

SWFLATODAY

DUNKIN'S DIAMONDS
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Franck Legrand Jr. visits his younger sister, Francesca Sainvilus, at Fifty's Caribbean Cuisine on Feb. 15.
EMILY SIMPSON/SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-PRESS

Area grocers report more workers with coronavirus



Shoppers make grocery runs at Publix in Bonita Springs on April 1. ALEX DRIEHAUS/USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Providing healthy eating choices

Project brings lifestyle change to food desert

Emily Simpson
Special to Fort Myers News-Press
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Note to readers: The News-Press and Naples Daily News partnered with an FGCU solutions journalism class during the 2020 spring semester. This is one in a series of stories the students produced.

In 2016, Franck Legrand Jr. visited the doctor with a headache. He left with news that he would soon die. He was 37 years old and weighed 305 pounds.

The headaches Legrand had been experiencing all week were a symptom of his high blood pressure. Legrand, who used to chuckle at the sight of a salad, was told he needed to lose weight to avoid seizures, heart attacks and premature death.

"The feeling is that you're invincible until you're not," Legrand said. "Every time I saw my doctor, he always mentioned the death part. It drives the point home."

In one year, Legrand lost more than 100 pounds by changing his eating habits.

"People say 'Hey Franck. What's up with you? Where did the rest of you go?'" said David Longfield-Smith, Blue Zones Project organization lead. "He's become quite an inspiration for others."

What is the Blue Zones Project?

The Blue Zones Project is a community-wide initiative that encourages healthier lifestyles and choices. Imokalee is considered a food desert: an area that lacks access to healthy, affordable food. However, Legrand's family businesses have been working

See **BLUE ZONES**, Page 4A

Stores are taking precautionary measures as cases rise

Andrew Wigdor
Fort Myers News-Press
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

As thousands of new coronavirus cases are reported daily in Florida, grocery store workers from large chains are continuing to test positive for the virus.

But as positive employee cases rise, stores are cranking up precautionary measures.

A slew of chains announced last week that they would be requiring customers to wear masks in stores. Among these companies were: Walmart, Publix, Target and Whole Foods.

Winn-Dixie's parent company, Southeastern Grocers, announced this week that it would be requiring masks after stating just a day before that it would not.

Only time will tell how effective these heightened precautions will be in curbing the spread of the virus.

Publix, Aldi, Fresh Market report more locations with positive employees

Florida grocery giant Publix confirmed it now has 49 locations in Lee and Collier counties that have employees who have tested positive for the coronavirus.

This is an increase of 13 locations

Florida grocery giant Publix confirmed it now has 49 locations in Lee and Collier counties that have employees who have tested positive for the coronavirus. ... The chain began requiring masks in stores Tuesday.

since The News-Press inquired about positive employees in the first week of July. The chain began requiring masks in stores Tuesday.

Among the 49 stores, 33 have employees who have tested positive within the past 14 days.

These locations include: 4370 Thomasson Drive in Naples; 6900 Daniels Parkway, Suite 19, in Fort Myers; 5781 Lee Blvd. in Lehigh Acres; and 1616 Cape Coral Parkway West, #5, in Cape Coral. See the full list below.

Sixteen Southwest Florida Publix locations have had employees test positive for the virus, but not within the last 14 days.

These locations include: 11200 Tamiami Trail N., #2200, in Naples; 24600 S. Tamiami Trail, Suite 300, in Bonita Springs; 20321 Summerlin Road in Fort

Myers; and 1735 NE Pine Island Road in Cape Coral. See the full list below.

Other companies have also seen increased cases among Southwest Florida locations.

Aldi confirmed in the first week of July that two of its nine locations in Lee and Collier had employees who have tested positive. Three employees between the stores had tested positive, the company stated.

When asked this week, the grocery chain confirmed that four additional employees in Lee and Collier counties had tested positive. The positive employees work at the following locations: 1481 Southwest Pine Island Road in Cape Coral; 4015 Santa Barbara Blvd., #6, in Naples; and 10991 Saxum Drive in Fort Myers.

Aldi has been requiring customers to wear face masks since June 27.

The Fresh Market, which has four locations in Lee and Collier, told The News-Press in early July it had no locations with positive employees.

When asked again this week, company spokesperson Meghan Flynn confirmed an employee at Fresh Market's 13499 S. Cleveland Ave. location in Fort Myers had tested positive. The company was notified of the positive test on July 14, and the employee was last in the store on July 11.

See **GROCERS**, Page 4A

Marco: United Way grants nearly \$100,000 to YMCA

Marco Eagle staff

United Way of Collier and the Keys granted \$98,000 to the YMCA on Marco Island to support scholarships for early-learning and afterschool programs.

"The United Way really understands and responds to the needs of our community," wrote Cindy Love-Abounader, CEO of the YMCA. "Because of their support, we can serve children regardless of their families' financial circumstances."

"That has never been more valuable than this year as so many families are struggling."

YMCA's early-learning program focuses on literacy, math and social-emotion learning for children between 2 and 5 years old. YMCA has a track record of 100% of its students testing as "kindergarten-ready," according to a news release.

YMCA's K-8 afterschool program, ASPIRE, focuses on literacy, math, physical education and character devel-

opment. The YMCA turned the program into an all-day camp using the Collier County Public Schools' virtual curriculum after recent school shutdowns due to COVID-19.

ASPIRE will accommodate families who choose any of the school district's in-person, virtual or blended instruction options when the new school year begins in August.

There are tuition charges for these programs but scholarships are available and a YMCA membership is not required, according to Stephanie Pepper, youth development manager.

The YMCA of South Collier has served children for over 40 years throughout southern Collier County, including the communities of East Naples, Lely, Isles of Capri, Marco Island, Goodland, Port of the Islands and Everglades City.

For more information, visit marcoymca.org or call 239-394-YMCA (9622).



Wearing face coverings at the Marco Island campus, kids spell YMCA with their bodies during summer camp on July 9. COURTESY OF CATERA ISME, YMCA

Grocers

Continued from Page 3A

After the notification of the test, Flynn said the store “implemented enhanced deep cleaning and disinfection protocols” and “scheduled an outside third-party company to do enhanced overnight disinfection.”

Unlike many other chains who announced a mandate in recent weeks, The Fresh Market has required customers to wear masks since April.

Whole Foods, which began requiring masks in stores on Monday, previously confirmed to The News-Press that employees at its two locations in Lee and Collier counties had tested positive.

A Whole Foods spokesperson said this week that they could not provide any further details, such as whether employees at the 9101 Strada Place store in Naples or the 6891 Daniels Parkway, Suite 100, store in Fort Myers had tested positive within the last 14 days.

Spouts has a web page dedicated to providing the public with updated information regarding employee cases.

The page shows that an employee at the 119990 S. Tamiami Trail location in Estero tested positive for the virus. The team member was last in the store on July 6.

During the first week of July, the page referenced a team member from the Estero store that had tested positive and was last in the store on June 17. Sprouts has not yet made an announcement regarding customer mask-wearing, but is currently requiring employees to wear masks.

Walmart, which started requiring masks on Monday, does not report cases or specific locations when asked. “We’ll be referring to the local health department regarding any positive cases in our stores,” Walmart spokesperson Rebecca Thomason said in an emailed statement.

Target spokesperson Jake Anderson told The News-Press that Target also could not provide information regarding cases when asked about all locations in Lee and Collier.

Anderson clarified that Target does sometimes provide information on cases when a member of the media comes to the company with knowledge of a specific case at a specific store.

Winn-Dixie did not respond to multiple requests for information regarding their store locations.

The chain’s mask policy will go into effect on Monday.



Customers shop at the Publix in the Colonial Crossings Shopping Plaza on March 31. Publix owns the plaza and is helping tenants who rent the other spaces for their businesses. AMANDA INSCORE/THE NEWS-PRESS USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

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Publix positives

Here are locations where an employee tested positive for coronavirus within the past 14 days:

These locations include: 4370 Thomasson Drive in Naples; 6900 Daniels Parkway, Suite 19, in Fort Myers; 5781 Lee Blvd. in Lehigh Acres; 19100 S. Tamiami Trail in Fort Myers; 4601 9th St. North in Naples; 7101 Radio Road in Naples; 1616 Cape Coral Parkway West, #5, in Cape Coral; 4600 Summerlin Road in Fort Myers; 100 Hancock Bridge Parkway W. in Cape Coral; 12663 Tamiami Trail E. in Naples; 11600 Gladiolus Drive in Fort Myers; 24600 S. Tamiami Trail, Suite 300, in Bonita Springs; 21301 S. Tamiami Trail, Suite 200, in Estero; 1089 N. Collier Blvd., Suite 401, on Marco Island; 5624 Strand Blvd. in Naples; 2450 Vanderbilt Beach Road in Naples; 15880 Summerlin Road in Fort Myers; 15265 Collier Blvd. in Naples; 8585 Collier Blvd. in Naples; 1631 Del Prado Blvd. S. in Cape Coral; 12900 Trade Way Four in Bonita Springs; 20311 Grande Oak Shoppes Blvd. in Estero; 2420 Santa Barbara Blvd. in Cape Coral; 13650 Fiddesticks Blvd. in Fort Myers; 3015 Southwest Pine Island Road in Cape Coral; 11851 Palm Beach Blvd. in Fort Myers; 2160 McGregor Blvd. in Fort Myers; 12975 Collier Blvd., Suite 200, in Naples; 13401 Summerlin Road in Fort Myers; 17960 N. Tamiami Trail in North Fort Myers; 1324 Homestead Road N. in Lehigh Acres; 4860 Davis Blvd. in Naples; and 13550 Immokalee Road in Naples.

Here are locations where an employee has tested positive for coronavirus but not in the past 14 days:

11200 Tamiami Trail North, #2200, in Naples; 2310 Pine Ridge Road in Naples; 24600 South Tamiami Trail, Suite 300, in Bonita Springs; 20321 Summerlin Road in Fort Myers; 5997 South Pointe Blvd., Suite 106, in Fort Myers; 4975 Avila Ave. in Ave Maria; 7950 Dani Drive, #200, in Fort Myers; 26841 S. Tamiami Trail in Bonita Springs; 127 Cape Coral Parkway West in Cape Coral; 8833 Tamiami Trail N. in Naples; 16950 San Carlos Blvd. in Fort Myers; 1735 Northeast Pine Island Road in Cape Coral; 6700 Bayshore Road in North Fort Myers; 1981 Tamiami Trail N. in Naples; 3304 Bonita Beach Road in Bonita Springs; 13121 Paul J. Doherty Parkway in Fort Myers.

STATE BRIEFS

Federal agent, accomplice charged in Oxycodone distribution

MIAMI – A federal agent used his position to help an accomplice run an illegal prescription painkiller operation in South Florida, prosecutors said.

Special Agent Alberico Ahas Crespo, 45, and Jorge Diaz Gutierrez, 65, were charged this week with conspiring to distribute Oxycodone, obstructing justice and making false statements to the FBI, according to a Department of Justice press release.

From September 2019 to June 2020, Diaz Gutierrez recruited patients and sent them to medical clinics to obtain Oxycodone prescriptions that the patients did not need, investigators said. The patients would sell the prescriptions to Diaz, who would fill them at pharmacies and sell the pills to street dealers, officials said.

During this time, Crespo served on a healthcare fraud task force while working for the Office of Inspector General with the Department of Health and Human Services. Crespo passed along information about investigations to Diaz Gutierrez and coached him on how to lie to investigators and tamper with evidence, prosecutors said.

Coast Guard rescues 3 Tennessee boaters off the Florida coast

CLEARWATER, Fla. – The U.S. Coast Guard rescued three people from Tennessee after their boat capsized Wednesday some 15 miles off Florida’s Gulf Coast.

The agency said in a news release that the boaters called at 2:09 p.m., saying their flat bottom fishing boat was taking on water and they needed assistance.

A Jayhawk helicopter crew located the men wearing life jackets and clinging to the capsized boat. They rescued Karim Odeh, Mark LaRoche and Kevin LaRoche, all of Cookeville, Tennessee.

The crew hoisted them into the helicopter and took them to Tampa General Hospital for further evaluation. They had been in the water for about an hour. There was no additional update on their conditions.

“After everything went wrong, these men did everything right,” said Lt. Tim Keily, the Air Station Clearwater helicopter co-pilot.

Associated Press

Blue Zones

Continued from Page 3A

with Blue Zones Project to provide the Immokalee community with healthy food options.

National Geographic found five places in the world where people live longer, healthier lives and called them “Blue Zones.”

Smith, 61, works with Blue Zones Project in Southwest Florida helping local employers, restaurants, and grocery stores increase healthier food options.

Despite being on Good Morning America, Oprah, and the Today Show, Smith says many people in Immokalee don’t have access to learning more about Blue Zones Project.

“It’s going to be a challenge in Immokalee because of the immigration, culture and lack of communication,” Smith said. “We need to find that real simple message and they could see that message come to life.”

Franck Legrand Jr. is a real-life example of the Blue Zones message.

Franck’s Story

Legrand Caribbean Market has been a staple in Immokalee for more than 20 years. Franck Legrand Sr. opened the family business in 1997. In 2011, he died in a car crash.

Now, Legrand Jr. serves as the general manager of Legrand Caribbean Market.

“That’s what slowly brought us from different parts of Florida back home,” Sainvilus said. “We wanted to support my mom and try to hold things together and manage the store.”

When his father passed, Legrand weighed about 250 pounds.

“Before I knew it, a year went by and I was gaining weight massively,” Legrand said. “We went through so much, like a roller coaster ride. It was like one thing after another.”

A year after his father passed, Legrand’s wife experienced childbirth complications. Legrand lost his wife and his baby. The following year, his mother passed away too. These losses are ultimately what led to Legrand’s weight gain.

“We’ve already lost too many people,” Legrand said. “I started to realize I am the only male figure in the family right now.”

This is what motivated Legrand to lose weight and change his lifestyle. In



Legrand Caribbean Market is located in Immokalee, Florida. In 2017, the market celebrated its 20 years of operation. EMILY SIMPSON/SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-PRESS

an effort to save his own life, Legrand began researching health benefits of various foods.

Legrand heard about Blue Zones Project through his brother-in-law and is now working with Smith to make Legrand Caribbean Market Blue Zones Project approved.

“Healthy eating was never my thing, so I was curious about Blue Zones Project,” Legrand said.

“How are these people living so long? The Blue Zone project promotes so many things that could actually make your life better.

“The more you know about it, the better you live and feel.”

Today, Legrand weighs around 210 pounds.

Legrand Caribbean Market

Brightly colored fruits and vegetables greet customers as they enter the market. When reaching in the cooler for a drink, bottles of water are the first thing to touch a customer’s fingertips. Healthy snacks perch near the register for customers to grab on their way out.

According to Legrand, he arranged the market this way to promote healthier choices.

“His weight loss has helped people want to make those choices,” Sainvilus said. “They say, ‘You’re like half your size. What did you do?’ and he tells them.”

Legrand shares his story, advice, and research to community members who

visit the market.

“People come in the store and they’ll pretty much tell me their whole life story,” Legrand said. “When the next person comes through the door, I want to help them even more because you see that you’ve made a change.”

According to Sainvilus, most of the people shopping at the market speak Spanish or Haitian Creole as a first language, or only speak those languages.

“There’s a lot of language barriers for those people, because there’s not a lot of literature in their languages about healthy eating,” Sainvilus said. “So, when they come to a comfortable place here at the store, they feel comfortable gaining information in their language about how to choose those healthier options.”

Legrand pushes customers to purchase the same healthy food he eats.

“He’s not talking to people that can Google it,” Sainvilus said. “My brother is talking to people that maybe don’t have access to the internet, don’t have access to reading it or can’t read at all.”

Legrand also helps customers find what is best for any dietary issues or restrictions they may have.

“Communication and education are key to everything and a lot of people here lack that education,” Legrand said. “It’s a great feeling to help people who are struggling to find out what is good for them.”

“They think since this is what I’ve always eaten, it must be good.”

Her brother’s weight loss and the

community’s wishes for healthier food is what motivated Sainvilus to become a part of the Blue Zones movement.

In 2016, Sainvilus fulfilled Franck Sr.’s dream of opening a restaurant. Around the same time, the family learned of the Blue Zones Project at a county meeting.

“We never expected people to come here and choose a healthy option, but when we put it on the menu, they try it,” Sainvilus said. “They probably came in here for something fried or savory, but when you put on the board that it’s Blue Zones inspired, people just want to know what it is.”

Smith began working with the family after Fify’s Caribbean Cuisine opened and soon became like family.

“One of the things I’m probably most proud of is earning the title Uncle Dave,” Smith said. “I genuinely liked them and care about them and I was so touched by her desire to participate.”

Smith looks at a restaurant’s menu, what ingredients and dishes they already have, and helps them re-imagine how they could be healthier.

“We felt like there was no other place for most of our client base to go, so we were trying to beat all the Blue Zone hurdles to bring healthy food to clients that would probably not go anywhere else,” Sainvilus said.

Fify’s Caribbean Cuisine became Blue Zones Project approved Feb. 4, 2020.

“Doing the Blue Zone menu is like the icing on the cake,” Sainvilus said. “It’s not just about trying to make sales. This is bigger. National Geographic big — like you’re part of the greater concept. Especially being in this food desert, I think that it’s so worth it. It’s like a diamond in the rough.”

Before the restaurant became Blue Zones Project approved, Legrand asked for special, healthy dishes not on the menu.

“At the market, he would promote what we cooked just for him,” Sainvilus said.

“Like we don’t serve that, but he started sending people here to get a healthier option.”

Now when customers come in, they can order “Franck’s Favorite”: boiled plantain, onion, peppers, and black beans on brown rice.

Blue Zones Project

For more information about Blue Zones Project visit communities.bluezonesproject.com.