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The Heron Herald



FEBRUARY 2026

A Look Inside

LIVING WITH COYOTES

EIGHT WILD MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT FLORIDA, DEBUNKED

TAX SEASON CAN BE STRESSFUL

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IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Deadline for March articles is February 5. Email all submissions to Paula Short, editor - bslnewspaper@yahoo.com

Join Your Neighbors!



For Our Annual Picnic Sponsored By Our Association!

Located off Rio Togas near Burnt Store Road.

Sunday, February 8 - 1 to 3 p.m.

A delicious, complete meal will be provided, with more information to follow.

Plates, silverware, napkins, and water will also be provided.

Win big with a ticket(s) for the 50/50 raffle!

Donations are always greatly appreciated and will be collected at the picnic.

Come for the food and stay for the fellowship and fun reconnecting with old and new neighbors.

We hope to see EVERYONE there!



BSLPOA Architectural Review Update – December 2025

BETTY INGERSON, CHAIRMAN,
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Two Single-Family Home Applications were reviewed by ARC in December. Both were recommended for approval. One was previously unauthorized construction. Six other applications were reviewed. Four were recommended for approval, one was held for additional information, and one was rejected.



Effective December 31, 2025, there were 51 new homes in the approved construction process. Several of the approved homes are experiencing delayed construction or contractor abandonment issues that have resulted in violations of the Association's Clean Site Program. The violations are being addressed on a case-by-case basis using Clean Site and Builder's Completion Deposit Funds to pay for site cleanup. Legal counsel has been engaged to assist in two of these instances.

Six new homes received Certificates of Occupancy this fiscal year (October 2025 – September 2026). Three homes received certificates in December.

The following architectural projects were either approved or conditionally approved by the Burnt Store Lakes Board of Directors during the December 9, 2025, Board Meeting:

ADDRESS	BOARD APPROVED PROJECT
NEW HOMES	
16309 Cayman Ln	**RESUBMITTED SPEC HOME:** 3026 Sq Ft (1,961 AC). 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, den, and 2 car garage with paver driveway. Metal roof color Grizzle Gray. Home color Ice Cube, trim Pure White by Groff Building Contractors. Includes pool and Lake Source.
17519 Ainse Ct	**SPEC HOME:** 2,657 Sq Ft (1,927 AC). 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, office, Florida room, and 2 car garage with paver driveway. Standing seam metal roof color Black. Home color Textured Stucco, trim Miratec by Olympus Designs Group. Includes pool by H2 Pools. This was UNAUTHORIZED CONSTRUCTION.
OTHER CONSTRUCTION	
16579 Cape Horn Blvd	**POOL:** Pool addition by Sunset Pools with mansard style screen enclosure and picket style fencing.
17188 Cape Horn Blvd	**EXTERIOR PAINT & TRIM:** Repaint home White with Dark Brown trim by Holmes Maintenance Services. Previously Yellow with Terra Cotta Trim. Neighboring home is Yellow with White Trim. Empty lot on other side.
24228 Peppercorn Rd	**EXTERIOR PAINT & TRIM:** Repaint home Brown/Mocha with Beige trim by Restoration Solutions. Previously Cream with Ivory trim. Neighboring home is Ivory with Dar Brown trim. Empty lot on other side.
16571 Cape Horn Blvd	**FENCE:** 4 ft high, 60 ft long, black aluminum picket fence with one gate by Owner. Located on the left side of the home and rear pool area.

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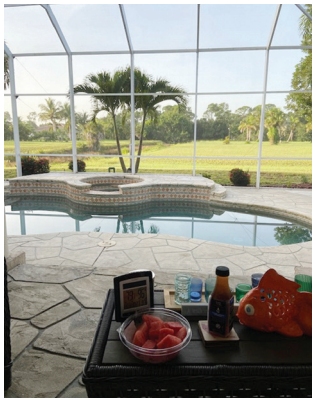
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Edie Johnson, **Director at Large**
Jeanie Jordan, **Director at Large**
Ronald Paul, **Director at Large**

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Architectural Review	Fred Boland
Communications	Edie Johnson
Mechanical and Maintenance	Richard Hefright
Long Range Planning	Jeanie Jordan
Beautification	Richard Hefright
Lakes Quality	Rob Hancik
Drainage and Swales	Ron Paul
County Liaison MSBU's and Coalition County Commissioners, etc.	Rob Hancik
Deed Restrictions Enforcement Document Revisions	Jeanie Jordan

Board of Directors meeting is Tuesday, February 10 at 3 p.m. Meetings are hybrid meetings held in the Community Center and available by Zoom.

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From My Lanai

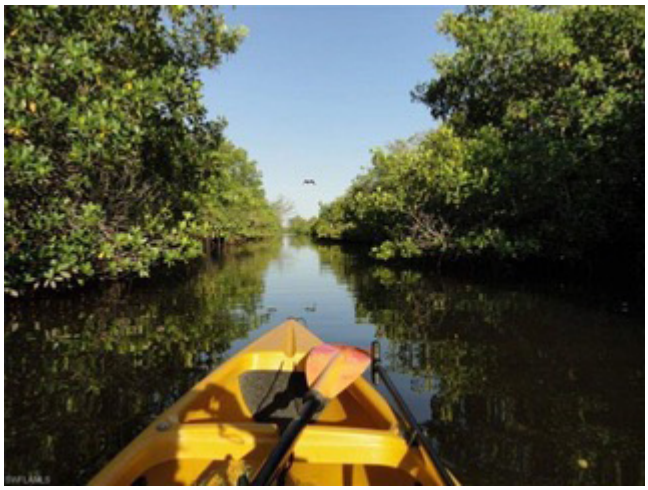
AVA RITTER

I've said it before, and I'll say it again. Burnt Store Lakes is a great place to retire! *The Heron Herald* won't give me the space required to list all the reasons we love living here, but I would like to focus on one particular amenity.

We have a kayak launch ramp! All neighborhoods cannot boast about that – but we can. It is well maintained and just a few paddles from the awe-inspiring waters of Charlotte Harbor. If you haven't checked it out, do so immediately. It is easily accessible from Acapulco Road off Bear Branch Creek. This waterway connection and path to the harbor is under-appreciated and likely under-utilized. However, I'm changing all that.

Young(er) friends of ours have launched (pun intended) a new branch of a nonprofit organization to offer exciting kayaking excursions throughout Southwest Florida, Florida state-wide, and even other exotic rivers throughout the United States. This ministry, called appropriately "Ends of the Earth Kayaking," is designed to inspire people to enjoy the outdoors. Imagine seeing the beautiful Florida sky viewed from designated dark zones and enjoy a deeper communion with the tranquility nature and kayaking can bring.

It doesn't stop there, though. The funds gathered from these events will follow a pipeline to charities committed to stopping the horrific crime of human trafficking. As a supporter, I am excited to host "First Launch," an event in our home on Santa Inez Road in late February. The event will be informative as well



as promoting a great excursion to be awarded to six lucky people (ticket is transferable). This will be the "First Launch-Lottery" and is designed to create a fun experience locally with expert guides and lots of fun giveaways.

If you would like an invitation to learn more, to kayak, or to find out about future excursions (when and where) contact them at https://newinternational.org/give/campaign/francisco-andrea-miyares or at www.NewInternational.org to the attention of the Miyares family. You can, also, reach out to me to receive information at frommylanai@gmail.com.

I will likely be planning the event menu as I sit on my lanai.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Just as an FYI ... with the newspaper's new online format, we have significantly more room in which to accommodate lengthy articles.

RE-ELECT

ROB HANCIK

2026

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Living With Coyotes

Coyotes are found throughout Florida. This adaptable animal belongs to the dog family and resembles a small German shepherd. In Florida, coyotes typically weigh between 15 to 30 pounds. They have pointed ears, a narrow muzzle and a bushy tail. Males tend to be larger than females. Coyote fur is usually grayish brown but occasionally is black. When running, the coyote usually holds its tail at "half-mast" or straight out behind it, unlike most domestic dogs.



The scientific name of the coyote, *Canis latrans*, literally means "barking dog." Coyotes use a variety of vocalizations, such as barking like dogs, but most often they are heard making shrill yips and howls. Howling is often a group effort that begins as a simple howl but quickly increases into a series of group howls and high-pitched barks.

Coyotes typically are shy and elusive, but they occasionally can be spotted either alone, in pairs, or in small groups where food is readily available. **Never** feed coyotes, and do not don't place food outdoors that will attract any wild animal. Clean up pet food, fallen fruit, and seed around bird feeders. Secure garbage cans and compost in animal-proof containers.

Keep your pets safe. Coyotes can and do prey on domestic cats and small dogs. To protect your pets, don't allow them to roam freely. Most coyote attacks on pets occur either at night or at dusk or dawn. During these times especially, be careful if you're walking your pet in wooded areas or in heavily foliaged areas where coyotes could hide. Keep your dog close on a short leash. Keep cats indoors. When cats wander freely, there's an increased risk of them being attacked by coyotes.

Be aware of unusual coyote behavior. Examples include coyotes approaching people, stalking pets, chasing joggers or bikers, or attacking leashed pets.

Teach children to recognize and not to run from coyotes. If children are approached, have them move slowly into a house or climb up on a swing, tree, or deck and yell.

Coyotes can be curious but are also timid and generally run away if challenged. Just remember that any wild animal will protect itself or its young.

Never initiate a close encounter with a coyote. If a coyote approaches too closely, immediately act aggressively toward the coyote. Wave your arms, throw things like stones, and shout at the coyote.

However, don't attempt to hurt it, because injured animals are more likely to attack. If necessary, make yourself appear larger by standing up or stepping onto a rock, stump, or stair. Convince the coyote you are a potential danger to be avoided.

Where coyote encounters occur regularly, walk pets at other times besides nighttime hours, dusk, and dawn. Carry something that will make noise or scare the animal, such as a small air horn, big water pistol, solid walking stick, golf club, or paintball gun. These things may deter the coyote at close range. Make a "coyote shaker" by putting a few washers, pebbles, or pennies into an empty soft drink can. Wrap the can in foil and tape closed. Continue "hazing" the coyote until the animal leaves; otherwise, the coyote will learn to wait to leave until the activity stops.

Coyotes remain active year-round and play an important role in the ecosystem by helping to keep rodent populations under control.

> If you are experiencing coyote problems, please contact FWC's Wildlife Alert at (888) 404-3922.



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COYOTE FAST FACTS

▪ Coyotes live throughout Florida and in every state but Hawaii.
▪ They weigh 15 to 30 pounds. The males are slightly larger than the females.
▪ Coyotes eat whatever is available, including fruits, nuts, seeds, dead animals, rodents, garbage, pet food, domestic cats, and small dogs.
▪ They breed every year with 2 to 12 pups per litter. Pups are raised in a den.
▪ Removing coyotes from one area can result in other coyotes moving in from surrounding areas and producing more pups per litter.



▪ Coyote tracks are narrower and more elongated than dog tracks.

MYTHS ABOUT COYOTES

▪ Coyotes are extremely dangerous: **False!** There have been very few reported cases of Eastern coyotes biting people. The coyote's innate fear of humans tends to keep them from getting too close.
▪ Coyotes are a new problem: **False!** Coyotes have been in Florida for many years and will continue to make their homes around the state. This medium-sized predator is extremely adaptable, thriving in urban, suburban, and rural areas.
▪ Coyotes need our help to survive: **False!** People like to feed animals. However, by providing a "free lunch" for coyotes, you eliminate their natural fear of humans and increase their populations. Remember ... a fed coyote causes problems. Keep 'em wild!
▪ Coyotes can be totally eliminated: **False!** Removing coyotes is an inefficient and ineffective method to control populations. They compensate by increasing litter size, and new coyotes move into areas where others have been removed. Populations can quickly return to original size.

If you are experiencing coyote problems, please contact FWC's Wildlife Alert at (888) 404-3922.



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BSLPOA Website – BSLPOA.ORG

BETTY INGERSON,
WEBSITE ADMINISTRATOR

HOW TO KEEP IN CONTACT WITH BSLPOA!

Our website allows us to welcome you and share the ins and outs, the activities, the benefits, and the advantages of living in Burnt Store Lakes. It is the primary communications vehicle for our Association. All members receive BSL email information notices as they are sent, unless they have personally elected to opt out.

QUICK UPDATES

- We have 2,042 members and 1,387 accounts registered on our website as of December 31, 2025.
- The website had 6,969 individual visitors over the last year. Visitors include both BSL members and nonmembers. Certain sections of the website are accessible only to registered BSL members. Most website visits occur on Mondays. This is due to the weekly publication of the BSL "What's Happening?" emails that summarize emails, bulletins, and website updates that occurred during the previous week.
- The **Pay My Annual Assessment** section of the website has been the most visited section of the website over the last six months, with over 1,700 visits. You can pay online via credit/debit card or via ACH directly from your bank. You will need your Assessment Invoice and the Account Number listed on your invoice to initiate the process. The website provides a direct link to Bank OZK where you can complete the process. Any questions should be directed to the BSLPOA Office.
- Remember to use the **Potluck RSVPs** section of the website to sign up for the monthly Potluck Picnics in the community park. Your reservation lets us know you are attending so we can plan accordingly. Come join your neighbors and enjoy conversations and a great picnic as well.
- If you have placed items on the **BSL Classified Listing** pages, please remember to remove them when the item is sold. Items will be removed after four months.

REMEMBER:

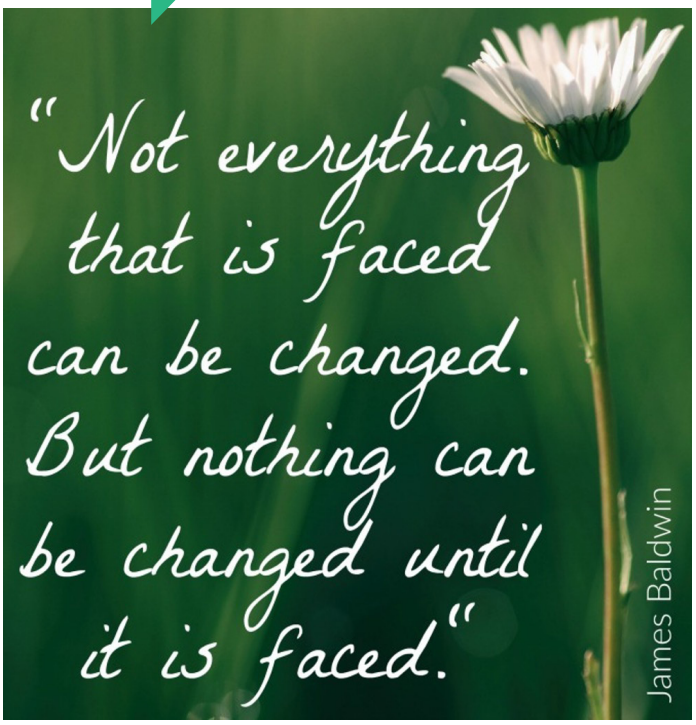
The Burnt Store Lakes website is the best way to make sure you are up to date on what is going on in the community. We strongly encourage all new residents and property owners to go to the BSLPOA Website (www.bslpoa.org) and register for access. Once registered, you can automatically keep informed. Select the types of email communications you wish to receive (notifications, alerts, updates, bulletins, etc.). You will also be listed in the online Resident's Directory, and find helpful information regarding community activities, governing documents, forms, policies, deed restrictions, and other contact information. Note that many areas of the website are only available to registered members, so signing up is important!

REGISTER ON THE WEBSITE TO RECEIVE BSL EMAILS!

Remember:

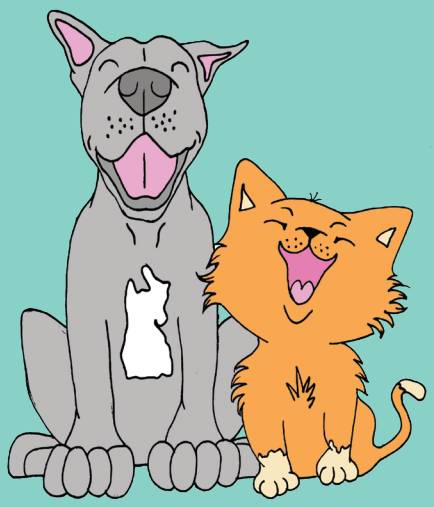
- Update your information if any changes are needed. You are the only one that can update your emails, phone numbers, etc. If you are not receiving your Monday email bulletins, please check your email for accuracy.
- Privacy and passwords controlled by member
- Email blasts for instant information sharing
- Weekly bulletin updates listing past notices
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QUOTE OF THE MONTH



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Tax Season Can Be Stressful—Don't Let Fraudsters Make It Worse

Each year the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) releases a list of the latest scams that taxpayers should watch out for. (View the full 2025 list here.) While many of these involve unscrupulous groups and individuals—especially on social media—trying to mislead taxpayers into filing false or incorrect returns, others center on direct attempts by fraudsters to steal money and personal information.

These direct threats represent a major risk of identity theft and financial loss. According to the Taxpayer Advocate Service, an independent organization housed within the IRS, more than 1.9 million U.S. tax returns were flagged in 2024 for potential identity issues.

Here are three identity-related scams identified by the IRS for the 2025 tax season, along with advice on how to stay protected as you prepare and file your return.

1. EMAILS OR TEXTS FROM IRS IMPERSONATORS

Scammers posing as entities like the IRS, state tax agencies, or tax software companies are sending unsolicited emails with offers of tax refunds or warnings that the recipient faces legal charges for committing tax fraud. These are phishing attempts meant to capture the victim's personal and financial information. (The text message equivalent of phishing is called "smishing," in which the fraudster sends an alarming text such as "Unusual Activity Report," accompanied by a link.) The links in these phony texts and emails could lead to web pages that appear official but are actually fake sites designed to steal personal information. They could also be a way for fraudsters to secretly plant malware or ransomware on your device.

Tip: As a matter of policy, the IRS initiates contact with taxpayers only by mail. Never click a link in an unsolicited email or text message from a sender claiming to be the IRS or any state tax agency. If you need to contact the IRS for any reason, start here.

2. FAKE ONLINE ACCOUNT ASSISTANCE

Have you created an individual online account with the IRS? It's a convenient way to access your tax records, balance, payments, and more. If you haven't, watch out for third parties contacting you and offering help in setting up your online account. The IRS says there's been a rise in these phony offers of assistance. The scammers are looking to harvest your personal information and submit fraudulent tax returns in your name.

Tip: Don't respond to any unsolicited offer of online tax assistance. If you need help in setting up your individual online account with the IRS, the agency has a number of free resources available, including Frequently Asked Questions.

3. BOGUS NONPROFITS

While you may have donated to a charity from the goodness of your heart, it's also nice to get the side benefit of a tax deduction. Beware, however, of fraudulent nonprofits that have been created to take advantage of your generosity. These fake organizations usually don't serve their stated purpose and often put your donation into their own pockets. Plus, they've got your personal information, which can be exploited for identity theft. As for that tax deduction, it won't count unless the charity is a qualified tax-exempt organization recognized by the IRS.

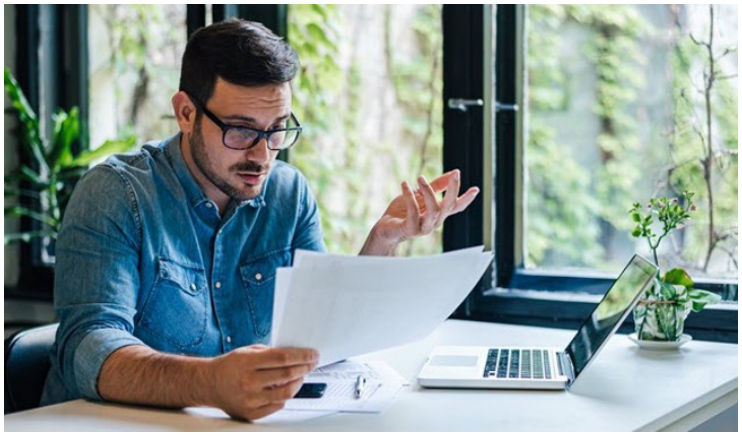
Tip: Before giving, do your research on nonprofits through an independent rating service like Charity Navigator. Donate only to nonprofit organizations that can show legitimate proof of their 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.

MORE ADVICE FOR STAYING SAFE DURING TAX SEASON

A few bonus tips on how to avoid falling victim to tax-related fraud:

• Sometimes, IRS impersonators will contact you by phone, with the caller ID altered to match a legitimate IRS number. Don't fall for it. Remember, the IRS will only initiate contact with a taxpayer by mail.

• Speaking of mail, if you get a letter claiming to be from the IRS and demanding tax



payment through high-pressure language like threats of imprisonment or steep fines, know that it's a scam. The IRS doesn't use aggressive collection tactics like this.

• Similarly, don't engage if you're directed to send cryptocurrency, debit cards, or gift cards. The IRS will never ask for nontraditional forms of payment like these.

• File your return as early as possible. If your identity is stolen through a data breach, criminals might attempt to file a false tax return in your name. Filing early allows you to stay one step ahead of them. (It's also a good idea to get an Identity Protection PIN from the IRS—it prevents others from filing a return in your name.)

• If you believe you've been victimized by fraud related to your tax return, report it to the IRS. You can also contact the Taxpayer Advocate Service.

> "As a matter of policy, the IRS initiates contact with taxpayers only by mail.

Seven Fun And Weird Bits Of Valentine's Day Trivia!

Whether or not you've already managed to find a gift for the special person/pet in your life, be it a significant other, a parent, a best friend, dog, cat, etc., the day itself is not without its own brand of peculiarity. So, dive right in as we explore a few of the strangest facts we've uncovered about Valentine's Day!

1. WHO WAS SAINT VALENTINE?

Originating as a Roman feast day, Valentine's Day honored the Christian martyr, St. Valentine, on February 14. Valentine of Terni (or of Rome in some tellings) was a third century Roman citizen who was imprisoned during the reign of Claudius II for marrying soldiers during their military service. Though it might seem a trivial reason to go to jail, the belief at the time was that marriage diminished a soldier's efficiency on the battlefield.

This fervent Christian was then tasked with healing the blind daughter of his jailer, Asterius. During this time, Valentine fell in love with Julia, prompting him to write her a love letter prior to his execution on February 14, 271 A.D.



He signed it "from your Valentine" giving rise to the celebration of St. Valentine's Day that we all know today.

2. WHEN DID WE START CELEBRATING VALENTINE'S DAY?

The Roman Pope Gelasius officially declared February 14 "St. Valentine's Day" at the end of the fifth century. However, it wasn't until the Middle Ages, the 1300s to be precise, that it officially became a holiday associated with love.

While some believe that the date was chosen for the untimely death of St. Valentine, there are others who trace it back to a pagan fertility festival called "Lupercalia." This festival was celebrated on the 15th of February in Rome and included animal sacrifice and a bizarre tradition of smacking women with animal hides (to increase their fertility).

3. CUPID IS A LOT OLDER THAN HE LOOKS.

Cupid and Valentine's Day are an inseparable duo today, but the bow and arrow wielding cherub was once a much more intimidating figure. His origins can be traced all the way back to 700 B.C. as the son of the Greek goddess Aphrodite, Eros. Eros, unlike Cupid, was depicted as a handsome man in his late teens who had the power to make people fall in love. While the chubby, merry character

we know and love does this with innocence and good will, Eros' motives were quite the opposite. His actions were often interpreted as a kind of madness inflicted upon mankind causing mayhem on Earth.

The Romans eventually transformed Eros into Cupid in the fourth century B.C. by heavily connecting his stories to his mother's. By doing this, he became Aphrodite's obedient son and (adorable) underling. His name and age were changed, and he was armed with a bow and arrow for good measure. By the time the 19th century rolled around, Cupid had become the mascot of Valentine's Day thanks to his innate matchmaking abilities.

4. THE VERY FIRST MASS-PRODUCED VALENTINE'S ONLY APPEARED IN THE MID-1800S.

The idea of exchanging gifts goes way back with this holiday. The first Valentine was apparently sent in the early 1400s by a French medieval duke named Charles (who was in prison at the Tower of London at the time) to his wife.

The tradition of giving flowers dates back to the 17th century when King Charles II of Sweden learned of the "language of flowers" while on a



trip to Persia. This "language" assigns a specific meaning to every flower. For example, red roses quickly became a symbol of romantic love while white ones stood for chastity and innocence. Once the concept was brought to Europe, every blossom that was given was more than just a flower. It was a message too.

5. THERE'S A VALENTINE'S DAY ALTERNATIVE FOR SINGLES!

For those among us not in a relationship, International Quirkyalone Day offers singles the chance to celebrate their love for themselves and their own lives!

The idea was the 2003 brainchild of Sasha Cagen author of *Quirkyalone: A Manifesto for Uncompromising Romantics*. She believed that Valentine's Day was far too commercial and that it left a great number of people out of its observance. This is why she created Quirkyalone Day – to focus on self-worth rather than the need to be part of a couple. For many, it's a reminder that there is nothing wrong with just being you.

6. VALENTINE'S DAY IS CELEBRATED A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD.

Now that our products are also available in Brazil, we know that the Brazilians celebrate Valentine's Day on June 12 instead of February 14. In Columbia,

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however, the big day falls on the third Saturday in September!

Japan has a fascinating tradition surrounding the celebration of love. There the tradition is for women to give sweet treats to the men in their lives. It is the quality of these treats that indicates the giver's true feelings for the receiver. One month later, on March 14, men are given the opportunity to do the same on what is known there as "White Day."

7. AMERICANS DO SOME SERIOUS SPENDING FOR VALENTINE'S DAY.

Now, we all know that Valentine's Day can be an expensive holiday, but the numbers are finally in. A survey conducted by the National Retail Federation showed that shoppers expected to spend a whopping $175.41 per person (on average) on Valentine's Day gifts. They also reported that overall spending had increased from $21.8 billion in 2021 to $23.9 billion in 2022! It is probably unsurprising to hear that jewelry is currently the top Valentine's Day gift. The next most popular expense was a night out, followed by the usual flowers, chocolates, and clothing.

On top of that, a stunning number of pet owners in the USA give presents to their pets on Valentine's Day! Approximately 41 million adults will shower their dogs with gifts while 31.5 million adults will be doing the same for their kitties.

There's no wrong way to celebrate! While we likely all feel the pressure to show our love through spending, there are many, many low-cost gift ideas out there that will keep you well under that aforementioned $175.41. If you're struggling, Hooray Heroes has the solution – we offer a number of adorable freebies for couples in love along with personalized Valentine's Day cards and books (hard and soft cover) that are sure the charm any heart (and are kind to any wallet).



Eight Wild Misconceptions About Florida, Debunked

The inhabitants of the Sunshine State may not be as old or kooky as you think.

1/ MISCONCEPTION: FLORIDA HAS THE LARGEST POPULATION OF OLD PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES.

Between its theme parks, beaches, wildlife, and sometimes eccentric citizens, Florida lands in the news quite a bit. But not everything you hear is true. You may be under the impression that Florida is the top place for retirees to relax on the lanai and enjoy some hard-earned cheesecake, but there is another state that tops it when it comes to the largest population of people over 65. According to 2020 Census data, California has 6 million residents who are 65 or older compared to the Sunshine State's 4.5 million. California has a much larger population, so what about percentage of population? Florida's still second, with 21.2 percent of the population versus Maine's 21.8.

2/ MISCONCEPTION: FLORIDA HAS MORE ALLIGATORS THAN ANY OTHER STATE.

There are roughly 5 million alligators in the U.S. With stories like golf course attacks, gators hiding in stormwater pipes, and even a man losing his arm to an alligator after fighting it behind a bar, you wouldn't be blamed for thinking most of those 5 million gators reside in Florida. There *are* over a million alligators roaming the state, but the gator population in another state wins that distinction. As of 2023, Louisiana had 2 million wild and 1 million farmed alligators—so many, in fact, that there has been a push to expand alligator hunting season to help control the population.

3/ MISCONCEPTION: THE SOUTHERNMOST POINT IN THE UNITED STATES IS IN FLORIDA.

You've probably seen the giant buoy landmark in Key West, in photos if not in reality. But it's not actually the southernmost point in the *entire* U.S. That distinction belongs to South Point Complex, the tip of the Island of Hawaii on Ka Lae. Puerto Rico—which has been a U.S. territory since 1898—is also located south of Key West. And if we're including territories, the overall winner is actually Rose Atoll in American Samoa, which is in the Southern Hemisphere.

Key West isn't even the southernmost part of Florida. That title is usually given to Ballast Key, which is slightly farther south. Key West is more the southernmost point of the lower 48 that is easily reachable by tourists—which is probably a bit long to fit on a buoy. And that famous buoy isn't even

on Key West's southernmost point. According to a 1997 *Miami Herald* article, officials determined it came in fourth, saying, "The real southernmost point is at the Navy base, followed by the White Street pier, and then the end of Duval."

4/ MISCONCEPTION: THE WEATHER IN FLORIDA IS ALWAYS WARM.

Florida is the Sunshine State for a reason, but there are days where the mercury doesn't rise much. It depends where you are, of course—in Key West, it only dips to a balmy 64° F. But in the state capital of Tallahassee up north near the border, low can easily hit the low 40s in the winter. Tallahassee also happens to hold the record for the lowest temperature ever recorded in the state—2 degrees F in 1899.

Cold snaps do have a particularly interesting effect in Florida: They can cause iguanas to fall from trees.



5/ MISCONCEPTION: THE REAL FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH IS THERE.

Let's just say we don't know *for sure* that the real Fountain of Youth is not in Florida, but signs point to probably not. First, a refresher on the legend: In the 16th century, Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon set off on an expedition to find the Fountain of Youth, a mythical water source that appears in tales dating back centuries. After searching the world over, de Leon stumbled upon the spring of eternal youth after arriving in what is now St. Augustine, Fla., in 1513. (Clearly, it didn't do him much good, because he died in 1521 while he was still in his 40s). Today, you can pay $20 to sip from the fountain and see if you feel a little more spry.

The truth? Not only is there no historical record that Ponce de Leon was searching for a fountain of any

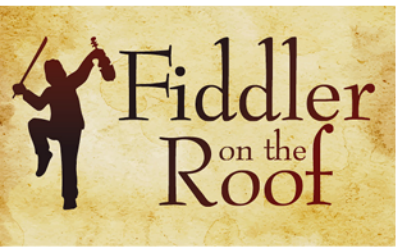
kind, but some historians also believe he landed in Melbourne, Fla., and not St. Augustine. So, how did the whole legend start? It may have actually been a joke made by historians who were insinuating that the explorer was seeking the Fountain of Youth so he could keep up with ladies who were much younger than him. And not centuries later. We're talking less than two decades after he died, which probably explains the misconception's staying power.

The fountain in St. Augustine is a tourist attraction founded in the early 1900s by an eccentric local woman named Luella McConnell. And just to add insult to injury over this whole myth, the spring water apparently doesn't even taste good. One former worker said, "Imagine what you would think the Fountain of Youth would taste like. It doesn't taste like that."

6/ MISCONCEPTION: FLORIDA WAS THE FIRST CHOICE FOR WALT DISNEY WORLD.

Despite the year-round warm temps and subtropical climate, Orlando was not top of Walt Disney's list for a second theme park. He came very close to erecting a park in St. Louis, Mo. Why? Walt grew up in Missouri and had a soft spot for the classic Americana of riverboats and Mark Twain, which very nearly sealed the deal in 1964. The park, deemed Riverfront Square, would have included a Lewis and Clark ride, a

BROADWAY PALM
PRESENTS



January 3 - February 14

This Tony Award-winning classic follows Tevye as he navigates the challenges of tradition, family, and change in his close-knit Jewish village. As his five daughters seek love on their own terms and outside forces threaten their way of life, Tevye must balance faith, love, and resilience. With a rousing and heartwarming score featuring *Tradition, Matchmaker, Matchmaker, If I Were a Rich Man*, and *Sunrise, Sunset,* Fiddler on the Roof is a powerful celebration of family, hope, and the enduring human spirit.



February 20 - April 4

This Andrew Lloyd Webber, record-breaking musical is a dazzling spectacle of music, dance, and fantasy. On one magical night, the Jellicle Cats gather for their annual ball, where their wise leader, Old Deuteronomy, will choose one cat to be reborn. As each cat shares their story—from the mischievous Rum Tum Tugger to the hauntingly beautiful Grizabella—you'll be swept into a mesmerizing world of mystery and wonder. Featuring the iconic *Memory*, CATS is a breathtaking celebration of life, second chances, and the power of community.

Dates may be subject to change.

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theater, and a ride where you visited the lair of some Caribbean pirates—years before a similar concept opened up in Disneyland. Unlike the other Disney parks, this one would have been entirely enclosed.

But plans fell through when Disney and the city couldn't agree on how much money the city would kick in for development. He moved on, fell in love with the wide-open space and Orlando's position near major roads, and the rest is history.

7/ MISCONCEPTION: FLORIDA HAS THE LARGEST CROP OF ORANGES IN THE U.S.

Historically, yes, Florida has been the nation's biggest producer of oranges. But lately not so much. In 2022, Florida experienced the worst year for its orange crop since World War II, down 50 percent from normal due to damage from *Hurricane Ian*, as well as a disease called citrus greening. All this means California has surpassed Florida as the biggest supplier of oranges in the U.S.





Citrus greening, in particular, has been negatively impacting Florida oranges for nearly 20 years, with the blight causing production to drop from 220 million boxes annually in the early 2000s to just 16 million.

The decline impacts your brunch habits: Ninety percent of Florida's oranges are used for juicing, so your daily glass of OJ is getting more expensive.

8/ MISCONCEPTION: THE ECCENTRIC "FLORIDA MAN" IS A NORMAL OCCURRENCE.

The "Florida Man Does (insert absurd crime/activity)" headlines that abound on the Internet are not a reflection of Floridians as a whole. It's

commonly said that one of the main reasons for the news constantly picking them up is that the state boasts one of the "most robust public records laws in the nation." It's very easy and accessible to find arrest records and even video footage from said arrests; most states don't make it so easy to find the absurd crimes that happen there every day.

But this itself might be a misconception. Writing in the Florida State University Law Review, American University Law Professor Ira P. Robbins argued that the things Florida's Public Records Law make uniquely available are not necessarily the same things required for a good Florida Man story. Mugshots especially are much more readily available in Florida, but Florida Man stories don't always have mugshots. The things that make up the meat and potatoes of a Florida Man story, Robbins claims, are accessible in most states.

Robbins argues the real reason behind the popularity of Florida Man stories is … the popularity of Florida Man stories. As he wrote in a paper about the subject:

"[T]here is no question about the roles that the Internet and popular culture play. Social media platforms are the venues in which the Florida Man phenomenon took off; the platforms even provide additional sources for journalists in reporting Florida Man stories. Social media users were receptive to the phenomenon due to some existing familiarity with Florida as an offbeat place and the pervasiveness of memes in modern-day popular culture. Florida Man's popularity both motivates journalists to write more on Florida Man and inspires Internet users to share the meme with their networks, further enhancing Florida Man's popularity."

Florida and its inhabitants have been the subject of jokes for decades, so if you hear a story about Nebraska Man you might think "Okay …" but if you hear about Florida Man you think "Yeah, this makes sense."

And as Robbins points out, all the open record laws in the world don't matter if people aren't reporting on the stories. There's not an appetite for Nebraska Man articles, so nobody does the legwork. But a Florida Man story goes viral, gets clicks, and inspires people to request records for the next viral Florida Man story.

Which argument is right? Impossible to tell, but what we do know is that Florida's violent crime rate is almost exactly on par with the national average. The Florida Man archetype is a combination of confirmation bias and a smidge of truth.



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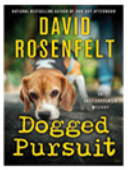
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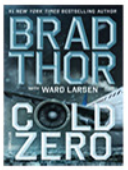
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Sports Idioms Used On And Off The Field

With so many sports terms in use beyond game day, it begs the question: Why does everyday language so heavily feature words originating in the world of sports? "There's something that's very specific to a certain discourse with a very precise meaning, and then we generalize it," Adams says. "We recognize the significance of a phrase and then expand it metaphorically to a more commonplace situation than the one it was invented for. That's just language behavior."

So which sports idioms and terms are always on the tip of our tongues? The 20 that follow will be familiar to most people, but their origins may surprise you.

"Kickoff" – Football, Rugby, Soccer

American football has roots in two other sports: rugby and soccer, the latter of which is known as football everywhere but in the United States. So, there's naturally quite a bit of shared lingo, though football is much more popular here (sorry, Ilona Maher). Games for all three of these sports begin with a kickoff, literally the first kick to the ball.

But the word can refer to the beginning of any event or enterprise, which is why it was chosen to, ahem, *kick off* this list.

"Monday Morning Quarterback" – Football

Most professional football games, including the Super Bowl, are played on Sunday. So, if you spend the next day second-guessing decisions made during the game and proclaiming that the head coach should never have gone for that 2-point conversion, you, my friend, are a Monday morning quarterback.

In the real world, this dismissive football idiom, which came into use in the early 1930s, applies to anyone who assumes wisdom *after* an event has occurred. As they say, hindsight is twenty-twenty.

"Play Hardball" – Baseball

Hardball has been used as a synonym for *baseball* (as opposed to *softball*) since 1887. But since 1949, it's also been used as a slang term for ruthless, uncompromising methods or dealings, especially in business and political negotiations. Think: "If they won't budge, we might have to play hardball."

"Slam Dunk" – Basketball

In this sport, invented in 1891 by a Canadian clergyman, educator, and physician James Naismith, a slam dunk is a shot made by jumping up and pushing the basketball downward into the basket. But by as early as 1984, the term had evolved to mean anything that's certain to succeed. For example, a court case in which a defense attorney presents a video clearly proving her client's alibi and, therefore, innocence is a slam dunk.

"Hail Mary" – Football

One of the most dramatic plays in all of sports, a Hail Mary is a long forward pass thrown by a quarterback, usually in the last seconds of a game and usually with low odds that it will be caught. The term hails from a Roman Catholic prayer (dating back to the 15th century in its current form, though parts of it are straight from the Bible) but became popular after the Dallas Cowboys' Roger Staubach claimed to have said the words while throwing a game-winning touchdown against the Minnesota Vikings in 1975.

Now, a Hail Mary can describe any kind of long shot attempt taken when all other efforts have failed.

"Front-Runner"– Horse Running

Since 1896, *front-runner* has referred to a horse that runs best when in the front of the pack. By 1906, the meaning had expanded to mean the person who is leading in, or seems likely to win, a race or other contest; it's used frequently in politics.

"The Ball Is In Your Court" – Tennis

In tennis, if the ball is in your court, it's on your side of the net, and it's your turn to hit it. So, when you tell someone, "The ball is in your court," you're letting them know that you've done your part and now the decision or responsibility is on them. You may tell your partner, "I chose the last movie. The ball is in your court tonight."

"Moving The Goalposts" – Football And Rugby

Though the first professional football game (between the Allegheny Athletic Association and the Pittsburgh Athletic Club) was played on Nov. 12, 1892, the rules of the game, including exactly where the goalposts are located, have changed several times since then. In the same way that moving those uprights in football makes scoring more difficult, moving the goalposts on a project—by changing the criteria or expectations—can make success more elusive.

"Throw A Curveball" – Baseball

The definition of *curveball*, "a delivery in which the pitcher causes the ball to deviate from a straight path by imparting spin," dates to 1875. But since 1936, it's been used to mean any challenge that's unexpected, surprising, or disorienting—for instance, when a client throws a curveball with last-minute changes.

Fun fact: Though early forms of bat-and-ball games have been played for centuries across various cultures, the first recorded game of the sport we know as baseball was played in 1846 in New Jersey.

"From The Jump" – Basketball

The jump ball is the opening play of a basketball game, where the referee tosses the ball into the air and two players jump to try to gain possession, and it's the symbol of the start of the game.

Off the basketball court, when someone says, "from the jump," they're talking about something that happened right at the beginning. A co-worker might say, "I liked her idea from the jump."

"In Your Wheelhouse" – Baseball

The original meaning of *wheelhouse*, dating from 1835, is the pilot house on a boat, which can be seen as the center of a ship's power. In baseball, since 1959, it's the area of the strike zone where a particular batter can hit the ball most forcefully.

But you'll often hear the term in the corporate world, too. Think of your strike zone as the skills you bring to the job. "So that's how we get the idea of people having a wheelhouse," says Adams. "It's not just the office you work in. It's the specific thing that you do best."

"Punt" – Football And Rugby

When the team punts, they drop the ball and kick it before it hits the ground to give the opposing team possession farther down the field. Since *punting* means abandoning (at least for a while) the attempt to score points for your own team, the verb has developed a secondary meaning of postponing a decision or action or deferring responsibility for the situation to someone else. You know, like when you asked your manager about how the budget cuts would impact your workload, and she punted the question to the finance department.

"Drop The Gloves" – Ice Hockey

There's a long history of physical fights in hockey games (though stricter penalties in the NHL have curtailed their occurrence), with players literally taking off their gloves to punch one another with bare knuckles. The saying "I went to a hockey game, and a boxing match broke out" exists for a reason!

Off the ice, the phrase means to engage in a fight, whether figurative or literal, and confront someone or something directly: "He's ready to drop the gloves and tackle the issue head-on."

"Par For The Course" – Golf

Many historians claim the game we know as golf began in 15th-century Scotland; some, however, trace the sport's roots back to the Ancient Roman game of paganica. In today's game, par is the number of strokes that a scratch player (one with a handicap of zero) should need to complete a course; 86% of regulation 18-hole golf courses in the United States have a par of 71 or 72.

People have been saying "par for the course" about something typical or expected since 1947.

"Rain Check" – Baseball

The term for a ticket given to a spectator at a baseball game interrupted by or postponed because of rain, enabling the holder to attend a future event without further charge, was first used in 1884 and soon spread to other outdoor events. By 1955, retailers started giving rain checks as a promise to provide goods or services that were temporarily unavailable, typically at a sale price.

These days, we use it anytime we want to reschedule a social obligation. "Mind if I take a rain check on dinner?" you might ask a pal after an extra-long workday.

"Jump The Gun" – Track And Field

The firing of a gun is traditionally the official start of a race. To jump the gun is to start running *before* the signal is given (often leading to a warning or disqualification).

Off the field, jumping the gun is doing something before the expected or appropriate time or acting prematurely—say, making a judgment call before all the facts are in.

"Full-Court Press" – Basketball

This term for a defensive strategy in which intense pressure is applied to the opposing team over the entire length of the court also means a vigorous and concerted effort or campaign. So, when you're putting in maximum effort, especially in a challenging situation, you're giving it the full-court press.

"Throw In The Towel" – Boxing

If a fighter is taking too many hits and is clearly outmatched, the coach (or corner) will throw a towel into the boxing ring to signal the fighter's surrender, conceding defeat to protect the boxer from further harm. Since 1915, the meaning of the phrase has expanded outside of a boxing match to mean "give up" in any situation that seems unwinnable.

"Blindsided" – Football

Of all the terms on this list, *blindsided* is the only one that may not have originated in sports, according to Adams. The first known usage of *blind side* as a noun, for the side on which a person's view is obstructed, is 1393, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). The verb—to catch someone off guard, often with a surprise you didn't see something coming—isn't recorded until 1950, with the football usage (hitting someone on their blind side) first recorded in 1955.

"I suspected that I was going to find a competition between the general sense of that word and the sports sense," says Adams. "And then here's the tricky thing: The OED tells us that it's just a five-year gap between the two recorded uses. So, it's really not possible to tell which is the chicken and which is the egg."

"Down To The Wire" – Horse Racing

This phrase is thought to have originated from horse racing in the 19th century, when a wire was stretched above the finish line to determine the winner. If a race was very close, the outcome wasn't clear until the horses crossed "down to the wire." Today, it's often used to describe the decisive moment at the end of a situation when time is nearly up, and a critical decision or action is needed.



Florida Fun Fact

FLORIDA IS THE ONLY STATE WHERE A CHANNEL IS MARKED WITH DECORATED TOILET SEATS.



This is true! The shallow, man-made channel in Islamorada is known as the Toilet Seat Cut, where you'll see over 250 colorfully decorated toilet seats come into view as your boat approaches.

Locals believe that this quirky trend made its debut after *Hurricane Donna's* destruction and redistribution of household debris in 1960. Apparently, one toilet seat ended up hanging from a homemade post, and voila, a trend was born.

Beware Of Alligators!

Inhabitants of Burnt Store Lakes and nearby areas have encountered alligators from time to time.

If you cross paths with an alligator that ...

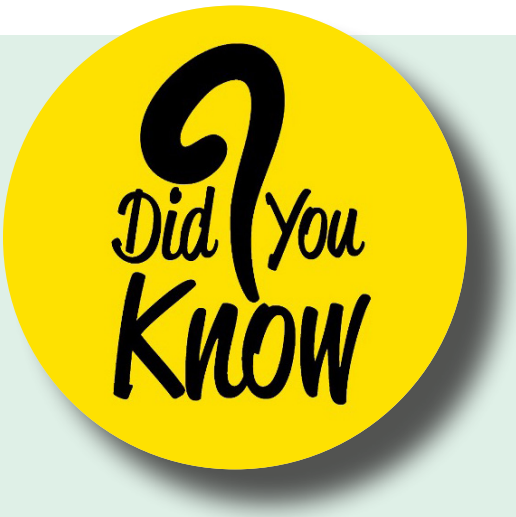
a. is in a place considered unacceptable, such as a swimming pool, lanai, garage, etc.,
b. you consider a threat to people, pets, or property,
c. approaches people, or
d. doesn't retreat if approached,

... please call the BSL POA office at (941) 639-5881.

Do not feed or harass it. Doing so is dangerous and illegal.

Visit the Burnt Store Lakes Property Owners Association website for more information.





Boeing uses potatoes to test their in-flight Wi-Fi, as they reflect and absorb the signals similarly to people. The project is called Synthetic Personnel Using Dialectic Substitution – or SPUDS.



Good Neighbor Program



Let us know if you would like to be connected with a neighbor. Neighborhood Watch is accepting resident profiles as a community service for those who may need assistance from time to time, particularly in the event of a severe storm or hurricane.

To obtain a copy of the profile and/or to obtain additional information, contact Louise Barrett at (508) 728-8002 or at lbarrett10@comcast.net. The BSL website (bslpoa.org) also has the profile forms and information available.

Furthermore, you can register online at the State of Florida Special Needs registry for "special needs" status if you have a physical, mental, or sensory disability and require assistance during an emergency. Charlotte County Emergency Management, along with the Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County, will strive to provide special needs sheltering and/or transportation to a general shelter.

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Find Out What's Happening

February Events

PUNTA GORDA ART AND CRAFT MARKET – SEASON KICK-OFF PARTY



Date and Time: Saturday, Jan. 31 and Sunday, Feb. 1, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Website: http://www.mypromotions.com
Description: As of this season, My Promotions has been producing this show for 20 years at Gilchrist Park. It's a beautiful location and always a nice turnout with lots of great vendors, fun, food trucks, and live music!
Location: 400 W. Retta Esplanade, Punta Gorda
Contact Information: Call (302) 384-1116
Fees/Admission: FREE!

TRIBUTES TO AEROSMITH AND FOREIGNER



Date and Time: Friday, Feb. 6, 7 to 9 p.m.
Website: http://www.militaryheritagemuseum.org
Description: Experience an electrifying night with tributes to legendary rock bands Foreigner and Aerosmith. Relive the iconic hits and unforgettable performances that shaped rock history, all delivered by an incredible frontman paying homage to Lou Gramm and Steven Tyler, backed by an incredibly talented band, capturing the essence and energy of these classic acts.
Location: 900 West Marion Ave., Punta Gorda
Contact Information: Gregg Hansen – Send email
Fees/Admission: $52 at https://ci.ovationtix.com/35397

MEET LOAF TRIBUTE



Date and Time: Tuesday, Feb. 10, 7 to 9 p.m.
Website: http://www.militaryheritagemuseum.org
Description: "Meet Loaf" is a top-notch Meat Loaf tribute band that has the look, the sound, and the show! This group performs all your favorite Meat Loaf songs! Meet Loaf – the Ultimate Tribute will take you back to the band in its prime, with soaring vocals and a high energy pro-stage show.
Location: 900 West Marion Ave., Punta Gorda
Contact Information: Gregg Hansen – Send email
Fees/Admission: $52 at https://ci.ovationtix.com/35397

YOUNG ORIGINAL – A VALENTINE SHOW



Date and Time: Friday, Feb. 13, 7 to 9 p.m.
Website: http://www.militaryheritagemuseum.org
Description: Bring your lover and come enjoy a spectacular evening of classic love songs and old favorites with multitalented young musicians! Experience mind-blowing instrumentals and tight vocal harmonies that bring down the house – everything from treasured love songs and nostalgic classics to pop, country, and movie hits. Highlights include a fast-paced tribute to crooners such as Frank Sinatra and Nat King Cole. Ben Morren is a firebrand pianist and composer who plays too many instruments to count, Silas Johnson started cello lessons at age 3 and has performed with The Johnson Strings to sold-out crowds in Branson and abroad. Joe Xiques hails from Miami and has traveled the world playing bluegrass gospel music. Each extraordinary member of the group shares a deep appreciation for great music and the classic songs of yesteryear.
Location: 900 West Marion Ave., Punta Gorda
Contact Information: Gregg Hansen – Send email
Fees/Admission:
$52 at https://ci.ovationtix.com/35397

Find Out What's Happening

February Events

SOUTH OF THE BORDER



Date and Time: Friday, Feb. 13, 7:30 to 9 p.m.
Website: https://symphonicwindscc.com/
Description: This concert will feature many popular musical favorites with a flair of Spanish and Caribbean sounds.
Location: Charlotte County Performing Arts Center, 701 Carmalita St., Punta Gorda
Contact Information: Box Office Voicemail, (941) 218-0022
Website: symphonicwindscc.com
Send email
Fees/Admission: Individual tickets: Adults, $23 online; and $25 at the door; Students, $5

TURN IT ON AGAIN: TRIBUTE TO PHIL COLLINS



Date and Time: Tuesday, Feb. 17, 7 to 9 p.m.
Website: http://www.militaryheritagemuseum.org
Description: Experience the magic of Genesis and Phil Collins with "Turn It On Again," Florida's premier tribute act with a frontman who resembles Phil Collins himself and, also, sounds like him, who brings unparalleled energy and authenticity to the stage. Relive the hits like *In the Air Tonight*, *Invisible Touch*, *Against All Odds*, *Land of Confusion*, *Sussudio*, and more! This electrifying performance promises to transport you back to the golden era of rock and pop. Don't miss out on a night of nostalgia and incredible music with "Turn It On Again!"
Location: 900 West Marion Ave., Punta Gorda
Contact Information: Gregg Hansen – Send email
Fees/Admission: $52 at https://ci.ovationtix.com/35397

BEACH BUOYS: TRIBUTE TO THE BEACH BOYS



Date and Time: Friday, Feb. 20, 7 to 9 p.m.
Website: http://www.militaryheritagemuseum.org
Description: The most authentic Beach Boys tribute band in the business! The '60s brought bikini beachgoers, hot rod muscle cars, and surfing to a new level. Nobody brought that new happening scene to the forefront like the Beach Boys! It was American culture at its best. The Beach Buoys bring all of that back with seasoned musicians who have taken great effort to recreate the look, sound, and feel of a live Beach Boys concert circa 1965!
Location: 900 West Marion Ave., Punta Gorda
Contact Information: Gregg Hansen – Send email
Fees/Admission: $52 at https://ci.ovationtix.com/35397

ABSOLUTE QUEEN



Date and Time: Friday, Feb. 20, 7 to 10 p.m., Doors open one hour prior to showtime.
Website: https://www.charlotteharborecc.com/events/2020/event-in-progress2
Description: Experience the hyper-realistic sights and sounds of what a Queen concert was like in the early 1980s, filled with all the hits, incredible vocals, stories about Queen with costume changes, and high-energy sing-along songs that will lift you off your seat! The band has spent hundreds of hours in the studio, and you will hear the exact multiple harmonies live that you hear on the real Queen records – but performed by Absolute Queen. Their attention to detail is astounding, and you must experience them performing *Bohemian Rhapsody* live to truly appreciate the incredible performance of this masterpiece song as Queen envisioned it! With the massive success of the *Bohemian Rhapsody* film breathing new life and notoriety into Queen's music, Absolute Queen will perform every song from the film and many more deep cuts and hits as well, like *Best Friend*, *We Are the Champions*, *Love of My Life*, *Play the Game*, and *Another Ones Bites the Dust*, just to name a few. No outside food/beverages permitted. Refreshments available for purchase. The Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center is a cashless facility.
Location: Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center, 75 Taylor St., Punta Gorda
Contact Information: Call (941) 833-5444
Fees/Admission: Tickets at $57.28 and $70.63, No Refunds/Exchanges – All Sales Final

Find Out What's Happening

February Events

THIRD ANNUAL PATRIOTS GALA



Date and Time: Saturday, Feb. 21, 6 to 10 p.m.
Website: http://www.militaryheritagemuseum.org
Description: Join The Military Heritage Museum's Annual Gala on Saturday, Feb. 21, featuring keynote speaker Rocky Bleier, Vietnam veteran and four-time Super Bowl champion. Enjoy an elegant evening of awards, appetizers, dinner, music, and dancing benefiting the museum. Sponsorship opportunities and individual tickets now available. Your support helps preserve veterans' stories, honor those who served our nation, and educate future generations.
Location: 900 West Marion Ave., Punta Gorda
Contact Information: Gregg Hansen – Send email
Fees/Admission: $150/person, secure your reservations today at https://onecau.se/patriotgala26.

FLEETWOOD MAX: TRIBUTE TO FLEETWOOD MAC



Date and Time: Friday, Feb. 27, 7 to 9 p.m.
Website: http://www.militaryheritagemuseum.org
Description: Fleetwood Max is an incredible, authentic tribute to the world-famous band Fleetwood Mac! This Florida-based band has played for years all over the U.S. in casinos, large events, and top venues. Sharon's portrayal of Stevie Nicks is a site to behold, and her vocals will blow you away. The whole band strives for the exact look of the real act; the playing and vocal harmonies are top notch as well. Fleetwood Max covers the entire career, with hit songs like *Rhiannon* and *Go Your Own Way* and Stevie Nicks solo classics like *Edge of Seventeen* and *Stop Draggin' My Heart Around*.
Location: 900 West Marion Ave., Punta Gorda
Contact Information: Gregg Hansen – Send email
Fees/Admission: $52 at https://ci.ovationtix.com/35397

February Holidays





FEBRUARY 8



FEBRUARY 14



FEBRUARY 16