

NAPLES FLORIDA WEEKLY®

IN THE KNOW. IN THE NOW.

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 20-26 2018

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BY THE NUMBERS:

24,067
Florida children in out-of-home care.

86

Percent of sex trafficking victims missing from social services in 2016.

25-30

Percent of children removed from families related to substance abuse.

Child welfare strained



Community-Based Care Lead Agencies, which contract with the state's Department of Children and Families to administer the child welfare system, say **they need more foster families**, and support for friends and relatives who help provide care, as well as for parents so that fewer lose their children to the state

BY EVAN WILLIAMS

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FLORIDA'S CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM is strained with 6,700 more children than five years ago, an increase linked to higher rates of drug abuse — historically a top reason why kids are removed from homes — and the opioid epidemic.

Caregivers and advocates say there is a lack of available foster homes as well as funding and support for preventative services to help struggling parents keep their children, and resources for friends and relatives who often take in children removed from their parents. The lack of services hurts kids in the state's care by failing to provide them with the crucial stability and attention they need to flourish in a situation that is already traumatic.

SEE STRAINED, A8 ►

'Wellness tourism' a burgeoning new industry in Collier, officials say

BY KRISTINE GILL

Florida Weekly Correspondent

Collier County already boasts the designation of the happiest and healthiest city in the country for third year running, according to annual Gallup rankings.

Now, local tourism leaders and industry experts hope to capitalize on that title by drawing more visitors as part of what they're calling wellness tourism.

"Wellness travelers don't want to sit at the pool and they don't want to struggle to find things they can eat," said Peggy Sealfon, a personal development coach, who helped to launch the initiative in 2017.

After speaking on



SEALFON

the topic at a luncheon for the Collier County Tourism and Lodging Alliance, she and Debi DeBenedetto, of the Convention and Visitors Bureau, started a task force hoping to gain traction among local political leaders.

The culmination of a year of work is a breakfast that happened this week at the Edgewater Beach Hotel where Ms.

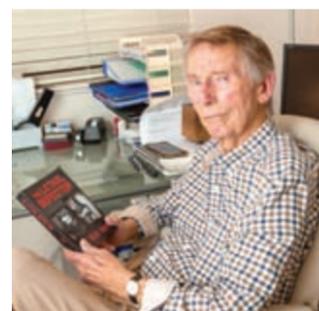
SEE TOURISM, A21 ►

INSIDE



Arts & Entertainment

One-woman show about pioneering sex therapist opens Florida Rep season. **C1** ►



Business

Local authors discover that self-publishing no longer carries a stigma. **A24** ►



Naples Zoo tragedy

One-eyed Florida panther Uno unexpectedly passed away over the weekend. **A17** ►



Good causes

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HEALTHY SHORTS

Tickets are now available for the fourth Annual **von Arx Family Foundation Southwest Florida Diabetes & Wellness Conference**. The region's leading conference on diabetes education, wellness, prevention and research is set for 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 4, at Florida SouthWestern State College - Collier Campus, 7505 Grand Lely Dr. Presented by Germain BMW of Naples, the conference will provide an entire day of educational and professional speakers, research, vendors, demonstrations and support. Medical professionals who attend can qualify to earn CME continuing education credits. All proceeds support children with diabetes through the Help A Diabetic Child Foundation. For more information, visit www.SWFLDiabetes.com.

The **Hope Shines Luncheon** announced that Collier County Sheriff Kevin Rambosk will serve as honorary chair. The event, benefitting NAMI of Collier County, aims to raise critical fund-



Sheriff Kevin Rambosk

COURTESY PHOTO

ing to provide free mental health support services an programs to 16,000 people in Collier County. "My guiding principle in life has been a commitment to community, safety and service. Working with our community partners including NAMI of Collier County, we're able to help people in crisis get the mental health and support they need," said Sheriff Rambosk. The event will take place on Friday, Dec. 7, at Grey Oaks Country Club. Email events@NAMICollier.org for information on how to register. ■

TOURISM

From page 1

Sealfon and others touted the ways in which Collier can capture a piece of this multi-billion dollar industry. Wellness travelers spend, on average, 130 percent of what the average tourist spends on a getaway, Ms. Sealfon said.

"Naples is uniquely poised for this," Ms. Sealfon said.

With dozens of Blue Zone-approved restaurants, miles of walkable shoreline, the Gordon River Greenway, and outdoor activities such as biking, hiking and kayaking, the environment here in Naples just lends itself to an active lifestyle.

"We already have the infrastructure," Ms. Sealfon said.

That infrastructure, coupled with the offerings of local hotels and spas for a relaxing weekend away, is likely to draw first-time visitors and encourage regulars to stay a while longer.

"The target market is almost exactly what we're seeking now," said CVB Executive Director Jack Wert. "It's the 35 to 54 age group, and it's definitely a family and couples business that skews a little female, because women are often making holiday travel decisions."

"But it's not just a niche market that likes golf," Mr. Wert added. "It's almost mainstream."

Mr. Wert said western U.S. cities have picked up on the trend in recent years, drawing active individuals to areas that experience warm weather year round.



WERT

Trends that hit California first are often slower to reach Florida, he said.

In 2017, 1.8 million visitors came to Collier County and stayed in paid housing like a hotel or registered AirBnb rental. Mr. Wert

thinks wellness tourism would encourage those individuals to add a fourth night to their stay as they took advantage of new activities.

"The side benefit is our local population," Ms. Sealfon said. "This is a win-win for everyone."

Marco Perry is the managing director of the LaPlaya Beach & Gulf Resort. He said his hotel got a jump-start on wellness tourism over the past three years, as they began adding exercise classes, new spa packages and even a new bike rental station for visitors.

"We started the hashtag #LaPlayaLiving," Mr. Perry said. "Our wellness program is a state of mind. I hope to change the mentality even of our employees when it comes to making healthy choices daily."

Mr. Perry said that while Naples has always drawn tourists, those visitors don't yet think of the area as a wellness destination. But already he sees the task force working to change that. And he's done his part with organized beach walks, yoga classes and the Blue Zone approval of their food offerings.

For more on the initiative, visit www.paradisecoast.com/wellness. ■

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