Highland Village FLING

WHERE THE HEART GROWS YOUNG

September 2026

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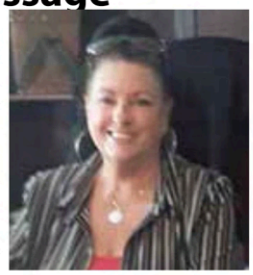
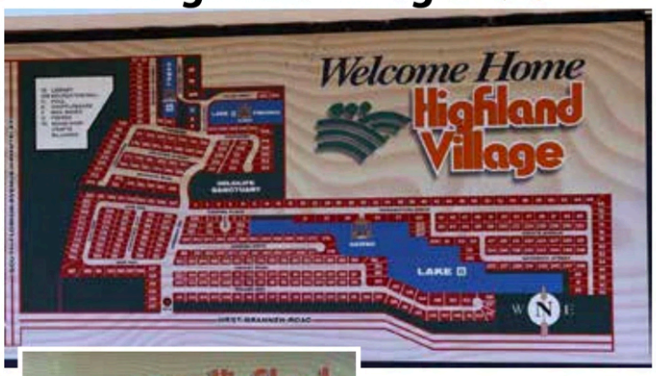
Manager's Message



This month, Polk County transitions from intense summer heat into the start of the autumn season. Local farms open popular corn mazes and pumpkin patches, downtown areas host evening festivals as temperatures begin to dip. The Polk County History Center features cultural events and heritage programs, get out and do something fun.

Lynda Eddlemon
Park Manager Highland Village M.H.P
330 Brewer Rd Lakeland Fl 33813 Phone # 863-646-8541

A Warm Welcome to Highland Village



Autumn Greetings, Highland Village!

Wishing all our Highland Village neighbors a wonderful September! As summer winds down and Central Florida slowly eases into the golden days of early autumn, we can look forward to slightly softer afternoon breezes and the promise of cooler evenings just around the corner.

This season reminds us how blessed we are to live in a community where the palms sway, the tropical blooms keep right on shining, and our neighbors bring warmth to every day. Beyond the community gatherings, labor of love projects, and the seasonal rhythm starting up again, may your September be filled with joyful conversations on the porch, great health, and plenty of shared laughs.

Warmest regards,
From Highland Village

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🎤 **Community Shout-Outs & Heartfelt Thanks**

A massive thank you to **Deborah Spencer** for stepping up to accept the delivery and oversee the sorting of our physical papers! Working alongside the fantastic **Lizette Ramirez**, they will be organizing, stuffing, and prepping everything for our delivery team. This is a huge, essential undertaking, and we are incredibly grateful for your time and dedication!

We also want to extend a warm appreciation to this month's wonderful contributors: Donna Koreny, Lizette Ramirez, and Steve Miner, as well as Lynda and Donna in the front office for their article submissions.

🚚 **A Special Feature Thank You:** A huge thank you to Rich Rayno for sitting down with us for this month's Resident Spotlight—it was so fascinating to learn more about his incredible experiences and unique background! We truly appreciate him taking the time to share his stories and warm personality with the Highland Village community.

✍️ **Delivery Volunteers Urgently Needed!**

Because we are short on help, several of our amazing volunteers are currently pulling double duty and walking multiple neighborhood routes.

Can you spare just **15 to 30 minutes once a month** to hand out papers to your immediate neighbors? It's a quick, easy way to stretch your legs, greet your neighbors, and lighten the load for everyone. We truly need a few more hands on deck!

✍️ **Notes from the Editor's Desk**

- **Monthly Deadline:** Please submit all articles and content by the 10th of each month (or earlier, if you have them ready!).
- **A Reminder for Our Creative Writers:** We absolutely love your deeply researched articles! If your piece uses information from a book, magazine, or website, please include a quick line at the bottom showing where you found it. If it's 100% your own personal memories or original thoughts, no source is needed. Let's make sure we give credit where credit is due!

📱 **Connect With Us!**

To sign up for a delivery route, submit a photo, or pitch an article idea for the next edition, please reach out to:

Stacey Ross
📧 *(248) 342-1217*
🍂 *HighlandVlgFling@Gmail.com*

Thank you for supporting and reading your community newspaper!

September Community Meeting: Welcome Fall & Finalize the Fun! 🎨

Mark your calendars! Our next monthly community meeting is happening on **Monday, September 7, 2026, at 6:30 PM** at the clubhouse.

As summer fades and autumn arrives, we are gearing up for a bustling season filled with neighborhood favorites! Join us in the comfort of the clubhouse to pull up a chair, connect with friends, and help bring our upcoming fall lineup to life.

We have some fantastic events right on the horizon, and we rely on your energy, volunteer spirit, and creative ideas to make each one a success. Come out and help us finalize the details for:

🗓️ **October 3rd (9:00 AM – 3:00 PM) – Craft & Bake Sale:** Tables are available for $20 each—time to start prepping your goods!

We are looking for generous bakers who would be willing to donate homemade baked goods for our up and coming fundraiser in conjunction with our Craft Fair on October 3rd from 9 am to 3 pm in the clubhouse.

Please text or call Lizette 863-209-2424 with your name to sign up. There will be a sign up sheet as well in the clubhouse.

Thank you in advance. ❤️🍩🥐🍞🎂🍪🍰🧁

🚗 **October 5th – Annual Enrollment Seminar:** An informative session to help navigate your benefit options.

🪦 **October 16th & 17th – Carport Sale:** Clear out the clutter and hunt for local hidden treasures.

🩺 **October 20th – Medicare & Retirement Meeting:** Helpful guidance and updates to help you prepare for the year ahead.

🎸 **October 23rd – Health & Wellness Fair:** Connect with local resources and focus on healthy living for the season.

🎃 **October 24th – Sock Hop:** Dust off your dancing shoes! We're finalizing the official time, so bring your input.

🗳️ **October 31st (4:00 PM – 8:00 PM) – Halloween Potluck Party:** A spooky-good time for everyone in the village!

Whether you'd like to jump in as a volunteer, pitch a fresh idea, or simply catch up on what's happening around Highland Village, your voice makes all the difference.

See you on **Monday, September 7th at 6:30 PM**—great conversation, fall planning, and warm neighbors guaranteed!

August Fundraiser Success!

August was an incredible month for our community, thanks to the overwhelming success of our two featured fundraisers! A huge thank you to Steve Miner for hosting our delicious Breakfast Sandwich fundraiser, and to Deborah Spencer for bringing everyone together for a sweet time at the Ice Cream Social. Because of your enthusiastic participation and generosity, both events were a resounding success. We are deeply grateful to our entire community for your continued support as we grow and thrive together!

Keeping Our Neighborly Spirit Strong 📦🌳

As we roll into September, the local election season is officially in full swing. With campaign signs popping up and political ads on every screen, it is a good time to pause and reflect on what keeps Highland Village such a wonderful place to live.

There's a classic old saying: "Never discuss politics or religion at the dinner table." While we can't always avoid those topics when gathering on the porch or chatting at the clubhouse, we can choose how we navigate them.

Our community is made up of people from all walks of life, with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. We don't all have to vote the same way, nor do we ever have to share who we are voting for. If you do find yourself in a political conversation with a neighbor, let's make a conscious effort to listen with kindness and be open to different opinions.

We don't need to jump into every debate that comes our way. But when we do speak, let's ensure our words are considerate, respectful, and neighborly. At the end of the day, our words and actions have a real impact on those around us—and our connection as neighbors is far more valuable than any political point.

Let's lead with respect, care for one another, and keep Highland Village the welcoming, peaceful neighborhood we all love coming home to.

Warmly,
Stacey Ross, Your Editor 🍂

September Birthdays: Welcoming the Golden Season! ✨🪻

September is here, bringing the gentle turn toward autumn and a wonderful, golden pace of life to our neighborhood. To everyone celebrating a September birthday: you were born during a season of harvest and soft breezes, bringing a warm and comforting energy to our Highland Village family!

Here is a look at the natural wonders and stars that shape our wonderful September celebrants:

September's Natural Wonders

💙 **Birth Flower: The Aster & Morning Glory**
September is represented by two enchanting blooms. The delicate Aster represents deep love, wisdom, and elegance, while the bright Morning Glory symbolizes affection, renewal, and a sunny outlook. Together, they mirror our September neighbors—thoughtful, wise, and always bringing fresh cheer to the village!

♍ **Birthstone: The Sapphire**
September boasts the brilliant, deep blue Sapphire. Long associated with royalty, wisdom, and peace, this stunning gem is believed to bring trust, clarity, and good fortune to its wearer. It perfectly captures the calm, dependable, and radiant nature of our September-born friends!

The September Stars

⚖️ **Virgo (August 23 – September 22): The Helpful Hands**
Virgos are gentle, practical, and incredibly observant. They are our neighborhood's natural problem-solvers—deeply organized, reliable, and always the first to offer a helping hand or remember the small details that make people feel special.

⚖️ **Libra (September 23 – October 22): The Harmonizers**
Libras are charming, peaceful, and naturally social. Guided by a love for fairness and beauty, a Libra brings balance, gentle humor, and a warm, welcoming presence to every porch chat and community gathering.

The Virgo/Libra Cusp (September 19 – September 25): The Cusp of Beauty
This unique blend combines the practical, grounded nature of Virgo with the artistic, gracious charm of Libra. Those born on this cusp are thoughtful, artistic, and have a wonderful gift for making the world around them both organized and beautiful.

A Little Birthday Wisdom

As we welcome the turn of the season, here are three things for our September celebrants to keep in mind:

1. **Share Your Harmony:** September is a season of balance. Your calm and steady presence helps keep our community grounded and connected—never hesitate to share your warmth!
2. **Savor the Breeze:** Take time to enjoy the changing season—step out onto the porch during those softer late-afternoon hours, pour a cold drink, and relax with good friends.
3. **Celebrate Your Grace:** Whether you channel the quiet dedication of Virgo or the warm charm of Libra, remember that you make Highland Village a brighter, kinder place just by being you.

Wishing a very happy, healthy, and joy-filled birthday to all of our wonderful September residents!🎉🎂🎂

September Resident Birthdays

Date	Resident	Address	Fun Facts
Sept 1	Martia Stephens	374 Evie Way	*Birthday twin with Lily Tomlin and Zendaya!*
Sept 2	Jacklyn Money	2 Morganthau Dr.	*WWII officially ended aboard the USS Missouri on this day in 1945.*
Sept 2	Autumn Randall	229 Cayuta	*Shares a birthday with Keanu Reeves!*
Sept 5	David Middleton	260 Odessa	*Birthday twin with rock icon Freddie Mercury.*
Sept 8	Debra Davis	20 Morganthau Dr.	*Shares a birthday with pop singer P!nk.*
Sept 8	Debra Oliver	331 Pridgeon	*Star Trek first premiered on TV on this day in 1966.*
Sept 8	Margarita Stangl	90 Morganthau Dr.	*Birthday twin with country legend Patsy Cline.*
Sept 9	Peggy Devine	232 Cayuta	*Shares a birthday with actor Adam Sandler.*
Sept 10	James Hoff	288 Belcher	*Birthday twin with golf legend Arnold Palmer.*
Sept 10	Alan Terhune	254 Odessa	*The Gibson Guitar Company incorporated on this day in 1902.*
Sept 11	Donald Barker	246 Goodrich St.	*Shares a birthday with actress Taraji P. Henson.*
Sept 11	Roy York	85 Strout St.	*Birthday twin with football legend Bear Bryant.*
Sept 12	Rosemary Wells	359 Evie Way	*Jesse Owens won his 4th gold medal on this day in 1936.*
Sept 13	David Bradley	228 Cayuta	*Shares a birthday with Olympic sprinter Michael Johnson.*
Sept 13	Janice Marine	127 Moller Way	*Birthday twin with actor and director Tyler Perry.*
Sept 14	Michael Cabrejo	44 Morganthau Dr.	*Francis Scott Key wrote The Star-Spangled Banner on this day in 1814.*
Sept 15	Robert Sullivan	88 Morganthau Dr.	*Birthday twin with Prince Harry and Tommy Lee Jones.*
Sept 16	Robert Quiles	49 Morganthau Dr.	*Shares a birthday with blues legend B.B. King.*
Sept 17	Kimberly McNeely	131 Moller Way	*Birthday twin with country star Hank Williams.*
Sept 22	Patricia Cousens	204 Brewer Rd.	*Shares a birthday with rock icon Joan Jett.*
Sept 23	Donna Caldwell	306 Brewer Rd.	*Birthday twin with Bruce Springsteen and Ray Charles.*
Sept 24	Henry Richards	40 Morganthau Dr.	*Shares a birthday with Muppets creator Jim Henson.*
Sept 26	Stacy Mallard	315 Brewer Rd.	*Birthday twin with tennis legend Serena Williams.*
Sept 27	Nancy Parris	274 Odessa	*Shares a birthday with actress Gwyneth Paltrow.*
Sept 28	Steven Osborne, Sr.	119 Moller Way	*Birthday twin with TV icon Ed Sullivan.*
Sept 28	Robert Bunton	105 Moller Way	*Shares a birthday with French icon Brigitte Bardot.*
Sept 28	Alice Bradley	228 Cayuta	*E.T. crossed $300M at the box office on this day in 1982.*
Sept 28	Elise Ryder	335 Brewer Rd.	*Shares a birth date with soul singer Ben E. King.*
Sept 29	Deborah Spencer	316 Brewer Rd.	*Birthday twin with cowboy star Gene Autry.*
Sept 30	Kim McElligott	16 Morganthau Dr.	*Shares a birthday with pop singer Halsey.*

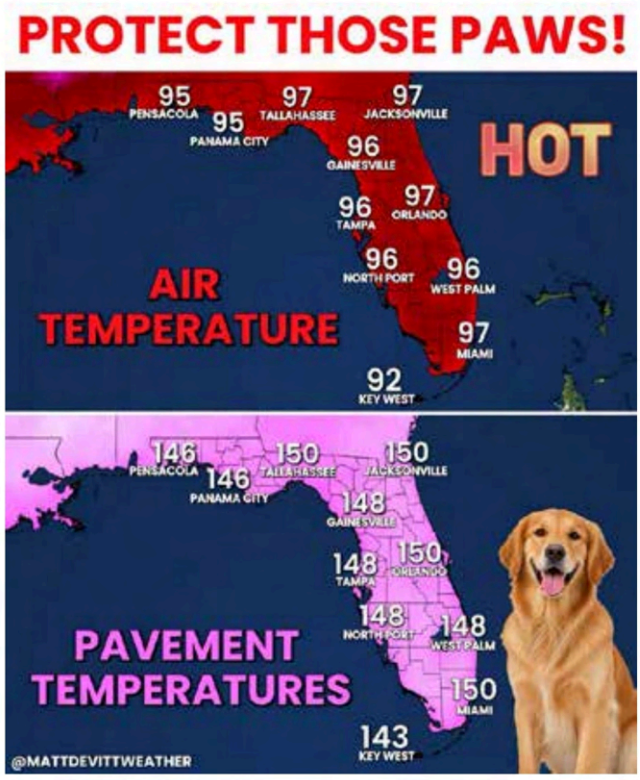
🎂 **Happy Birthday to all of our September celebrants!** 🎈🎈
May your month be filled with good health, happiness, and plenty of reason to celebrate! If we missed your special day, please let the office know so we can make sure to include you in our next edition.

🌿 **Anniversary Wishes for Lawrence & Dorothy Smith (83 Strout St.) — September 20**

Fun September 20th Fact: On this day in 1519, explorer Ferdinand Magellan set sail from Spain on the world's very first circumnavigation of the globe!

Wishing you both continued smooth sailing, great health, and many more happy miles together on life's journey. Happy Anniversary!

If we missed your birthday or anniversary, please email Stacey Ross at HighlandVlgFling@gmail.com - to get the list updated.



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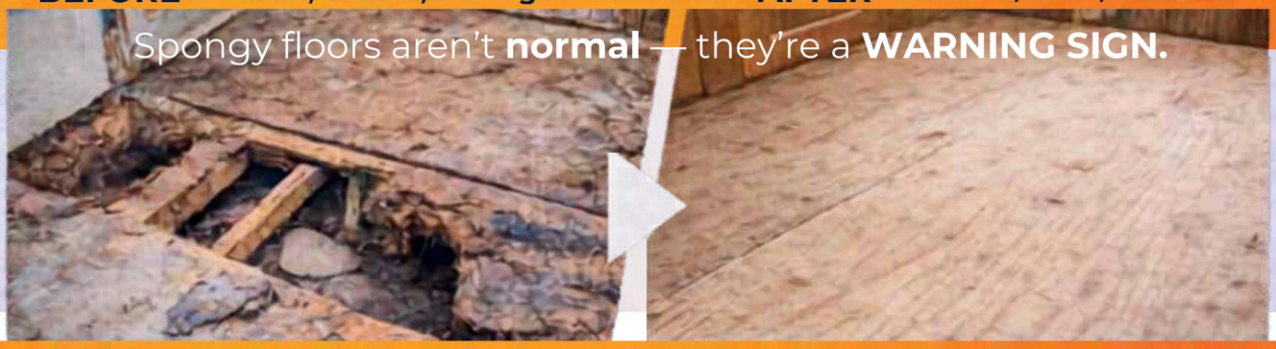

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Resident Spotlight: Rich Rayno

If you've spent any time around the neighborhood, you already know that this month's spotlight feature is a true social butterfly. Whether he's chatting about the latest game or greeting neighbors, Rich Rayno brings a wonderful energy to our community. Living right at the corner of Brewer and Buckeye, Rich is a familiar face to many—especially if you want to talk Hockey!

We recently sat down with Rich to talk about his deep history with our park, his New England roots, and his love for the ice.

A New England Love Story & A Beautiful Legacy:

Rich's story truly begins in New Hampshire, where he met the love of his life, Sue. The couple was married for 59 incredible years, raising a wonderful family together. Though Sue sadly passed away late last year on December 24, 2025—just shy of what would have been their milestone 60th anniversary—her memory and the life they built together remain close to his heart. Their 56-year-old son still resides in Gilmanton, New Hampshire, with his wife, Lisa, keeping the family & the Granite State roots strong.

The 15-Year Convincing Act:

While Rich and Sue officially transitioned into full-time Florida residents in 2021, their connection to our community actually goes back nearly two decades. For 15 to 20 years, the couple regularly came down to visit family who already lived right here in the park. Rich fell in love with the area instantly and was completely on board to make the move permanently. Sue, however, was deeply attached to their beautiful New Hampshire home. It took a good 15 years of gentle convincing from Rich, but patience finally paid off. Rich recalls coming home from work one ordinary day when Sue completely surprised him by simply announcing, "It's time to move to Florida".

They immediately put plans into motion, sold their New Hampshire home, and packed up for the Sunshine State, finally settling into their perfect spot on the corner of Brewer and Buckeye.

In Their Own Words:

Question: Rich, you visited family here for nearly twenty years before moving in full-time. What was it about this specific community that made you fall in love with it so early on?

Rich: It's just such a welcoming place. Every time we came down to visit family, it felt less like a vacation and more like coming home. I knew right away this was where I wanted to end up.

Question: We love the story of Sue coming home and suddenly deciding it was finally time to make the leap to Florida. What was that whirlwind move like for you both?

Rich: After 15 years of me trying to convince her, I couldn't believe my ears! But once Sue made up her mind, she was all in. We didn't waste any time selling the original home and getting down here. Getting to enjoy this beautiful park together as full-time residents is something I'll always be grateful for.

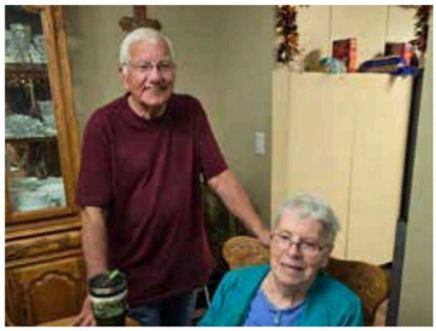
Question: Anyone who knows you knows you are a major sports fan. Take us through your favorite teams—we hear you have a soft spot for hockey!

Rich: Oh, absolutely. I'm a New England guy through and through, so I am an avid fan of the Boston Bruins. If the hockey game is on, you can bet I'm watching and cheering them on!

Question: You are definitely known as a social butterfly around the neighborhood. What is your favorite part about living on the corner of Brewer and Buckeye?

Rich: It's a fantastic spot because I get to see everyone coming and going! I love the social aspect of this neighborhood. Getting to wave to neighbors, catch up on the local news, and just enjoy the Florida weather with great people is what it's all about.

A huge thank you to Rich Rayno for sharing his heartwarming story and his time with us for this edition. Next time you pass by Brewer and Buckeye, be sure to stop, say hello, and maybe talk a little sports with Rich!



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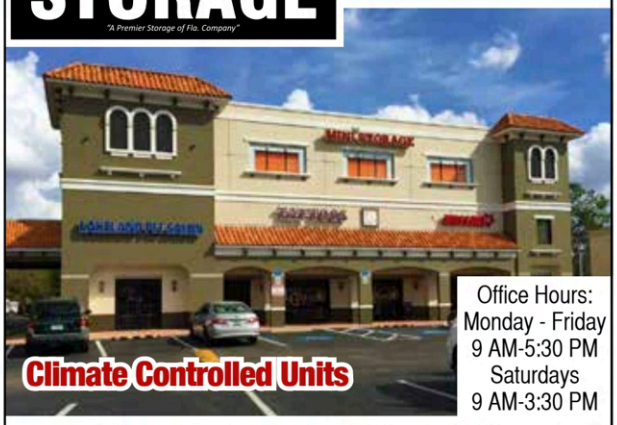

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Highland Village

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Address: 375 Brannen Road, Lakeland

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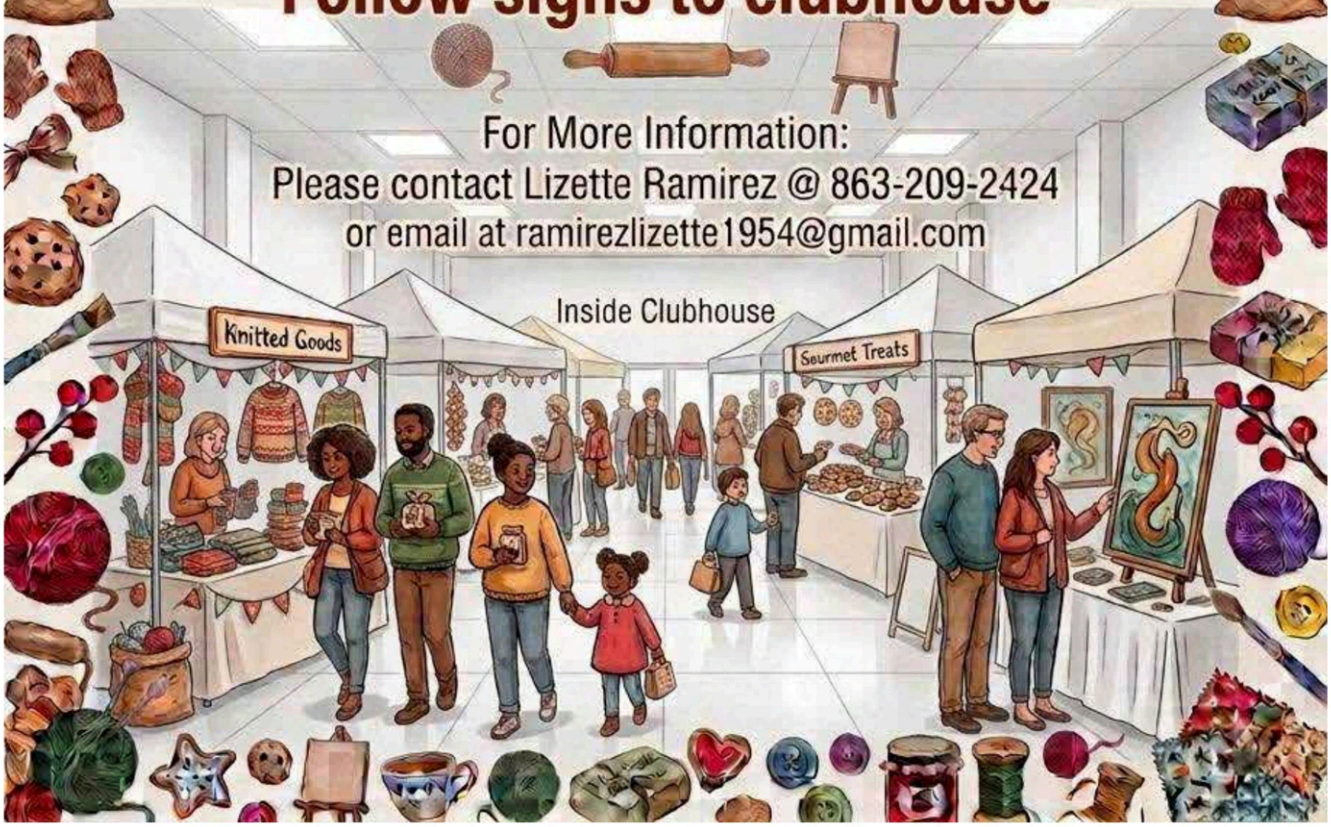
For More Information:
Please contact Lizette Ramirez @ 863-209-2424
or email at ramirezlizette1954@gmail.com

Inside Clubhouse



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September 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 GARBAGE DAY 2:00 PM BUNCO 10:00 AM WATER AEROBICS WITH SARAH	2 9:00 AM COFFEE / TEA 10:00 AM CRAFTS 6:00 PM NICKLE BINGO	3 10:00 AM WATER AEROBICS WITH SARAH	4	5
6	7 5:00 PM FREE FOOD GIVEAWAY 6:30 PM SOCIAL COMMITTEE MEETING	8 GARBAGE DAY 2:00 PM BUNCO 10:00 AM WATER AEROBICS WITH SARAH	9 9:00 AM COFFEE / TEA 10:00 AM CRAFTS 6:00 PM NICKLE BINGO	10 10:00 AM WATER AEROBICS WITH SARAH FLING	11	12
13	14 5:00 PM FREE FOOD GIVEAWAY	15 GARBAGE DAY 2:00 PM BUNCO 10:00 AM WATER AEROBICS WITH SARAH	16 9:00 AM COFFEE / TEA 10:00 AM CRAFTS 6:00 PM NICKLE BINGO	17 10:00 AM WATER AEROBICS WITH SARAH 10-11AM	18	19
20	21 5:00 PM FREE FOOD GIVEAWAY	22 GARBAGE DAY 2:00 PM BUNCO 10:00 AM WATER AEROBICS WITH SARAH	23 9:00 AM COFFEE / TEA 10:00 AM CRAFTS 6:00 PM NICKLE BINGO	24 10:00 AM WATER AEROBICS WITH SARAH	25	26
27	28 5:00 PM FREE FOOD GIVEAWAY	29 GARBAGE DAY 2:00 PM BUNCO 10:00 AM WATER AEROBICS WITH SARAH	30 9:00 AM COFFEE / TEA 10:00 AM CRAFTS 6:00 PM NICKLE BINGO			

Health & Wellness: Easing into Autumn 🍂💧

As September unfolds, Central Florida offers a subtle shift in the air. While warm days are still plenty, the softer late-afternoon light and slight dip in humidity make it a wonderful time to re-evaluate our daily health routines and prepare for the lively season ahead.

🔪 1. Hydration Beyond the Heat

It is easy to remember to drink water during the blistering days of July and August, but as the weather softens in September, we often forget that hydration is just as vital.

- **The Goal:** Aim for 6 to 8 glasses of water daily.
- **Seasonal Tip:** If plain water gets tiring, try infusing a pitcher with sliced cucumber, citrus, or fresh mint for a refreshing porch side drink!

🍀 2. Safe Outdoor Movement

With neighborhood events picking up—from our upcoming Italian Potluck to the October Carport Sale—keeping your mobility and stamina strong will help you enjoy every moment.

- **Best Times to Walk:** Take advantage of early morning or twilight hours for a stroll along Evie Way or Moller Way when temperatures are coolest.
- **Sun Protection:** Even as summer fades, Florida's UV rays remain strong. Keep wearing your wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen during outdoor neighborhood chats.

🧠 3. Seasonal Nutrition: Fall Harvest Favorites

September brings a fresh wave of seasonal produce that supports immune health and digestion:

- **Apples & Pears:** Packed with dietary fiber to support heart health and digestion.
- **Sweet Potatoes & Squash:** Rich in Beta-Carotene and Vitamin A, perfect for boosting immunity as we head toward flu season.
- **Leafy Greens:** Incorporating spinach or kale into lunch provides an easy energy boost for active days.

🚴 4. Mindful Rest & Porch Time

Physical health is only half the picture—mental well-being is just as important! Taking 15 to 20 minutes each afternoon to sit on the porch, read a good book, or catch up with a neighbor does wonders for lowering blood pressure and reducing stress.

Let's step into this new season feeling energized, connected, and strong!

September Outdoors & Sports in Central Florida 🧠🚲🍁

September brings a welcome shift to Central Florida! As the intense summer humidity begins to break, it's the ideal month to dust off your walking shoes, grab your binoculars, and enjoy the best of our local parks, lakes, and sports events.

⚽ Outdoor Activities & Trail Adventures

- **Morning Walks at Circle B Bar Reserve:** Early autumn is prime time for wildlife viewing at Circle B. As morning temperatures cool down, Alligator Alley and the Marsh Rabbit Run offer fantastic birdwatching—keep an eye out for returning migratory birds and resident bald eagles.
- **Paddling Lake Hollingsworth & Lake Mirror:** The cooler morning breezes make early September paddling or walking around Lakeland's lakes unbeatable. If you're out on Lake Hollingsworth, early mornings offer serene water conditions before afternoon breezes pick up.
- **Cycling the Van Fleet State Trail:** Stretching through Polk County, this paved, smooth trail is lined with shaded canopy sections, making it a favorite for an easy, flat bike ride or a long, brisk walk away from city traffic.

🥊 Sports & Spectator Highlights

- **High School Football Night Lights:** Friday night football is back in full swing across Polk County! Cheering on our local high school teams is one of the best ways to spend a crisp September evening outdoors.
- **Cypress Gardens Water Ski Show:** Head down to Winter Haven on Saturday, September 19, 2026, for the free monthly ski show hosted by the legendary Cypress Gardens Water Ski Team at Lake Silver. Bring a lawn chair and enjoy world-class water ski pyramids and stunts!
- **College & Pro Sports Kickoffs:** September marks the official return of autumn tailgating. Whether you're following Florida college football, catching an Orlando City SC soccer match, or tuning into Tampa Bay sports, the fall sports calendar is packed.

💡 Outdoor Quick Tips for September

- **Watch the Afternoon Sky:** While morning temperatures drop, September afternoon rain showers can still pop up quickly. Plan your trail walks or lake outings before 1:00 PM to stay dry.
- **Stay Hydrated:** Early autumn breezes can fool you—Florida humidity is still present! Keep a water bottle handy on all outdoor excursions.

Stay Sharp, Stay Safe: Recognizing the Signs of Senior-Targeted Fraud

Community Safety Corner: Spotting and Handling Scams

Scammers frequently target older adults using high-pressure tactics and urgent demands. Recognizing the warning signs and knowing what immediate action to take can stop fraud in its tracks.

Common Scams to Watch For

- **Imposter Calls:** Callers pretending to be from Social Security, Medicare, your bank, or the IRS, claiming an urgent issue requires immediate payment or account verification.
- **Family Emergency Schemes:** Callers pretending to be a family member or legal official claiming a relative is in trouble and needs money immediately. Scammers can even use AI voice technology to clone a loved one's voice.
- **Tech Support Pop-Ups:** Computer pop-ups or callers claiming your device has a virus and directing you to pay for support or give them remote access.
- **Unsolicited Prizes:** Notices claiming you won a sweepstakes, but requiring you to pay "taxes" or "processing fees" upfront to claim your winnings.

Red Flags

- Pressure to act immediately or face legal trouble, account suspension, or arrest.
- Demands for payment via gift cards, wire transfers, peer-to-peer apps (like Zelle or Venmo), or cryptocurrency.
- Requests to keep the conversation or transaction secret from family members, neighbors, or bank tellers.

What to Do If You Think You Are Being Scammed

If you suspect you are on the phone with a scammer or realize you may have shared information, take these immediate steps:

1. **Stop Communication Immediately:** Hang up the phone, delete the email, or disconnect from the website. Do not engage further, no matter how persistent or threatening the person becomes.
2. **Contact Your Financial Institutions**: If you shared credit card numbers, bank account details, or sent money, call your bank or card provider right away. Ask them to stop pending transfers, freeze compromised accounts, or dispute fraudulent charges.
3. **Protect Your Accounts & Devices:**
   - If you shared passwords, update them immediately across your accounts.
   - If you gave someone remote access to your computer, disconnect from the internet, run a full security software scan, and have a trusted technician check the device.
   - If you shared your Social Security number, visit **IdentityTheft.gov** to set up a credit freeze and monitoring plan.
4. **Speak to Someone You Trust:** Scammers rely on isolation and embarrassment. Talk to a trusted family member, neighbor, or friend before taking any requested financial action.

Report the Incident:

- **Local Law Enforcement:** File a report with the local police department.
- **Federal Trade Commission (FTC)**: Report the scam at ReportFraud.ftc.gov or call 1-877-FTC-HELP.
- **National Elder Fraud Hotline:** Call 1-833-FRAUD-11 (1-833-372-8311) for free, personalized support in reporting financial fraud.

Submitted by: Donna Koreny
(This is an AI generated article)

Here is a fresh, September-themed Laugh-O-Meter packed with seasonal Florida humor for The Fling:

The September Laugh-O-Meter

Weather & Life Reality	Resident Humor
The thermometer drops from 95°F to 89°F.	Florida autumn has officially arrived—time to break out the long-sleeved T-shirt!
Spotting pumpkin spice iced coffee at the store.	Drinking it on the porch while sweating in 80% humidity anyway.
The September community meeting agenda.	Spent 5 minutes on budget reports and 45 minutes debating the Sock Hop playlist.
Checking your fall garden strategy.	Realizing the weeds survived four months of summer monsoons better than the lawn did.
Looking forward to cooler October breezes.	Remembering that "cooler" in Central Florida just means the air conditioner rests for 20 minutes!

Joke of the Month:

Q: Why do Florida trees never worry about losing their leaves in September?

A: Because palm fronds don't drop—they just wave hello to the next sunny day!

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Green Thumb Girls: September Garden Reset

Welcome to September, Highland Village! As we slowly edge toward the end of summer, September is our golden window to step outside, clean up the post-summer jungle, and prepare our gardens for the glorious autumn growing season.

In Central Florida's Zone 9b climate, September isn't the end of the line—it's actually our second spring! Here is how to get your beds, borders, and patio pots back in top shape this month.

What to Prune & Tidy Up

Summer heat and afternoon storms leave behind a lot of leggy, tired foliage. Now is the time to clean things up without over-stressing your plants:

- **Lightly Trim Perennials:** Give heat-weary perennials like lantana, salvias, and pentas a light haircut. Trimming off spent blooms and dead tips will encourage a fresh flush of colorful blooms for October and November.
- **Tidy Up Tropicals:** Snip away yellowing or storm-damaged fronds on palms and cut back ragged leaves on bird of paradise or banana plants.
- **Hold Off on Heavy Tree Pruning:** Avoid severe pruning on trees and shrubs late in the month. Heavy cutting triggers fresh, tender growth that can be damaged if we hit an early cold snap later in the fall.

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What to Remove Completely

- **Spent Summer Annuals:** If your marigolds or vincas have succumbed to root rot or pest damage from the summer rain, pull them out. Leaving dead vegetation in the garden attracts unwanted pests and fungal spores.
- **Weed Clearance:** Get on top of weeds now before they drop seeds for the winter. Pulling them after a rain shower makes the job much easier while the soil is loose.
- **Diseased Leaves:** Clear away any fallen leaves beneath your plants that show signs of black spot, powdery mildew, or rust to keep disease from spreading to new fall foliage.

What to Plan & Plant for Fall

September is the premier month to map out your fall flower and vegetable gardens:

- **Fall Vegetable Garden:** September is prime time to plant seeds or starts for bush beans, cucumbers, squash, and broccoli. It is also the ideal month to get your fall tomato, pepper, and eggplant transplants into the ground or large patio containers!
- **Herbs**: Start planting cilantro, dill, parsley, and basil. As the humidity begins to drop, these culinary herbs thrive in our climate.
- **Cool-Season Flowers:** Start planning where you'll want your cool-season annuals (like pansies, snapdragons, and petunias) in a few weeks when temperatures cool down slightly.

Upcoming September & October Local Events

Looking to pick up new plants or learn a few tips from local experts? Save the date for these great upcoming events in the Lakeland area:

- **FREE Gardening Class with Farmer Banks:** Learn seasonal tips and hands-on growing techniques on **Thursday, September 24, 2026, from 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM** at the Florida Blue Center on Kathleen Road in Lakeland.
- **Plant Pop-Up in Munn Park:** Mark your calendars for **Saturday, October 10, 2026, from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM** in Downtown Lakeland. Browse a wide variety of native plants, succulents, and seasonal blooms from local vendors right in the center of town.

TTFN: The Green Thumb Girls (Cheryl & Stacey)

Show Us Your Garden!

Have you already started clearing out your beds or setting up your fall patio containers? We want to see! Send in your photos to be featured in an upcoming issue of The Fling.

Do you have a gardening tip, a question for the column, or a photo to submit? Reach out to Stacey or drop off your submissions for the next edition of The Fling!

The Savvy Spatula

Ever wonder what to do with the plethora of items that grace our cupboards and refrigerators from "Free Food Giveaways"?

When a box of pantry staples or fresh extras lands on the counter, it can be a puzzle figuring out how to use everything before it spoils. But with a little kitchen creativity, those everyday basics can easily be turned into tasty, crowd-pleasing treats!

This month, we're putting a fun spin on surplus staples. Here are a few clever recipes showing you how to transform overripe bananas into baked goodness, refresh extra popcorn for a cozy snack, and incorporate cereal or leftover snack cakes into something unique and fabulous!

The craft room is a dedicated room for any and all craft items for creating special crafts. It's NOT a room for household overflow. Treating it like storage room is not what the room is for. For several months, a team of ladies have worked hard to organize any and all items that can be used for event planning. We have worked very hard to make it easy to locate what we need. We are taking it to the next level soon to even make it more organized. We keep the craft room clean as well and use the tables as a work area. Those tables are to be kept clean at all times. If you have any craft items to donate, please contact Lizette. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. Attached is the Craft Fair-Bake Sale flyer. It will be posted soon, and anyone who wants to donate baked goods will be appreciated and can sign up.

BAKED BANANA BREAD CHEESECAKE

This Baked Banana Bread Cheesecake features a spiced Graham cracker and cinnamon-pecan crust that tastes just like banana bread, topped with a rich, baked cream cheese filling infused with your overripe bananas.

- **Yield:** 8–10 slices (9-inch springform or deep pie pan)
- **Prep time:** 20 mins | **Bake time:** 55–65 mins | **Chill time:** 4+ hours

INGREDIENTS

Banana Bread Crust:

- 1½ cups Graham cracker crumbs (or crushed Vanilla Wafers)
- ⅓ cup pecans or walnuts, finely chopped (optional, for that banana bread nut flavor)
- ¼ cup light brown sugar, packed
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ⅛ tsp ground nutmeg
- 5 Tbsp butter, melted

Banana Cheesecake Filling:

- 3 ripe bananas, thoroughly mashed
- 16 oz (2 blocks) cream cheese, softened to room temperature
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup sour cream (or heavy cream)
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice (prevents bananas from browning)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Prep oven and build the crust: 10 minutes.
Preheat oven to 325°F (165°C). In a bowl, combine Graham cracker crumbs, chopped nuts, brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and melted butter. Press the mixture firmly into the bottom and slightly up the sides of a 9-inch springform or deep pie pan. Bake crust for 8–10 minutes, then set aside to cool slightly.

2. Beat cream cheese and sugar: 5 minutes.
In a large bowl, beat room-temperature cream cheese and granulated sugar on medium speed until smooth and creamy (about 2 minutes). Scrape down the bowl.

3. Add bananas and flavorings: 3 minutes.
Mix in mashed bananas, sour cream, vanilla extract, and lemon juice until well incorporated.

4. Add eggs gently: 2 minutes.
Add eggs one at a time, mixing on low speed just until incorporated. Do not overmix after adding eggs to avoid trapping extra air bubbles in the cheesecake.

5. Bake low and slow: 55–65 minutes.
Pour filling over the baked crust. Bake at 325°F for 55–65 minutes until the edges are set but the center still has a slight jiggle. Turn off the oven, crack the oven door open slightly, and let it cool inside for 1 hour.

6. Chill and set: 4+ hours.
Refrigerate for at least 4 hours (preferably overnight) before slicing to let the cheesecake set completely.

The Savvy Spatula

SNACK CAKE STREUSEL BANANA LOAF

With all the different snack cakes we receive, not only can they be frozen for later snacking, but they can also be transformed into something totally different and flavorful!

Inserting a middle layer of crumb cakes gives you a rich, delicious ribbon through the center, while saving a portion for the top creates a thick, buttery bakery crust.

- **Prep time:** 15 minutes
- **Bake time:** 55–60 minutes
- **Yield:** 1 standard 9x5-inch loaf

INGREDIENTS

For the Banana Batter:

- 4 ripe bananas, thoroughly mashed (about 1½ to 1¾ cups)
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, melted and cooled slightly
- ¾ cup granulated sugar (or light brown sugar)
- 1 large egg, room temperature
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp salt

For the Crumb Layers:

- 2 boxes (11.5 oz each) Mini Crumb Cakes or Your Favorite (Dry) Snack Cakes

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Prep oven and loaf pan: 15 minutes prep.
Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease a standard 9x5-inch loaf pan with butter or baking spray. For easy removal, line the pan with parchment paper, leaving an overhang on the sides.

2. Separate and chop the cakes: Prep the crumb cakes.
Take 1 box of mini crumb cakes and cut them into medium-sized chunks (about 4–6 pieces per mini cake) for the center ribbon. Take the 2nd box and chop/crush them into a coarse crumble for the top crust.

3. Mix wet ingredients: 5 minutes.
In a large bowl, whisk together the melted butter, sugar, egg, and vanilla until well combined. Stir in the mashed bananas until smooth.

4. Add dry ingredients: 2 minutes.
In a smaller bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, and salt. Gently fold the dry ingredients into the banana mixture with a spatula just until combined (do not overmix, or the loaf will become dense).

5. Build the loaf: Assemble layers.
Spread half of the banana batter evenly into the bottom of your prepared loaf pan. Scatter the medium-sized chunks from the first box over the batter to form a solid middle layer. Pour the remaining banana batter over top, smoothing it gently to cover the cakes.

6. Top and bake:55-60 minutes.
Pile the coarse crumbles from the second box evenly across the very top, pressing them down very lightly so they stick to the batter. Bake at 350°F for 55 to 60 minutes.

Pro Tip: At the 40-minute mark, check on your loaf. If the crumb topping on top is getting too dark, tent a piece of aluminum foil loosely over the pan for the last 15–20 minutes of baking. Test with a toothpick in the center—it should come out clean of wet batter (crumb cake pieces are fine). Cool in the pan for 15 minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

****

Refreshing stale popcorn is super easy, and using heat will crisp up the kernels and drive out trapped moisture in just a few minutes.

Here is how to bring your popcorn back to life using either method:

Method 1: Air Fryer (Fastest & Crispiest)

The air fryer's circulating hot air works like a charm to make popcorn crispy again without drying it out.

1. **Preheat**: Set your air fryer to 300°F (150°C).
2. **Load**: Spread the stale popcorn evenly in the air fryer basket in a single, shallow layer (don't overfill it, or the air won't circulate properly).
3. **Heat**: Air fry for 2 to 3 minutes.
4. **Shake**: Give the basket a quick shake halfway through.
5. **Cool**: Transfer to a bowl and let it sit for 1 to 2 minutes—it will crisp up even more as it cools down!

Tip: Keep a close eye on it so smaller pieces don't blow around or burn.

Method 2: Oven (Best for Large Batches)

If you have a lot of popcorn to revive, the oven gives you plenty of space to spread it out.

1. **Preheat**: Preheat your oven to 250°F to 300°F (120°C to 150°C)—a lower temperature prevents scorching.
2. **Spread**: Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper or foil, and spread the popcorn in an even layer.
3. **Bake**: Bake for 5 to 8 minutes, tossing or stirring the popcorn once around the 4-minute mark.
4. **Cool**: Remove from the oven and let it sit for a couple of minutes to finish crisping up before serving.

Pro-Tips for Extra Flavor

- **Add Fresh Butter/Oil:** Spritzing or lightly tossing the warm popcorn with a touch of melted butter or oil right after heating helps any fresh seasonings stick.
- **Re-season:** Toss with a fresh pinch of salt, nutritional yeast, chili powder, or garlic p wder while it's still warm!

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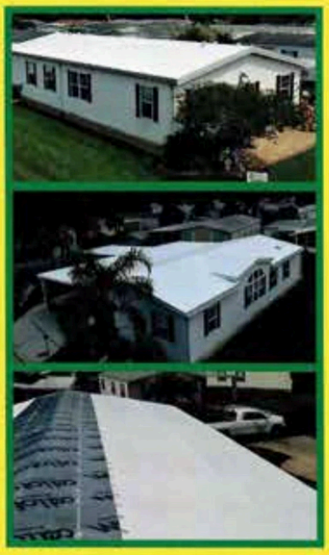

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