

NEWS BRIEFS

Free boating seminar offered

Powerboaters, paddlers and sailors who are novices or newcomers to Southwest Florida are welcome to attend a free Feb. 11 event designed to help them with everything from etiquette and eco-tips to safe-boating techniques and getting around.

Boat Safe/Boat Smart is at 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 11, at the Matlacha Community Center, 4577 Pine Island Road NW., Matlacha. It's a quick drive from Cape Coral, Fort Myers, southern Charlotte County and greater Pine Island.

Presentations include speakers from Lee County Sheriff's Office Marine Unit, U.S.

Coast Guard auxiliary, Lee County Natural Resources, Tow/BoatUS, Lee County Sea Grant and Lee County Parks and Recreation as well as local boating columnist, Betsy Clayton. A Sanibel Police marine officer who specializes in fitting children and adults correctly in life vests also will be there.

Safe boating techniques and equipment, boating and boat-ramp etiquette, and environmental impacts of boating are among the topics to be discussed. Also on the agenda are common boating mistakes, information on local boat ramps, and services available online through the Department of Natural

Resources Marine Program.

The evening workshop is free and open to the public. Registration is required due to limited space. Call (239) 283-4110 or (239) 707-6485. The workshop is sponsored by Lee County Parks and Recreation and Florida Sea Grant. ■

Tax help available for low-income people

United Way volunteers will prepare taxes for low-income workers free of charge through April 15 at four United Way Neighborhood Houses located in Lehigh Acres, Harlem Heights, Cape Coral and Dunbar. Tax payers must have their W-2 forms from their employers prior to making an appointment for the service.

Individuals and families with income of less than \$40,000 in 2007 are eligible for free tax preparation through the VITA program, or Volunteer Income Tax Assistance. VITA can e-file tax returns and get qualifying refunds to the taxpayer in 9 to 16 days.

United Way of Lee, Hendry and Glades,

in partnership with the Internal Revenue Service, Edison College and Lee County Government provides trained volunteers to help prepare and file tax returns for qualifying tax payers. Some taxpayers may be eligible for up to \$4,716 in Earned Income Tax Credit.

The Earned Income Tax Credit, known as the EITC, can help low-income working families and individuals. It is a refundable tax credit that offsets income taxes paid by low-wage workers. The IRS estimates that up to 25 percent of eligible workers do not file for the credit.

Call United Way 211 or (239) 433-3900 for questions or to schedule an appointment. ■

Museum needs volunteers

The Southwest Florida Museum of History, the historic train depot that is home to Southwest Florida's heritage through artifacts, exhibits and displays, needs volunteers to help in a variety of roles at the museum. However, the museum especially needs docents to lead guided tours both in the museum and downtown as part of the seasonal Walking Tours (January - April). Other opportunities exist in administration, fundraising, marketing, special events and archives.

The museum provides programming, tours, Walking Tours, Escorted Day Trips and an annual traveling exhibit.

Training will be provided to volunteers. Call Nikki at 337-3332 for more information. ■

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