

**BEST WAY TO SAVE ON THE ELECTRIC BILL**

Go Solar

Solar-powered hot water technology is uncomplicated and has been around for decades. It's reliable, cost effective and it will reduce carbon emissions. You can have one installed for, on the low end, \$1,500 after federal and state tax credits. Based on an average person using 50 cents of hot water energy per day, a family of four would save \$750 per year on their electric bill. A photovoltaic system to power your whole house with solar could cost \$10,000, more or less. Although you might have to take the long view on going solar in the entire house, the investment ultimately will pay back your pocketbook — and the environment — in spades.

Details: Try Advance Solar & Spa in Fort Myers

BEST FREE SERVICE YOU DON'T USE

The Lee County Library System

Libraries are peaceful places, kind of like churches, except much more informative and all-inclusive. And there are drinking fountains. At a public library, the world is really limitless, especially if you consult a reference librarian who's trained to help you make sense of the volumes from Shakespeare to Sartre, Grisham to Crichton, Van Gogh to Vogue magazine. Don't know how to file for unemployment online? Go to a library. Looking up an ancestor? Ditto. Or just stop by to catch up on your favorite magazines. And if you want to borrow some books or movies to take home, it only takes about five minutes to get your own library card. What a deal.

Details: www.leegov.com/library/

BEST RETAIL SHOP THAT WELCOMES DOGS

Lily & Co. Jewelers

Karen Bell and Dan Schuyler, owners of Lily & Co. Jewelers on Sanibel, clearly put dogs on a pedestal. Their store is named after Ms. Bell's Labradoodle (Lily) and two yellow Labradors, Angel and Gracie (& Co.). The three obedience-school trained canines greet customers at the door, many of whom bring their own dogs when they shop at Lily & Co. "We're all about dogs," Mr. Schuyler says. Every year on May 3 (Lily's birthday), Ms. Bell and Mr. Schuyler throw a party to raise money for the Animal Refuge Center in North Fort Myers. This year, 125 dogs showed up with their owners. Sometimes even exquisite gemstones play second fiddle to man's best friend.

**BEST SUPPORT GROUP**

The Alvin A. Dubin Alzheimer's Resource Center

The Dubin Alzheimer's Resource Center is a model for support groups. It provides crucial guidance and myriad practical resources for Alzheimer's patients and their families, connecting them to at least 12 local groups that meet regularly, where the guidance of experts is strengthened by empathy from others experiencing a similar ordeal.

Details: www.alzheimersswfl.org

BEST FREE SEMINAR FOR BABY BOOMERS

Dr. Edward Humbert

You won't find a more experienced or professional surgeon than hip and knee doc Dr. Ed Humbert. He offers a free monthly seminar at his office, so you can meet him and learn how you can stay active late in life, even if your hip and knee joints are riddled with arthritis or other trauma. Dr. Humbert has had a practice in Fort Myers for seven years, but he started out as a mechanical engineering student at the University of Florida. He switched to orthopedic medicine, completing a fellowship in hip and knee replacement at Ohio State University because "it's a lot more fun to put them in than to make them." He performed more than 800 hip and knee replacements last year using a method that doesn't remove any muscle or tendon. "The recovery is dramatically quicker," he says. "They can pretty much go back to any activity if they like, to playing tennis or golf or dance, downhill skiing or rollerblading."

Details: call his office at 337-2003

BEST SECONDHAND CLOTHING STORE

Goodwill

Competition between Goodwill Industries of Southwest Florida and other retail operations is "very tough," says CEO Tom Feurig. But Goodwill's efforts to compete with for-profit and nonprofit clothing stores alike have paid off. At places like the big new Goodwill on Plantation Road in south Fort Myers, the atmosphere and merchandise resemble that of a brand-name outlet. But the prices are still "secondhand." The icing on the cake: No matter what you pay, you'll never suffer buyer's remorse, because Goodwill's profits all go to help people who otherwise couldn't get jobs, housing and other things they need to be more independent.

Gavins ACE Hardware

Gavins Ace Hardware Inc. started in October 1987, when Rita and Larry Gavin purchased the 6,000 sq. ft. independent Cypress Hardware on Cypress Lake Drive, just off McGregor Blvd. A few years later, the Gavins family then purchased another store (Schaeffers Ace Hardware) a 11,000 sq. ft. store in Cape Coral at the north end of Del Prado. In March of 1991 Gaddies True Value on San Carlos Blvd., went out of business and Gavins Ace Hardware moved into their 28,000 sq. ft. location. The Gavins closed their two smaller hardware stores, allowing them to concentrate on their larger Carlos Blvd. Home Center. Besides the usual Hardware, Plumbing, Paint, Tools, and Electrical departments you'll find extensive departments that include: Housewares, Lawn and Garden Supplies, Patio Furniture, a huge line of Weber Grills, parts and accessories, Decorative Landscape Materials, Mulch, LP Gas and much more. The Gavins store is known throughout Southwest Florida for its fourth quarter dynamic Holiday and Christmas selection. Over the years the Gavin family has been increasing the inventory selection and depth. Gavins Ace was honored by being one of the top ten Ace Hardware stores in the United States for Hoover domestic purchases. We were selling so many vacuums that we ended up doing basic repairs; so we decided to do Hoover, Eureka, and Sanitaire factory authorized service and repairs. Gavins Ace Hardware is also an authorize sales and service facility for Weber Stephens Grills and Huffy Bicycles. Gavins Ace now has over 37,000 sku's, making it one of Southwest Florida's most complete and interesting Home Centers. We couldn't even venture a guess how many times a snowbird has stated, "I wish this store was also up north where I live during the summer," Ron Gavin, President stated. In 1999 they purchased the 6,000 sq. ft. building right next door that houses their Home and Pro Powerhouse that sells outdoor lawn equipment and does equipment and small engine repair. The Powerhouse sells residential and commercial equipment that includes, Echo, Toro, Snapper, Lawnboy, Husqvarna, MTD, Ryobi and also carries parts for these and other lines such as , Homelite, Murray, Kohler, Kawasaki, Tecumseh and Briggs and Stratton. The Powerhouse has an extensive inventory of repair parts, valued over \$150,000! The Powerhouse has been growing rapidly to where it seasonally has had three mechanics. In January 2005 the Powerhouse opened up an additional 1,200 sq. ft. of floor space and opened the Ace Rental Place. The Ace Rental Place has over \$80,000.00 in inventory of home owner and small contractor rental equipment, such as towable concrete mixer and Toro Dingos which are skid steer units that accept attachments. Gavins Ace Hardware has won numerous Best Hardware Store Awards! John Gavin, Vice President of Operations said, "Having over a million dollars in inventory and a large selection is a key part to our success, but it's the knowledgeable and helpful Ace associates that truly set us apart from the others".

"Gavins Ace is the Helpful Place"

Gavins ACE Hardware 466.7777 • 16025 San Carlos Blvd. • Fort Myers

