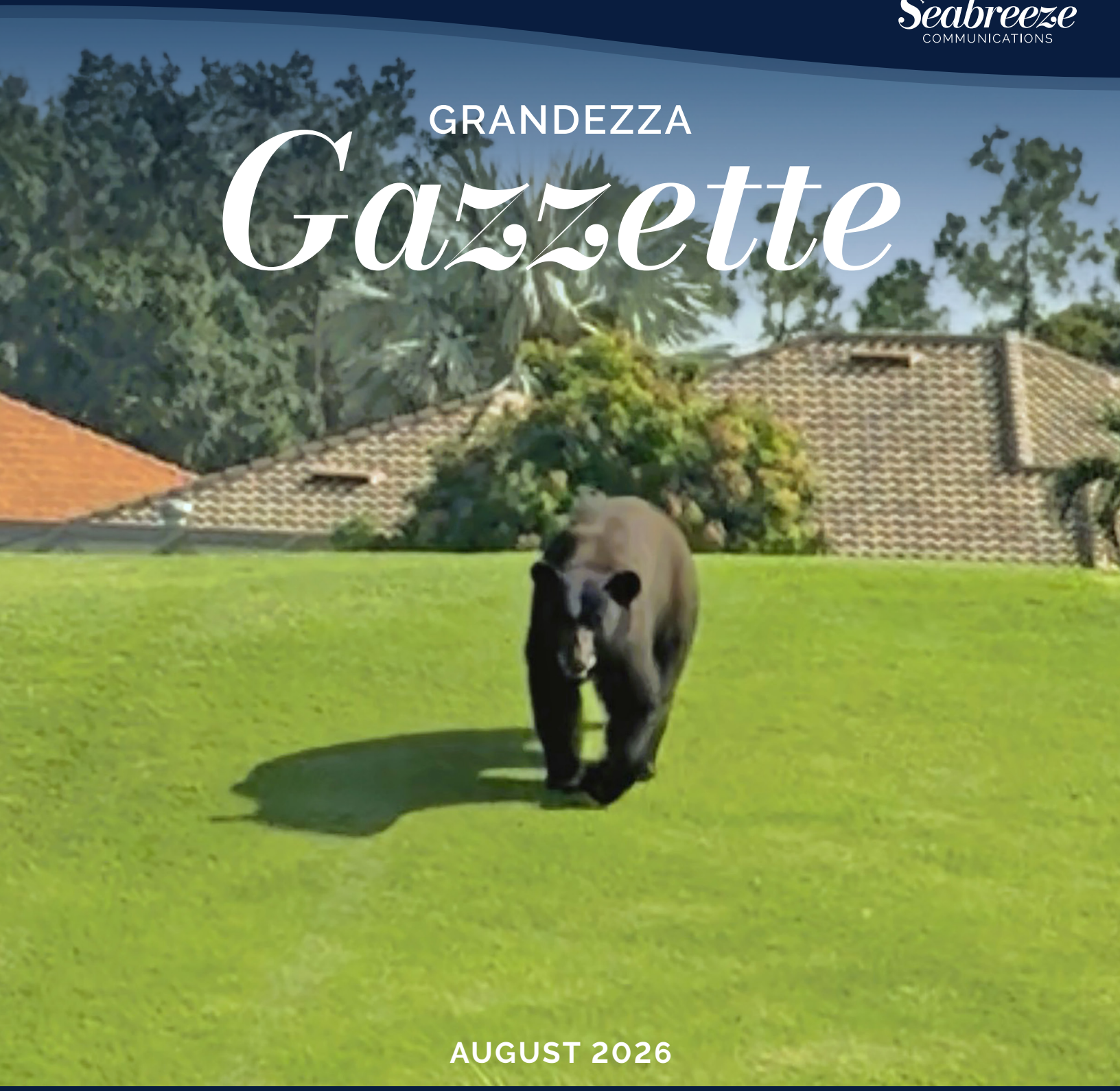
Seabreeze COMMUNICATIONS

GRANDEZZA

Gazzette



AUGUST 2026

A Look Inside

GOACCESS ARRIVES SEPTEMBER 1

SLEEP WELL, LIVE WELL

WILD GRANDEZZA – THE GOPHER TORTOISE

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12567 Grandezza Circle

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I have buyers who want a 3 car garage home in the Grande Estates - and also perhaps in Villa Grande and Cypress Cove A - If you are thinking of selling, please contact me - all conversations will be confidential.



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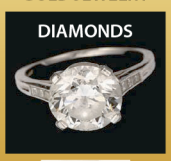
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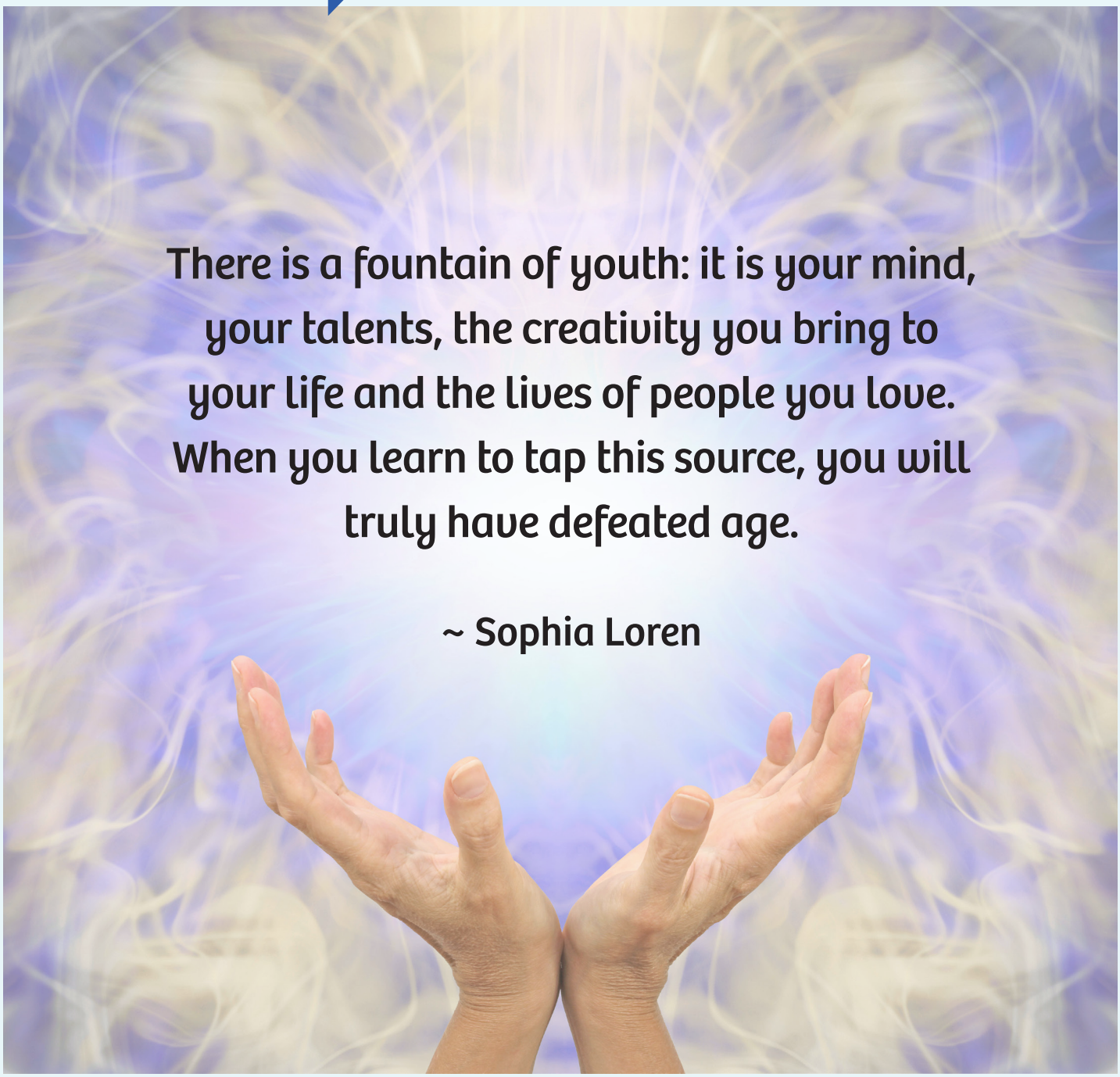
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EDITOR'S THOUGHT OF THE DAY



ARTICLE DEADLINES

Articles for the September issue of the *Gazzette* are due August 14. Send your submissions to sjsherwin18@gmail.com.

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Master POA Report

SARAH HARTMAN

We are well into the "dog days of summer" here in Florida. Or, perhaps I should say the "bear days of summer," given the number of bear sightings throughout our community, including the most recent visitor on the 6th hole of the golf course in broad daylight! As a reminder, please continue to follow the guidelines Cheryl recently shared about keeping trash, pet food, and other attractants securely contained.

On Friday, July 31, and again on August 7, you should have received email blasts regarding the planned September 1 transition to the Access Control system used at the gatehouse. This month's edition of the *Gazzette* also includes a detailed article outlining the change from dwellingLIVE to GoAccess. Please take a few minutes to review the information, become familiar with the implementation timeline, and understand the steps involved in the transition.

Although the Board does not hold monthly meetings during the summer, work continues behind the scenes. Our Community Account Manager, Cheryl McFarland, and the MPOA remain busy with a wide range of responsibilities, including:

- Managing access control systems, including gatehouse hardware and software, surveillance cameras, and entry gates, as well as overseeing the vendor responsible for gatehouse operations and patrol services.
- Overseeing the vendor that provides internet and cable services throughout the community.
- Managing vendors responsible for maintaining our main roads, streetlights, signage, lakes, preserves, entrance monuments, and fountains.
- Coordinating common-area landscaping services.
- Publishing the monthly *Grandezza Gazzette* and other resident communications.
- Monitoring and reviewing the Master Property Owners Association's financials.

If you are interested in learning more about the work of the Board or serving on one of the committees that are formed from time to time, please reach out to any member of the Board.

I noticed in a recent Engage Estero communication that there are two community meetings planned which may be of interest. The first will be held on **September 24 at 6:00 p.m.** at the Estero Fire Rescue Center on Corkscrew Road and will focus on the future of education in the East Corkscrew area. The second meeting, **"Guiding Estero Forward,"** will take place on **October 26 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.** at the South County Regional Library. It will provide an opportunity to meet the mayor and one of our county commissioners. Additional information,

including reservation links, is available at https://esterotoday.com.

I'm sure many of you have already seen the videos captured by golfers on the 6th hole when the bear decided to join them for a short visit. For those who haven't, I've included a couple of screenshots. (Photo credit: Orlando S.)

Take care, everyone, and continue enjoying your summer!



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GoAccess Arrives September 1

GRANDEZZA'S NEW ACCESS CONTROL SYSTEM IS READY FOR LAUNCH

Grandezza's transition from **dwellingLIVE** to **GoAccess** remains on schedule, with the new Access Control system scheduled to become operational on September 1.

In mid-August, residents will receive an email containing detailed instructions and a brief video demonstrating how to download the GoAccess mobile app, create a username and password, and verify resident account information.



Residents are encouraged to complete these steps as soon as possible after receiving the email. Completing the account setup before September 1 will help ensure a smooth and successful transition for both individual households and the community as a whole.

WHAT RESIDENTS SHOULD BE DOING NOW

At this stage of the transition, residents should:

- Download the GoAccess app from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.
- Create a GoAccess username and password.
- Log into their account.
- Verify their personal and household information.

Please note that guest lists will not yet appear in GoAccess. Until September 1, residents should continue using dwellingLIVE for all guest registrations and guest list updates as they do today.

WHAT HAPPENS ON SEPTEMBER 1?

On September 1, GoAccess officially becomes Grandezza's Access Control system and dwellingLIVE will be discontinued.

At that time, each resident's existing guest list will automatically become available within GoAccess. Residents are encouraged to review their guest lists, confirm that the information is accurate, and remove any guests who no longer require access authorization.

Beginning September 1, all future guest registrations should be managed using the GoAccess mobile app or the GoAccess resident website.

AN IMPORTANT IMPROVEMENT AT THE GATEHOUSE

Beginning September 1, the Scan Station located in the resident entrance lane will be discontinued.

Although originally intended to make guest entry more convenient, the scanner has frequently caused traffic delays when guests arrive with expired, invalid, or damaged QR codes. When this occurs, the Gatehouse Officer must leave the visitor lane to assist guests in the resident lane, delaying residents waiting to enter the community.

Removing the Scan Station will improve traffic flow through the resident entrance while allowing Gatehouse personnel to process visitors more efficiently.

NEED ASSISTANCE?

The step-by-step instructions provided by email should enable most residents to complete the account setup process on their own.

For residents who have questions or encounter difficulties while downloading the app, creating an account, or verifying resident information, the Master Board will host several GoAccess Help Sessions at the Club during the last two weeks of August and, if needed, during the first few weeks of September. These sessions are intended to answer questions, provide guidance, and help troubleshoot any issues residents may experience.

Dates and times will be announced in an upcoming email.

LOOKING AHEAD

Additional email reminders will be distributed over the coming weeks as the September 1 implementation date approaches.

Remember that effective September 1st dwellingLIVE will no longer be accessible by residents.

The Grandezza Master Board appreciates the cooperation and participation of all residents during this transition. By completing the requested account setup before September 1, residents will help ensure a successful implementation of GoAccess for the entire community.

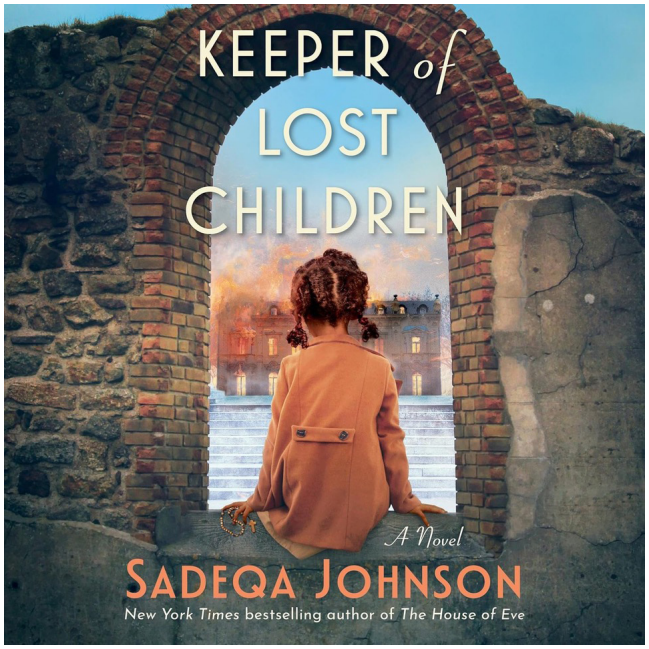
Reader's Corner – *Keeper of Lost Children*

SUSAN SHERWIN

Keeper of Lost Children by Sadeqa Johnson is one of those books I did not want to put down. It is the poignant story of three characters whose lives are shaped by the aftermath of World War II, and it grew from Johnson's extensive research for a previous book. Mabel T. Grammer, a journalist and wife of a chief warrant officer stationed in Mannheim, Germany, discovered that hundreds of mixed-race babies had been conceived and abandoned to orphanages. The children were the products of relationships between German women and Black American GIs. Through her Brown Baby Project, she and her husband Oscar worked to place these children with African American families in the United States. The mothers were often abandoned by their own families, who feared public scrutiny over non-Aryan babies, or were simply unable to care for them. Their American partners, meanwhile, had frequently been redeployed, were denied permission by U.S. commanding officers to bring a family home, or were simply unwilling to return with a "war baby."

The character of Ethel Gathers is inspired by Grammer's life and work. Struggling with her inability to conceive, Ethel one day wanders into a local Catholic orphanage and begins helping the overworked nuns care for the children there. She eventually adopts children of her own and develops a program to find loving homes for other brown babies across America.

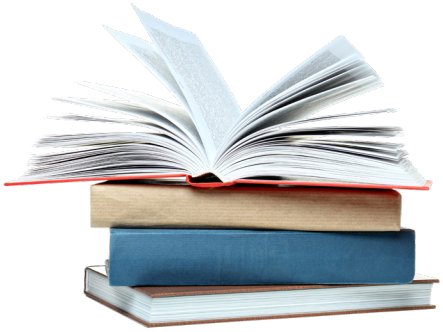
Ozzie Philips is a bright young Black man from Philadelphia who enlists in the military



hoping to escape racism and build a meaningful career. It is 1948, and President Truman has promised to integrate the armed forces. Despite earning the highest score on his preliminary military tests and hoping for an assignment in intelligence, Ozzie is placed in a role far beneath his abilities and subjected to the casual cruelty of a prejudiced commanding officer. He finds solace at a local bar, where he meets and falls in love with a German woman named Jelka. When she gives birth to their daughter, Ozzie is overwhelmed with love and vows to care for them both, but the promise is shattered when he is reassigned. Back in the States, he never stops searching for Jelka and the child he left behind.

Sophia Clark is a young Black teenager growing up in rural Maryland in 1965, just as American schools begin to integrate. Despite being treated more like a farm hand than a child by her cold and indifferent parents, she earns top grades and catches the eye of a guidance counselor who helps her transfer to Oak Forest Academy, a prestigious boarding school, on scholarship. Her new life is unlike anything she could have imagined: she encounters both the incredible privilege of her new surroundings and the sting of blatant racism, alongside the unexpected gift of genuine friendship with other Black students.

Keeper of Lost Children is a compelling, character-driven novel that brings its historical timelines to vivid life. Each of these three characters felt real and worth caring about, and I am pleased to recommend it highly to fellow Grandezza readers.



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Sleep Well, Live Well

YVETTE BERNOSKY, B.MS.,
DIRECTOR OF FITNESS & WELLNESS, *THE CLUB AT GRANDÉZZA*

My phone gently reminds me each night at 9:30pm that it is time to wind down. By 10:00pm, I am usually fast asleep. A good night's rest has always mattered to me, and over time, I have built a routine that supports it. My room is dark and cool, my bed is comfortable, and I drift off quietly listening to sleep meditations.

Sleep is one of the most essential pillars of well-being, influencing both our mental and physical health. Without it, our bodies and minds begin to struggle. Just as food and water sustain our vital systems, sleep restores and protects them. When we do not get enough, our immune system weakens, making us more susceptible to illness. Research also links poor sleep to increased risks of heart disease, diabetes, weight gain and even certain cancers. Mentally, lack of rest affects our focus, memory, and mood.

So why do so many of us take sleep for granted?

Are we truly too busy, or have we simply formed habits that work against us?

Sleep is not something we can eliminate. We can only borrow against it, and the cost is often high. We have all heard the phrase "beauty sleep," and there is truth behind it. Without adequate rest, we may notice dark circles, accelerated aging, and increased stress. Sleep deprivation can even affect cognitive function and hormone levels, influencing everything from decision-making to overall well-being.

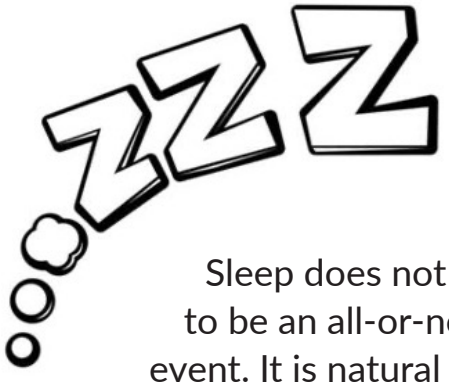
On the other hand, when we prioritize rest, the benefits are undeniable. We look and feel better. Our thinking becomes clearer, our decisions improve, and our bodies activate their natural healing processes. We wake up feeling restored.

When we invest in sleep, the return is powerful.

So how much do we actually need?

According to studies from The Happiness Studies Academy:

- Babies need 14 to 15 hours, though they typically get about 12.
- Elementary-aged children need 11 to 12 hours but average around 9.5.
- Adolescents need about 9 hours, though many fall short.
- Adults need around 8 hours, yet few consistently achieve it.



Sleep does not have to be an all-or-nothing event. It is natural to move in and out of lighter and deeper stages throughout the night. In fact, research suggests that humans also experience natural dips in energy during the day.

German physician and behavioral physiologist Jürgen Aschoff found that people often experience a second dip in alertness during the afternoon, making short naps a natural extension of our sleep patterns. Building on this idea, Cornell professor James Maas popularized the term “power nap,” describing a brief 20-minute rest that can restore energy and focus. Even notable figures such as Winston Churchill, Albert Einstein and Thomas Edison were known to incorporate naps into their daily routines.

Rest, in all its forms, matters.

Think of sleep as an appointment with yourself, one that deserves to be protected. Resist the trade-offs. Refine your evening routine. If you need one, allow yourself a short power nap during the day.

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- **BLOOD DRIVE**
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- **HEART HEALTH PANEL**
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Why you need dental insurance in retirement.

Many Americans are fortunate to have dental coverage for their entire working life, through employer-provided benefits. When those benefits end with retirement, paying dental bills out-of-pocket can come as a shock, leading people to put off or even go without care.

Simply put — without dental insurance, there may be an important gap in your healthcare coverage.

When you're comparing plans ...

- Look for coverage that helps pay for major services. Some plans may limit the number of procedures — or pay for preventive care only.
- Look for coverage with no deductibles. Some plans may require you to pay hundreds out of pocket before benefits are paid.
- Shop for coverage with no annual maximum on cash benefits. Some plans have annual maximums of $1,000.

Medicare doesn't pay for dental care.[1]

That's right. As good as Medicare is, it was never meant to cover everything. That means if you want protection, you need to purchase individual insurance.

Early detection can prevent small problems from becoming expensive ones.

The best way to prevent large dental bills is preventive care. The American Dental Association recommends checkups twice a year.

Previous dental work can wear out.

Even if you've had quality dental work in the past, you shouldn't take your dental health for granted. In fact, your odds of having a dental problem only go up as you age.[2]

Treatment is expensive — especially the services people over 50 often need.

Consider these national average costs of treatment ... $274 for a checkup ... $299 for a filling ... $1,471 for a crown.[3] Unexpected bills like this can be a real burden, especially if you're on a fixed income.

[1] "Medicare & You," Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2025. [2] "Aging changes in teeth and gums", medlineplus.gov, 4/17/2022. [3] FairHealth, Inc. National average dental fees. Data current as of July 2025; subject to change.

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6371

Cook's Corner

JOHN DEJOY

GRILLED VEGETABLE GAZ



Here is a great recipe to help utilize your garden veggies! Michelle and I just got back from a quick trip to our hometown of Cleveland, Ohio (Mentor, Concord, Painesville area) and it was great to eat some "backyard" tomatoes and eat some local corn. It's a little early still, but they are starting to pop. Our restaurant, John Palmer's Bistro 44, was located near many small family farms, so we were the lucky recipients of some beautiful produce. One time a local gardener "gave" me an entire wheelbarrow full of cucumbers—flavorsome, ripe cucumbers. Why did he have so many? I don't know, but I did my best to use them in any and all ways thinkable. We later formed a partnership where I purchased his seeds and helped him work in the garden. He was the green thumb; I provided the muscle. I will get into cucumbers in the next article. For all this produce, I had no fewer than 4 Gazpachos in my soup repertoire. I found this one in a book called "Thrill of the Grill" by Chris Schlesinger and John Willoughby. It is a little labor intensive, but oh so worth it. I hope you enjoy it.

2 pounds ripe tomatoes, cored and halved
1 medium zucchini, quartered lengthwise
1 bell pepper, quartered and seeded
1 red onion, peeled and quartered
4-5 cloves of garlic, minced
1 thick slice of day-old crusty bread
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves

1) Prep all the vegetables and get them grill ready. Place them in a mixing bowl, toss with olive oil and season with salt and pepper.

2) Grill the vegetables over high heat. Place them on a cookie sheet to let them cool.

3) Toast the crusty bread on the grill.

PACHO

4) Place all ingredients in a food processor or blender—bread, veggies, garlic, etc. Blend in the olive oil and vinegar. If the soup is too thick, you may thin it with water or tomato juice if you have it. I often would use Bloody Mary mix in my Gazpachos.

5) Place in a glass bowl and cover. Let this stand for at least 2 hours. Overnight is great. The rest will allow the smoky, sweet and acidic flavors to meld together.

Note: I used to dice the grilled zucchini and yellow squash while pureeing the rest. This gave the soup a chunky, nice spoon feel.

Note: Feel free to roast these vegetables if a grill is not accessible. You are simply layering flavors. The grill helps to get that smoky flavor but It's still a unique soup, flavorful bowl of goodness if the veggies are roasted.

Note: Feel free to use what you have. I have used grilled eggplant and all colors of peppers.







Please Pick Up After Your Pet

We all love our dogs—they're part of the Grandezza family! But no one enjoys stepping in or seeing dog waste left behind on sidewalks, lawns, or common areas. Please be a responsible pet owner and pick up after your dog every time. Dog waste is not only unpleasant, it can spread bacteria and harm our beautiful community landscape. Let's all do our part to keep Grandezza clean, healthy, and enjoyable for everyone—two-legged and four-legged alike!

Writers Wanted!

In an effort to make the Grandezza Gazzette interesting and readable to our residents, we invite you to share your stories, experiences, and perspectives. We welcome articles about books, travel, pets, sports, TV and movies, tech, and/or content that will get our community talking and sharing! Just avoid topics such as politics and religion in keeping with our policy of avoiding controversy.

Please try to limit your words to between 200 and 600 words and feel free to include a couple of jpeg photos with high resolution. We'll be happy to give you a byline!

Send your submissions to sjsherwin18@gmail.com.



Am I the only cute pet here?— If you think your pet is cuter or even better than me, tell us and the Gazzette will publish it. Email it to: sjsherwin18@gmail.com



FORT MYERS Living

FEATURED INSIDE

Celebrate National Thrift Shop Day
Page 18

Alliance for the Arts: New August Exhibitions
Page 22

PICTURED: POPPY SHOWS OFF A SNEAK PEEK OF THE NEW GULF COAST HUMANE SOCIETY FIREMAN'S CALENDAR, AVAILABLE THIS MONTH!

AUGUST 2026

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Wild Grandezza – The Gopher Tortoise of Southwest Florida

KEVIN RYAN

MEET THE QUIET ENGINEER THAT SUPPORTS MORE THAN 350 WILDLIFE SPECIES

"Every healthy gopher tortoise burrow is an underground neighborhood, protecting dozens of animals from heat, hurricanes, predators, and wildfire."

A Living Bulldozer Beneath the Pines

Walk through a pine flatwoods preserve in Southwest Florida on a warm morning, and you may notice a half-moon-shaped mound of freshly dug sand beside a wide opening in the ground. If you're patient, a sturdy gray reptile may slowly emerge, pause to survey its surroundings, and begin grazing on a variety of grasses and wildflowers.

You've just met one of Florida's most important—and most overlooked—wildlife species.

The gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) isn't flashy. It doesn't soar like a bald eagle, stalk prey like a Florida panther, or leap from the water like a dolphin. Yet scientists consider it one of the most important animals in the southeastern United States because of one extraordinary talent—it loves to dig.

Its burrows become life-saving shelters for hundreds of other species, earning the tortoise recognition as a **keystone species**, an animal whose influence on its environment is far greater than its numbers alone would suggest.

From Fort Myers and Estero to Naples, Punta Gorda, and Cape Coral, these gentle reptiles have quietly shaped Southwest Florida's upland ecosystems for thousands of years.



MATURE GOPHER TORTOISE PAUSES OUTSIDE ITS BURROW BEFORE BEGINNING ITS MORNING SEARCH FOR GRASSES AND WILDFLOWERS. BURROWS LIKE THIS MAY REMAIN IN USE FOR DECADES.
📷 : CONSERVANCY OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

FACT BOX

GOPHER TORTOISE AT A GLANCE

Scientific Name: *Gopherus polyphemus*
Family: Testudinidae
Average Length: 9–15 inches
Average Weight: 8–15 pounds
Life Span: 40–60+ years
Habitat: Pine flatwoods, scrub, sandhills, dry prairie
Diet: Herbivore
Burrow Length: Up to 40 feet
Protected Status: State **Threatened** in Florida

Why Is It Called a "Gopher" Tortoise?

The name doesn't come from the small mammal known as a gopher.

Instead, early settlers noticed the tortoise's remarkable digging ability. Equipped with shovel-like front legs and sturdy claws, it excavates massive underground tunnels that rival the work of heavy construction equipment—only much slower.

Its scientific name, *Gopherus polyphemus*, references Polyphemus, the giant cave-dwelling Cyclops from Greek mythology.

Southwest Florida: Perfect Tortoise Country

Southwest Florida provides nearly ideal conditions for gopher tortoises.

Its sandy soils are easy to excavate, while open pine forests and scrublands produce an abundance of grasses, legumes, and flowering plants that tortoises depend upon throughout the year.

Healthy populations occur throughout:

- Lee County
- Collier County
- Charlotte County
- Sarasota County
- Hendry County
- Glades County
- DeSoto County

Some of the region's finest tortoise habitats can be found in places such as CREW, Babcock Ranch Preserve, Estero Bay Preserve State Park, Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park, and Picayune Strand State Forest. A couple of photos included later in the article were taken at Barefoot Beach near the south parking lot. This for me has been a common place for Gopher sightings.

Interestingly, tortoises have also adapted to many human landscapes, including golf courses (next pic is from West Bay Golf & Country Club), utility corridors, schools, airports, and carefully managed residential communities.

continued →



MANY SOUTHWEST FLORIDA GOLF COURSES PROVIDE SURPRISINGLY SUITABLE HABITAT BECAUSE THEY CONTAIN OPEN SUNNY AREAS WITH SANDY SOILS AND NATIVE VEGETATION. 📷 : KEVIN RYAN, WEST BAY GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB (IPHONE)

Nature's Underground Apartment Building

The gopher tortoise's greatest contribution to wildlife lies underground. Its burrow may extend 40 feet in length and plunge 10 feet below the surface. Inside, temperatures remain remarkably stable year-round. When summer temperatures climb into the upper 90s, the burrow remains comfortably cool. When winter cold fronts arrive, it stays considerably warmer than the outside air. Scientists have documented **more than 350 different species** using these burrows.

Some visit only briefly while others cannot survive without them.

Who Lives in a Gopher Tortoise Burrow?

A single burrow may shelter:

- Eastern Indigo Snake
- Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake
- Gopher Frog
- Florida Mouse
- Burrowing Owl
- Southern Toad
- Box Turtle
- Rabbits
- Opossums
- Skunks
- Armadillos
- Ground Beetles
- Crickets
- Scorpions
- Spiders
- Millipedes
- Numerous native insects

During wildfires and hurricanes, burrows often become emergency shelters for dozens of animals simultaneously.

Built for Digging

Everything about a gopher tortoise's body reflects its underground lifestyle. Its powerful forelegs resemble miniature bulldozer blades. Massive scales protect their legs while digging. Strong claws loosen sand. The elephant-like hind feet then push loose soil backward, gradually creating the familiar fan-shaped mound seen outside every active burrow. A single adult may excavate several tons of sand over their lifetime.

Did you know – Pied-à-terre?

A mature gopher tortoise may maintain several burrows within its home range, using different ones depending on weather conditions, food availability, or "How you doin?" 😊 breeding activity.

A Vegetarian With Excellent Taste

Gopher tortoises are almost entirely herbivores. Researchers have identified over 300 different plant species in their diet. Favorites include:

- Wiregrass
- Bluestem grasses
- Tickseed
- Milk peas
- Clover
- Gopher apple
- Saw palmetto fruit
- Prickly pear cactus
- Native wildflowers
- Mushrooms

Because they eat a wide variety of vegetation, tortoises help shape plant communities while dispersing seeds through their droppings



PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS IS ONE OF THE TORTOISE'S FAVORITE FOODS AND ALSO PROVIDES VALUABLE MOISTURE DURING DRY PERIODS.
📷 : KEVIN RYAN, BAREFOOT BEACH (CANON 70D, CANON EF 80-200MM F/2.8 L)

Fire Is Their Friend

To many people, wildfire represents destruction. For the gopher tortoise, fire represents renewal. Historically, lightning ignited regular fires across Florida's pine ecosystems.

These low-intensity fires prevented dense brush from taking over while encouraging fresh grasses and wildflowers. When prescribed burns are conducted today, tortoises simply retreat underground until flames pass. The same burrows that protect them also save hundreds of other animals.

Prescribed Fire Matters

✓ Encourages fresh grasses
✓ Increases wildflowers
✓ Reduces dense shrubs
✓ Improves visibility for predators and prey
✓ Maintains healthy pine flatwoods
✓ Benefits more than 350 wildlife species

continued →



Growing Up Is Slow

Unlike rabbits or squirrels, gopher tortoises mature very slowly. Females often require **15 to 20 years** before laying their first clutch of eggs. Most nests contain between five and eight eggs.

Unfortunately, very few hatchlings survive. Predators including raccoons, crows, snakes, foxes, and invasive fire ants consume many eggs and young tortoises before they reach adulthood. Those that survive may live for more than half a century. Some individuals likely exceed 80 years of age.

Sharing Our Neighborhoods

As Southwest Florida continues to grow, encounters between people and tortoises become increasingly common.

Many residents discover burrows beneath:

- Mailbox landscaping
- Golf course roughs
- Vacant lots
- Retention pond banks
- Community preserves
- School campuses

Finding a tortoise in your neighborhood is a good sign that quality native habitat remains.

If You Find a Gopher Tortoise

DO

✓ Enjoy watching from a distance
✓ Keep pets under control
✓ Drive carefully in tortoise habitat
✓ Report injured tortoises
✓ Leave burrows undisturbed

DO NOT

× Feed tortoises
× Place objects inside burrows
× Block entrances
× Attempt relocation
× Allow dogs to investigate burrows

Conservation Challenges

Although protected under Florida law, gopher tortoises face increasing challenges. The largest threat remains habitat loss. Southwest Florida's rapid growth continues to replace pine flatwoods and scrub with residential communities, shopping centers, and highways. Other threats include:

- Habitat fragmentation
- Vehicle collisions
- Illegal relocation
- Invasive plant & animal species (Iguanas, Nile Monitor Lizards)
- Disease
- Human disturbance

Because tortoises reproduce so slowly, recovering from population declines can take decades.



ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF HATCHLING GOPHER TORTOISES SURVIVE LONG ENOUGH TO REACH ADULTHOOD.
📷 : KEVIN RYAN, BAREFOOT BEACH
(CANON 70D, CANON EF 80-200MM F/2.8 L)

QUICK FACTS

Fastest Speed: About 0.3 mph
Activity: Diurnal (daytime)
Best Habitat: Open, sunny uplands
Number of Burrow Associates: 350+
Largest Threat: Habitat loss
Favorite Foods: Native grasses and legumes

Fascinating Facts

They Rarely Drink Water
Most moisture comes from the plants they eat.

They're Excellent Engineers
Some burrows remain occupied for decades.

Their Shell Is Part of Their Skeleton
Unlike cartoons, turtles and tortoises cannot leave their shells.

They're Surprisingly Strong
A determined tortoise can move surprisingly large amounts of sand every day.

They Help Entire Ecosystems
Without tortoises, dozens of species would lose their underground shelters.

Why Every Southwest Florida Resident Should Care

The gopher tortoise reminds us that nature's most important creatures aren't always the biggest, fastest, or most spectacular.

By simply digging a burrow and grazing on native plants, this quiet reptile supports an astonishing web of life beneath our feet.

Its tunnels provide shelter from hurricanes, refuge during wildfires, protection from predators, and stable temperatures throughout the year. Every active burrow is an underground sanctuary that helps sustain the extraordinary biodiversity for which Southwest Florida is known.

As our region continues to grow, protecting these ancient engineers means preserving entire ecosystems—from pine flatwoods and scrublands to the many birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects that depend on them.

The next time you notice a fan-shaped mound of sand beside a wide burrow entrance, pause for a moment. Beneath the surface lies far more than a single tortoise's home. It is a thriving underground community, carefully built and maintained by one of Florida's greatest natural engineers.

Could You Spot a Scam Under Pressure? The STOP Rule Can Help.

Scammers don't give you extra time to think. And that's intentional. Most scams begin with an unexpected message. It might be a phone call about a missed payment, a text claiming your account was hacked, or an email warning of legal trouble. The details change, but the pattern is consistent: sudden contact paired with a story that demands immediate action. That urgency is meant to trigger an emotional reaction that makes you less likely to question what you're hearing.

When people are startled or worried, the brain's threat response activates, narrowing focus and pushing you toward quick problem solving. In that moment, it becomes harder to slow down, notice inconsistencies, or recognize red flags. It is a temporary cognitive blindness that scammers rely on. This is why they often use phrases like "don't hang up," "act now," or "you will be arrested," hoping to keep you locked inside the emotional moment.

The good news is that you don't have to navigate that pressure on your own. The Federal Trade Commission created a practical worksheet called How I'll Avoid a Scam: My Action Plan that helps you prepare before a scammer ever contacts you. It gives you a place to list trusted people you can call and verified contact numbers for the companies and agencies you do business with.

You can download the FTC's worksheet here: https://consumer.gov/system/files/consumer_gov/pdf/1096A_HowIllAvoidAScam-Worksheet-Fillable.pdf

Pairing this worksheet with a simple decision making guide called the STOP rule can make a stressful moment much easier to manage. The STOP rule outlines what to do when something feels suspicious: Slow Down, Test the Story, Observe Warning Signs, and Protect Your Information and Money. The worksheet gives you the information you need to follow each step effectively.



S – Slow Down

When a message appears urgent or alarming, the most powerful response is to pause. Scammers count on quick reactions because those reactions bypass critical thinking. Slowing down interrupts that pattern and gives your brain time to shift from panic to problem solving. This is where the worksheet becomes useful. Instead of clicking a link or calling a number provided in the message, you can reach for your action plan. Seeing your prepared list reminds you that you don't have to decide anything immediately.

T – Test the Story

Once you've taken that pause, it's time to question the narrative you were given. If someone claims to be from your bank, utility company, credit card company, or another business, don't use the contact information they provided. Use the verified number you wrote on your worksheet which you already know belongs to the real organization. This prevents you from inadvertently contacting the scammer again. The worksheet also includes space for trusted friends, family members, neighbors, or caregivers who can serve as a sounding board. Sometimes simply saying the situation out loud to another person can help you notice that something does not sound right.

O – Observe Warning Signs

As you begin checking the story, look for the classic signs of a scam. Was the message unexpected? Is the caller pushing you to act immediately? Are they insisting that you keep the conversation secret? Are they demanding payment through gift cards, cryptocurrency, wire transfers, or payment apps? Are they asking for personal information like your Social Security number, bank account, or verification codes? Even messages that look professional or include personal details can be fraudulent, especially if they try to create urgency or pressure.

P – Protect Your Information and Money

The final step is to safeguard your personal and financial information. Don't send money or share sensitive details unless you're absolutely sure who you are communicating with. And don't rely on instructions from someone who contacted you unexpectedly. Your worksheet provides a safer alternative: stop the conversation, check your action plan, reach out to someone you trust, and verify the message using a phone number you know is legitimate. For example, if someone claiming to be your utility company threatens to shut off your power unless you pay immediately, hang up. Then use the number on your worksheet, not the number the caller gave you, to confirm whether the story is true.

Build Your Action Plan Before You Need It

Preparation is one of the most effective scam prevention tools. Completing the FTC worksheet allows you to create two important lists: people you trust and companies or agencies you do business with. This can include your bank, credit card companies, utility providers, insurance companies, online retailers, cell phone or internet carriers, or government agencies that scammers commonly impersonate, such as the IRS or Social Security. Once your lists are complete, keep the worksheet somewhere easy to reach: by your phone, saved digitally, or shared with a trusted friend or caregiver.

Scammers want you to stay inside the fear of the moment. The STOP rule and the FTC worksheet give you a way out of that moment. Slow down. Test the story. Observe the warning signs. Protect your information and money. A few minutes of verification can prevent a very expensive mistake.



How I'll Avoid a Scam

My Action Plan

Use this action plan to help protect yourself from scams. Know what to do if you get an unexpected call, text, email, or social media message asking for money or personal information.

Know the signs of a scam

- **Scammers contact you and say there's a problem.** They might lie and say you owe the government money. Or pretend to be your bank and say your account's been hacked.
- **Scammers tell you to hurry.** They don't want you to have time to think.
- **Scammers tell you how to pay** — often only with a gift card, wire transfer, cryptocurrency, or a payment app. Once you pay these ways, it's hard to get your money back.

If you feel pressured, **pause**. Talk with **someone you trust** before you act.

Contact information for people I trust

List only people you know in person — like family members, friends, or neighbors. Let them know they're a trusted person and that you might call them if you suspect a scam.

Name	Phone number

Contact information for companies I do business with

List credit card companies, banks, online shopping sites, and utilities. Only use contact information you know is real — like from your account page, bills, receipts, or the back of your cards. That way you'll know how to reach the business if you're worried there's a problem with your account.

Business name	Phone number	Website

Report scams

Did you see or experience a scam? Tell the FTC at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**.

With thanks to Cuyahoga County Department of Consumer Affairs

Sheriff Carmine Marceno's August 2026 Fraud Alert: Vacation Rental or Vacation Trap?



The Lee County Sheriff's Office reminds vacationers to be cautious when renting vacation homes because you may be clicking on a scam.

Scammers will use real locations and pictures to advertise a fake listing. The scammers will have you make a payment upfront. After payment is made, you may experience two things upon arrival: the property is not real or it's unavailable for your reservation dates.

SIGNS THE LISTING MIGHT BE A SCAM

If the price is too good to be true, it probably is. Compare the price of other rentals in the area for that time of year. If the rental is way cheaper than others, it is probably a scam.

If the owner/manager of the property is refusing to use a legitimate rental platform, that's a red flag!

If you are pressured to pay quickly, it is probably a scam. Scammers will push a sense of urgency that makes people buy first, ask questions later. Don't fall for it.

HOW TO AVOID RENTAL SCAMS

Use a reputable platform. Make sure the website is legit before booking. If you haven't heard of that platform before and there aren't a lot of reviews, don't use it.

Search for the property online. Verifying the listing you're looking at is real through reviews, reverse image search, and comparing listings online. If there are multiple listings or the information does not match, it may be a scam.

Rental managers should not be requesting payment through gift cards, cryptocurrency, or wire transfer. These methods are irreversible. Make sure to pay with a credit card.

IF YOU GET SCAMMED

Contact the booking company immediately. Report the scam to your bank. Save all documentation of the property, payment details, and communication with the renter.

If you're a victim of this type of scam, report it to the Lee County Sheriff's Office (239) 477-1000 or your local law enforcement agency.

Did you know the Lee County Sheriff's Office provides over a dozen free crime prevention programs? These sessions cover practical tips to help keep you and your community safe. If you'd like to schedule one for your neighborhood, business, church, or organization, just give us a call at (239) 477-1CRU (1278) or send an email to CRU@sheriffleefl.org.

WHAT DEVELOPMENT IS HAPPENING ALONG EAST CORKSCREW ROAD? WHY IT MATTERS.

MARK NOVITSKI, CONSULTANT TO ENGAGE ESTERO, & CHAIR OF THE EAST CORKSCREW ALLIANCE

East Corkscrew is a hub of growth for the greater Estero area, and the choices being made right now on roads, schools, utilities, rock mines, cell service, and conservation will influence life here for years to come.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

— East Corkscrew is one of the fastest-growing areas in Greater Estero, with more than 10,000 homes built or under development and thousands more planned.

— Road infrastructure is struggling to keep pace with development, with no funding currently identified for additional Corkscrew Road widening beyond Phase II.

— Major residential and commercial developments, including Kingston Village, Verdana, Rivercreek and The Place are reshaping East Corkscrew.

— School capacity is becoming a critical issue as population growth outpaces plans for new public schools.

— Traffic safety improvements, including new signals, roadway access changes, and pedestrian infrastructure, remain a top priority.

— Cell service infrastructure is expanding, but coverage gaps remain as growth continues.

— Healthcare access is improving with Lee Health planning a new outpatient medical facility to serve the growing community.

— Environmental conservation continues to influence development decisions, particularly around Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary and Larry Kiker Preserve.

— Additional regional development, including 9,000 new homes in nearby Collier County, will place even greater demands on transportation and public infrastructure.

Learn the latest details on Corkscrew Road widening, Kingston Village, school capacity, traffic safety improvements, cell service, healthcare expansion and conservation issues affecting the area. If you live, work or travel along East Corkscrew Road, this article provides the latest developments — and the important questions residents should continue asking local leaders.

Read the Full Article by clicking on this link:
https://wp.me/pgats9-W0J

continued →

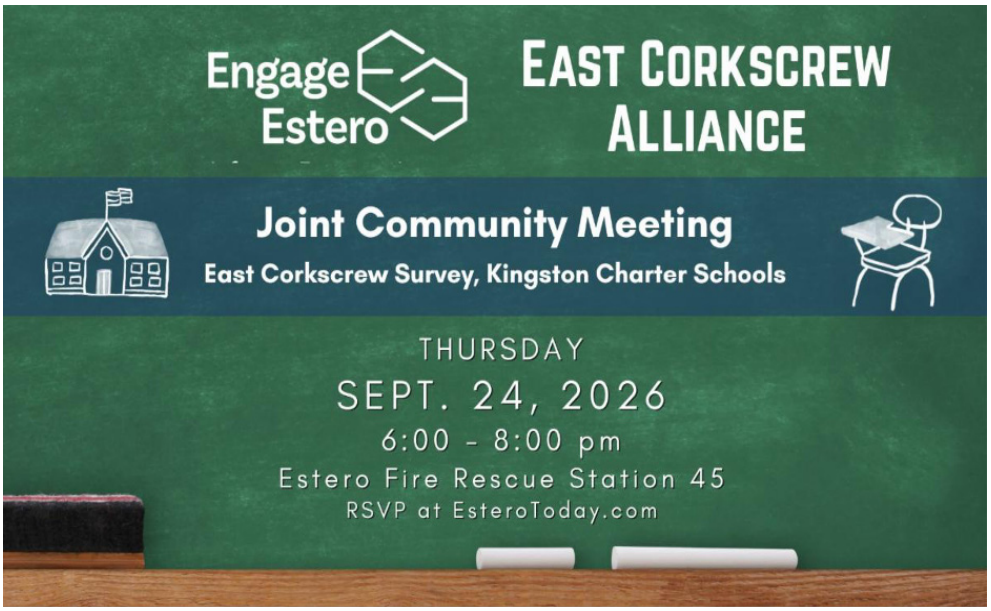


Kingston Village is planned as a mix of commercial, retail, and residential uses.

A new north-south connector, Kingston Village Parkway, will connect Corkscrew Road to State Route 82. The Corkscrew Road & Kingston Village Parkway intersection is under construction now, with a traffic signal expected to be operational by Fall 2026. Kingston Village Parkway – currently under construction - to State Route 82 is expected to be completed with a traffic signal at State Route 82 by Winter 2027/2028.

UPCOMING COMMUNITY MEETINGS YOU WILL NOT WANT TO MISS!

EAST CORKSCREW SURVEY, KINGSTON SCHOOLS SEPTEMBER 24TH AT 6 PM AT ESTERO FIRE RESCUE STATION 45



(18743 Corkscrew Rd, Estero, FL 33928 – Across from Verdana Village)

• President Allan Bowditch will present the results of the recent East Corkscrew survey.

• Nick Cameratta, Founder and COO, The Cameratta Group of Companies will introduce the K-12 Charter school coming to Kingston

• True North Classical Academy will present its plan for a K-12, 3100 student charter school in the Kingston development.

• Lee District Schools have been invited.

• Optima Academy has been invited.

The meeting is free and open to the public. Seating is limited, so reservations are required. You can make reservations at:

https://esterotoday.app.neoncrm.com/nx/portal/neonevents/events?path=/portal/events/49417



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https://esterotoday.app.neoncrm.com/nx/portal/neonevents/events?path=/portal/events/49417

Please consider a donation to strengthen our ability to remain an independent, trusted voice for the Estero community. We would greatly appreciate your support as we continue working to protect Estero's character and future. A summary of our achievements in 2025 is provided in the 2025 Annual Report available on our website www.esterotoday.com.

Contributions by check should be payable to "Engage Estero" and mailed to PO Box 424, Estero, Florida 33929. Please include your email and phone number.
Or go to the link on our website: https://esterotoday.com/donate/ and click on "Donate Now."



RESOURCE HUB

GRANDEZZA MASTER WEBSITE
WWW.GRANDEZZAMASTER.COM

Gatehouse
(239) 498-8895

Gatehouse
(DwellingLIVE Automated # to register guests)
(239) 986-8627

Address
11450 Grande Oak

Clubhouse
(239) 948-3569

Grandezza Express - Take Out Food
(239) 738-7113

Golf Pro Shop
(239) 948-2900

Tennis Pro Shop
(239) 738-7111

Wellness Director
(941) 999-1331

Golf Maintenance
(239) 947-6296

Vesta Property Services
cmcfarland@vestapropertyservices.com
(239) 947-4552 x 932

Gazzette Editor for HOA
Susan Sherwin
sjsherwin18@gmail.com
(973) 615-4222

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH COORDINATORS

Grandezza is a safer community because of Neighborhood Watch.

Avalon	Peggy Dempsey	610-662-2082
Cypress Cove A (Buttermere)	Mike Patricelli	239-464-0780
Cypress Cove B	Kevin O'Neil	239-265-5982
Grande Estates	Mike Bresson	603-812-8455
Oakwood I (bldg 1-8 & 23-29)	Al Meyer	239-313-0580
Oakwood II (bldg 9-22)	Al Meyer	239-313-0580
Sabal Palm	Mark Sherwin	201-370-4160
Santa Lucia	Celia Platt	239-498-8158
Saraceno	Jeanne Basso	239-600-2828
Savona	Sharmin McKenny	239-989-2334
Solemar	Bob Lindgren	651-895-6210
Ville Grande	Steve Bajinski	678-575-2397

REMEMBER-

- **Call 911** for a crime-in-progress (emergency) or
- **Call the police at 239-477-1000** to report suspicious activity/behavior (non-emergency)
- **Call the Grandezza Gate at 239-498-8895** to inform them that the police may be coming and why.
- **Notify your Neighborhood Watch Coordinator**

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Poison Control	(800) 222-1222
Alligator Hotline	(866) 392-4286
Animal Control	(239) 432-2083
Mosquito Control	(239) 694-2174
Florida Power & Light	(239) 334-7754
Sunshine Before You Dig	(800) 432-4770
Waste Services of Florida	(239) 332-8500
Free Residential Appliance Pickup	(239) 337-0800

GRANDEZZA COMMUNITY BOARDS AND OFFICERS

ASSOCIATION *POSITION*

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Barry Blank	S
Aramis Sullivan	D
Mike Patricelli	D
Susan Sherwin	D

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John Polczynski	D

Grandezza Classified Ads

To place a classified ad Grandezza residents may e-mail sjsherwin18@gmail.com. An ad will run for THREE (3) MONTHS beginning with the first submission. Please inform us when the item has been sold or if you wish to have it deleted from the column. Also, you must notify us to continue an ad for an additional cycle after the initial 3-month period has expired or it automatically will be deleted. (Ending cycle of the ad running is noted at the end in parentheses.)

ITEMS FOR SALE

Leather Sofa—black triple power recliner. Perfect condition, purchased in November 2025 for $1,999. Heading North and asking only $1,100. Call or text 309-838-7533 to view at our Saraceno Drive address. (Expires 9/26)

Nearly new Acorn Stairlift. Installed in February 2026. Will fit Sabal Palm Unit #6 from 1106 to 2806. Original price was $13,695; sale price negotiable. Contact Arlene Alderfer (215) 237-3333 (Expires 9/26)





Seabreeze
COMMUNICATIONS

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