.

Here, the holiday season begins the moment Thanksgiving ends. On the day after Thanksgiving, our home transforms into a Christmas wonderland. We unpack the boxes of ornaments, set up the tall, glittering artificial tree, and carefully hang the stockings along the fireplace — an American tradition where Santa Claus fills each one with sweets and little surprises. The air smells of freshly baked cookies and hot chocolate. Our family’s beloved Elf on the Shelf makes his grand return from the North Pole — a cheeky little elf sent by Santa to keep an eye on the children. Each morning, our son races through the house to find where the elf has hidden this time: hanging from the ceiling fan, sitting in a bowl of marshmallows, or peeking out from a pile of Christmas books. He also writes his letter to Santa, carefully listing his wishes and promising to stay on the “nice list.”

Outside, the holiday magic explodes in color. Every palm tree glows, every bush twinkles, and even the mailbox sparkles. Our neighborhood turns into a real-life Christmas village. Families stroll the streets at night, admiring the lights. We even set up a snow-blowing machine, so the kids can dance in a flurry of white foam while the adults raise their glasses and toast to

the holiday season under a sky full of stars.

One of the most beloved traditions here is the boat parade — a uniquely Floridian twist on holiday celebrations. Locals decorate their boats with lights, Christmas trees, and festive music, then sail along the canals and coastlines while spectators cheer from the shore. In towns like Naples, Fort Myers, and Cape Coral, these parades have become major community events, lighting up the water and spreading Christmas cheer in true coastal style.

As Christmas approaches, the excitement builds. Every evening, the kids gaze up at the clear Florida sky, hoping to catch a glimpse of Santa’s sleigh streaking across the horizon — maybe with Rudolph’s red nose shining brightly and Blitzen leading the reindeer team. It’s a magical countdown that fills the air with anticipation and joy, night after night.

But Christmas in America isn’t just about lights and gifts — it’s also a time of giving back. All across Southwest Florida, you’ll find toy drives, food collections, and charity events organized by schools, churches, and local communities. Families donate new toys for children in need, businesses collect blankets and food for the homeless, and volunteers deliver meals to seniors who might be alone for the holidays. This spirit of generosity runs deep — a true reminder that the heart of Christmas is about kindness and compassion. Then comes Christmas Eve, one of the most heartwarming nights of the year. We gather with our neighbors and friends who have become like family. The children, dressed in cozy pajamas, curl up

on the couch to watch Christmas movies while the parents laugh, toast, and share stories. Above the doorway hangs a sprig of mistletoe, and according to tradition, anyone who meets beneath it must share a kiss — a symbol of love, friendship, and good fortune.

By the time the clock strikes midnight, the excitement is electric. The children hurry to bed, whispering about Santa and his reindeer flying over the Gulf of Mexico. The world outside is still, but it feels like something magical is happening.

When Christmas morning finally arrives, joy fills every corner of the house. The sound of laughter mixes with the rustling of wrapping paper as the children discover what Santa has left under the tree and in their stockings. Later, we cook a festive dinner — a seafood boil, and homemade pies. Friends stop by, music plays, and for one perfect day, everything feels warm, bright, and full of love.

Christmas in Southwest Florida might not come with snow or frosty windows, but it has its own sparkle — one made of sunshine, laughter, generosity, and the warmth of community. It’s a celebration straight out of a holiday movie, where every palm tree twinkles, every child -big or small - believes in magic, and every heart shines a little brighter.

By S. Mechalik



Photo: Pixabay

Whats happening? The Sunshine Post Event Calendar

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

Holiday Nights Pt. 1
at Edison & Ford Winter Estates

An evening light show and festively decorated historic estate.

fortmyersbeach.org

November

28

January

04

Holiday Lights
at Calusa Nature Center & Planetarium

A cozy, family-friendly light walk along a 1/3 mile forest trail. ftmyers.org

December

05

28

Holiday House Christmas
Stroll Downtown Fort Myers

A charming stroll through historic homes and downtown storefronts dressed up for the holidays.

christmas-events-near-me.com

December

03

January

Fort Myers Beach Chirstmas
Boat Parade

Traditional boat parade with festively lit boats – perfect for an atmospheric evening by the water. fortmyersbeach.org

December

06

Fort Myers Festival of Trees
Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center

Exhibition of beautifully decorated Christmas trees, featuring wreath lighting, Santa’s Block Party, raffle, and more.

fortmyersfestivaloftrees.com

December

04

07

Send Us Your Event Recommendations!

info@sunshine-post.com

Holiday Magic in Cape Coral: When Light becomes the Language of Community

When December settles over Cape Coral and Fort Myers, the evenings begin to glow with a soft radiance that feels both gentle and full of promise. Warm breezes move through palm-lined streets, replacing the winter chill found elsewhere, and yet—despite the sunshine—something unmistakably festive begins to unfold. As dusk arrives, neighborhoods awaken in color. Lights shimmer across rooftops, lawns transform into storybook scenes, and families step outside or climb into their cars to seek out the most brilliant displays. In Southwest Florida, Christmas-light viewing is far more than a seasonal pastime; it is a cherished ritual that brings people together, a moment each year when the ordinary world feels touched by wonder.

Holiday Traditions and American Spirit

Holiday decorating has long held a special place in American culture. A home covered in lights sends a message instantly understood across neighborhoods: celebration, welcome, joy. Many families have decorated for generations, passing down traditions, adding new elements, and shaping displays that grow alongside their memories. In Florida, winter nights remain warm, giving this tradition an entirely different character. Without frost or icy winds, residents take their time, working patiently and creatively in the gentle December air. One home begins, another follows, and before long, an entire street becomes a glowing ribbon of community spirit.

Friendly Creativity & Community Competition

Friendly competition adds brightness to the season. It is never about rivalry, but rather about imagination—about stretching the limits of creativity and craftsmanship. Neighbors wonder who will synchronize lights to music this year, who will build the most magical characters, who will transform an ordinary yard into a full Christmas wonderland. Many displays become extraordinary works of art. Lights pulse in rhythm to beloved holiday melodies, animated figures glide through carefully arranged scenes, and entire houses shift in coordinated waves of color. Some families even connect their displays to charitable causes, collecting donations and transforming decoration into a gesture of goodwill.

A Family Tradition Under Palm Trees

For countless households, light-viewing is as essential as trimming the tree or baking holiday treats. Families pack snacks, queue up festive music, and head out for evening drives. Children press their faces to the windows, eyes wide with excitement as they point at shimmering angels, glowing reindeer, and palm trees wrapped in strands of

gold. In a place without snow, holiday magic emerges through color, imagination, and togetherness. Streets become stages; each home becomes a warm and welcoming universe of its own.

Local Highlights: Where the Magic Shines Brightest

Some displays have become landmarks of the season. Planet Monkman in Cape Coral was one of the most beloved—an elaborate, joyful treasure featuring more than 150,000 lights, animated figures, musical shows, and a festive atmosphere that drew visitors from across the region. For 17 years, it stood as a true holiday highlight before its final season marked the end of an era.

The Edison & Ford Winter Estates in Fort Myers offer a different kind of enchantment—historic, elegant, and timeless. From November 28th through January 4th, the winter homes of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford sparkle with sophisticated lighting, themed decorations, and riverfront charm along the Caloosahatchee. Visitors can stroll the illuminated grounds at their own pace or join guided tours. Located at 2350 McGregor Blvd., the estates blend nostalgia with holiday wonder, becoming one of the region’s most treasured annual traditions.

Neighborhood displays in Southeast and Southwest Cape Coral are equally magical. These pockets of community pride are known for coordinated decorations, where neighbors collaborate to create immersive themed streets. Arches of lights stretch across the road, palms twinkle in synchronized colors, and entire blocks glow with unity. These displays capture the heart of the season: people offering creativity, warmth, and joy to anyone who passes by.

A Region Shaped by Warmth and Diversity

Southwest Florida’s holiday atmosphere thrives because the region is shaped by people from everywhere—individuals who bring memories, customs, and stories from colder climates, distant states, and countries where winter looks completely different. Here, those traditions blend with coastal ease. Without snow to define the season, light becomes the holiday’s essence. The glow becomes a gathering place, a symbol of connection and celebration.

The Heart of the Season

And that sense of connection becomes unmistakable. Just after sunset, neighbors step outside, greeting one another as strings of lights flicker on up and down the street. Children move excitedly from yard to yard, noticing new decorations, discovering hidden

details. Visitors slow their cars to admire the beauty created not by officials or planners, but by everyday residents who pour heart and joy into the season. These unscripted, human moments are what make the tradition feel alive.

A Different Kind of Winter Magic

Part of the magic lies in the atmosphere itself. The rustle of palm fronds, the scent of the Gulf drifting inland, and the warm December breezes create a holiday setting unlike any other. Families can stroll comfortably through decorated streets or enjoy hot chocolate on softly glowing porches. It is a winter experience defined not by cold, but by light and serenity.

A Final Glow of Togetherness

Many visitors plan their winter vacations around these displays, eager to experience a holiday season framed by palm trees and twinkling color. They photograph illuminated boulevards, explore the Edison & Ford Estates after dark, and discover neighborhood gems shared by locals. The region becomes a tapestry of lights and shared moments, weaving together long-time residents, newcomers, and winter guests into one community of celebration.

Ultimately, the shimmering rooftops, glowing streets, and illuminated palms speak a language all their own—a gentle invitation to slow down, breathe deeply, and savor the beauty of the season. They remind us that the heart of the holidays lies in connection: in the simple act of discovering brightness in the world and offering it generously to others. And that is what makes Christmas in the Sunshine State unforgettable, whether you call it home or are simply passing through.

In Cape Coral and Fort Myers, holiday lights are more than decoration. They are symbols of optimism, warmth, and unity—a radiant reminder that even in a place defined by sun and summer skies, the magic of the season shines just as brightly.

By Katharina Kaufmann



Photos courtesy of Katharina Kaufmann



Florida Panthers: From Expansion Team to Dynasty — Between Triumph, Adversity, and Vision

When the Florida Panthers joined the NHL as an expansion team in 1993, few believed hockey could thrive in the tropical heat of South Florida. Ice-hockey in a land of palm trees and beaches? It sounded like a punchline. But Wayne Huizenga, the late Blockbuster Video magnate and original franchise owner, had a different vision: to make hockey matter in a market that had never seen a snowflake. Incredibly, within just two years, that vision nearly came true. The 1995–96 Panthers stunned the hockey world by storming to the Stanley Cup Final, propelled by their scrappy play — and their now-legendary “Rat Trick” tradition, where fans showered the ice with plastic rats after every goal. They lost that final to the Colorado Avalanche, but the Panthers had arrived. A cult team was born. What followed were tougher years — playoff droughts, ownership changes, and false dawns. But with the move to the sleek Amerant Bank Arena in Sunrise, Florida, and a gradual rebuild, the foundation for something bigger was laid. The real turning point came after 2020, when General Manager Bill Zito took charge. His blueprint was simple but bold: build around the core of Aleksander Barkov, Matthew Tkachuk, and Sergei Bobrovsky, and cultivate a culture of unity, belief, and relentless work ethic. That blueprint would soon produce a dynasty.

Back-to-Back Glory: The 2024 and 2025 Stanley Cups
The Panthers completed their fairytale rise with two consecutive Stanley Cup championships — a feat no team had achieved since the Pittsburgh Penguins in 2016 and 2017. In 2024, they lifted the first Stanley Cup in franchise history, edging the Edmonton Oilers 2–1 in a dramatic Game 7. “This is a moment we’ve been building toward for decades,” said captain Aleksander Barkov, beaming beneath the falling confetti. One year later, they did it again — and more convincingly. The 2025 Final was a rematch with the Oilers, and this time Florida needed just six games. The decisive Game 6 in Sunrise was pure dominance: a 5–1 win, capped by Sam Reinhart’s four-goal explosion. “We wanted to prove our first Cup wasn’t a fluke,” Reinhart said afterward. The celebration that followed turned Fort Lauderdale Beach into a sea of red and blue. For one weekend, South Florida wasn’t about football or beaches — it was about hockey.

Stars, Warriors, and Characters
Every dynasty has its heroes — and Florida’s roster reads like a roll call of grit and brilliance:

- Aleksander Barkov (C) – The Finnish captain and two-way maestro. Calm, unselfish, and cerebral, Barkov is the soul of the team. But a torn ACL will sideline him for most of the 2025/26 season. “I’ll come back stronger,” he vowed this summer.
- Matthew Tkachuk (RW) – The team’s emotional spark plug. Fearless, physical, and cunning, Tkachuk’s presence sets the Panthers’ tone. Recovering from a groin injury, he’s expected back by December.
- Aaron Ekblad (D) – The defensive anchor. A powerhouse on the blue line, Ekblad’s leadership extends far beyond the ice.
- Sam Reinhart (C/RW) – Once a quiet contributor, now a hero. His Game 6 heroics in 2025 turned him into a franchise icon.
- Sam Bennett (C) – The team’s heartbeat. Relentless, rugged, and reliable — a playoff warrior who thrives in chaos.
- Brad Marchand (LW/C) – The veteran agitator joined in 2025, bringing edge, leadership, and a winning mentality from his years in Boston.
- Sergei Bobrovsky (G) – The Russian goaltending wall. With a .930+ save percentage in both Cup runs, Bobrovsky was named 2024 Finals MVP and remains the backbone of Florida’s success.

The Architect: Bill Zito’s Masterclass in Team Building
If there’s a single figure behind Florida’s rise, it’s Bill Zito. The Panthers’ GM has executed one of the sharpest rebuilds of the modern era. By combining vision with financial discipline, Zito managed to lock in his core players — Barkov, Tkachuk, Reinhart, Ekblad, Bennett, Marchand, Bobrovsky, and others — on team-friendly contracts. Many players took less than market value to stay together, choosing legacy over luxury. Zito’s philosophy is clear: success comes not from chasing superstars, but from building a culture of trust and continuity. “We don’t want to be the most expensive,” he said recently. “We want to be the best — every single year.” That approach has transformed the Panthers into more than a team — they’ve become a movement.

The Business of Winning: A Franchise Transformed
A decade ago, the Panthers struggled with half-empty arenas and financial losses. Today, they’re one of the fastest-growing franchises in the NHL. According to Forbes (2025), the Panthers’ valuation has soared to \$1.45 billion — a staggering 60% increase since 2020. The Amerant Bank Arena (capacity: 19,250) is now routinely sold out, and the energy inside during the 2025 playoffs rivaled that of any “Original Six” arena. “Hockey isn’t exotic here anymore,” said head coach Paul Maurice after last year’s Cup win. “It’s passion.” Florida’s mix of championship success, smart marketing, and a young, diverse fan base — especially in the Miami–Fort Lauderdale area — has turned them into a model for how to grow the game in non-traditional markets.

Fun Facts: Panthers Edition

- The “Rat Trick” tradition began in 1995 when Scott Mellanby killed a locker-room rat, scored two goals, and sparked a superstition that lives on today.
- The team’s mascot, Stanley C. Panther, is a nod to hockey’s ultimate prize.
- Florida was among the first NHL teams to launch Spanish-language social media, connecting with South Florida’s vibrant Hispanic community.
- Sergei Bobrovsky is the first Russian goaltender to win two Stanley Cups with the same U.S. franchise.

Looking Ahead: Between Injuries and the Dream of a Three-Peat
From a sun-belt experiment to a full-blown dynasty, the Florida Panthers have rewritten what’s possible for hockey in the South. Now comes the hardest part: staying on top. The question of the season is clear — can the Panthers complete the three-peat? With Barkov and Tkachuk sidelined early, the challenge is steep. Yet the team’s depth and culture give them a fighting chance. Coach Paul Maurice plans to lean on the next generation — Anton Lundell and Eetu Luostarinen — while maintaining the Panthers’ trademark blend of aggression, structure, and intensity. “Injuries aren’t excuses,” GM Zito said at the season’s outset. “Our culture is bigger than any one player.” If the stars return in time for the postseason, the Panthers could again emerge as the league’s team to beat. Two Stanley Cups, soaring franchise value, and a roster built to endure — that’s the blueprint of a dynasty. Whether the story ends with a third consecutive title or not, one thing is certain: the Florida Panthers have secured their place among hockey’s elite. And in South Florida, hockey isn’t just surviving — it’s thriving.

By John Heinrich



Photos courtesy of Sunshine Post Editorial Team

Hidden Sparks – Pets Looking to Shine

Every month, we open our hearts to two remarkable animals – this time once more from the Cape Coral Animal Shelter. Each one carries a story worth telling: a little spark of courage, a touch of mischief, and a whole lot of love waiting to be shared. Some have been waiting quietly, others still learning to trust that gentle hands and kind voices really can change everything. But all of them are ready to bring light and warmth into the lives of those who see them for who they truly are.

The shelter continues to stand beside every adoption, offering a free post-adoption exam within 30 days at its affordable care clinic – a small gesture that makes a big difference for pets starting a new chapter. Because finding a forever home isn't only about opening a door; it's about opening your heart, and keeping it open.

Maybe one of these furry faces will capture your heart today.
By J. & J. Heartley

Hours of Operation:

Tuesday & Thursday:
12:00–5:00 pm

Friday through Sunday:
12:00–4:00 pm

Monday & Wednesday:
Closed

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

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

GOLDIE

Goldie is a 5–7-year-old female — a shy, tender-hearted girl who's still learning that the world can be gentle. She needs a calm, quiet home where she can feel safe enough to let her sweetness shine. Goldie may take a little time to warm up, but once she does, you'll discover a loving, soft-natured companion who adores peaceful moments and steady affection.

Right now, she's focusing on feeling her best, and a slower-paced lifestyle will help her settle in beautifully. The wonderful team at the shelter is making sure she has everything she needs — all she asks from her future family is patience, love, and a safe place to grow confident.

If you're looking for a gentle soul who will cherish every cuddle, Goldie might just be the girl who completes your home. She has been with us for over 80 days, and her adoption fee is \$225 — a small step toward giving this sweet spirit the soft, peaceful life she deserves.



PRANCER

Prancer is a 5–7-year-old male — a petite black cat with a huge heart and an irresistible love for people. His absolute favorite place in the world is curled up in your lap, purring contentedly while soaking in all the attention he can get. He isn't on the adoption floor because, truth be told, he's simply too gentle for all the bustle and noise — he'd much rather be doted on in a quieter space.

But don't let that stop you from meeting him. Ask the team at the shelter to introduce you — they'll happily bring him out, and we promise he'll prance straight into your heart. Prancer is affectionate, people-focused, and always ready to offer warmth and companionship to anyone who sits beside him.

If you're looking for a loving companion who will make every day feel a little softer, Prancer may be your perfect match. He has been with us for over 60 days, and his adoption fee is \$70 — a small gift for a cat who's ready to bring so much comfort and joy.





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CEO & Founder



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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 week-end trips, to what’s for dinner, to budgeting. In this series, powered by the insights of our tech team and seasoned AI connoisseurs, we will show you how you too can benefit from this technology.

What’s your every-day AI Question?

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

info@sunshine-post.com

Subject: “AI Prompt Submission”

DID YOU KNOW?

The best AI prompts are specific!
Specificity = Better

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

Holiday Boat Parade Planning

“I want to watch the Cape Coral Holiday Boat Parade with family visiting from out of state. What are the best viewing spots and local restaurant reservations nearby?”

- AI suggests:
- Four Freedoms Park offers prime viewing with parking
 - Book waterfront dining at Rumrunners or The Nauti Mermaid by 5 PM
 - Arrive by 6 PM for the 7 PM parade start
 - Bring folding chairs and holiday-themed snacks

Christmas Beach Day Organizer

“Plan a Christmas Day beach picnic for 12 people at Fort Myers Beach. Include activities for kids and grandparents, considering December weather.”

- AI suggests:
- Bowditch Point Park for pavilion rentals and calmer waters
 - Morning arrival (10 AM) for cooler temperatures
 - Beach games: shell ornament crafting and sandman building
 - Pack layers - December averages 75°F with ocean breeze

Holiday Shopping Route Optimizer

“Create an efficient one-day shopping route for Christmas gifts in Fort Myers, focusing on local boutiques and avoiding chain stores. Budget: \$500 for 8 people.”

- AI suggests:
- Start at Edison Mall farmers market (Saturdays) for local crafts
 - River District shops: Franklin Shops and The Veranda
 - Fleamasters Flea Market for unique Florida-themed gifts
 - End at Miromar Outlets for 3-5 PM deals

Snowbird Holiday Helper

“First winter in Cape Coral as snowbirds from Michigan. How do we create holiday traditions in Florida without snow? Include local December events.”

- AI suggests:
- Luminary Festival in downtown Fort Myers (early December)
 - Christmas boat decorating at your canal-front property
 - Beach bonfire with s’mores at Lovers Key State Park
 - Holiday concerts at Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall

TECH QUOTES OF THE DAY

„AI is not about replacing human intelligence, it’s about amplifying it – giving everyone superpowers they never knew they could have.“

Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft

„The real power of AI isn’t in automation; it’s in augmentation – helping humans make better decisions, faster, with insights we couldn’t see before.“

Andrew Ng, Co-founder of Coursera

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Physical Activity – It’s More than the Way to the Fridge



No dumbbells needed in the caves, photo courtesy of Clemens Mueller

If you made it past the headline, we can congratulate you for being already the Top 50% of US population, who call themselves interested in physical activity. But reading about physical activity does not count as BEING active.

So before you continue with this article, I recommend you to get up, go to the fridge, return to your chair and sit down again. Now repeat this ten times, without helping yourself from the fridge and you can call this an activity. The average percentage of the US population engaged in sports, exercise, and recreation per day is 21.5%.

For physical activity it is not important how many sport channels your TV can receive, but how many pushups you do, before switching the channel.

According to latest statistics so called lifestyle diseases (e.g. Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases, Cancer, Stroke, Obesity, etc.) are still growing in the US. There are few areas in public health - such as physical activity - where evidence on required action is so convincing, cost effective and practical. This is what the WHO says in its 2022 global status report on physical activity.

It is really that easy. Just stay active!

But they didn't count on your inner demons. And the demons say loud and clear: „There is no need for physical activity! The fridge is full! Stay on the Couch. That's safe.“ Actually your demons are right. As long as your fridge is full, your brain refuses the necessity of physical activity.

Caveman

This is historically easy to explain. Back in the days, where mankind lived in caves - the real ones, a million years ago, not the cave you call your neighbors house - they didn't have a fridge full of food and drinks. If your ancestors were hungry, they needed to go hunting. With a spear for a mammoth, not with a gun for a duck.

So you can imagine there was a lot of physical activity before lunch. And only if they were lucky, they weren't the lunch themselves.



Clemens Mueller, photo courtesy of Clemens Mueller

Hunting was not infrequently a several days work. So your ancestors were very skilled in food deprivation and their body was absolutely capable of hunting with a three day empty stomach. Now imagine you will have to go to the first business meeting of the day WITHOUT breakfast.

As evolution went on, the human became the mightiest being on earth, but the oldest part of our brain - the brainstem - stills works with these ancient reflexes. There is still an ancient captain in your brain, who overtakes the steering wheel, if we don't tie him to the mast. And here is how you do that: Just use the ancient rites. Go „hunting“ before your meals!

Don't shoot your neighbors! Wait a second: please don't go out and shoot your neighbor's dog! Let's do it in a little more cultivated way. Forget the hunting.

Just go for a walk.

Walk 2,000 to 3,000 steps before each meal and you satisfy the ancient captain and establish a healthy habit in harmony with your body's needs. If you could implement one or two little sprints within your walk, it'd be great. Back in the days we were not hunting snails... By the way: If we would only have one meal a day (depending on the quality) the 2,000 - 3,000 steps would be enough. And now you know, why WHO recommends 10,000 steps...

Difference between Activity and Training

Unfortunately I can not let you get away with „only“ a few steps of walking a day, due to your five meals per day. The muscles are the largest organ of the human body. At least for some of us.

Doesn't it make sense to take care of your largest organ appropriately?

Your body is constructed highly effective. It follows the principle „use it, or lose it“. So the less you use your muscles, the the faster you lose them.

We will focus on this issue called „Sarcopenia“ in another episode, but I can spoiler as much as: Muscles need to be challenged. And please don't tell me, that going for a walk is a muscular challenge already.

That means there is a difference between activity and training. And that is why the fitness industry is growing and has the potential to grow further in the next decades. And this is why we decided to feature this important topic in the Sunshine Post with six episodes.

By Clemens Meueller

About the author

Clemens Mueller is a German Fitness and Prevention Expert with the experience of 30 years in the Fitness and Health Industry as Personal Trainer, General Manager, CEO and Immune Signature Coach. He has a martial arts background with a black belt in Judo and a track record of +100 competitions. His motto is: Every Dollar and every Minute you invest in prevention, pays off three or four times over.

Christmas – An old story revisited

When the festive season arrives and the streets glowThe Christmas Gospel according to Luke is probably one of the best-known texts in the Bible. Hardly any other passage is read, sung, performed, and interpreted as often. And yet it is worth taking a closer look – beyond the familiar images of the stable, the manger, and the shepherds. For Luke tells us much more than just a beautiful story. He draws a broad arc between power and powerlessness, center and periphery, religion and humanity.

Let's start in Rome. Emperor Augustus reigns there, allowing himself to be worshipped like a god. Rome is not only the political but also the religious center of the ancient world. 2,500 kilometers further east lies Jerusalem, the heart of Judaism. Here stands the temple – a symbol of God's closeness and the order of religious life. Ancient Judaism was a religion of orthopraxis: those who do the right things at the right time and in the right place live in harmony with God.

And yet the Christmas story does not take place in Rome or Jerusalem. It takes place in Galilee and Bethlehem – on the margins of the world.

Joseph and Mary come from Nazareth, a small town in the north that was of little importance in the eyes of the Jerusalem elite. Galilean Judaism was considered unclean, uneducated, not “proper.” So when Joseph moves to his hometown of Bethlehem to register for the tax lists, it is not a comfortable journey, but a path full of tension. Both socially and religiously, he is met with mistrust—a stranger from the provinces, possibly with a questionable history surrounding his pregnant fiancée. Bethlehem is only five kilometers south of Jerusalem—a stone's throw away, and yet a world of contrasts. Here, the order of the capital meets the simple life of the villages. Here, worlds collide: the power of Rome, the religious rigor of Jerusalem, and the unassuming trust of two people who believe in God more than in social expectations.

Mary faces the unexpected with courage and trust. “Let it be done to me according to your word,” she says – knowing full well that her decision could get her into trouble. Joseph takes longer to follow this path. He struggles, wrestles, considers leaving. But he too learns to hear God's voice in the unexpected.

And then there are the shepherds. They stand outside the religious order, on the margins of society. People who are looked down upon—unclean, uneducated, simple. But it is precisely to them that the angel appears, not to the priests, not to the powerful. God's message first reaches those whom no one would have expected.

The angel himself is the mediator between heaven and earth, between divine message and human fear. He proclaims not power, but peace.



Photo: Pixabay

Not control, but trust. And the child lying in the manger is the opposite of the emperor in Rome: not a ruler over people, but a God who entrusts himself to people – vulnerable, defenseless, at an altitude of 760 meters in a cold stable.

Perhaps that is the real provocation of the Christmas Gospel: it turns the world upside down. The emperor, who believes he can rule the world, ultimately loses control of what matters most. And a child, born in poverty, brings a new perspective on power, trust, and humanity.

When we hear this story today, it also tells us something about ourselves. For each and every one of us carries parts of these characters within us:

Augustus, who is afraid of losing control.

Mary, who is willing to embrace the unexpected.

Joseph, who learns to listen to God in uncertainty.

The angel, who encourages others and carries hope forward.

The shepherds, who are amazed that God also speaks to them.

And the inhabitants of Bethlehem, who prefer to stick to their rules so as not to burden themselves with strangers and the unknown.

None of them are perfect—and neither are any of us. But in their stories, in their doubts, and in their trust, something becomes clear: God's presence is not revealed in the splendor of palaces, but in the midst of

life's fractures.

Christmas is therefore not merely a memory, but an invitation. An invitation to discover our own part in this story: Where do I cling to power and control? Where do I allow myself to be touched by the unpredictable? Where do I listen to the quiet voice that calls me to act differently?

Perhaps that is precisely the miracle of Christmas: that God is still born today where people are willing to open themselves – despite fear, despite uncertainty, despite imperfection.

And so the Christmas message remains timelessly relevant. It tells of a God who does not allow himself to be glorified from afar, but seeks closeness, trust, encounter, and togetherness.

Christmas reminds us: the sacred does not happen somewhere else—it happens here, among us.

With this in mind, I wish you and your families a merry and blessed Christmas and a happy New Year 2026.

By Tobias Leinesser

From the Entire Sunshine Post Team:

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

Respect & Community – The Art of Living a True “We”

We talk a lot about community. About teamwork. Unity. Togetherness.

But what does that really mean—beyond meetings, events, and social networks?

True community doesn’t grow from proximity. It grows from presence. And respect is the architecture that holds it.

What does respect look like—practically speaking? Respect isn’t about big gestures. It’s in how we listen. How we disagree. How we speak about people when they’re not in the room. It’s in our willingness to let others be different without needing to be right. Where respect is missing, people shut down. Where it’s present, connection becomes possible—even without agreement.

Community doesn’t require sameness—it requires dignity. Being part of a community doesn’t mean thinking the same. It means holding space for difference—without judgment, without withdrawal. A true “we” is built where each “I” can stand tall.

The Gift of Living Community
In communities rooted in respect, no one has to get louder just to be heard. No one has to shrink to belong. It becomes a space where people thrive—not just perform. And that changes everything—at work, at home, in society.



Photo: Pixabay

A Societal Perspective
When respect becomes culture, community becomes possible again—even in times of division, noise, and reactivity. We don’t need more systems. We need deeper encounters. It starts with one choice: To see the person—not the opinion. To listen, even when we don’t agree. To meet others in their humanity—not just their identity.

Reflection Prompts:
How do you speak about others when they’re not listening? And what could respect look like for you—today, in action?

By Angelique Soularys



Photo: Pixabay

Recap of the last episode:

But what does that really mean—beyond meetings, events, and social networks? True community doesn’t grow from proximity. It grows from presence. And respect is the architecture that holds it.

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By Angelique Soularys

About the author

Angelique Soularys opens spaces for reflection, lived values, and courageous inner clarity. Her column is an invitation to take a stand, live deeply, and lead from within.

Sunshine Post Recipe of the Month: Classic Christmas Meal Menu

Ingredients

- 4 lemons
- 2 medium sweet onions (halved)
- 4 serrano chiles (quartered), split in ½ lengthwise and membranes removed
- 2 garlic heads, peeled and halved
- 2 bunches fresh thyme, tied with string
- 1 2/3 cups seafood seasoning (such as Old Bay)
- 6 teaspoons kosher salt
- 6 bay leaves
- 3 pounds medium red potatoes, sliced in half
- 5 (13 ounce) packages of smoked kielbasa sausage, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 6 ears sweet corn, halved
- 30 littleneck clams
- 4 pounds jumbo shrimp, deveined, tail on
- 5 pounds Alaskan king crab legs or snow crab legs
- 6 lobster tails

Step 1

Fill a very large stockpot fitted with a basket insert with about 8 quarts of water, or about halfway full. Squeeze lemons into the water, tossing the halves in too.

Add onions, chiles, garlic, thyme, seafood seasoning, kosher salt, and bay leaves; bring to a boil over medium-high heat.

Reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes..

Step 2

Stir potatoes into the pot and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes.

Step 4

Add clams and boil until they open, about 8 minutes.

Toss in shrimp and shut off the heat. Cover the pot and let shrimp steep in the flavor for 10 minutes, adding crab and lobster in the last 5 minutes (press them into the liquid).


Step 3

Next, add sausage and corn; cook another 5 minutes, making sure everything stays covered with the liquid.

Step 5

Drain and spread crab, lobster, shrimp, sausage, clams, corn, potatoes, and onions out on a newspaper-covered table or on three large serving trays. Sprinkle with a dusting of Old Bay Seasoning

Enjoy a perfect meal for Christmas!
By S. Mehalick, Sunshine Post Editorial Team



We Want to Hear from You!

Your voice matters. At the Sunshine Post, our new Letters To the Editor section is a space for readers to share opinions, spark conversations, and respond to the stories shaping our community.

Whether you want to comment on a recent article, highlight a topic that deserves attention, or simply share your perspective – we welcome your thoughts.

Send your letter (up to 250 words) to editor@sunshine-post.com. Please include your full name, city, and a contact number for verification.

Join the conversation and let your voice be part of the community dialogue!



DARIA

dreams come easy



INVEST IN YOUR DREAMS

