



## BEST UNOFFICIAL MAYOR

Ed Ryan

Ed Ryan insists that, "Politics is a big comedy act to me on every level." Nevertheless, this 43-year-old former radio news reporter from upstate New York is a public figure in Gateway, an 8.5-square-mile district in south Lee County. Mr. Ryan, who calls himself Gateway's Unofficial Mayor, loves to poke fun at the five-member board that governs Gateway. He also likes to write. Through his online, bi-weekly newspaper, *The Gateway Gazette*, more than 2,000 subscribers have become familiar with his irascible wit.

"If you sit through their meetings long enough, someone will say something stupid," he says of Gateway's lawmakers. "And I feel it's my duty to catch them saying it." He admits to having a wide and deep sarcastic streak, especially when it comes to politics, and advises, "Take me with a huge grain of salt." But he also reports on a variety of goings on in Gateway, from proposed tax hikes to incidents of vandalism to plans for a community Easter egg hunt.

## BEST BUTT-KICKING

Sheriff Scott vs. the Ferrante Brothers

Lee County Sheriff Mike Scott didn't blink when he got rid of two top dogs in his department last spring. The brothers and longtime officers both were accused of using intimidating tactics toward co-workers. The sheriff said Charles Ferrante, his second in command, was trying to usurp his command when he told a co-worker, "The election (for Sheriff Scott) is over... I can do what I want to whoever I want." Dominick Ferrante, former head of the Special Operations Division, resigned under allegations he broke the chain of command by threatening another deputy's job over a firearm purchase. Sheriff Scott gave him a polygraph test, which he failed. Charles Ferrante allegedly tried to intimidate a legal adviser to get rid of a personnel file that could be used as evidence against his brother. He was out a month later. At the end of the day, Sheriff Scott emerged unbruised and the brothers are long gone. Just another day at the office.

## BEST VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION

Susan G. Komen for the Cure Southwest Florida

Founded in 1982, the national Komen for the Cure organization is the largest network of breast cancer survivors and activists committed to fighting breast cancer worldwide. Locally, the Southwest Florida chapter has grown to more than 400 volunteers since its inception in 2002. The group always needs volunteers, whether for one-time events or on an ongoing basis. Participants can join the Education and Outreach Committee, which distributes breast cancer awareness information at health fairs, or the Special Events Committee, which plans annual events like the Survivor Celebration. Want to be part of one of Southwest Florida's biggest yearly happenings? Help plan and organize the Race for the Cure, the organization's largest fundraising and awareness event.

## BEST BILLBOARD

Stay Alive... Just Drive

Most billboards try to get you to buy something. This one just wants to keep you safe by reminding you to stop text messaging or talking on the phone, put down the food and wait to comb your hair until you get there. The billboard features a provocative, eye-catching design by cartoonist Doug MacGregor. You've probably seen it around Southwest Florida: a bright green background with a gray road cutting through it. On the road, the words: "Stay Alive." A yellow sign in the foreground reads: "Just Drive." Next to the road is a small, white marker with a few roses and sunflowers that reads: "In Loving Memory."

Details: [www.sajd.org](http://www.sajd.org)



COURTESY PHOTO

The Sidney and Berne Davis Art Center in downtown Fort Myers is an architectural gem.

## downtime

### BEST PLACE FOR A FIRST DATE

Mike Greenwell's Family Fun Park

Dinner and a movie are so 1992. Skip the awkward conversation over appetizers and head for this Lee County landmark instead. Size up a potential love interest over air hockey or skee ball, or try your hand at a little old-school Pac Man. More daring types can step into the batting cages outside or take a spin on the go cart track out back. The best part? No need to blow an entire paycheck on the experience. Twenty bucks buys enough tokens to last all night. And if the date bombs, there's always paintball (don't shoot your eye out).

### BEST ARCHITECTURAL TREASURE

The Sidney and Berne Davis Art Center

Originally built in 1933, the site served as a post office and federal courthouse before its current incarnation as the home of Florida Arts. The stately building covers more than 23,000 square feet, including a covered portico with columns made from coral rock mined in the Florida Keys. After more than five years and \$3.2 million, the building has been restored under the guidance (and sweat equity) of Florida Arts Executive Director Jim Griffith. "It's one of the most brilliant pieces of architecture in all of Florida," Mr. Griffith says. Don't miss the detailed lobby ceilings or the glass chandeliers designed from blueprints found in the basement by local metalworker James DiGiorgio.

### BEST HANGOUT FOR LITTLE KIDS

Chuck E Cheese

The life-sized mouse alone should put this place on the top of most kids' lists, but there's also more than 100 arcade games and an indoor playground. Smiling, kid-friendly "cast members" at this pee-wee wonderland sell pizza and hot dogs, and vending machines dispense ice cream sandwiches and Jolly Rancher popsicles. Game tickets pile up like gold and can be traded in for tiaras or toy trucks. Did we mention the mechanical pony? For the adult chaperones, there's even beer available at the concession stand.

### BEST HANGOUT FOR TEENS

Coconut Point

Few places in Lee County offer as many opportunities for teens to spend allowance money as the shops at Coconut Point. With stores like Aeropostale, Hollister and American Eagle, the mall caters to the trend-focused under-20 set. Buckle and Lucky Brand Jeans have the latest in denim (skinny jeans, anyone?), and Icing by Claire's offers spot-on jewelry and accessories for a teenager's budget. For those looking to unload savings from a summer job, the Apple store features the latest in cool tech gadgets. Restaurants like Johnny Rockets and California Pizza Kitchen offer cheap eats and a fun place to hang. Plus, there's always the movie theater.

### BEST HANGOUT FOR SENIORS

McGregor Point Bridge Club

In the monthly McGregor Point Bridge Club newsletter, the heading reads, "The club with heart," and that is certainly the case with this South Fort Myers establishment. Club owners Rick and Val Covalciuc welcome visitors on the club's Web site with a warm invitation. "If you need a place to stay," they say, "just ask. If you need help at the airport, we will assist." In addition to the friendly atmosphere, the club offers daily bridge games and lessons, as well as special events like the July Fourth potluck and championship. "My best partner and I can come in first or last," the club's newsletter wisely says, "and still have the best time."

### BEST PLACE TO MEET SINGLE MEN

WAKA Game Nights

Since its inaugural season in the summer of 2008, Lee County's World Adult Kickball Association league has grown to more than 170 players, about 60 percent of who are men. Co-ed teams play weekly at Wa-Ke-Hatchee Park in South Fort Myers. After the games, the fun continues off the field at Icabod's, where teams intermingle and reform for drinking games, and flirting spreads in proportion to the amount of beer consumed. WAKA delivers good-looking single men of all ages and professions in a fun, relaxed environment. Many even bring buddies to the bar afterwards. Add that to the fact that all a woman has to wear to participate is a team T-shirt and gym shorts, and WAKA game night makes for a sweet singles event.