

YOUR DAILY DOSE OF OPTIMISM



# SUNSHINE POST

04	CREDIT UNIONS	08	MEMORIAL DAY	15	#1 RANKING	18	AI-PROMPTS
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On a Sunday afternoon in Fort Myers, a phone buzzes on a kitchen counter. It's a notification. Not from a bank. Not from a fintech app. From a survey.

At the end of May, highways across the United States fill with cars packed for road trips, airports become crowded with travelers, and beaches and parks prepare for large crowds.

Officially ranked #1 in the region: Discover how Daria's German Bakery & Bistro turned traditional craftsmanship into Cape Coral's greatest success story.

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



Photo Source: Pexels

The story of a humpback whale stranded in the Baltic Sea, which would later draw international attention, began in early March with a case of misidentification. When the animal appeared in the harbor of Wismar on March 3, experts from the German Oceanographic Museum initially believed it was a fin whale.

Even then, it was clear that the marine mammal was in trouble. Firefighters and the water police freed it from around 50 meters of netting, but the whale could not be fully disentangled. Specialists later confirmed that pieces of rope were still lodged in its mouth. What at first seemed like a spectacular case would become the prelude to a days-long drama on Germany's Baltic coast.

When the whale first became stranded on a sandbank off Timmendorfer Strand during the night of March 23, the ordeal turned into a multi-day rescue drama followed by thousands of people via livestreams. It is still unclear why the animal entered the Baltic at all, or why it remained for so long in shallow coastal waters. Only one thing was certain: it was already in poor condition.

Read more on Page No. 17 →



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

## Looking Ahead to Brighter Days Together

Dear Readers,  
When I travel, I can't help but miss the warmth of a late spring morning in Florida. In fact, most of the countries I visit during the spring are still packed with locals wearing jackets and coats from their fall wardrobe (I remember vividly how I once wore a wool coat in the middle of May while travelling through Germany), and tourists, who never think about May being a cold month, almost freezing in the chill breeze of European spring.

Read more about our newest issue in our Letter From The Editor on Page No. 2 →

I would like to nominate Joanne Rogers as *Hero of the Month*. She is a staff member at Hope Clubhouse of southwest Florida. I have been under her supervision for three years now and she consistently shows up for every member at Hope Clubhouse. Joanne manages more than just the Clubhouse but sits in the trenches with all the members and makes massive sacrifices every day to make sure members are always taken care of.

Dante Pastore

SUNSHINE POST

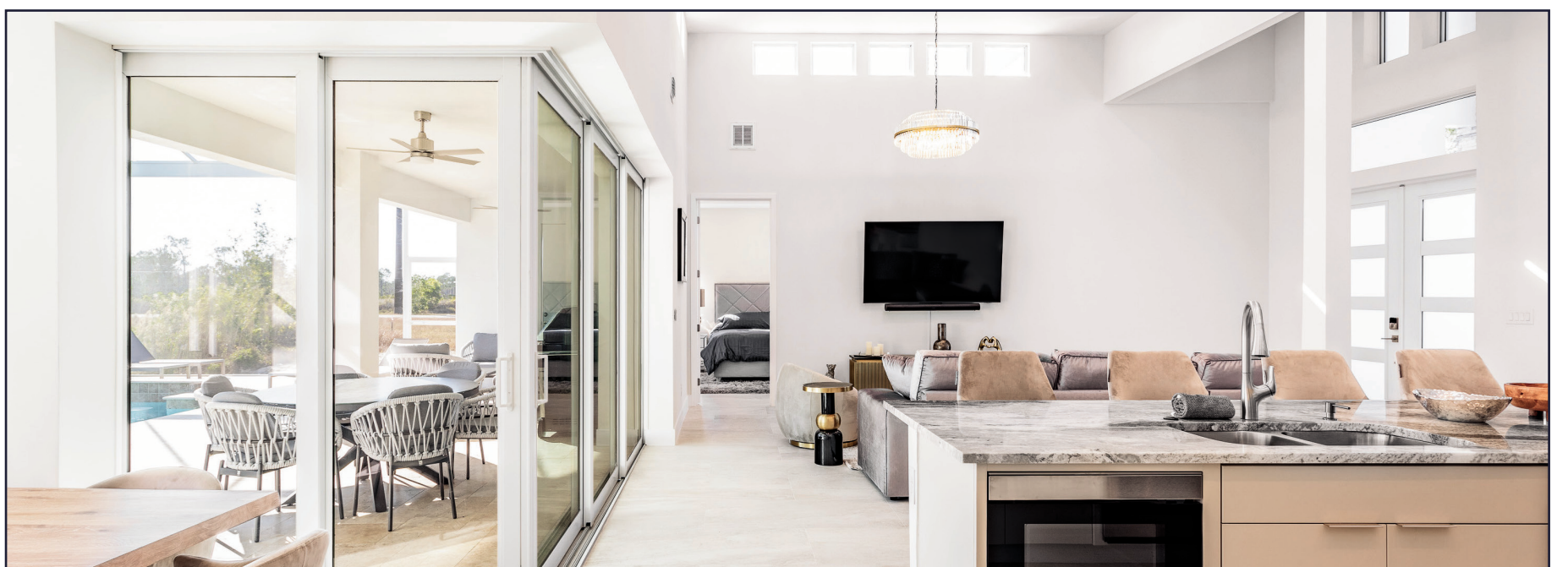
## HERO OF THE MONTH

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

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

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

Send us your suggestion at [info@sunshine-post.com](mailto:info@sunshine-post.com). Let's celebrate the everyday heroes among us together.



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# Looking Ahead to Brighter Days Together

Dear Readers, When I travel, I can't help but miss the warmth of a late spring morning in Florida. In fact, most of the countries I visit during the spring are still packed with locals wearing jackets and coats from their fall wardrobe (I remember vividly how I once wore a wool coat in the middle of May while travelling through Germany), and tourists, who never think about May being a cold month, almost freezing in the chill breeze of European spring.

So consider yourself lucky, whoever you are, if you get to go outside and feel the sun shine warmly on your face today! That feeling, the pleasant heat and almost burn you can sense through your skin and up to your bones, is why May to me is a month that seems to invite me outdoors with every bright songbird sitting on a tree branch outside my window and every coffee I make to the subtle hissing sound of my moka pot.

May is the month to explore with childlike wonder, to reconnect with nature, and to make the most of longer, sunnier days while the summer slowly awakens out of its long slumber (the longest one yet?). It's a time when you see communities come alive in new

ways, and in this issue of Sunshine Post, we celebrate exactly that spirit of curiosity, connection, and new, shared experiences.

We're especially excited to bring you another exclusive interview with a well-known and established gallery at the heart of Fort Myers, offering a closer look at the people, passion, and creativity behind a space that enriches our cultural landscape. It's a reminder of how art continues to bring communities together and inspire new talent on the rise.

Our journey continues in the Florida Edit, this time taking you to the breathtaking Florida Keys: a place defined by its natural beauty, relaxed atmosphere, and unique way of life. Whether you're dreaming of travel or simply enjoying the view from afar, this feature is sure to spark a sense of escape (perhaps exactly what our readers outside the US need).

Closer to home, we've created a guide for the perfect family day, focusing on indoor playgrounds which are ideal for the sometimes still unpredictable spring weather and guaranteed fun for all ages. Because sometimes, the best memories

are made in the simplest of moments of togetherness.

If you have been following the Sunshine Post for a while now, you already know that gratitude and reflection are values of the highest priority to us. In our feature on Memorial Day, we explore meaningful ways to commemorate the holiday. Join us in honoring its significance while also embracing the opportunity to gather with loved ones. And in a truly moving story, we report on the rescue of a whale off the East Coast of northern Germany. If you think about it from a different perspective, it is a powerful example of compassion, cooperation, and the impact of collective action when it matters most.

As always, this issue is about more than just stories: it's about the connections between them, and between all of us. Thank you for being part of our community and for sharing in these moments, both big and small.

We wish you a wonderful May filled with sunlight, discovery, and time well spent together.

Sunny regards,

*Rouven Tietz, Editor-in-Chief*

## Sunshine Post

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Myers!

# The Kindness: Two Dollars at the Counter



Sharing is caring, and giving is receiving. (Photos courtesy of Jennifer Hagemester)

We often imagine kindness as something that asks for extra time.

A free afternoon. A bigger donation. A special event circled on the calendar. Something we plan for because it feels separate from everyday life.

But sometimes, kindness appears where we would least expect it. Not in a grand setting. Not in a carefully staged moment. Sometimes it waits quietly in the middle of errands, appointments, paperwork, and routines. Sometimes it is so simple, and so easy to overlook, that people pass right by without ever noticing it.

This month's story begins with one of those moments.

With a small sign in a public office.

With a simple question.

And with a realization that felt too important not to share.

## A Small Sign, Easily Missed

During a visit to the Lee County Tax Collector's office, a small display in the window caught my attention. It mentioned a fundraiser that seemed almost unbelievably simple: for just two dollars, visitors could buy a candy bar and support a local cause.

So I asked for one.

What happened next stayed with me. The manager first had to go look for the candy bars, and an employee told me that people ask for them so rarely that they are no longer kept out front. Back then, she said, there used to be small boxes at the counters. But because

hardly anyone ever asked for them, that changed. Now there is only one box kept in the back office.

And honestly, I found that heartbreaking. Not dramatic or loud. Just quietly sad. Because this is not some hidden corner that only a handful of people ever pass through. This is a place where people come every single day for all kinds of ordinary reasons. And right there, in the middle of all that daily traffic, sat a simple opportunity to help — one that was being overlooked again and again.

## An Everyday Chance to Help

Maybe that is exactly what makes this story so meaningful.

The Lee County Tax Collector's office is one of those places people visit because life requires it. You go there to take care of things, handle practical matters, update something, renew something, register something. It is part of everyday life, which also means it reaches an extraordinary number of people.

That is what makes this fundraiser so striking. The chance to help is not tied to a major event or a complicated commitment. It is right there in an everyday place, woven into appointments people are making anyway.

Sometimes we imagine kindness as something large or time-consuming. But this is the opposite. It is simple, immediate, and right in front of us.

## Why This Cause Matters

This year, the fundraiser supports

the Children's Advocacy Center of Southwest Florida.

That name alone should make us pause. Because behind a simple two-dollar purchase stands work that is anything but simple. The organization supports children affected by abuse and neglect — children who need safety, advocacy, care, and a place where healing can begin. It exists for some of the most vulnerable members of the community, and that gives the fundraiser a quiet but very real significance.

A candy bar may seem small.

A child's need for protection is not.

And maybe that contrast is what makes the whole idea so moving. Something modest on the surface is directly connected to something deeply serious underneath. The purchase itself may be light. The mission behind it is not. That is why these opportunities matter so much. Not because buying one candy bar changes everything on its own. But because real support is often built exactly this way: one decision, one contribution, one person at a time.

## A Little Comfort, A Little Joy

There is also something beautifully fitting about the fundraiser itself.

A visit to an office like this is rarely the highlight of anyone's day. There may be waiting, paperwork, mild stress, and the quiet tension that comes with wanting everything to go smoothly.

And then there is chocolate.

A small comfort in the middle of an ordinary task.

A little lift during a day full of practical things.

A tiny moment of enjoyment where you might not have expected one.

In that sense, the idea feels almost perfect. A candy bar can be a bit of comfort food, a little "nerves first aid" in a busy moment. But here, it becomes more than that. It is not only something pleasant for the person buying it. It is also a way to support children who need real care, protection, and advocacy. I ended up buying five.

And honestly, they were surprisingly good. There were several varieties to choose from, and later I brought some to my colleagues at work. What started as a small gesture at a service counter became something that spread a little joy in more than one direction.

Because kindness often works like that. It moves. It ripples outward.

## Kindness Hidden in Plain Sight

What stayed with me most was not only the fundraiser itself, but how easily it could have been missed.

A small sign. A small question. A small purchase.

And yet, behind it, a very real chance to help.

We often think meaningful action has to look impressive. But often, the most lasting kind of goodness is woven into everyday life much more quietly than that. It lives in attention. In noticing. In choosing not to rush past everything. That is what I loved about this moment.

It did not feel performative.

It did not feel complicated.

It did not require the perfect occasion. It was simply there, waiting for someone to care.

So the next time you find yourself at the Lee County Tax Collector's office, maybe take one extra second before moving on. Look around. Ask about the candy bars. Buy one if you can. Two dollars may not sound like much. But kindness does not always begin with something large. Sometimes, it begins right there at the counter.

*By Jennifer Hagemester*

## Learn more

Lee County Tax Collector  
Community Partner Program  
www.leetc.com/charity-partners-program

Children's Advocacy Center of  
Southwest Florida  
Learn more or donate directly  
www.cac-swfl.org

# When courts decide on your assets Germany and the US in comparison

No one likes to think that a court could suddenly decide on their assets. But that is exactly what can happen if there is no power of attorney or similar document in place. In both Germany and the US, state institutions intervene in such cases – with far-reaching financial consequences.

This article shows how the regulations work in both countries and what consequences a lack of provision can have.

## Germany: The guardianship court takes over

In Germany, legal guardianship is the mechanism that kicks in when an adult is no longer able to manage their own affairs. Without a power of attorney or living will, the court appoints a legal guardian.

Tasks of the guardian:

- Management of bank accounts and financial investments
- Regulation of rental and real estate transactions
- Conclusion or termination of contracts
- Decisions on major financial expenditures

## Restrictions and consequences

Judicial oversight serves to protect the person concerned. In practice, however, it can lead to considerable delays:

- Bank accounts are often frozen until a guardian has

been appointed.

- Sales or mortgages on real estate require court approval.
- Business decisions can be delayed for months if the managing director is incapacitated.
- The costs of the proceedings can amount to several thousand euros.

The situation becomes particularly problematic when multiple assets are involved or there are international investments. Without clear powers of attorney, the guardianship court can only act to a limited extent.

## USA: Guardianship and Conservatorship

In the United States, courts also intervene when a person is no longer able to make decisions for themselves. The procedure is called guardianship or conservatorship, depending on the state.

Procedure and consequences:

- The court first checks whether a durable power of attorney exists.
- If this is not the case, a guardian or conservator is appointed.
- This person is then authorized to make decisions about assets, contracts, and sometimes medical decisions.

Financial implications:

- Proceedings are often public and lengthy

- Courts charge fees for supervision and administration.
- Decisions may be delayed or restricted.
- Family members often have limited influence if no power of attorney document exists.

A prominent example from the US illustrates the risks: Several children of an elderly investor had to wait months to access bank accounts and real estate because the court first had to appoint a guardian.

## Financial risks without provisions

Whether in Germany or the US, a lack of provisions can have serious financial consequences:

1. Blocked accounts: Bills, taxes, or loans cannot be paid.
2. Real estate transactions come to a standstill: sales, rentals, or mortgages are delayed.
3. Business risks: companies cannot operate, employees remain unpaid.
4. Costs: legal assistance can incur significant fees.

These problems become even more complex when it comes to international investments. For example, powers of attorney from Germany are not automatically recognized in the US, and vice versa.

## Practical solutions for families and investors

1. Create a power of attorney:

This allows a trusted person to make decisions before a court has to intervene.

2. Check international powers of attorney: Separate documents should be created for real estate, bank accounts, or company holdings abroad.
3. Create an emergency folder: Make all important documents, access data, and insurance policies available in one central location.
4. Update regularly: Life situations change—powers of attorney must be adjusted.

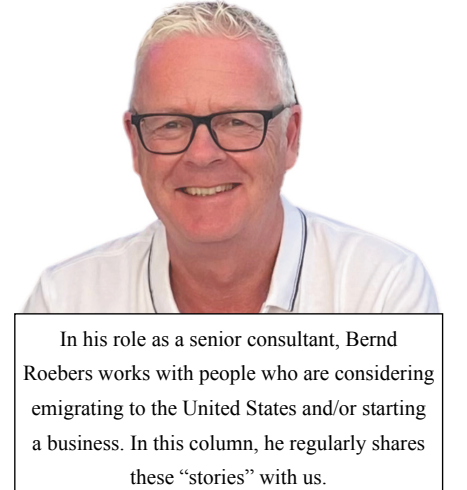
With a well-thought-out provision structure, most risks can be avoided. Families can act immediately, assets remain protected, and processes run without legal delays.

The comparison below shows that in both countries, those who fail to make provisions relinquish some control over their assets to the court. Differences exist in the duration of proceedings, costs, and the practice of public oversight.

## Conclusion

The reality is clear: without provisions, courts in both Germany and the USA can make far-reaching decisions about your assets. This applies to bank accounts, real estate, companies, and international investments.

By Bernd Roebers



Comparison between Germany and the USA		
Topic	Germany	USA
Legal representation	Guardianship court appoints guardian	Guardianship/conservatorship
Costs	High, depending on the state	Publicity Low Often public
Power of attorney	Power of attorney required	Durable power of attorney recommended
International assets required	Additional documents required	Separate powers of attorney often



# IS YOUR BUSINESS STUCK IN MANUAL MODE?

Manual paperwork, messy spreadsheets, and disconnected systems are costing you time and money.

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READY TO UPGRADE YOUR WORKFLOW?



# From Checking Accounts to Global Wallets

## How the Next Credit Union Is Being Designed by Its Members



Photo Source: Pexels

On a Sunday afternoon in Fort Myers, a phone buzzes on a kitchen counter. It's a notification. Not from a bank. Not from a fintech app. From a survey.

"Tell us how you want your next credit union to work."

Maria Alvarez wipes her hands, glances at the screen, and taps it open. She had seen the article the week before — the one about a credit union that doesn't exist yet. The one asking readers to help shape it.

She didn't expect to answer. But she did. Now she's back again.

### The First Signal: 92% Mobile

The results from the first survey are in. And they say something simple — but profound. 92% of respondents completed the survey on a mobile device.

Not a laptop. Not a desktop. Not in a branch.

On a phone.

It's the kind of statistic that doesn't just confirm a trend — it closes a debate.

For decades, financial institutions have talked about "meeting members where they are."

Now we know where that is.

In a line at a café. On a couch at midnight. Between classes. In the backseat of a rideshare.

In other words: everywhere — but always on mobile.

For a new credit union, this isn't a feature.

It's the foundation.

### The Second Conversation Begins

If the first survey answered where members want to bank, the second survey — featured in this edition — asks a different question:

What should that banking experience actually include?

On the opposite page, you'll again find a QR code linking to the next round of questions.

Scan it. Take two minutes. Help build something that doesn't exist yet. Because what's emerging from these responses isn't just feedback. It's a blueprint.

### The Legacy of "Plain Vanilla" Banking

For most of their history, credit unions have focused on simplicity. Checking accounts. Savings accounts. Auto loans. Mortgages.

Plain, reliable, understandable products. There were good reasons for this. Credit unions were built for stability, not speculation. For accessibility, not complexity. Their mission was to provide safe, fair financial services to people often excluded from traditional banking.

And for decades, that was enough. But the world changed.

### The Member Who Lives in Two Countries

Maria Alvarez is a good example. She grew up in Florida. Her parents are from Colombia. Her brother studies in Spain. Her best friend works remotely from Mexico City. Money moves constantly across borders in her life. Every month, she sends \$200 to her grandmother. Twice a year, she travels internationally. She buys goods online from Europe. She gets paid occasionally for freelance work from clients outside the U.S. And every time money crosses a border, she feels friction. High fees. Slow transfers. Unclear exchange rates. Hidden markups. Her credit union — the one her parents use — doesn't help much. So she uses three different apps instead. None of which she fully trusts.

### The Global Reality of a Local Member

Maria is not unusual. Younger generations are inherently more global:

- They travel more
- They work remotely
- They study abroad
- They maintain cross-border relationships
- They participate in global digital economies

But their financial institutions are still largely domestic. This mismatch is growing. And it creates an opportunity.

### From Local Accounts to Global Wallets

A new type of credit union — built from scratch on modern infrastructure — can rethink what "basic banking" actually means. Instead of separate products, imagine a unified financial platform:

A global wallet. One account. Multiple currencies. Real-time conversion. Transparent pricing. Instant transfers. Maria opens her app.

She sees her balance — not just in dollars, but optionally in euros and pesos. She taps "Send." Selects her grandmother's account.

The system shows:

- Exact exchange rate
- Total fee (low, clearly stated)
- Delivery time (minutes, not days)

She confirms.

Done.

No third-party apps. No confusion. No hidden costs.

### Why Traditional Credit Unions Struggle Here

Offering these services is not simply

a matter of adding features. It requires infrastructure.

Legacy systems — the kind many credit unions still use — were not built for:

- real-time FX pricing
- cross-border payment rails
- multi-currency accounting
- API integrations with global networks

Adding these capabilities to old systems is expensive, slow, and risky.

But a de-novo credit union — built from scratch — can integrate them from day one.

### The Neo Credit Union

We've seen neo-banks emerge over the past decade.

Digital-first, mobile-native, globally aware. But what we're now beginning to see is something different:

A neo credit union.

It combines:

- the cooperative ownership model
- regulatory stability
- community focus

with:

- cloud-native architecture
- real-time global payments
- integrated FX services
- mobile-first design

It's not trying to compete with banks on their terms.

It's redefining the category.

### Faster, Cheaper, Clearer

Cross-border payments today are notoriously inefficient.

The average international transfer can involve:

- multiple intermediary banks
- opaque fees
- delayed settlement
- inconsistent exchange rates

A modern credit union can leverage new infrastructure:

- direct payment networks
- fintech integrations
- real-time settlement rails
- transparent FX providers

The result?

Transfers that are:

- faster
- cheaper
- easier to understand

And for members like Maria, that's not a luxury. It's essential.

### The Trust Factor

Why not just use fintech apps for this? Many already do. But trust is fragile.

Some apps feel temporary.

Some lack deposit protection.

Some change terms unexpectedly.

A credit union offers something fintech often cannot:

- member ownership
- regulatory oversight
- long-term stability
- alignment of incentives

Combine that with modern technology — and you have something powerful.

### Beyond Transfers: A Financial Ecosystem

International money movement is just one piece.

A neo credit union could also offer:

- multi-currency savings accounts
- travel-friendly debit cards with zero FX fees
- cross-border budgeting tools
- global bill payments
- support for remote workers and freelancers
- integration with international tax tools

The goal is not to add complexity. It's to remove fragmentation. To bring everything into one place.

### Designed Through Participation

What makes this effort unique is not just the technology. It's the process. This credit union is not being designed behind closed doors. It is being shaped through ongoing dialogue. Survey by survey.

Response by response. The first survey told us where members are: mobile.

The second survey begins to tell us what they need: global functionality, simplicity, transparency.

And there will be more.

Each iteration refining the design. Each response influencing the outcome.

### The QR Code as a Cooperative Tool

It's a small thing — a QR code on a page. But it represents something larger.

A new form of cooperative participation. Instead of annual meetings, participation becomes continuous. Instead of a handful of voices, thousands contribute. Instead of assumptions, there is data.

The barcode on the opposite page is not just a link. It's an invitation.

### The Risk of Standing Still

For traditional credit unions, this moment is challenging. Their strengths — stability, trust, community — remain powerful.

But their product set risks becoming too narrow for a changing world. If younger members must leave their credit union to handle international payments, digital services, or modern financial needs, the relationship weakens. Over time, it disappears. The Opportunity of Starting Fresh. A new credit union does not have to make incremental changes.

It can rethink everything:

What is an account?

What is a product?

What is a branch?

What is a member experience?

And perhaps most importantly:

What does "local" mean in a global world?

### Maria's Choice

Back in Fort Myers, Maria finishes the survey.

She selects:

- "Yes" to international transfers
- "Yes" to multi-currency accounts
- "Yes" to transparent FX pricing
- "Yes" to fully mobile banking

She submits. A confirmation message appears:

"Thank you. You're helping design the next credit union."

She pauses. Then smiles. Because for the first time, it feels like a financial institution is not just serving her. It's listening to her.

### The Next Step

The second survey is live. The responses are coming in. The blueprint is evolving. And somewhere — in planning documents, in regulatory filings, in late-night design sessions — the idea of a new kind of credit union is taking shape. One that is:

- mobile-first
- globally connected
- technologically modern
- cooperatively owned

And built not just for members. But with them.

### Your Turn

On the opposite page, you'll find the next QR code. Scan it. Take the survey. Tell us what matters to you. Because the future of credit unions — like their past — will be built by the people who choose to participate.

And this time, it might be built faster than ever before.

by TFT

**Stay tuned!  
More surveys  
are just around  
the corner. We  
want to hear  
your voice!**

# The Credit Union: May Survey

Your voice matters! Scan the code to participate.



<https://survey.dariacreditunion.com/second-survey>

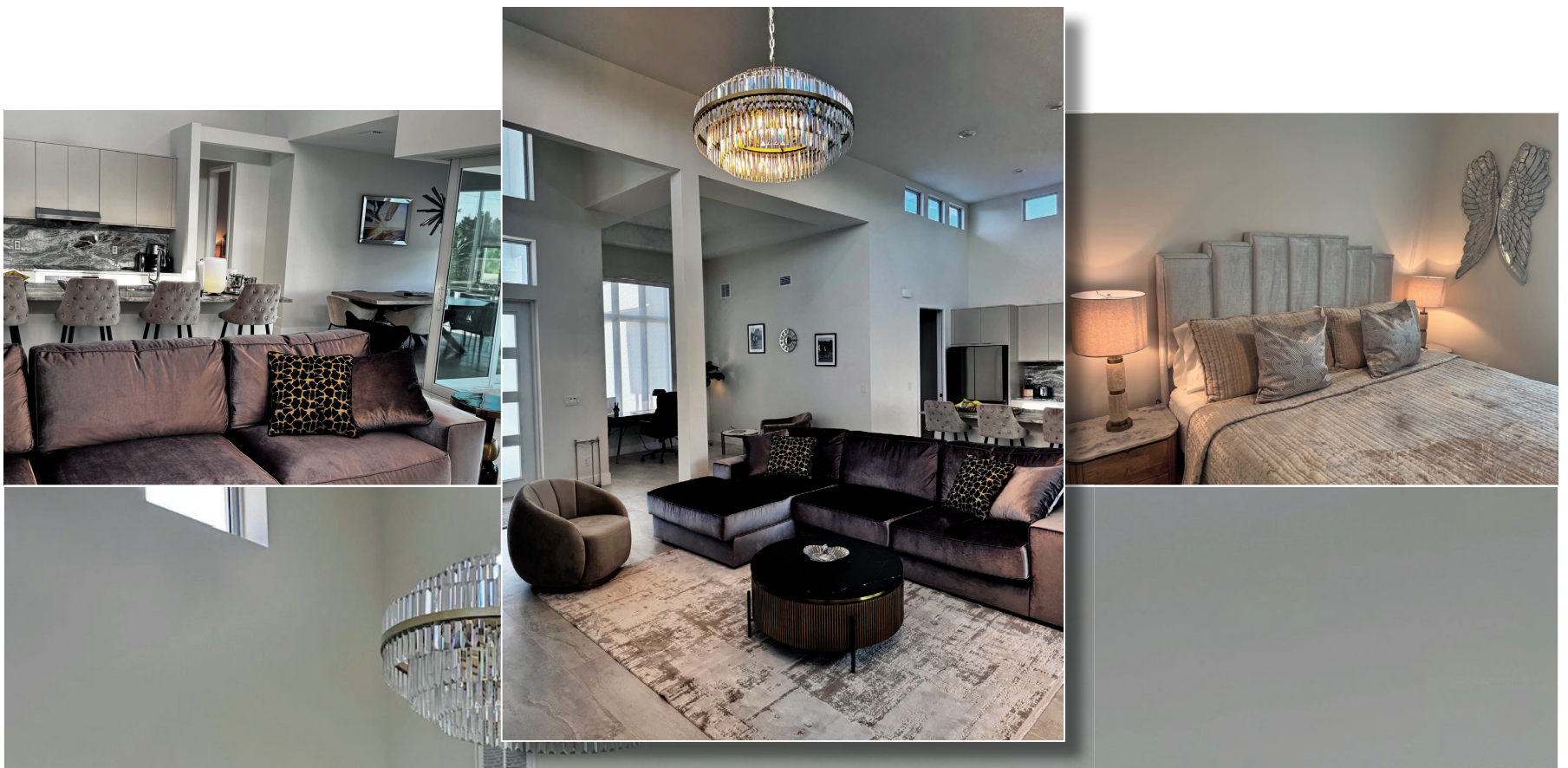


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# Lee County Housing Market Update

## Market Interpretation

As of March 2026, Lee County’s single-family housing market continues to move through a stabilization phase, with inventory levels showing a significant year-over-year decline. Active listings are down sharply compared to last year, which has contributed to a meaningful reduction in months of supply, even as overall supply remains near balanced levels. Homes are taking noticeably longer to sell, with days on market up 14.6%, indicating that buyer demand remains cautious and selective. Median sale prices have experienced only a modest year-over-year decline, reinforcing the view that the market is adjusting gradually rather than undergoing a sharp correction. The list-to-sale price ratio holding at 96.9% confirms that negotiation remains a consistent part of transactions, with buyers continuing to secure

### Lee County Single-Family Housing Snapshot (March 2026 Data | Published May 2026)

Metric	Value	Year-over-Year Change
Median Sales Price	\$394,950	-1.3%
Active Listings	8,044	-16.3%
Median Days on Market	55 days	+14.6%
Months of Supply	6.7 months	-23.0%
List Price / Sale Price Ratio	96.9%	-0.5%
Avg. 30-Year Fixed Mortgage Rate	6.32%	As of 4/16/2026

modest discounts. Mortgage rates, now slightly above 6.3%, continue to pressure affordability and limit urgency among buyers. Overall, the data reflects a market with tightening inventory but still subdued demand, requiring sellers to remain disciplined on pricing and expectations.

By Kevin Tremmel

*Data reflects closed single-family home activity in Lee County for March 2026. All MLS metrics are reported as rolling 3-month averages to better capture underlying trends. Mortgage rate data sourced from Mortgage News Daily.*



Interested in Buying or Selling?  
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### Contact Information:

#### Daria US Brokerage LLC

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License Number: CQ1072232



# Where It All Began: Why Accounting Has Determined Wealth for Centuries

Accounting. For many, it’s a word associated with paperwork, forms, and deadlines. Something you deal with because you have to.

But what if this is exactly where the real key lies? Not just for taxes – but for clarity, security, and true wealth building. A look back shows: this is exactly where it all began.

In medieval Europe, merchants faced a challenge that sounds surprisingly familiar today. Trade across borders, investors in the background, goods sold on credit – but very little overview. Decisions were often based on instinct rather than facts.

Until a system emerged that changed everything: double-entry bookkeeping. For the first time, numbers were not just recorded – they were understood. Income and expenses were connected. Wealth became visible. Success became

measurable. Suddenly, there was clarity. Control. Security. This way of thinking spread throughout Europe and was especially shaped in the German-speaking world. Precision, structure, and the ambition not only to record numbers but to truly understand them became the foundation of economic activity – values that still matter today.

Over time, this system made its way to the United States. There, it met a different environment: faster, larger, more entrepreneurial. At the same time, a system developed that requires one essential element: transparency.

To this day, in the U.S. it applies: Anyone doing business must be able to explain their numbers – at any time. And this is where many Germans face a turning point. Because suddenly, it’s no longer enough that “everything

somehow works.” Every transaction, every structure, every decision must be clearly traceable. This becomes even more critical in an international context between Germany and the United States. Different tax systems, different ways of thinking, and different rules increase complexity significantly. And this is exactly where mistakes happen. Not because people intend to do something wrong. But because structure is missing. Because numbers are unclear. Because things start too late.

Accounting was never meant to fix problems after they occur. It was always meant to prevent them. Modern accounting is therefore far more than recording numbers. It provides orientation. It translates between systems. And it forms the basis for decisions that work not only today – but also in the future.

This is exactly the approach of DARIA US Accounting Service LLC. With over 30 years of experience in accounting, 15 years of entrepreneurial practice, and deep cross-border expertise, Alexandra Welsch and her bilingual team support clients between Germany and the United States – from initial structure to long-term strategy. Because one thing has not changed over centuries: Those who understand their numbers feel more secure.

Those who control them make better decisions. And those who start early protect not only their business – but often their entire wealth.

In the next issue: Why bookkeeping doesn’t start at year-end – and why the beginning determines success or future problems.

By Alexandra Welsch

## A REAL SYSTEM - NOT JUST DATA ENTRY

### Bookkeeping that supports growth and smart decisions

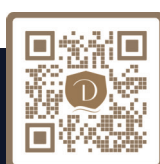
We don’t just “enter transactions.” We build and maintain a bookkeeping process that stays clean - so you can scale, invest, and plan with confidence.

#### Results you’ll notice:

- ✓ Fewer financial surprises
- ✓ Faster, smoother year-end
- ✓ Better cash flow visibility
- ✓ Stronger control over spending and profitability

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# Memorial Day Weekend in Florida: Beaches, Barbecues and Remembrance

Florida, United States — At the end of May, highways across the United States fill with cars packed for road trips, airports become crowded with travelers, and beaches and parks prepare for large crowds. The occasion is Memorial Day, a national holiday dedicated to honoring American military personnel who died while serving in the armed forces.

For many international visitors, the atmosphere can seem unusual. Memorial Day is a solemn day of remembrance, yet it is also widely seen as the unofficial start of summer in the United States—a long weekend when families gather outdoors, travel and celebrate the beginning of the warm season.

## A Holiday Rooted in History

Memorial Day has its origins in the years following the American Civil War (1861–1865), one of the deadliest conflicts in U.S. history.

Communities across the country began organizing ceremonies to honor fallen soldiers by decorating their graves with flowers and flags.

This tradition became known as “Decoration Day.”

Families, veterans and local organizations would gather in cemeteries to remember those who had lost their lives in the war.

Over time, the commemoration expanded beyond the Civil War to include soldiers who died in all American military conflicts. In 1971, Memorial Day officially became a federal holiday, observed on the last Monday of May, ensuring a three-day weekend for many Americans.

Today the day remains one of the most important moments of remembrance in the United States.

## Traditions of Remembrance

Across the country, communities hold

ceremonies at military cemeteries, memorial parks and town squares.

A common tradition is the placement of small American flags on the graves of fallen soldiers, often carried out by volunteers, veterans’ groups or scout organizations.

In many locations, thousands of flags line the rows of headstones, creating a powerful visual tribute.

Memorial Day parades are also a long-standing tradition. Marching bands, veterans, military units and community groups walk through city streets while spectators gather along the route waving American flags.

Another important tradition is the National Moment of Remembrance, observed at 3 p.m. local time. Americans are encouraged to pause briefly—wherever they are—to reflect on those who died in military service. In Washington, D.C., ceremonies take place at national memorials and the country’s most famous military cemetery, where many of America’s fallen soldiers are buried.

## One of the Busiest Travel Weekends of the Year

While the day itself is dedicated to remembrance, the long weekend has also become one of the largest travel periods in the United States.

Because Memorial Day always falls on a Monday, many Americans enjoy a three-day weekend, making it the perfect time for a short vacation. Families take road trips, visit relatives or travel to popular holiday destinations. As a result, highways across the country often experience heavy traffic, and airports report large numbers of passengers.

Travel organizations regularly estimate that tens of millions of Americans travel during Memorial Day weekend, making it one of the busiest travel periods of the year.

For many people, the weekend represents the first real opportunity to enjoy warm weather after the cooler months of winter and spring.

## Florida: Beaches and Sunshine

In Florida, the holiday weekend has a particularly festive atmosphere.

With warm temperatures and sunny skies already typical in late May, the state becomes a popular destination for both residents and visitors from other parts of the country.

Beaches along the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean fill with families setting up umbrellas, swimming, or enjoying picnics by the water. Coastal towns and resort areas often experience one of their first major tourist surges of the year.

Boating is another popular Memorial Day activity in Florida.

Marinas and boat ramps become busy as people head out on the water to fish, cruise along the coast or anchor near sandbars with friends.

Parks and nature areas also attract visitors. Families gather for barbecues, bike rides and outdoor games, while children enjoy playgrounds and water parks.

## Community Events and Celebrations

Many cities and towns organize community events throughout the weekend, blending remembrance with family-friendly entertainment.

These may include:

- patriotic ceremonies honoring veterans
- concerts and live music performances
- fireworks displays in the evening
- local festivals and markets

In some places, military aircraft flyovers or ceremonial wreath-laying events are part of the official observances.

For many communities, these

gatherings bring residents together while also welcoming visitors who are traveling during the long weekend.

The Symbolic Start of Summer Although the astronomical start of summer does not occur until late June, Memorial Day has long been seen as the symbolic beginning of the American summer season.

The holiday weekend marks the moment when many summer activities officially begin. Outdoor concerts and festivals become more frequent, amusement parks extend their hours, and many public swimming pools open for the season.

For students, the end of the school year is often just weeks away, adding to the sense that summer is about to begin.

Retail stores also take advantage of the holiday with large Memorial Day sales, making it one of the busiest shopping weekends of the year.

## A Weekend with Two Meanings

The combination of remembrance and celebration may seem unusual to some international observers. Yet for many Americans, the two aspects are closely connected.

Memorial Day honors the men and women who died in military service while also reminding people to appreciate the freedoms and everyday experiences those sacrifices helped protect.

Spending time with family, enjoying the outdoors and gathering with friends has therefore become part of the modern Memorial Day tradition.

In states like Florida—where sunshine, beaches and outdoor living shape daily life—the holiday weekend marks the moment when summer truly begins, bringing together remembrance, travel and the simple pleasure of being outside.

*By S. Mechalik*



Photo Source: Pixabay



## 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](mailto:editor@sunshine-post.com).

# Arts for ACT Gallery: More Than What You See

Sometimes, the places that seem the quietest from the outside carry the most meaning within. In the middle of Downtown Fort Myers, surrounded by restaurants, small boutiques, and everything that makes this area feel alive, there is a space many people walk past without realizing what it actually represents. Arts for ACT Gallery looks, at first, like an art gallery.

Beautiful pieces, local artists, a calm and inviting atmosphere.

But if you take a second to really look, you start to feel that there is something more behind it.

And that's exactly what drew me in. I originally wanted to write about something bigger - about what exists in Downtown Fort Myers that supports people quietly, without a lot of attention. Because the truth is, there are so many things happening right in front of us that we don't always notice. But after spending time in this gallery, talking to people, listening to different perspectives, I made a conscious decision to focus on this one place. Because it deserves that attention. This is not just about art. And it's not just about awareness.

It's about people.

Arts for ACT Gallery is directly connected to the work of Abuse Counseling and Treatment, Inc. (ACT) - an organization that supports individuals affected by domestic violence, physical abuse, and other forms of abuse that often remain unseen. And I'm aware that this is not the easiest topic to talk about. It's heavy. It's personal. And for many people, it's something that stays in the background. But I also believe that this is exactly why it deserves more visibility. Because these things don't happen somewhere far away. They happen here. In our communities. Sometimes closer than we think. And what this gallery does is something I found incredibly powerful.

It creates a space where these topics can exist without being overwhelming - where people can approach them in a way that feels human.

Through art.

Through conversation.

Through simply being there.

While I was there, I spoke to several people. Different perspectives, different backgrounds, different connections to

this place. Some of those conversations became very personal. So personal that I was asked not to share certain stories publicly - and that's something I fully respect. But what I can say is this:

Those conversations stayed with me. Because they shifted something. They gave me a different understanding of what people go through, of how different realities can look, and of how much strength and resilience exists behind stories we often never hear. It's one of those moments where you leave with a different perspective than you came in with.

What Arts for ACT Gallery represents goes far beyond the space itself.

Yes, it's a gallery. Yes, it supports local artists. But it also actively supports the work of ACT, helping provide resources, protection, and guidance for individuals who are navigating incredibly difficult situations.

And beyond that, it creates something you can't really measure.

A feeling.

A sense of care.

Of awareness.

Of people genuinely wanting to make a difference - even if it happens quietly.

Downtown Fort Myers is often described as vibrant, growing, full of new ideas. And I agree. But what really defines a place like this, in my opinion, is not just what you see on the surface. It's the people behind it. The ones who build spaces like this, support them, and keep them alive. Because without that, none of this would exist. And that's what makes this community special.

If this is something that resonates with you, I would honestly just recommend going there yourself. Arts for ACT Gallery hosts events and exhibitions that are easy to find online - and sometimes, the best way to understand something is not by reading about it, but by experiencing it.

Just walk in.

Take your time.

Look a little closer.

Because maybe that's what this place really is. Not just a gallery.

But a reminder that behind the surface of a city, there are people doing work that truly matters. And sometimes, all it takes is stepping inside to see it.

By Katharina Kaufmann

# St. Florian and the Fire of Neighborly Love



Photo Source: Pixabay

On May 4, the Church turns its gaze to a man whose life and death still carry a striking relevance today: Saint Florian, martyr and patron saint of firefighters. What at first glance may seem like a pious remembrance of times long past reveals, upon closer look, a powerful story of courage, responsibility, and a love willing to go to the very end.

## A Life Between Power and Decision

Florian was no marginal figure, no simple soldier. He was the highest-ranking official of the Roman governor in Ufernicum. A man of influence, of prestige, with a secure future. Precisely for that reason, his decision carries particular weight: during the persecution of Christians under Emperor Diocletian, he did not side with power, but with the persecuted. He could have remained silent. He could have conformed. He could have saved his career. But Florian did the opposite. Out of concern for his fellow believers, he

sought out the oppressed, went to Lauriacum, and openly professed his faith. With that, his fate was sealed: arrest, condemnation, death by drowning. On May 4, 304, he was thrown into the Enns River together with many companions.

Florian is not a legend invented for moral edification. His story is historically grounded, his witness has shaped generations. Not without reason has he been depicted countless times, carved in wood, painted, hewn in stone. People recognized in him something that reaches beyond his own time.

## Against the False "Florian Principle"

In German-speaking regions, there is a cynical saying:

"O holy Saint Florian, spare my house, set others on fire."

This phrase captures an attitude still widespread today: as long as I come through unscathed, what happens to others is secondary.

Yet this very attitude stands in stark contradiction to the life of Saint Florian.

He did not try to save himself while others suffered.

He did not place his security above his fidelity.

He did not withdraw—he stepped forward.

Thus Florian stands for the very opposite of what is sometimes attributed to him.

He is not a patron of selfishness, but a witness to radical solidarity.

## Firefighting – Profession or Vocation?

When we think of firefighters today, we inevitably think of deployments, sirens, and people who must act in extreme situations. Most vividly, the image of firefighters on September 11, 2001, has been etched into collective memory.

William Feehan, the highest-ranking firefighter in New York, once said:

"You can't pay someone enough to do this job. It takes more than money to make someone do it."

This touches a core truth. Firefighting is not simply a job. It is an attitude. An inner decision to stand up for others—even when it becomes dangerous.

On September 11, 343 firefighters died. They died where they had always been: in service of others. They did not run away from the fire; they ran into it. Not out of recklessness, but out of responsibility.

A fire chaplain stayed with the dying and lost his own life. Security personnel ensured that others could escape. People carried a woman in a wheelchair down countless steps. A blind man was led to safety with his dog.

These stories are not marginal notes. They are concrete expressions of what Christian tradition calls "love of neighbor."

## The Trial of Faith

The First Letter of Peter speaks of the "fiery trial" of life:

"Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that comes upon you to test you ... but rejoice insofar as you share in the sufferings of Christ."

At first, this may sound strange, even unsettling. Yet in the reality of people like Florian or the firefighters of New York, it becomes clear what is meant: faith proves itself not in comfortable times, but in moments of decision.

When a person suffers because he remains faithful—faithful to conscience, faithful to his mission, faithful to Christ—then abstract theology becomes lived reality.

Florian embraced this reality.

So did the firefighters on September 11.

## Witnesses to a Different Logic

Our world often operates according to the logic of self-interest: safety first, avoid risk, protect oneself. Yet there is another logic—the logic of the Gospel. This logic says:

Whoever clings to his life will lose it. Whoever gives it away will gain it.

Florian and his companions lived according to this logic. So too did the many people who rise beyond themselves in extreme situations and stand up for others.

They are not "heroes" in a superficial sense. They are witnesses. Witnesses to the fact that the human being is capable of more: of courage, of self-giving, of love.

## A Call for Today

The feast day of Saint Florian is more than a tribute to firefighters. It is a question addressed to each one of us:

- Where do I withdraw, though I am needed?
- Where do I secure myself instead of taking responsibility?
- Where could I do more—for others, for justice, for life?

Not everyone will have to run into a burning building. But everyone will face situations in which courage is required—situations in which it matters not to look away.

## A Hope That Endures

In the end, for Florian as for the many responders of our time, what stands is not defeat, but hope: that no act done out of love is lost. That every sacrifice, every deed of mercy, is held in God.

Christian faith does not mean being spared from suffering. But it promises that suffering and self-giving do not have the final word.

Thus, May 4 invites us to realign our lives:

toward a love that is more than feeling—namely, a decision.

A love ready to act.

A love that remains in the decisive moment.

A love that—like Florian's—goes to the very end.

By Tobias Leininger

# What's 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!

### Note for international readers:

Memorial Day weekend marks the unofficial start of summer in the United States and is one of the busiest travel periods of the year. Across Southwest Florida, communities combine ceremonies honoring fallen soldiers with festivals, concerts and family-friendly events.

Since Memorial Day weekend is widely considered the unofficial beginning of the American summer season, Beaches, parks, marinas and restaurants across Southwest Florida are typically at their busiest during these three days.

Here is a selection of events taking place throughout the region.

### Flag Placement for Veterans

**Where?** Fort Myers Memorial Gardens, Fort Myers

**When?** Morning

- Volunteers gather to place American flags on the graves of military veterans in preparation for Memorial Day ceremonies. Visitors are welcome to participate and help honor fallen service members.

23

### Patriotic Weekend Kickoff

**Where?** Downtown Cape Coral

Restaurants and bars along Cape Coral Parkway and in the entertainment district host live music, outdoor dining and patriotic-themed gatherings as the holiday weekend begins.

22

### Memorial Day Service

**Where?** Fort Myers Memorial Gardens

**When?** 9:30 a.m.

Community leaders, veterans and residents gather for a formal remembrance ceremony honoring fallen members of the U.S. armed forces.

25

### Red, White & Blue Pub Crawl

**Where?** Downtown Fort Myers

**When?** Evening

Participants dressed in patriotic colors visit several bars and restaurants in downtown Fort Myers while enjoying live music and special holiday drinks.

### Sunset Concert and Celebration

**Where?** Fort Myers Beach

**When?** Evening

Live music and beachside events close out the holiday weekend as visitors gather along the Gulf of Mexico for sunset celebrations.

25

### Beach and Waterfront Events

**Where?** Fort Myers Beach

Live music, sunset gatherings and outdoor dining events take place along the Gulf coast as visitors enjoy the long holiday weekend by the water.



Photo Source: Pixabay

**Send Us Your Event Recommendations!**

info@sunshine-post.com

# A Dream of Steel and Vision

David Beckham, Inter Miami, and the Long Road to a Stadium of Their Own

When David Beckham joined LA Galaxy in 2007, it was about far more than just a transfer. It marked the beginning of a long-term vision: Beckham didn't just want to play soccer in the United States—he wanted to shape its future. Nearly two decades later, that vision is embodied in Inter Miami CF, a club that has come to symbolize the rapid rise of soccer in North America.

## The Birth of a Project

The idea for Inter Miami dates back to Beckham's playing days. As part of his contract, he secured the option to purchase an MLS franchise later on. The road, however, was anything but smooth. It wasn't until 2018 that Miami was officially awarded a team in Major League Soccer.

The club began play in 2020 under challenging circumstances. Infrastructure was lacking—most notably, a permanent home stadium. Temporarily, the team played at Chase Stadium, which holds around 21,500 fans. From the outset, it was clear: Inter Miami would not be complete without a stadium of its own.

## Years of Setbacks—and Persistence

The stadium issue became the club's greatest obstacle. Several proposed locations fell through due to political resistance, environmental concerns, or financial uncertainty. At times, the entire project seemed at risk.

Reflecting on those years, Beckham later admitted: "There were moments when many people said this would never happen."

Only with the backing of strong investors and local political support did the vision begin to take shape. The breakthrough came with the decision to build Miami Freedom Park—a massive development project near the airport, designed to include not just a stadium but parks, restaurants, hotels, and entertainment spaces.

## The New Stadium: A Symbol of a New Era

At the heart of the project lies the so-called "Nu Stadium," Inter Miami's new home. Construction began in 2023, with completion timed for the 2026 MLS season.

Key figures highlight the scale:

- Capacity: around 26,700 seats
- Cost: approximately \$350 million for the stadium, part of a broader development worth up to \$1 billion
- Construction time: about three years (2023–2026)

Architecturally, the stadium sets new standards, including an innovative roof design. It also anchors one of Miami's largest urban

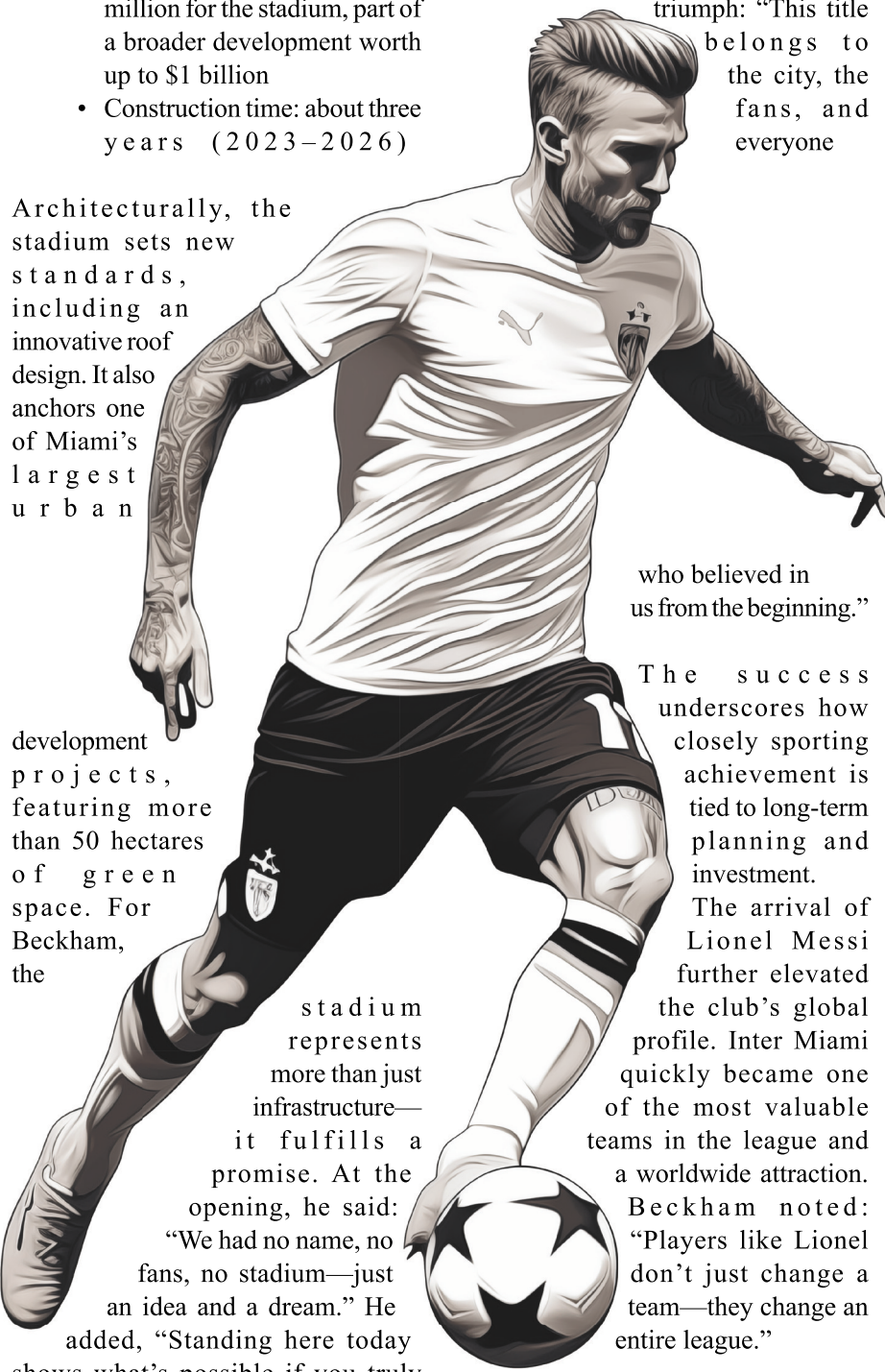
development projects, featuring more than 50 hectares of green space. For Beckham, the

stadium represents more than just infrastructure—it fulfills a promise. At the opening, he said: "We had no name, no fans, no stadium—just an idea and a dream." He added, "Standing here today shows what's possible if you truly believe."

## Sporting Breakthrough and Championship Glory

Alongside its infrastructural growth, the club has also risen on the field—culminating in its greatest achievement to date: Inter Miami won the MLS Cup last season.

The title marks a turning point. Beckham spoke emotionally after the triumph: "This title belongs to the city, the fans, and everyone



who believed in us from the beginning."

The success underscores how closely sporting achievement is tied to long-term planning and investment.

The arrival of Lionel Messi further elevated the club's global profile. Inter Miami quickly became one of the most valuable teams in the league and a worldwide attraction. Beckham noted: "Players like Lionel don't just change a team—they change an entire league."

## Looking Ahead to the 2026 World Cup

With the FIFA World Cup 2026 on the horizon, this transformation reaches a new peak. The United States, alongside Canada and Mexico, will host the tournament—and Miami will play a significant role.

However, Inter Miami's new stadium will not host World Cup matches. Instead, games will be held at the Hard Rock Stadium, a venue already proven on the global stage. Several matches are scheduled there, including group-stage games and knockout-round fixtures.

## A Lasting Legacy for Soccer in the U.S.

Even so, Inter Miami's new stadium remains a key part of the broader World Cup ecosystem. It will serve as a training and infrastructure hub, a symbol of soccer's rapid growth in the United States, and a long-term legacy project.

With Inter Miami, David Beckham has built more than just a club—he has created an ecosystem that blends sport, business, and culture. The journey has been long, filled with setbacks and skepticism. But with a new stadium and a championship title, the vision has become reality.

As Beckham himself put it: "I always wanted to build something that lasts—something bigger than myself."

By John Heinrich



Photo Source: Pixabay

# The Florida Edit: Off to the Florida Keys

There are places you visit for a moment - and there are places that quietly change the way you feel, the way you move, even the way you think.

The Florida Keys are not loud about it. They don't need to be. Their magic lies in something far more subtle.

Stretching like a string of islands between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, the Keys feel like a natural transition - not just geographically, but emotionally. Leaving the mainland behind and heading south toward Key West, something begins to shift. The air feels warmer, softer. The colors intensify. And with every mile, life seems to slow down just enough for you to notice it again.

But the Florida Keys are not just a beautiful escape. They are a place shaped by time, water, and resilience. Thousands of years ago, these islands were formed from ancient coral reefs, rising slowly as sea levels changed. What you see today is the exposed spine of a prehistoric reef system - fragile, unique, and deeply connected to the surrounding ecosystems. Long before travelers arrived, the Keys were home to indigenous tribes like the Calusa and Tequesta, who understood how to live with the rhythm of the water rather than against it.

That relationship with nature still defines the Keys today. Mangroves, shallow flats, and coral habitats create an environment that feels alive in a very quiet, almost humbling way. It's not dramatic nature - it's intentional, balanced, and deeply interconnected. In the early 20th century, the Florida Keys became the stage for one of the boldest visions in American history.

Industrialist Henry Flagler set out to build the Overseas Railroad, connecting the islands all the way to Key West. At the time, it seemed nearly impossible - constructing railways across open water, battling unpredictable weather, and working against the limits of engineering.

And yet, it was completed. The railroad stood as a symbol of ambition and belief - until the devastating Labor Day Hurricane of 1935 destroyed large sections of it, leaving behind fragments of what once was considered the "Eighth Wonder of the World."

But the story didn't end there.

## A place shaped by time, water, and resilience

From the remains of that railway, a new path was created - one that would define the Keys for generations to come: the Overseas Highway. Today, it is one of the most iconic drives in the world. Not because of speed or efficiency, but because of what it allows you to experience.

Driving the Overseas Highway is not about getting somewhere quickly. It's about being present in between.

Endless stretches of water in shades of deep blue and bright turquoise surround you. Bridges seem to float above the ocean. And somewhere along the way, without even realizing it, you start to let go of everything that felt urgent before. The Florida Keys have always attracted

people searching for something different. Over the decades, fishermen, artists, writers, and free spirits have all found their way here. Especially in Key West, that legacy is still alive - in the colorful streets, the open conversations, the feeling that individuality is not just accepted, but celebrated.

But beyond the culture, beyond the history, there is something else the Keys offer - something harder to describe.

They offer space. Space to breathe. Space to slow down. Space to reconnect - not only with nature, but with yourself.

Sunsets here are not just something you watch. They are something you pause for. People gather, not because they have to, but because it feels right. There is a shared understanding that some moments deserve your full attention.

And maybe that's what makes the Florida Keys so special:

They gently remind you of what truly matters.

Not in an overwhelming way. Not in a forced way.

But in a quiet, almost effortless way. Because once you begin to understand the Keys - their origins, their history, their connection to the ocean - you stop seeing them as just a destination. You start seeing them as an experience layered with meaning.

They are where nature and human ambition have met, challenged each other, and ultimately learned to coexist. They are where time feels different - not slower in a lazy way, but softer, more intentional.

They are where you don't feel the need to rush to the next thing - because being exactly where you are suddenly feels enough.

And that is something rare. The Florida Keys don't try to impress you with excess.

They don't overwhelm you with options.

They simply invite you in - and allow you to experience them in your own way.

And for those who are open to it, that experience becomes something unforgettable.

Because the Florida Keys are not just a place you visit.

They are a place you feel.

A place you carry with you.

And once you've been there, a part of you will always want to return.

By Katharina Kaufmann

**You can reach us  
anytime for inquiries  
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[booking@daria-us.com](mailto:booking@daria-us.com)

## Daria US Property Management LLC's Monthly: Home Tips & Insights

As Southwest Florida transitions into spring, homeowners are greeted with warmer temperatures, blooming landscapes—and the return of high humidity, frequent rain showers, and the early stages of storm season. While this time of year brings natural beauty, it also requires a proactive approach to home maintenance.

For full-time residents, this means preparing your property for changing conditions. But for seasonal residents and vacation homeowners, it presents a different challenge: how to protect a home when you're not there to monitor it.

This is where professional property management becomes not just helpful—but essential.

### Daria US Property Management LLC

[booking@daria-us.com](mailto:booking@daria-us.com)

At Daria US Property Management LLC, we specialize in caring for homes as if they were our own—providing reliable, professional service so you can enjoy your property without stress.

### Property Management Tip

Spring is the ideal time to establish a maintenance and inspection routine. Preparing now ensures your home is ready before the peak of rainy and hurricane season arrives.

### Spring & Rainy Season Checklist

Taking preventative steps now can help avoid costly repairs later in the year. A well-prepared home is far less likely to suffer damage during heavy rains or extended humidity. Here are a few key areas every homeowner should focus on:

- **Roof & Gutters:** Inspect for loose tiles, cracks, or blockages. Proper drainage is critical to prevent leaks and water intrusion.
- **Windows & Doors:** Check seals and caulking to keep moisture out and maintain energy efficiency.
- **HVAC System:** Service your air conditioning unit early. A well-functioning system helps control humidity and prevents mold growth.
- **Outdoor Areas:** Trim trees, clear drains, and ensure landscaping directs water away from the home.
- **Plumbing & Appliances:** Inspect for small leaks under sinks, around water heaters, and behind appliances—these can quickly worsen in humid conditions.

Even minor issues can escalate quickly in Florida's climate. What starts as a small drip or clogged gutter can turn into water damage, mold, or structural problems within weeks.

### A Smart Investment

Many homeowners think of property management as an added expense—but in reality, it often saves money in the long run. Preventative maintenance reduces the likelihood of major repairs, preserves property value, and keeps homes in top condition year-round.

### Why Property Management Matters

For homeowners who are away for part of the year, the risks increase significantly. Without regular checks, problems can go unnoticed until they become expensive emergencies.

A professional property management company provides consistent oversight and ensures your home is cared for—even in your absence. Services typically include:

- Scheduled property inspections with detailed reports
- Preventative maintenance coordination
- Storm preparation, including securing outdoor areas
- Post-storm inspections to catch damage early
- Vendor coordination for pool care, landscaping, cleaning, and repairs

In addition, having a local professional means faster response times when something unexpected happens—whether it's a leaking pipe, power outage, or storm-related issue.

### Peace of Mind for Snowbirds & Vacation Homeowners

Southwest Florida is a popular destination for seasonal living, and many homeowners spend months away from their property. During that time, the combination of heat, humidity, and storms can take a toll.

Property management offers peace of mind by ensuring your home is regularly checked, properly maintained, and always ready for your return. Instead of worrying from afar, homeowners can relax knowing that someone is keeping a close eye on their investment.

# From a German Classroom to an American High School Movie

**M**oving to Florida — for many, it sounds like a dream. But my family and I took the leap.

I am seventeen years old — and until that moment, I had never experienced a move in my life. In our small town in Germany, everything was familiar, safe, and taken for granted. My sister and I had grown up there surrounded by the same circle of friends — children we had known before we could even walk. Our families were close, I knew the paths to my friends’ homes better than my own route to school, and we had each other’s stories memorized by heart.

**New Girl, New World, New Version of Me.**

And then: Florida. Sunshine, palm trees, beaches — an entirely new life. A month ago, I stood with my mom amid a sea of suitcases in a house that felt utterly foreign. I rearranged my room, pushed furniture back and forth, and pinned up the letters and farewell gifts from my friends — as if I could paste a piece of my old life onto these new walls. We took in the new surroundings: unfamiliar sounds, strange streets, unknown faces. But for a teenager like me, none of that was the most thrilling part of moving to America.

Because the real highlight was waiting just ten minutes away by bicycle: my new high school. The original plan had been different. I could have attended a school where three of my German friends were already enrolled — we had met at the Young Manager Academy 2025, and going there would have meant a ready-made social circle from day one. Everything would have been easy. And yet, I chose not to.

I wanted the challenge. I wanted to prove to myself that I could start over completely on my own — knowing no one, with no one who spoke my language. So I chose Island Coast High School in our new neighborhood, just a ten-minute bike ride away. No long car trips, no depending on anyone for a ride. Independence and flexibility had always been important to me back in Germany, and I wasn’t about to let that change.

And so there I was on my first day,

printed schedule in hand, navigating an enormous building where — unlike anything I had known in Germany — the teachers stay in their rooms while the students move from class to class. A fellow student had given me a quick tour after enrollment, but I was still hopelessly lost.

It felt exactly like being dropped into an American high school movie — except this time, I was the new girl. The day began with an unexpected twist: because I had initially been placed in several lower-level courses — some shared with younger students — more than one person mistook me for a teacher. Students in the hallways looked at me with puzzled expressions; no one recognized me. I wandered around with my printed schedule like a map through uncharted territory, and I suspect I looked every bit as lost as I felt.

But whenever a teacher noticed the paper in my hands, they would walk straight over and ask where I needed to go. And not just that — they didn’t simply point me in the right direction; they walked me there themselves. I had never in my life encountered teachers so genuinely helpful and engaged.

The subjects on my schedule were unlike anything I had seen before: Aerospace Technology and Forensic Science — both genuinely fascinating. A few classes were more familiar, like physical education, and it was there that I made my first real acquaintance. The introduction was, admittedly, a little embarrassing. I tried to pull open the gym door — and failed. I could see more students approaching behind me. A boy had been watching, and I stepped aside for him, completely flustered. He opened the door effortlessly. Pull, not push. “Well,” I thought, “that’s quite a start.”

He figured out immediately that I was new. During class, he explained the rules of the game, helped me find my footing on the team, and we talked for a long time. Afterward, he walked me to my next classroom. When I asked how lunch worked, he told me to wait outside my next class when it ended — he would come find me, and we would go together so he could show me everything.

What continues to amaze me is how genuinely warm and welcoming people are here. My second day brought more of the same. In the hallways, people I barely knew were already waving at me. Students I had never spoken to looked my way — curious, friendly. It felt as though I was slowly becoming visible.

I was still carrying my schedule around when it led to yet another memorable encounter. A pleasant woman stopped me and asked where I was headed. She walked me to my classroom and we chatted along the way — about my classes, about how I was settling in. I mentioned, as politely as I could, that some of the academic content felt somewhat less challenging compared to what I had been used to in Germany, though I was deeply grateful for the chance to find my footing first. Only at the end of our conversation did it emerge: she was the school principal. On the third day, I was called out of my very first class to visit the Student Office and meet with my counselor. In the American school system, a counselor is something like an academic advisor — someone who manages schedules, academic planning, and college preparation.

My counselor, Miss Albertson, greeted me with a warm smile and said: “The principal came to see me yesterday. We think you’re not being challenged here — and we want to give you the best possible preparation for college.”

**More than Sunshine and Palm Trees: Finding a home in the unknown.**

Together, we overhauled my entire schedule. More demanding courses. Classes that would earn me college credit. She listened to my wishes with genuine care, worked hard to have my German coursework recognized, and patiently explained every option available to me and how the system worked.

Before I left, she picked up the classroom phone and called the teacher I was about to have, letting him know his new student was on her way. When I arrived at his room, he was already waiting at the door. He smiled, introduced me to the class, and enthusiastically announced that I had just arrived from Germany and would be joining them. The class welcomed me warmly, and a few of the girls even waved.

**From German Roots to Florida Sun.**

In the days that followed, teachers whose classes I had left due to the schedule change stopped me in the hallway to say they were sorry I was no longer in their courses. Even the principal checked in again — asking whether the new classes suited me better and whether I felt at home.

By Friday of my first week, I was already meeting up with a girl I had befriended on day one. We had clicked instantly, and by now she has become one of my closest friends here.

I also have a regular lunch group now. We laugh together and swap stories. They ask me all sorts of questions about Germany, and in turn I learn so much about their world and their culture.

Then came the next challenge I had set for myself: joining the school tennis team. The process involved a small bureaucratic marathon — more paperwork than I expected — but the teachers rallied around me, helped with forms, walked me through the procedures, and pushed everything through as quickly as possible so I could start without delay.

The team itself is wonderful. The girls are warm, open, and driven. Training with them is genuinely joyful. Everyone supports one another; no one is left out; and the whole spirit of the group is about fun and being together. I could not have imagined a better start to my high school experience. I wanted the challenge — and now I sit at lunch with my own group of friends, I have demanding and interesting courses, I play tennis every day with a team I love, and I spend my free time with people who have become important to me. I have grown, stretched beyond what I thought I could do, and collected more meaningful experiences in a few weeks than I ever expected.

*By Feline Lantman*  
*PS: I have learned this: sometimes the greatest adventure begins precisely in the moment you choose the unfamiliar path over the safe one — and I cannot wait to see what this path still has in store for me.*

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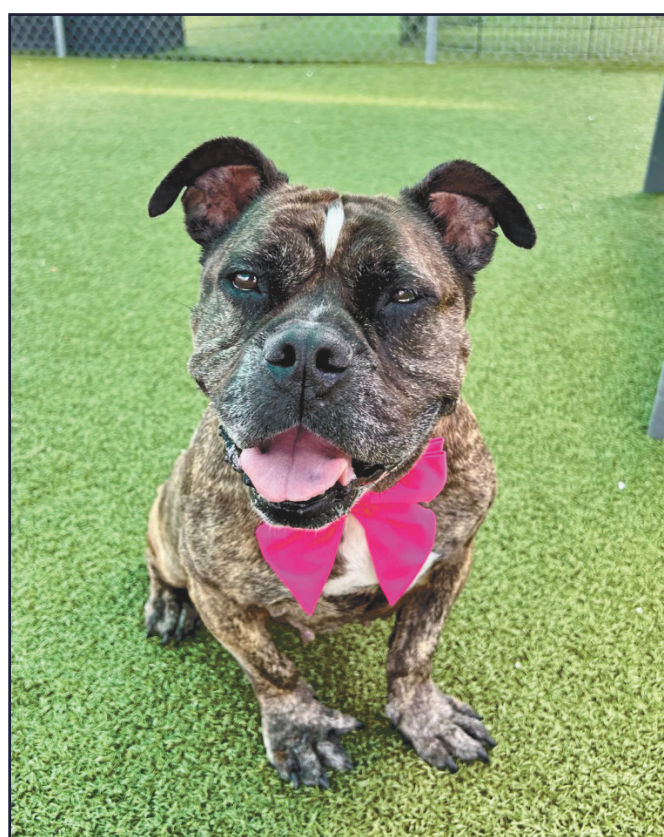
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# Hidden Sparks: Pets Looking to Shine

Some companions don't arrive in a rush. They don't demand attention or fill every moment with energy. Instead, they offer something quieter—something steady, gentle, and deeply comforting. The kind of presence that turns ordinary days into something warm and meaningful. This month, we're introducing two souls from the Cape Coral Animal Shelter who remind us that not every spark needs to shine brightly to be powerful. Some glow softly, offering calm, connection, and a sense of home that grows stronger with time. Because sometimes, the greatest gift a pet can bring into your life is not only love and companionship, but also a deep sense of peace. Maybe one of these furry souls is waiting just for you—ready to shine in their own beautiful way.

by Jennifer Hagemeister



## RACHEL

Rachel is a 5–7-year-old female — a friendly, easygoing girl with a gentle soul and a big heart. She loves her people and prefers to take life one relaxed moment at a time, finding joy in calm routines and quiet companionship. She's not one to rush through life. Rachel enjoys leisurely walks, cozy naps, and simply being near the people she cares about. Her peaceful nature makes her the kind of companion who brings balance and warmth into everyday life, reminding you to slow down and enjoy the little moments.

Rachel would be happiest in a home where life is shared at a comfortable pace—quiet mornings, relaxed afternoons, and peaceful evenings together. If you're looking for a steady, loving sidekick who will bring calm and kindness into your world, Rachel just might be your perfect match. Her adoption fee is \$225.



Photos courtesy of Cape Coral Animal Shelter.

## SOPHIA

Sophia is a 12+ year-young female — a super senior with a heart full of love and a gentle spirit that makes every moment feel a little softer. She may be in her golden years, but what she offers is something truly special: calm companionship, quiet affection, and a presence that feels like home.

Sophia enjoys the simple things in life—soft beds, gentle pets, and being close to her people. She loves attention and will happily soak up all the love you have to give, returning it in her own sweet and peaceful way. There's no rush with her, no demands—just a steady, comforting connection.

She's looking for a calm and cozy home where she can spend her golden years feeling safe, cherished, and truly loved. If you're searching for a loyal companion with a tender soul, Sophia might be the perfect match. Her adoption fee is \$40.

### 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](http://www.capecoralanimalshelter.com)

# Indoor Fun for Kids in Southwest Florida

Where to go when it rains or the heat is too much!

In Southwest Florida, summer doesn't just mean sunshine—it also brings intense heat, high humidity, and sudden thunderstorms. For families, this can quickly make outdoor play uncomfortable or unsafe. But there's good news: Fort Myers and Cape Coral are home to a variety of indoor attractions and public spaces that keep kids active, engaged and entertained—no matter the weather. Whether your child loves high energy thrills, imaginative play, technology experiences or calm storytelling, this guide has something for every age and interest.

With this range of choices — from exciting slides and karts to learning spaces and tech adventures — even the hottest or rainiest day can turn into a memorable family outing in Southwest Florida.

By S. Mechalik, Anja Behrendt

## High Speed Fun

### 1. FastTrax — Fort Myers (Indoor Go Karts)

FastTrax offers indoor go kart racing that's especially appealing to older kids and teenagers who want a bit more speed and competition. The track has hosted multi level racing and features electric powered karts that provide a safe but exhilarating experience. While operations have shifted over time, local families still remember it as one of the region's go to spots for teen adrenaline. (Check local listings for current status and hours.)

*Best for: ages 8+ (teens especially)*

*Typical price: ~\$20–\$30 per race*

## Planning Tips for Parents

- Check age recommendations and session times ahead of visiting — some attractions offer toddler only hours or special events.
- Weekday mornings are generally quieter at indoor play venues.
- Libraries and story times are a great free option for younger kids and a respite from high energy spaces.

## A Hidden Gem: Public Libraries with Kids Programs

An often-overlooked option—especially appreciated by local families—is the Lee County Library System, with multiple branches offering free story times, craft sessions, and educational programs for children.

### 1. Lakes Regional Library — Fort Myers

A spacious and vibrant branch near Lakes Park, this library offers a large children's section, comfy reading nooks, and frequent kids programs. Parents often bring toddlers for weekly “story times” or early literacy activities, and older children enjoy browsing titles on their own. The friendly staff can help find books by theme or age.

*Best for: toddlers to early elementary*

### 2. Fort Myers Regional Library — Downtown

Located in the heart of Fort Myers, this library is a great stop on a rainy afternoon. In addition to story time sessions and family literacy events, it often hosts themed weeks (dinosaurs, space, crafts) and offers a cozy environment for reading, coloring and group activities.

*Best for: all ages*

## Tech & Immersive Play

### 1. Sandbox VR — Fort Myers

5.0•Venues & Event Spaces•Open For tech savvy kids and teens, Sandbox VR delivers a high end virtual reality adventure. Players wear motion tracking gear and explore fully immersive worlds with friends—solving challenges and working as a team. It's a unique indoor experience that blends gaming, social interaction, and physical movement.

*Best for: ages 10+*

*Typical price: ~\$40–\$50 per person*

## Thrills & Active Play

### 1. Sky Zone Trampoline Park — Fort Myers

A classic destination for high energy kids, this indoor trampoline park features bouncy courts, dodgeball areas and foam landing pits that let children jump, flip and play safely. Sky Zone also offers party packages, making it perfect for birthdays. Activities vary by age group, and supervised sessions keep things fun and controlled.

*Best for: ages 5+ (toddler hours available)*

*Typical price: ~\$15–\$25 per hour*

### 2. Slick City Action Park — Fort Myers

This indoor slide and activity park is one of the newest and most exciting spots for kids and families. With numerous dry slides ranging from mild to thrilling, spiral tunnels, “air courts” for dodgeball and jumps, and a soft play area just for younger children, Slick City is designed for all day adventure. They also host special events like sensory friendly hours and family themed days.

*Best for: kids 4+ (junior areas for younger)*

*Typical price: ~\$28–\$34 per session*

## Family Style Indoor Entertainment

### 1. HeadPinz Entertainment Center — Fort Myers

A mix of bowling lanes, arcade games, laser tag and casual dining, HeadPinz is a playful place where families can linger for hours. Kids can bowl a few frames, switch to video games, and grab a snack without leaving the building. While it tends to be lively and energetic (especially in the evenings), it's a solid choice when you want several activities in one spot.

*Best for: ages 6+*

*Prices: pay per activity*

# From Golden Edges to First Place

## A Love Letter to Bread, Tradition, and the Bakery That Became Number One



If success had a scent in Cape Coral, it would probably begin with the unmistakable aroma of freshly baked bread drifting through the morning air, slowly transition into the rich, comforting notes of a simmering goulash by midday, and end - almost inevitably - with something sweet enough to make even the strongest willpower quietly surrender. Somehow, all of that leads to one place: Daria's German Bakery & Bistro. And as of this year, it leads somewhere else as well - straight to the very top.

Awarded first place among all bakeries in the Caloosahatchee region, Daria's has achieved something that cannot be faked, rushed, or engineered overnight. It is the result of consistency, craftsmanship, and a deeply rooted belief that tradition is not a trend, but a responsibility. The recognition comes from BusinessRate, a nationwide platform that looks far beyond simple star ratings. Instead of relying on surface-level impressions, it evaluates businesses through a comprehensive scoring system that measures not only recent customer satisfaction, but also long-term consistency, the authenticity and depth of reviews, and perhaps

most importantly how a business performs in direct comparison to its local competitors.

In other words, this is not about who had a good week. It is about who delivers, again and again. And when all of those factors are combined into a single performance score, one conclusion becomes impossible to ignore: Daria's German Bakery & Bistro is not just popular, it is performing at the highest level in the region. With an impressive 4.9-star average on Google, the bakery has built something far more valuable than attention. It has built trust. And trust, as it turns out, is what turns first-time visitors into regulars, and regulars into enthusiastic ambassadors.

But numbers alone never tell the full story. To understand why Daria's has reached this point, one has to step inside. Or perhaps even more telling, take a moment to simply stand outside and notice what happens. People arrive with intention, but they rarely leave in a hurry. Conversations linger, recommendations are exchanged, and somewhere between the first bite and the last sip of coffee, it becomes clear that this is not just a place you visit. It is a place you return to.

At the heart of it all lies a philosophy that sounds simple, yet is surprisingly rare: do things the right way, even if it takes longer. At Daria's, recipes are not shortcuts, but inheritances. Ingredients are chosen with care, not convenience. And time is treated as an essential ingredient rather than an obstacle. The result is a bakery that still honors its roots - with fresh breads, pastries, and cakes prepared daily - while at the same time evolving into something far more dynamic. Under the guidance of Jörg "Joe" Domscheit, whose presence behind

the counter is as reassuring as it is unmistakable, the bakery has grown into a bistro experience that extends well beyond the morning hours. Guests now find themselves drawn in not only by the promise of exceptional baked goods, but by a menu that celebrates the depth and comfort of German cuisine. Whether it is a perfectly crisp schnitzel - for the particularly ambitious, even in an XXL version - a rich and deeply satisfying goulash, tender roulades, or a Döner Kebab (coming soon) that would earn approving nods in Berlin, the food carries with it something that is difficult to replicate: authenticity.

And just when a meal seems complete, the dessert counter quietly reminds you that restraint is, in this particular setting, more of a suggestion than a rule. Chocolate cake, cheesecake, and a rotating selection of sweet creations make it remarkably easy to reconsider even the most disciplined intentions — and, truthfully, no one here seems particularly concerned if you do.

Yet what ultimately sets Daria's apart is not just what is served, but how it feels. There is a natural ease to the way guests are welcomed, a familiarity in the way conversations unfold, and a quiet attentiveness to details from the layout of the space to the convenience of accessible parking directly in front that signals genuine care. It is not a performance of hospitality, but its natural expression. And while no ranking system can fully capture that, it is precisely this authenticity that systems like BusinessRate are increasingly able to recognize.

With recognition, of course, comes growth. And growth, in this case, brings opportunity. Daria's Gastronomy is currently expanding its team and inviting those who share a passion for quality, tradition, and real hospitality

to become part of the journey. Whether as a baker or in service, the approach is refreshingly straightforward: walk in, introduce yourself, and let the conversation begin. Sometimes, the best opportunities are the ones that do not require a formal invitation — just the willingness to step through the door.

And while reaching number one would be a fitting highlight for many businesses, here it feels more like a beginning than a conclusion. Because even now, the next chapter is already taking shape. Later this year, Daria's German Restaurant will open in North Cape Coral, expanding the concept into a full dining and event experience where exceptional food meets live music, celebrations, and shared moments. At the same time, a second bakery location in Fort Myers Downtown, located at the Daria headquarters, will bring the same dedication to quality and tradition to an even broader audience.

What lies ahead is not just growth, but momentum - the kind that builds when passion meets consistency and is recognized by the very people it aims to serve. And perhaps that is the most remarkable part of this story: despite all the success, the door still feels open. Whether you come for the bread, stay for the atmosphere, return for the food, or decide to become part of the team, there is a sense that you are not just visiting a business, but joining something that is still unfolding.

Because in the end, this is no longer just about a bakery. It is about what happens when tradition is taken seriously, when quality is non-negotiable, and when a community responds by making you number one. Blue. Gold. Daria. And a story that is just getting started.

*By Jacob Kugmun*



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# Sunshine Post Series on Healthy Aging: Part 6

**N**utrition. There is hardly any other topic that generates as much advice as eating and drinking. And that's no surprise, since food intake—that is, eating AND drinking—is one of the basic needs of every human being, alongside sleep. Before we dive into practical recommendations on healthy aging nutrition, we need to discuss a few basic principles of nutrition.

In previous issues, we've already explained that the body converts food into energy and that some foods have different energy values than others. I'd like to briefly recap that here. We divide nutrients into macronutrients and micronutrients. Macronutrients are the three main nutrients—carbohydrates, proteins, and fats—which the body needs in large quantities to produce energy and maintain basic bodily functions. They provide calories for metabolism, muscle growth, and wound healing. Micronutrients are essential substances such as vitamins, minerals, and trace elements, which, unlike macronutrients, your body needs only in very small amounts. Since the body can almost never produce these on its own, they must be regularly obtained through food. There are a few general formulas we'd like to share here. I like to describe the body as an energy exchanger. When you eat, energy is supplied to the body, which the body then uses up throughout the day depending on your activity level. If the body uses less energy than was supplied, it stores the rest “for a rainy day.” There is a basal metabolic rate—essentially the energy consumed even while resting—and an activity-related metabolic rate. The more intense the activity, the higher the additional activity-related metabolic rate. The brain consumes approximately 25% of the basal metabolic rate. Yes, even while resting. Another approximately

25% is consumed by the skeletal muscles. However, I can influence this—as already mentioned in the section on muscles—and increase the basal metabolic rate by building muscle. Thus, people with well-trained muscles effectively burn energy even while sleeping (e.g., fat, when there are no more carbohydrates left to burn). The unit for energy here is kilojoules, or

kilocalories.

In this unit, I can measure both intake and expenditure.

If your goal is to lose weight, there is a very simple formula: The currency is calories. Your task is the reverse bank account. You must expend more calories than you consume. We need another fundamental insight to approach “species-appropriate” nutrition: Every day, the body renews numerous cells; in this process, the parent cell dies and copies its information onto two daughter cells. Just like in a drawing, the information gradually fades during the copying process. We call this process: AGING

Once you understand that proteins make up more than 50% of a cell's mass, it becomes clear that a protein-rich diet, among other things, ensures better copying quality.

There's also a simple rule of thumb for protein needs: body weight x 1.5 in grams

**Example:** a 100 kg person needs 150 g of protein per day. That would be, for example, about 600 g of chicken breast per day. This helps me maintain my muscles. It won't make them grow yet. Chicken breast has a very good protein-to-fat ratio here. If I were to calculate

using pork cutlets, we'd be looking at a good 2 pieces... at 1.5 kg each! Unfortunately, though, due to the breading and the inherently fattier meat, I'd also be consuming some nutrients that I'd prefer to limit.

So if muscle building is the goal, the protein requirement will be even higher. In general, protein requirements increase with age—because the body's

repair

mechanisms become less efficient. And now take a look at the food served in hospitals...

Hospital stays are like muscle-wasting camps.

Largely immobile (though only partially

by necessity) and without a proper protein intake, we leave the hospital permanently weakened.

When it comes to weight management, protein has another advantage: The body uses energy to digest, absorb, and transport food. Protein has the highest thermic effect. About 20–30% of the protein calories consumed are burned off during digestion, compared to only 5–10% for carbohydrates and 0–3% for fats.

So you could say: Protein calories only count as half on the income side of my “bank account.” It helps keep your account in the red. Plus, protein keeps you full longer.

Now take a look at an average day:

Breakfast in the morning: cereal or bread (high in carbs)

Lunch: pasta, pizza, or something similar (high in carbs)

Dinner: bread, chips, and beer (high in carbs)

That would be the perfect diet if you were competing in an Ironman. But not for a desk job. Protein-rich foods

are essential for muscle building, satiety, and bodily functions. The best sources include soy granules (approx. 51g/100g), dried meat (39g), pumpkin seeds (35g), hard cheeses like Parmesan (approx. 30g), fish (tuna/salmon), chicken breast (approx. 24g), lentils/beans (approx. 22g), tofu (15g), quark (10-12g), and eggs (12.6g).

Where's the enjoyment in that??? Schnitzel and burgers just taste best to me... Of course they do. Fat is a flavor carrier. Just please be aware that schnitzel and burgers don't just cost you the price on the menu—they also deduct time and energy from your other account. Time you have to spend “burning off” the excess energy through physical activity, or time that will be deducted from your life at the end because you chose to “store” the energy rather than burn it off.

My personal tips:

Start the day with plenty of protein: You'll find a super simple and delicious recipe for this in the “Recipe of the Month” section of this issue.

Water and tea instead of juices and sodas: Juices are a hidden sugar trap, because fructose is also sugar.

Cut back on side dishes: Eat plenty of meat and vegetables, and ideally skip the sides entirely. Hara Hachi Bu: This philosophy suggests that you stop eating when your stomach is about 80 percent full, rather than eating until you're completely full or feel bloated.

Background: It takes about 15 to 20 minutes for the brain to fully register the feeling of fullness. Those who stop before they are “completely full” feel just the right amount of fullness a short time later, without an unpleasant bloated feeling. It originates from Okinawa, a region known for its many centenarians, and is based on Confucian teachings.

By Clemens Müller

## Have You Ever Been Frustrated?

**Perhaps because your efforts to be happier simply vanished: Blown away by some circumstance or event?**

Today I'll give you insights into why this happens so often and how you can avoid these pitfalls.

Let me illustrate what I mean:

When you're feeling down, sad, grumpy, and frustrated, you want to improve this feeling and do something about it. Whatever it is: a walk, a warm bath, something to let off steam (sports, watching a movie...). Almost as if you were sticking a brightly colored Post-it note on your current gloomy outlook, bringing that famous ray of sunshine. The thing is, these things don't stick that well—they don't leave any residue, but they also come off very easily. This means you can brighten things up every now and then by brightening your appearance with a small act, giving your facade a bit of a makeover. And when that one “post-it,” that little “do-it-good” note, falls off, hopefully it won't be too long before another bright spot appears... bam, another “post-it”! Or you could make a conscious effort to create bright spots more often—meaning you can stick a “post-it” more often, because then the balance between bright and murky areas will improve. However, you might find that when you're going about your daily routine, and, for example, your boss at work is bombarding you with tasks like a whirlwind, most of your “post-it” notes can't withstand the strain and simply fall off... Then you notice that the more “post-its” are stuck together and on top of each other, the more stable the whole thing becomes against such storms of life... until... an event forces you to move more than usual for a short time, and suddenly a large part of the “post-it” shield falls away all at once, revealing the dreary surface of your being once again.

In my experience, these little moments stuck on top are often a lot of fun, but

like a “post-it,” they only cover a spot/issue temporarily because they're only meant to brighten the spot/issue and cover the dark spot with their own color structure. And that's universal, on pretty much any surface... But how can you brighten that dreary surface in the long term? To stick with the analogy: imagine your surface not as smooth, but as a unique structure with many small indentations in various arrangements. The “post-it” notes have stuck to the highest points of this structure.

However, if, instead of relying on random novelty items, you consciously observe and experiment to discover which “happiness boosters” truly satisfy your needs—which are, so to speak, the counterparts of YOUR structure—these will not only settle on the highest points but will also integrate into the indentations of your structure, thus forming a longer-lasting bond and creating a lasting brightening effect.

They don't just cover a gap, but fill a deficiency. Structure fillers that are a perfect match for you leave only small, uneven areas of your surface between them, giving your surface a new radiance. In contrast, “post-it” notes are merely temporary fixes.

The biggest problem in finding the right structure fillers is often impatience. Understandably, you don't want to be unhappy any longer and want to achieve a quick improvement. But it's absolutely worth finding the right structure of “happiness boosters,” because life's little whirlwinds, which so easily blow away our Post-it notes, are always there. And nothing is more frustrating than constantly piecing together patchwork solutions that fall apart at the slightest bump, forcing us to start all over again.

You can find the right structure by exploring the topics of: conditioning, personal needs, courage, and honesty—because it's about finding individual happiness boosters that match your needs and filtering out any triggers stemming from your conditioning. These are often partly responsible for the gusts and whirlwinds.

And let's also take a look at the widespread topic of “becoming calmer” or “finding your center.” There are many great approaches and valuable support available. In my opinion, however, one component is often overlooked.

For example, when I look at and read about the 7 pillars of resilience, this thought resonates with me: here are instructions on how to function well again.

**Optimism:** Looking positively to the future.

**Acceptance:** Accepting given facts that cannot be changed.

**Self-efficacy:** Believing in one's own strength.

**Personal responsibility:** Not remaining in the victim role.

**Network orientation:** Cultivating social relationships.

**Solution orientation:** Actively seeking ways out of crises.

**Future planning:** Setting and pursuing goals.

All objective points that are absolutely valid and effective—but in my opinion, they overlook an important aspect: The development of emotional intelligence through experiencing the full spectrum of emotions. Experiencing the feelings of even a seemingly negative situation. We live in a polarity, but always only want the sunny side and desperately search for tips on how to bring it back without having to “take” the dark side. We look for the middle ground

somewhere at the bottom of the sunny side, without knowing exactly where it is. – Understand me correctly: I do NOT mean that something bad should happen to everyone so they know the “other side.” I'm talking about how, in my experience, fully experiencing feelings of fear, and perhaps even the resulting paralysis, diminishes their power—revealing your inner balance and allowing you to feel and experience the highs much more consciously.

For me, this means not forcibly trying to calm our system, but rather experiencing, embracing, and expressing what forces us into blocking patterns through emotion. Allowing feelings to surface in order to release the previously pent-up energy from them. Development through experience. Prevention only leads to stagnation!

To put it simply: first, get out of your center—experience the feelings so that you automatically find your center afterward. Because only experiences lived WITH feelings change behavioral patterns as effectively as long-term repetitions.

A striking example of this emotional transformation from my own experience comes from grief work: As a funeral director for many years, I've been able to observe many different cultural contexts during this time.

Where German/Central European mourning culture is characterized by “silent grief” and “being strong,” mourners in Southern Europe often give free rein to their grief loudly—sometimes to the point of exhaustion and fainting. What sounds tragic and strange to us at first has a striking, visible effect: The grief is fully experienced with all its emotions in a short time

Read more on the next page →

and therefore transforms much more quickly into loving memories than with mourners who keep their emotions to themselves for a long time, carry them internally, or perhaps don't show them at all.

Showing feelings is anything but a weakness—it is courageous, strong, and liberating. Unfortunately, we are often socially conditioned and

influenced to see things differently.

It's a clear, metaphorical principle:

If I sit on one side of a seesaw with all my baggage, it will never balance. Only when I release both sides (suffering and joy, dark and light, fear and curiosity...) and experience their full range can I find my center and find peace in equilibrium. This is dynamic, of course, because everything is in flux,

and our seesaw is often subjected to external forces that we can then balance through our awareness, observation, and experience.

For me, this means that living happily requires consciously acknowledging and accepting the dark moments, but feeling them in their entirety, grasping the whole spectrum, in order to emerge from them calmed and strengthened.

This is fundamentally true of life: If you truly realize that you only have a limited time in this life, and internalize this with all its consequences, you will be able to use your time more meaningfully and rediscover joy.

By Matthias Erbacher

## High-Protein Tropical Bowl

This tropical protein bowl combines creamy, chunky cream cheese with sweet mango, dates and a hint of coconut. Perfect as a quick breakfast, healthy snack or light post-workout treat – rich in protein, fibre and natural sweetness.

By Dina Veronique Scheve

### INGREDIENTS (SERVES 1)

- 200 g cream cheese
- 5 dates, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp chopped almonds
- Fresh mango cubes (approx. 100 g)
- 1 tbsp runny honey
- 1 tbsp coconut flakes (for topping)

### NUTRITIONAL VALUES (APPROX. PER SERVING)

- Calories: ~410 kcal
- Protein: ~29 g
- Carbohydrates: ~45 g
- Fat: ~12 g
- Fibre: ~5–6 g

**1** Place the crumbly cream cheese in a bowl and stir until slightly creamy.

**2** Scatter the chopped dates and almonds over the cream cheese.

**3** Then add the fresh mango cubes.

**4** Drizzle with liquid honey and top with coconut flakes. Enjoy immediately.

Tip: For extra freshness: Drizzle with a little juice and zest from an organic lime. For an extra tropical flavour.



Photos courtesy of Dina Veronique Scheve

## Whalestranding in Germany

What the stranding of a humpback whale in the Baltic reveals about large-whale rescue in Germany — and why saving whales matters.

The story of a humpback whale stranded in the Baltic Sea, which would later draw international attention, began in early March with a case of misidentification. When the animal appeared in the harbor of Wismar on March 3, experts from the German Oceanographic Museum initially believed it was a fin whale. Even then, it was clear that the marine mammal was in trouble. Firefighters and the water police freed it from around 50 meters of netting, but the whale could not be fully disentangled. Specialists later confirmed that pieces of rope were still lodged in its mouth. What at first seemed like a spectacular case would become the prelude to a days-long drama on Germany's Baltic coast. When the whale first became stranded on a sandbank off Timmendorfer Strand during the night of March 23, the ordeal turned into a multi-day rescue drama followed by thousands of people via livestreams. It is still unclear why the animal entered the Baltic at all, or why it remained for so long in shallow coastal waters. Only one thing was certain: it was already in poor condition.

The Baltic Sea itself is no place for a great whale: it is shallow, narrow, full of sandbanks and far less salty than the Atlantic — a serious problem for the osmotic barrier of a whale's skin. Put simply, the change in salinity can cause cells to swell and burst, leading to secondary skin infections. Many images of the whale clearly showed such damage. Brief stays in fresh or brackish water, such as dolphins hunting fish in the Everglades, are not generally dangerous. For a large whale trapped for days, however, the situation is very different. The rescue operation near Niendorf revealed two things at once: remarkable commitment and a striking lack of established large-whale rescue routines. On site were staff from the local municipality, the public order office, police, fire brigade, DLRG, water police, coast guard, experts from the ITAW (Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Research), and environmental groups including Greenpeace. Excavators dug a channel toward deeper water under

difficult conditions. One of the most visible figures was marine biologist Robert Marc Lehmann, an experienced whale rescuer, who approached the animal in a wetsuit and assessed its state: "He reacts, he has both eyes open, he vocalizes, but he is incredibly insecure and he is afraid." Lehmann also clearly communicated the broader plan: not just to free the whale, but to keep it safe by escorting it with boats all the way back toward the Atlantic, preventing another stranding. The approach was based on his experience from more than ten whale rescues and on close consultation with international experts, including Ingrid Visser, who has led whale rescue efforts in New Zealand and Australia for decades. The images of him beside the whale shaped public perception of an operation driven by extraordinary personal



Photo Source: Pexels

initiative — by people who did not wait for jurisdictional debates, but acted voluntarily and out of concern for the animal.

During the night of March 27, the humpback whale finally freed itself through the man-made channel. But that did not mean it was safe. Why the whale was not then escorted farther west by boat, as originally planned, remains unclear. Soon after the whale re-stranded. Over the following days, rescuers and specialists repeatedly hoped that rising water levels might allow it to get free on its own; at times, that did happen. On the evening of March 30, it was swimming freely again — but initially in the wrong direction. By March 31, it was stuck once more off the island of Poel. Since then, its condition has continued to deteriorate. On April 1, experts described the whale as severely weakened, no longer reacting to boats or gentle attempts

to prompt movement. As of April 2, it was still lying in the same place in the Kirchsee near Poel, the 500-meter exclusion zone remained in place, and preparations were already underway for a recovery and scientific examination. We must wait to see how this tragedy unfolds; what is certain is that the whale has stranded again and is severely weakened.

A comparison with Florida makes Germany's structural shortcomings especially clear. In the southeastern United States, NOAA officially coordinates responses to strandings and entanglements. There is a national network with more than 120 partner organizations, 24/7 hotlines and clearly defined responsibilities. In Florida alone, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission operates five

marine mammal field stations; regional partners such as the Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute cover large sections of coastline and respond to dozens of marine mammal strandings each year. Germany does have research institutions and committed individuals, but it lacks a similarly established specialist rescue system with permanently trained teams, clear response chains and standardized equipment. It is by no means far-fetched to assume that such incidents will recur — and may become more frequent, especially along German coasts. Humpback whales are not native to the Baltic, but they can stray into it, for example by following schools of small fish. At the same time, several humpback populations have recovered significantly since the end of commercial whaling; experts cite this as one reason why whales are now appearing more often in regions where they had scarcely been seen for decades. The Baltic is also a dangerous

bottleneck: straits, shallow bays, dense shipping traffic, fishing gear and underwater noise can quickly turn a wrong turn into a deadly trap.

So why fight so hard for a single animal? Because whales have more in common with humans than expected. Their brains contain spindle neurons, which, as far as we know, are otherwise found only in humans, great apes and elephants, and are associated with complex social and emotional processes. Whales live in close family structures and have long been considered bearers of culture: behaviors and vocal patterns are passed on socially, and among humpbacks. Song is perhaps the clearest example of cultural transmission. Every year, a new "song" emerges among humpback whales off Western Australia and is carried across the Pacific to Ecuador by many male individuals. And while not all whales share this trait, several toothed whale species also have something rare in common with humans: menopause, after which females may live for many years and lead their offspring and grandchildren as the matriarch of the family. All of this shows that the loss of a whale means more than the death of a single wild animal.

Then there is their ecological significance. NOAA notes that a single great whale binds, on average, around 33 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> in its biomass over the course of its life; when its body sinks to the deep after death, that carbon can remain out of the atmospheric cycle for a long time. There are also indirect effects through nutrient transport in the ocean. The often-cited estimate of more than two million US dollars per great whale is, of course, an economic model rather than a natural constant. But it captures something that is easily lost in public debate: saving a whale is not only an act of compassion toward a suffering animal. It also means protecting intelligence, culture, evolution and a piece of marine ecology. This humpback whale is therefore more than a news story. It is a warning — and a call for Germany to finally build resilient structures for large-whale rescue. By Flurina Fürst

# Revolutionary: How AI Can Transform Your Day

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

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

By Marc Siewert

## DID YOU KNOW?

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

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

## What's your everyday AI Question?

Whether it's a recipe, travel dilemma, or practical tip, send us your most used questions at [info@sunshine-post.com](mailto:info@sunshine-post.com)  
Subject: “AI Prompt Submission”

### Interview Prep

“We're interviewing the team behind a large local gallery. Help us create engaging questions that highlight their creative vision, community impact, and what makes their gallery unique.”

#### AI suggests:

1. Start with their founding story – what inspired the creation of the gallery
2. Ask how they support emerging local artists and creative talent
3. Explore how the gallery connects with the community through events or exhibitions
4. Include a question about current trends in the local art scene
5. End with a personal touch: what art means to them on a deeper level

### Perfect Family Day Planner (Indoor Edition)

“What should families consider for a fun and stress-free experience indoors?”

#### AI suggests:

1. Choose age-appropriate playgrounds with separate toddler and older kids areas
2. Visit during off-peak hours (weekday mornings) to avoid crowds
3. Combine playtime with a nearby café or lunch spot for a full outing
4. Pack essentials like socks, water bottles, and snacks
5. Look for locations that offer party rooms or special themed activities

### Florida Keys Travel Guide

“We're continuing our Florida journey with a stop on the Florida Keys. What should first-time visitors know, and what are the must-see highlights?”

#### AI suggests:

1. Start in Key Largo for snorkeling or diving in John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park
2. Drive the Overseas Highway – one of the most scenic roads in the U.S.
3. Visit Key West for sunsets at Mallory Square and the laid-back island vibe
4. Try local seafood like fresh lobster and key lime pie
5. Plan for a slower pace – the Keys are about relaxing, not rushing

### Memorial Day Reflection & Planning Guide

“We want to create a meaningful Memorial Day celebration. How can we honor the day while also spending quality time with family and friends?”

#### AI suggests:

1. Attend a local Memorial Day ceremony or parade to honor fallen soldiers
2. Take a moment of reflection or visit a veterans memorial
3. Host a backyard gathering with classic American barbecue foods
4. Share stories or learn about the history behind the holiday
5. Balance remembrance with togetherness – the heart of the day lies in both

## Classic American BBQ Menu

### MAIN DISH: GRILLED BBQ RIBS

#### INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4-6)

- 2 kg pork ribs
- 1 cup BBQ sauce (store-bought or homemade, see below)
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 1 tbsp paprika
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper

**1** Mix brown sugar, paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, salt, and pepper to make a dry rub.

**2** Rub the spice mix generously over both sides of the ribs.

**3** Preheat the grill to medium heat.

**4** Cook ribs indirectly (not directly over flames) for 1.5–2 hours, turning occasionally.

**5** Brush BBQ sauce on the ribs during the last 15 minutes of grilling.

**6** Remove and let rest for 5–10 minutes before slicing.

### 1. SIDE DISH: CLASSIC AMERICAN COLESLAW

#### INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4-6)

- 1 small cabbage, shredded
- 2 carrots, grated
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp sugar
- Salt & pepper to taste

**1** In a large bowl, mix shredded cabbage and carrots.

**2** In a separate bowl, combine mayonnaise, vinegar, sugar, salt, and pepper.

**3** Pour dressing over cabbage mixture and toss until coated.

**4** Chill in fridge for at least 30 minutes before serving.



Photos courtesy of S. Mechalik

### 2. SIDE DISH: GRILLED CORN ON THE COB

#### INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4-6)

- 4 ears of corn, husked
- 2 tbsp butter
- Salt and pepper

**1** Preheat grill to medium heat.

**2** Brush corn with melted butter and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

**3** Grill for 10–15 minutes, turning occasionally, until slightly charred and tender.

#### BBQ SAUCE (OPTIONAL HOMEMADE):

#### INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4-6)

- 1 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- Salt & pepper to taste
- Mix and simmer for 10 minutes until slightly thickened.

### DESSERT: AMERICAN APPLE PIE (MINI VERSION)

#### INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4)

- 2 ready-made pie crusts
- 3 apples, peeled and sliced
- 3 tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp flour
- 1 egg, beaten (for brushing)

**1** Preheat oven to 200°C (400°F).

**2** Mix apples, sugar, cinnamon, and flour.

**3** Cut pie crust into 4 circles; place apple mixture in the center.

**4** Fold edges slightly over filling, brush with egg.

**5** Bake 20–25 minutes until golden brown.

**6** Serve warm with vanilla ice cream, if desired.



# Letter To The Editor

Dear Heike, our dear friend,



Photos courtesy of Anke and Dirk Koch

There are people in life whose true importance cannot be measured by a single moment or gesture, but rather by the quiet, constant presence they bring into our lives - the way they shape our path, support us without hesitation, and enrich our world in ways that are often felt more than they are spoken. You are exactly that kind of person, dear Heike.

Today, as you celebrate your 60th birthday, we want to pause, take a moment, and truly honor you - not just for this special day, but for all the years, memories, and moments that connect us so deeply.

There were times in our lives when things were not easy, when not everything felt certain or secure. And in precisely those moments, you were there - reliable, caring, and

always ready to help without expecting anything in return. You looked after our children so we could go to work, giving us the chance to build something for our family that might not have been possible otherwise. What may have seemed natural and effortless to you meant the world to us. It gave us peace of mind, strength, and opportunities we will forever be grateful for.

Over the years, we have been fortunate enough to share so many wonderful experiences together. Countless vacations, moments full of laughter, joy, and lightness - memories that have become traditions we cherish deeply. And yes, even our love for cruises is something we owe to you. What started as shared experiences has grown into a passion that still accompanies us today, always reminding us of those beautiful times together.

What makes all of this so incredibly special is simply you. Being with you feels easy, natural, and genuine. There is a warmth and honesty in everything you do that creates a space where people feel comfortable, seen, and appreciated. Whether we are traveling, celebrating, or just spending a quiet moment together - it always feels right, always feels complete.

A particularly meaningful part of our journey is that we have continued to grow side by side, even as life evolves and new chapters begin. It fills us with deep joy and gratitude to walk this path together, supported by a foundation of trust, mutual respect, and a true, heartfelt connection. Knowing that we can rely on each other, no matter what, is something we value more than words can fully express. This trust, built over so many years, is what makes our friendship so strong, so rare, and so incredibly precious.

You have a remarkable gift - the ability to give. Not just in the obvious ways, but in the quiet, thoughtful gestures that truly touch people's lives. You give your time, your care, your attention, and your trust so generously, and in doing so, you make the world around you a better, warmer, and more beautiful place.

Today, we simply want to say thank you - from the bottom of our hearts. Thank you for your kindness. Thank you for your strength. Thank you for your unwavering support.

And thank you for all the big and small moments that have shaped our lives in such a meaningful way.

We feel incredibly blessed and grateful to have you by our side, to call you our friend, and to continue this journey together.

With all our love, we wish you the happiest 60th birthday, dear Heike. May this new chapter of your life be filled with joy, health, beautiful experiences, and everything your heart desires.

From the bottom of our hearts,  
Anke and Dirk Koch



# 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.

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

- Marc Schmidt
- Heiko Schotten
- Andrej Hasenkampf
- Anne-Catharina Bielinsky
- Regina Emilie Lissi Worisek
- Sven Roth

**And a special congratulation to:**

- Leander Hehn
- Franz Thomas Fuerst
- Marco Arnoldt
- Tanja Kunz

Would you like to congratulate someone special?

Send us your request at

[info@sunshine-post.com](mailto:info@sunshine-post.com)

and get featured in our next issue!

Subject: "Celebrating Life"

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