

# FORT MYERS FLORIDA WEEKLY™

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“My wife and I like the fresh, dirty produce we can wash off ourselves. Plus I get to ask questions.”

—Jim Sherron about the Fort Myers Downtown Farmers Market

## getting fresh



FLORIDA WEEKLY PHOTO EVAN WILLIAMST  
Fort Myers Downtown Market is open from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. every Thursday with an abundance of fresh produce.

**>>Inside:**  
When and where to get the freshest foods in town  
**A8&9**

SWFL markets offer quality, value, community

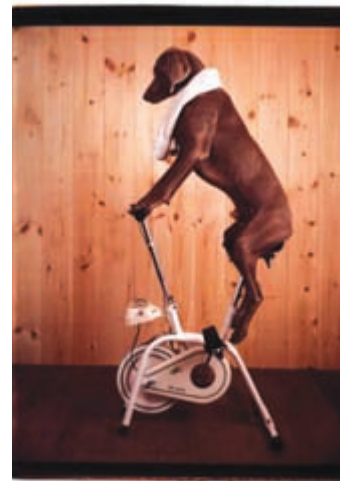
BY EVAN WILLIAMS  
Florida Weekly Correspondent

It was a humid mid-morning at the Immokalee State Farmers' Market, before lunch and therefore quiet – one worker napped behind boxes of tomatoes; festive music drifted from somewhere along the curved path of vendors.

A white van inched through the sparse crowd, the driver eating a mango. That is the essence of a farmers' markets appeal to many: it is generally the most direct route from vine to mouth.

“The reason they’ve grown so popular in the last 15 years is people want to buy something fresher,” said Carl Penn, development representative for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. “They want to deal with the farmers who can tell them exactly how they grew their produce and not have it

SEE FRESH, A8 ▶



### A dog's life

Photographs by artist William Wegman will soon be on display at the Von Liebig Art Center. **C1 ▶**



### Cape's Red, White and Brew

And other events in Fort Myers' society. **C19-21 ▶**



### Jatropha

This rare tropical plant is behind a \$6 million bio-diesel effort here in Fort Myers. **B1 ▶**

## Medicaid cuts hurting local service providers

BY MICHELLE L. START  
Florida Weekly Correspondent

Local service providers are scrambling to find ways to make ends meet after Medicaid reimbursements were cut in the state budget.

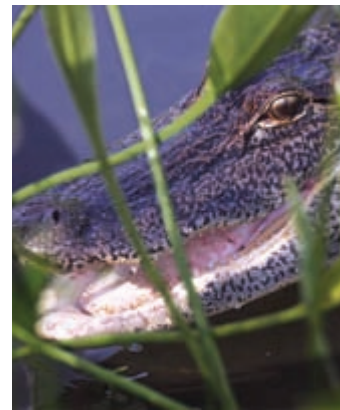
“We’ve had to decrease some of our employees,” said Cole Caruso, director of operations at Florida Habilitation Network. “We’ve had to reduce their pay. We’ve had no other choice. Other providers in the area are having to discontinue services.”



Melanie Etters, communications director for Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities, said the new budget that went into effect on July 1 cut most reimbursement rates by 7 percent. She said that the waiver support coordination and residential habilitation underwent 3 percent cuts last year, so they did not have the full 7 percent slashed. “Virtually all of the state agencies have some reduction because of the poor economy right now,” Etters said.

Marsha Vollmar, area administrator

SEE MEDICAID, A10 ▶



### Gooooo Gators

Alligator blood is touted as a potential source of lifesaving drugs. **A18▶**

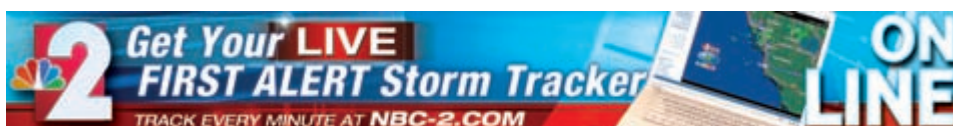
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ROGER WILLIAMS A2  
OPINION A4  
15 MINUTES A6  
OUTDOORS A20

ON THE MOVE B4  
NETWORKING B10&11  
ARTS C1  
EVENTS C6&7

SOCIETY C19-21  
CUISINE C23  
REAL ESTATE D1  
CLASSIFIEDS D10-11



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