



10<sup>th</sup> Edition

# Hendry County Guide



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# Welcome to Our Communities

Hendry County is a special place. It is located in one of the most unique ecosystems in the world, and yet it draws -- it does not shrink from -- its sense of place. Here, beautiful sunsets against lakes and rivers impress on a daily basis, the opportunities to enjoy nature's offerings are nearly limitless, and the sense of community here drives a flourishing, growing community. Join us as we look at what makes Hendry County a destination for businesses, residents, and newcomers.

### Hendry County Guide

A special publication of Independent Newsmedia Inc., publisher of Caloosa Belle and Lake Okeechobee News, serving Hendry County since 1922.

### 10th Edition

**Editor-in-Chief:** Katrina Elsen  
**Advertising Manager:** Jaime Limoges  
**Pagination Artist:** Kris Schwartz  
**Photographer:** Richard Marion  
**Advertising Services:**  
Jennifer Klerk de Reus  
Stephanie Larson

### Contact Us

313 NW 4th Avenue, Okeechobee, FL 34972  
southcentralfloridalife.com  
News/Subscribe: (863) 763-3134  
Display Advertising: (863) 763-3134

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# From Coast to Coast

## Explore the Lake Okeechobee Waterway

Florida boaters can travel from the east coast to the west coast via the Lake Okeechobee Waterway.

The 154-mile-long waterway extends from the Atlantic Ocean at Stuart, to the Gulf of Mexico at Fort Meyers. The waterway runs through Lake Okeechobee and consists of the Caloosahatchee River to the west of the lake and the St. Lucie Canal east of the lake.

Much of the waterway is man-made. Nature

did not connect the St. Lucie River to the ocean. The connection between Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie is man-made, as is the channel connecting Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee River.

In the days before paved roads, early pioneers used the waterways as liquid highways. Riverboats carried passengers back and forth between rural heartland and the coastal cities. Boats also hauled produce from rural farms to



market and supplies back to the interior.

Today, instead of steamships hauling freight and passengers, the Lake Okeechobee Waterway is used for recreational boating and fishing, and most boaters use the ActiveCaptain application to navigate. Go to [activecaptain.garmin.com/en-US/pois/17709](https://activecaptain.garmin.com/en-US/pois/17709) to learn more about it.

There are five locks on the waterway. From east to west they are the St. Lucie Lock, the Port Mayaca Lock, the Julian Keen Jr. Lock (at Moore Haven), the Ortona Lock and the W.P. Franklin Lock. These locks, operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, are operated 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. The last lockage of the day begins at 4:30 p.m.

Twenty-five bridges cross various points along the Lake Okeechobee Waterway. Eleven of these bridges open for boat traffic. The lowest of the fixed bridges is the Port Mayaca Railroad Bridge with a vertical clearance of 49 feet. Sailboats that are too tall to clear the bridge are sometimes helped under the

bridge by means of the “Okeechobee limbo.” The website [offshoreblue.com](http://offshoreblue.com) explains: “A crew out of the Indiantown Marina will meet your boat at the bridge and by use of plastic 50 gallon drums lined up along your rail and filled with water, list your vessel enough to pass under the Port Mayaca RR Bridge. Once through, the drums are emptied and removed from your boat and you are on your way. The whole process generally takes less than an hour.”

The Okeechobee Waterway is usually open year-round, but during the dry season there are sometimes restrictions based on the depth of the water. Tropical storms and hurricanes can also result in some closures on the waterway.

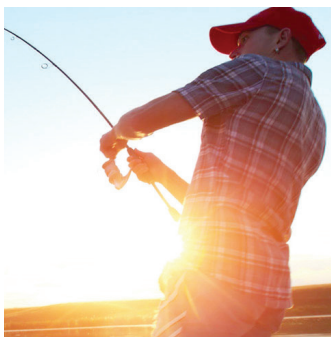
Hendry County is home to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Florida Operations Office, 525 Ridgelawn Road in Clewiston, FL 33440-5399, telephone: 863-983-8101.



# Oh, the fun to be had!

## Attractions in and around Hendry County

Hendry County boasts a multitude of sights, sounds and scenes for tourists to explore. From hiking and biking to airboat tours, from skydiving to bird watching, there are so many things waiting to be explored at one's own pace. Here are a sampling:



### Big 'O' Guide Service

A scenic Eco-Tour on Lake Okeechobee. See alligators, manatees, pelicans, exotic birds and more.

Roland Martin's Marina and Resort, 920 W. Del Monte Ave., Clewiston  
863-983-3151  
rolandmartinmarina.com



### Billie Swamp Safari

Take a swamp buggy ride or airboat tour at Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation. 30000 Gator Tail Trail, Clewiston

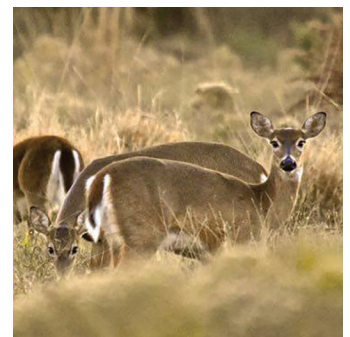
1-800-GOSAFARI  
billieswamp.com  
*Editor's note: As of press time, Billie Swamp Safari is temporarily closed.*



### Walking/Biking Tour

Four self-guided trails all start from the Clewiston Inn and wander through residential areas of Clewiston at 108 Royal Palm Ave., Clewiston.

For more information, please call 863-983-7979.



### Dinner Island Ranch

Outstanding wildlife viewing awaits at this vast acreage site. It offers fishing, hiking, cycling, camping, hunting, horseback riding and scenic driving.

They are located 29 miles southwest of Clewiston off of County Road 833.

**Blind Boys of Alabama**  
January 8 @ 7:00 PM



**Dolly Hand Cultural Arts Center**  
2022 Season  
40th Anniversary

**Drumline Live!**  
January 11 @ 7:00 PM



February 17  
@ 7:00 PM

**MOTONES & JERSEYS**



**The Singing Contractors**  
February 3 @ 7:00 PM



**Mariachi Herencia de Mexico**  
March 27 @ 4:00 PM



**The Pam Tillis Trio**  
Friday, March 4 @ 7:00 PM

VISIT [www.dollyhand.org](http://www.dollyhand.org)

Box Office 561-993-1160  
Buy tickets @ [www.dollyhand.org](http://www.dollyhand.org)

All dates, artists and programs subject to change.

**Helen Miller**  
The Gospel Whirlwind  
March 21 @ 7:00 PM

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### **STA 5 Bird-Watching**

In partnership with Hendry-Glades Audubon, the South Florida Water Management District offers escorted birding tours at the South Florida Birding Trail. STA 5 is ranked one of the best bird watching areas in the country.

No reservations required for walking or bicycling visits to these areas. For directions and information, please call 863-674-0695 or 863-517-0202.

The Clewiston Museum also offers a “Historical Eco-Tour” and STA 5 Fridays. For van tour schedules, email [clewistonmuseum@embarqmail.com](mailto:clewistonmuseum@embarqmail.com).

### **Audubon Society**

Birding organization for Hendry, Glades and Okeechobee counties. Hendry County Tourism sponsors the annual Big ‘O’ Birding Festival in March. Memberships are available.

For more information, please call 863-674-0695 or 863-517-0202. Visit their website at [hendrygladesaudubon.org](http://hendrygladesaudubon.org).

### **Jacob’s Flight Services**

Experience beautiful Lake Okeechobee and surrounding areas from the sky. Offered are designed, packaged scenic tours for you to enjoy the most popular sights they have to offer. You can also customize your own tour and see the destinations you choose. They are located at 1090 Airglades Blvd., Clewiston. You can reach them at 863-612-5294 or email [info@jacobsflightservices.com](mailto:info@jacobsflightservices.com). Visit their website at [jacobsflightservices.com](http://jacobsflightservices.com).

### **Silver Lake Preserve**

This beautiful 1,876-acre tract offers a customized hunting program with some of the best year round native wildlife opportunities in South Florida. The Silver Lake Lodge can accommodate 10 guests and offers several amenities. They are located at 2860 Silver Lake Rd. N.W. in LaBelle.

You can reach them by phone at 863-273-7712.

You can visit their website at [silverlakepreserve.com](http://silverlakepreserve.com).

### **Florida Ridge Airports**

A hang gliding and ultra-light facility offering a variety of tandem sky rides, pilot services and instruction. They are located at 12671 E. State Road 80 in Clewiston. You can reach them at 863-805-0440.

You can visit their website at [thefloridaridge.com](http://thefloridaridge.com).

### **Skydive Spaceland**

Experience the thrill of diving from 14,000 feet and taking in the view of Lake Okeechobee. This park is located at 1090 Airglades Blvd. in Clewiston. Call them at 800-533-6151 or visit their website at [skydivespaceland.com](http://skydivespaceland.com).

### **Spirit-of-the-Wild Wildlife Area**

Nature enthusiasts will want to visit this site because of the year round viewing of wildlife for which the area is known. The area offers fishing, hiking, biking, horseback riding and scenic driving. It is located 12 miles south of LaBelle on County Road 832. For information, visit [myfwc.com/recreation/lead/spirit-of-the-wild/](http://myfwc.com/recreation/lead/spirit-of-the-wild/).

### **Clewiston Museum**

The Clewiston Museum is located at 109 Central Avenue, Clewiston, Florida. It houses exhibits highlighting the local area, including: Fossils, Sugar, Cattle Industry Firsts, Commercial Fishing, Flying Brits, Killer Hurricanes and Seminole Indians. You can reach them at 863-983-2870. You can visit their website at [theclewistonmuseum.org](http://theclewistonmuseum.org). Email: [clewistonmuseum@embarqmail.com](mailto:clewistonmuseum@embarqmail.com).

### **Stargazing**

Starry nights are a common occurrence in Hendry County. You don’t need a telescope to stargaze. Just good weather. Walk out on the dike, or to the fields and you will see thousands of stars. For more info, please visit [stargazers.org](http://stargazers.org).

### **Captain Hendry House**

Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1993, Hendry House was the home of Francis A. Hendry, the “Father of LaBelle.” It is located at 512 Fraser Ave in LaBelle. For more information, please call 863-675-2872. For more info on the history, please contact the LaBelle Heritage Museum at 863-674-0034. You can visit their website at [labelleheritagemuseum.org/](http://labelleheritagemuseum.org/).

### **Uncle Joe’s Fish Camp**

Located in an off-the-beaten path area of Lake Okeechobee, Uncle Joe’s offers cabins, plus groceries, tackle, live bait, docks and boat ramps with direct access to the lake. They are located at 1699 Griffin Road in Moore Haven. Reach them at 863-983-9421 or 863-983-4818.

### **Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum**

Nestled in the heart of the Everglades, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum is home to more than 30,000 unique artifacts selected to celebrate, preserve and interpret the rich history and culture of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki means ‘a place to learn, a place to remember’ in the Seminole language.

To learn more, please visit [ahtahthiki.com](http://ahtahthiki.com).

### **LaBelle City Docks**

Overlooking the south side of the Okeechobee Waterway, just west of the LaBelle bridge. The City of LaBelle provides these docks, complete with electric and water, free of charge. All vessels are welcome 3 days in, 8 days out. Close proximity (walking distance) to downtown LaBelle for shopping, restaurants, and fuel. For more information please call 863-673-1191. Visit the city’s website at [citylabelle.com](http://citylabelle.com).

### **Belle Hatchee Marina**

Specializing in multi-hull haul out located in a hurricane protected area. Freshwater marina with no tides. Do-it-yourself boat work yard with 24 hour access. Inland boat storage in hurricane protected area. Ships Store on the premises. Shopping, restaurants and motels near by. Located at 121 Riverbend Drive in LaBelle. They can be reached at 863-674-1772 or 817-965-2302 or go to [bellehatcheemarina.com](http://bellehatcheemarina.com).





**Hendry County Locations**

**Handy #58 1040 South SR 29, LaBelle 33935 \*\***

**Handy #82 200 Old CR 78, LaBelle 33935**

**Handy #85 1400 CR 78, LaBelle 33935**

**Lee County Locations**

**Handy #86 21321 Palm Beach Blvd, Alva 33920 \*\***

**Handy #87 3205 Lee Blvd. Lehigh Acres, 33971 \*\***

**Okeechobee County Location**

**Handy #93 2790 Hwy 441 South, Okeechobee 34974 \*\***

**Collier County Locations**

**Handy #50 417 New Market Rd W, Immokalee 34142**

**Handy #65 501 15th St North, Immokalee 34142**

**Handy #75 2902 Lake Trafford Road, Immokalee 34142**

**Handy #77 1812 Lake Trafford Road, Immokalee 34142**

**Handy #91 820 West Main Street, Immokalee 34142**

**Handy #92 120 West Delaware Ave, Immokalee 34142 \*\***

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### *LaBelle Fossil Camp*

Fossil hunting and guided eco-tours via sailboat, canoe, or kayak. Adventures take place along the Caloosahatchee River, where you're 100% guaranteed to find fossils. It's a once in a lifetime trip through Florida's ancient past. Learn about the history of the River, search for bivalves and gastropods from 6 million years ago, and fossils from ancient tortoises and turtles, garfish, paleo camels and horses, mammoths, glyptodonts, smilodons, and giant ground sloths. Creatures that roamed the Earth nearly 2 million years ago! Social distancing practiced and masks worn. Located in the heart of LaBelle. Book your adventure by email or phone: [LabelleFossilCamp@gmail.com](mailto:LabelleFossilCamp@gmail.com), 863-417-9333 call or text.

### *Port LaBelle Marina*

Located on Okeechobee (Intracoastal) Waterway East of the LaBelle Bridge. This secluded marina offers fuel, electricity at the main dock, pump-out facility at the main dock, laundry, and men/women restrooms and showers.

The marina is located at 1152 Marina Drive in LaBelle. You can reach them at 863-675-2261. Visit their website at [portlabellemarina.com](http://portlabellemarina.com).

### *Clewiston Golf Course*

A beautifully maintained, championship 18-hole golf course that is open to the public. Designed in the Donald Ross Style, the course is a classic and can be enjoyed by the amateur golfer or the seasoned professional. They are located at 1201 San Luiz Ave in Clewiston. You can reach them at 863-983- 1448.

### *Roland Martin Marina & Resort*

Roland and Mary Ann Martin's Marina and Resort provides everything for the fisherman and boater. The marina features 20 of the nation's top notch fishing guides, many lodging choices, ample floating dockage, a fleet of rental boats, 130 covered boat slips, fuel, bait, supplies, a tiki bar with live entertainment/ karaoke and a restaurant. They are located at 920 E. Del Monte Ave. in Clewiston. You can reach them at 863-983-3151 or 1-800-473-6766. You can visit their website at [rolandmartinmarina.com](http://rolandmartinmarina.com).

### *Firehouse Theatre*

The Firehouse Community Theatre has been providing a unique cultural experience in the area for over 21 years. The theatre is staffed completely by volunteers from our communities. They are located at 241 N. Bridge Street in LaBelle. You can reach them at 863-675-3066. You can visit their website at [firehousecommunitytheatre.com](http://firehousecommunitytheatre.com).

### *Hendry County Motorsports Park*

Get ready for thrilling excitement on the Everglades clay at the Hendry County Motorsports Park, the southernmost raceway in the USA. They are located at 9985 West Hwy. 27 (9.5 miles north of Clewiston on U.S. 27).

You can reach them at 863-983-3478. Or visit their website at [hendryracing.com](http://hendryracing.com).



### ***The Barron Park House Gallery and Gift Shop***

Barron Park House Gallery is housed in the historic Christie House which was built in 1914. Local artists exhibit their oil, watercolor, acrylic, and mixed media paintings, sculptures, and photography. Exhibits are rotated monthly. Worth a visit for any art fan. It's hidden in the northeast corner of Barron Park, at 471 N. Lee St. You can reach them at 239-843-2929. You can visit their website at [artsinland.com](http://artsinland.com).

### ***Dolly Hand Cultural Arts Center***

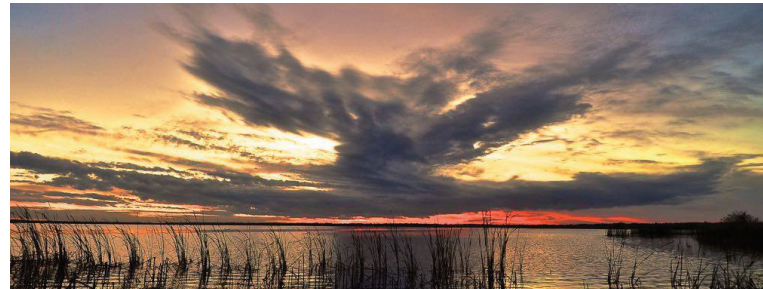
Located at the Palm Beach State College Campus, the Dolly Hand Cultural Arts Center and Theatre holds a roster of performances designed to offer an "escape from the everyday." They are located at 1977 College Drive in Belle Glade. You can reach them at 561-993-1160. Or visit their website at [dollyhand.org](http://dollyhand.org).

### ***Okeechobee Scenic Trail***

Designated as a segment of the Florida National Scenic Trail, this route circles the second largest freshwater lake in the contiguous United States. The trail runs on top of the Herbert Hoover Dike and provides views ranging from scenic lakeside to working agricultural landscapes. There are numerous locations for access by hikers and bikers, as well as equestrians. Not all areas are paved and some portions close at irregular intervals, so please call 863-983-8101 for the latest information.

### ***Big Water Heritage Trail***

The trail's name, the Big Water Heritage Trail, stems from the Seminole word for Okeechobee, which means, "Big Water." This successful project, implemented in 2003, is a heritage trail that identifies, links and marks sites of historical, cultural, natural, recreational and educational importance to the area. The Big Water Heritage Trail encompasses five counties surrounding Lake Okeechobee in Florida. For more information, please call 863- 983-7979.



### ***Okaloacoochee Forest Gatorama***

The Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest contains nearly 35,000 acres, mostly in Hendry County, which extends northward near the Caloosahatchee River and southward about 50 miles into Big Cypress Swamp. There are 38 miles of trails open for wildlife viewing, hiking, non-motorized biking, and horseback riding. Also available are four campgrounds. To learn more, call 863-612- 0776.

### ***Fisheating Creek Outpost***

The licensed concessionaire of the Fisheating Creek Wildlife Management Area provides recreational and educational opportunities to the public under contract of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Now offering camping, canoeing, paddling, hiking, and eco-adventures. RV/tent sites are available. You can reach them at 863-675-5999. You can also visit their website at [fisheatingcreekoutpost.com](http://fisheatingcreekoutpost.com).

Gatorama is a family-friendly Eco Adventure Park and licensed gator farm in the heart of the Everglades. The focus is on family, fun and education. Food and drink is available from a food truck inside the park. The owners and staff invite you to play wild, get dirty and get up close and personal with Florida's apex predators. Both alligators and crocodiles live here in the Sunshine State, the only place on Earth where they exist side by side in the wild. See the Big Gator Feed Show, try your luck at our Fast Hands or No Hands Challenge or participate in one of their "Gatorventures." Located at 10665 N. U.S. 27 in Palmdale, Gatorama can be reached at 863-675-0623. Or learn more by going online to [gatorama.com](http://gatorama.com).



# LaBelle continues to grow

## Exciting projects, improvements are coming to fruition

**By Alexis Crispo**

Consultant Planning/Zoning, City of LaBelle

The City of LaBelle continues to see exciting development projects and public improvements coming to fruition. In 2021, new construction projects included the O'Reilly's store at SR 80 and Cowboy Way, a mixed use development near Downtown on Missouri Street including both apartments and retail uses, and the first phase of single-family homes in the "Belle Arbor" community by D.R. Horton off Shady Oaks Avenue.

Development and permitting applications continue to be reviewed by city staff under the direction of Superintendent of Public Works Gary Hull, and assisted by City Planner Alexis Crespo, AICP. The city is working on a streamlined and coordinated permitting process that incorporates Fire Department and Building Department Review at the outset of projects to ensure a smooth process for Applicants. LaBelle's staff remains committed to a high level of customer service and working with property owners to achieve workable solutions and consensus.

LaBelle's development process and procedures are guided by the city's Comprehensive Plan, which can be accessed on the city's website, [www.citylabelle.com](http://www.citylabelle.com), and the Land Development Code (LDC) located on Municode. Every property in the city is designated within a specific future land use category, that guide whether a property can be used for residential, commercial, industrial, public

or a mix of land uses. Similarly, the zoning map classifies each property by zoning district and corresponds to district regulations in the Land Development Code that specify how development can occur on the property, including setbacks, minimum home sizes, landscaping requirements, and other development information. The city continues to update its codes to be up to date with current standards and ensure quality development. As an example, the city commission is recently strengthened the protection of the historical heritage oak trees throughout town to uphold the special character of LaBelle.

A key project completed by the city over the past year is the extension of sanitary sewer throughout several residential neighborhoods. The city continues to focus on infrastructure improvements for sewer, water, drainage and roads to provide the citizens of LaBelle with a high level of service. The city was recently awarded millions in funding to complete the septic to sewer conversion projects within town.

If you're considering a project in LaBelle, or just need access to information, the city's website is a key resource. City staff also offers pre-application meetings at no cost to the applicant to discuss development proposals and provide information regarding the applicable regulations and the permitting process. For more information, please visit the city's website at [citylabelle.com](http://citylabelle.com).



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*NMLS Registry Number – 423166*



# What's on the horizon?

## Residential growth continues to soar

**By Keitha Daniels**

Director of Hendry County Economic Development Council

Located in an ideal South-Central Florida location and equipped with the fundamental elements to become a premier business destination, Hendry County is poised for growth. With the coastal communities reaching capacity, more and more individuals are turning their attention inland. Our community offers a true quality of life where homes are affordable,

natural resources are available and businesses are prosperous.

Hendry County experienced higher than normal levels of residential growth during the global pandemic. According to a report by Bloomberg City Lab in May 2021, Hendry County led the State with in-migration. The study compared the number of individuals moving in versus the number of those moving out between March 2020 and February 2021. The ability to work



remotely combined with the attractiveness of a rural lifestyle led many to the area.

Industrial and commercial activity also saw tremendous growth county-wide. In 2021, Hendry welcomed several manufacturers relocating their businesses to the area. Hendry’s location in the State provides connectivity both east and west and north and south thanks to the many State Roads that intersect the County placing Hendry within a 90-minute drive of either southern coast. In addition to no state income tax, Hendry has no impact fees. The availability of large tracts of land in a desirable location and the lower operating costs in Hendry made the decision to relocate an easy one.

What is on the horizon for Hendry? Residential development continues to soar in areas such as Port LaBelle, Wheeler Estates, and Montura leading the way for retail opportunities. The City of Clewiston’s Industrial Park will soon see manufacturing facilities producing goods and the 650-acre Jack Paul Industrial Park in LaBelle is being readied for future development. Infrastructure projects have been planned and funded across the county providing more opportunities for residential and business growth.

The Airglades International Airport project will develop a state-of-the-art logistics complex

that will dramatically reshape the flow of goods from Latin American producers to United States consumers and vice versa. To date, the airport and the land surrounding it are undeveloped, providing a rare opportunity for businesses interested in importing and exporting of goods.

With all the new developments and growth, employment opportunities will be as high as they have ever been in Hendry. Providing a skilled workforce is a top priority for county leaders and educational institutes. The Hendry County Workforce Education and Adult School enrollment numbers continue to increase year-over-year as well as their course offerings and locations. In 2021, Governor DeSantis awarded the Glades Regional Training Center, a facility located less than 10 miles from the City of Clewiston, \$5.8 million dollars for technical training which will provide a training pipeline for future employment opportunities in the region.

The Hendry County Economic Development Council (EDC) will celebrate its 25th anniversary this year. The EDC is a community asset focused on business, workforce, and community enhancement. Through strategic partnerships with local, regional, and state entities, the EDC is delivering on a promise to continually improve the community and prepare for a better Hendry of tomorrow.



# Indisputable Charm

## Downtown LaBelle offers unique venues

**By Kelly Boone**

Executive Director, LaBelle Downtown Revitalization Corporation

Downtown LaBelle is an award-winning Florida Main Street Community nestled alongside the Caloosahatchee River. The LaBelle Downtown Revitalization Corporation (LDRC) is comprised of a board of directors that works closely with the City of LaBelle and the Hendry County Tourism Department to create a leisurely experience for residents and visitors.

Many dedicated businesses and individuals work daily to maintain a vibrant and economically successful downtown with unique venues throughout the district. The charm of this historic downtown is indisputable, with lush, aged oak trees lining our streets and shading our downtown. Visit shops, restaurants, art gallery, and library within walking distance from the City Wharf, which hosts our annual Wharf Walk Artisan Weekend celebrating talented local artists.

LDRC has proudly been an accredited Main Street Community by the National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Center since its development in 2014. LDRC was recognized as the 2019 America's Main Streets Contest Semifinalist in the "America's Main Streets" contest presented by IndependentWeStand.org, thanks to the support of our community and friends.

LDRC believes everyone deserves a beautiful, vibrant downtown. This place has a thriving

local economy rich in character, featuring inviting public spaces that make residents and visitors feel they belong. We want to celebrate the rich history of our community while helping breathe new life into our downtown economy. We have added lighting, seating, and unique sculptures throughout the downtown district to create a more inviting environment to achieve this goal. The LDRC created a great place to foster the growth of local entrepreneurs and small businesses with our seasonal Shop Downtown Outdoor Saturday Market.

Spend a little time with us to find Downtown LaBelle is an authentic, thriving, great American downtown. This is where our history and our future connect. Be a part of it!



**COTTAGE**

UNDER THE OAKS

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IN THE BEGINNING

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# America's Sweetest Town

## welcomes you to the gateway to Lake O

**By Randy Martin**  
Clewiston City Manager

"America's Sweetest Town" is the City of Clewiston, Florida. Positioned on the southwest boundary of Lake Okeechobee, the second largest natural freshwater lake entirely contained within the continental United States, Clewiston is the gateway to Lake "O" as it is affectionately known in the area. Clewiston is centrally located between the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the east and the waters of the Gulf of Mexico to the west.

The "Sweetest Town" label grew out of the abundant sugarcane agricultural interests in the vicinity and the City's proud claim as home to the corporate headquarters of the U. S. Sugar Corporation. As one of the world's largest sugar producers, the area's top employer and given the company's long history of philanthropic support

for the community at large, Clewiston is greatly indebted to U.S. Sugar for the plentiful contributions the company has made and continues to provide to the quality of life of this unique south central Florida region.

Clewiston visitors and locals alike are fortunate to be able to enjoy a natural environment with seemingly limitless outdoor recreational opportunities available in reasonably close proximity to the community.

With the noted convenient access to the lake's abundant fishing and wildlife attributes and close proximity to the wide variety of amenities offered in the more urban coastal areas on both shores, Clewiston is uniquely positioned as a south Florida hub location for all. The city is home to an amazing museum, an attractive library facility and maintains numerous passive and active parks and recreational facilities including an historic and



well-groomed 18 hole public golf course and bountiful water access points featuring a boat launch and ramp facility with lake access. The city also hosts one of the major access venues for hiking and biking enthusiasts to the Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail (LOST) that borders the 730 square mile lake. This hundred-mile plus paved trail sits atop the elevated Herbert Hoover Dike which encompasses the lake perimeter and is a major segment of the Florida National Scenic Trail system. Also, nearby in Hendry County are facilities of widespread interest to the birding community including the STA-5 Reservoir which is a focal point for the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society.

Clewiston is a well-designed John Nolen community with palm tree lined and landscaped streets and abundant open space. The City is intersected by the major US 27 & 80 transportation corridor, dubbed "Sugarland Highway," which handles most of the east-west traffic through central Florida south of the lake. City officials are focused on economic development initiatives to fortify and enhance existing commercial districts along the Sugarland Highway corridor particularly efforts to revitalize the older "downtown" sections. Clewiston recently closed on the sale of the last of the available parcels in its Park of Commerce entirely composed of development sites for small and medium light industrial type uses. The city is also experiencing significantly enhanced interest in residential and commercial growth in and around the community.

This heightened interest is welcomed by Clewiston and has helped to promote the development of a strong partnership between the City and its municipal

partner Hendry County to plan and expand access to necessary utility infrastructure to support larger scale industrial and commercial development particularly along the highway corridor west of the city. This effort is in great part positively influenced by the planned Airglades International Airport project. Having received FAA concurrence for the sale of the public county-owned airport for private development, the buyers expect to close on the acquisition in the near term with the initial phases consisting of a major cargo and freight handling facility on the site.

Despite the city's focus on economic development to generate a climate conducive for business investment and job creation in the Clewiston/Hendry County area, the city is equally committed to maintaining its' highly valued small town quality of life. Clewiston is blessed with a wonderful citizenry and a deeply committed Board of Commissioners. The city also boasts an active faith-based community, a strong group of civic organizations and a diverse and eclectic commercial base of small businesses many of which are locally owned. As city manager, it is a genuine honor to lead a dedicated team of qualified and capable professional staff driven toward the goal of providing the highest caliber public services in the most cost-effective manner possible.

Whether you are a potential year round resident, second home owner, real estate investor, business or service provider, or a visitor looking for a change of pace vacation or interesting day trip experience, I encourage you to further consider Clewiston.



est. 1923

## The history of Florida's 63rd county

Article courtesy of the LaBelle Heritage Museum

Hendry County, the 63rd of Florida's 67 counties, was established by the Florida legislature in May 1923 by taking approximately half of the area left to Lee County after the creation of Collier County, was named in honor of renowned Florida cattle man Francis Asbury Hendry. Hendry first came to the area as a scout for the U.S. Army during the Third Seminole War in the 1850s. He returned after the War Between the States to set up headquarters for a cattle ranch at old abandoned Fort Thompson that earned him the title of Cattle King of South Florida.

The Upper Caloosahatchee Valley became known to Americans of European heritage during the Second Seminole War (1835-1842) when supply depots were established along the pristine Caloosahatchee River and in the Everglades and Big Cypress - almost impenetrable regions to the south. They were periodically abandoned during the rainy season and also when U.S. troops were not systematically searching for Seminoles - the

generic term for both Miccosukee and Cow Creek bands of Native Americans. U.S. troops sought to round up and forcibly move these Native Americans to the Trans-Mississippi West, making inland Florida safe for settlement by Americans steadily moving south from Georgia and the Carolinas into a promised Eden. Native Americans resisted encroachments on their lands while American settlers and troops refused to admit the validity of Seminole claims to this virgin territory. Slowly but surely, American settlers moved into the Caloosahatchee Valley, lured by the promise of an area that would not only support tropical fruits and vegetables, but also their means of transportation - small supply boats plying the picturesque Caloosahatchee River taking them to market.

The Caloosahatchee River was both boon and bane to the hardy pioneers settling the Caloosahatchee Valley during the latter years of the 19th century. It was the source of irrigation for their crops as well as being their avenue to the

Gulf of Mexico and northern markets. Yet, at the same time, the river's inability to quickly and successfully drain the area during Florida's unpredictable rainy season and after seasonal hurricanes caused settlers to abandon their homes, farms, and tropical groves along its banks. Requests to the Army Corps of Engineers to clear the Caloosahatchee of obstructions following the disastrous floods of 1878 only resulted in the U S Congress appropriating funds to clear the channel as far upriver as the small community of Fort Myers.

Shortly thereafter, hardy pioneers began carving a new settlement on the banks of the Caloosahatchee at the western edge of Captain F.A. Hendry's vast cattle ranch. This settlement, first known as Belle or Belle City, became LaBelle when Hendry platted the small settlement and named it in honor of two of his six daughters, Laura Jane Hendry Thompson and Carrie Belle Hendry Evans.

It was left up to Philadelphia entrepreneur Hamilton Disston and his plans to reclaim the Everglades and construct a canal from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean. Such a waterway had been dreamed of since the days of Spanish Florida — a canal that would fully connect the Caloosahatchee from its headwaters at Lake Hickpochee to Lake Okeechobee via the Three Mile Canal. Small paddle wheel steamers plied the Upper Caloosahatchee from the early 1880s until Caloosahatchee Irrigation and Navigation Locks 2 and 3 were dynamited to help release flood waters from the disastrous 1928 Okeechobee Hurricane. Dynamiting these locks did not achieve the desired result but did result in destroying the Caloosahatchee itself as the primary avenue for transportation and commerce between Fort Myers and the Upper Caloosahatchee Valley.

Vegetable farms, citrus groves, and tropical fruit plantations dominated the area closest to the Caloosahatchee during this period of early settlement in the Caloosahatchee Valley. Cattle ranching was paramount in the lush grasslands that bordered the Caloosahatchee. However, the area south of the Caloosahatchee was home to large numbers of furbearers such as otter, fox, bobcat, and Florida Panther whose pelts were in demand for both gentlemen and ladies' hats, winter coats, and lap robes. Tropical birds were hunted for their plumes and sometimes entire carcasses that adorned not only ladies' finest millinery but also elaborate hairdos during the Gilded Age. Such high demand encouraged hunting and trapping for pelts and plumes that lasted well into the 20th century until changing fashions, wildlife conservation, and strict laws about poaching called an end to wide-spread trapping and fur trading on the streets of LaBelle.

The majority of the early American settlers in the Caloosahatchee Valley came south from North Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas in search of open frontiers

just as many of their neighbors moved west into virgin lands in Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Northern Louisiana, Texas, and the Great Plains. However, Midwestern land developers such as E.E. Goodno and - in some instances - land speculators like Rev. George F. Hall from the Midwest concentrated on luring yeoman farmers and artisans from Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma.

Clewiston had its Japanese settlers in the years prior to World War II, and LaBelle boasted Polish, Czech, and Italian families becoming steadfast members of the community during the early years of the 20th century as well as a short-lived return to the land by Eastern European Jewish immigrants from the Shtetls of the Russian Empire in the early 1930's.

The Seminole Indians had been forced into the Big Cypress during both the Second and Third Seminole Wars from the mid- 1830s to the late 1850s. A reservation was set up in the southeastern corner of Hendry County, and the Native Americans were conveniently forgotten (for the most part) except for visits into Clewiston and LaBelle to trade their furs and buy groceries.

The Seminoles were cattle ranchers in North Florida before the United States obtained Florida from Spain by treaty and purchase in 1819 and continued to herd some cattle even after they were forced into the Big Cypress. The plight of these Native Americans followed that of their cousins in other areas until entrepreneurs in the tribe decided to adopt the ways of their neighbors and became successful international businessmen with enterprises spanning the globe.

The possibility of raising sugar cane in the Upper Caloosahatchee Valley had been recognized as early as the 1870s. The possibility became a reality with the push for Everglades Drainage and Reclamation during the early years of the 20th century. It led to the establishment of Clewiston on the shores of Lake Okeechobee in the early 1920s, a community that would thrive off of the new sugar mill, United States Sugar Corporation. It had holdings in the rich muck lands of Lakes Okeechobee and Hickpochee, as well as the Upper Caloosahatchee Valley. The Caloosahatchee, Lake Okeechobee, and the prime hunting lands in the area coupled with generally mild winter and spring weather, beckoned wealthy sportsmen from the North. Winter vacation homes began to spring up along the banks of the Caloosahatchee and on the Ridge in Clewiston. Many of these tourists became very active in their winter vacation communities, and some even became permanent residents.

The economy of Hendry County has been a mixture of agriculture, hunting and fur trading, and tourism since its early days. Who knows what the future has in store for our diverse population with its varied interests?

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Heather B. Seith, MD

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# Florida South Western State College

## 60 years of elevating opportunities for all

**By Jennifer R. Young**

Florida SouthWestern College Media Coordinator

For 60 years, Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW) has been elevating the educational and career opportunities for those in the Southwest Florida area. If you've been to a doctor's office or medical facility, sat in an elementary school classroom, or supported a local business in Southwest Florida, chances are high that you've encountered FSW alumni.

Annually serving nearly 22,000 students at five locations and online, FSW offers more than 45 academic programs with two- and four-year degrees and professional certifications, several with 100 percent licensure pass and job placements rates. FSW's tuition is the lowest in Southwest Florida, and with scholarships and financial aid, 70% of FSW students graduate debt free.

FSW faculty bring world-class experience and a deep knowledge base to the classroom. Our course offerings prepare students to further their education or start their dream career with experiences that stretch far beyond the classroom. Honors courses, internships and undergraduate research opportunities are available, and FSW students can even study abroad at the Lorenzo de' Medici Institute in Italy. Many others have traveled abroad to experience learning in countries including Russia, Nicaragua, and the Galapagos Islands.

As a member of the Florida College System, FSW offers our students the benefits of articulation agreements established by the Florida Department of Education. Students graduating from

FSW with an Associate in Arts (AA) degree are guaranteed by the state of Florida to "have the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree at a state university or Florida college offering four-year degrees." Additionally, Destination FGCU, the FSW/FGCU Transfer Program, provides students with the tools and guidance they need to easily and successfully move from FSW upon completion of their Associate in Arts degree (AA) to Florida Gulf Coast University.

FSW's collegiate high schools, located on the Lee and Charlotte campuses; FSW's Collegiate Institute at Clewiston High School; and our dual enrollment program provide Southwest Florida high school students the opportunity to accelerate their learning and earn an AA degree while they are still in high school.

FSW students have many ways to stay engaged on campus. Student clubs and activities, intramural sports, and a state-of-the-art fitness center provide opportunities for students to be socially and physically active. FSW is also known for its dedication to the arts with the Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall, the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at FSW, and the Rush Collections Gallery all located on the Lee Campus in Fort Myers.

Also, on the Lee Campus, sports fans can catch an FSW Bucs basketball or volleyball game at the Suncoast Credit Union Arena. Additionally, the arena hosts a variety of concerts, graduations, tournaments, and community events. The community can also catch an FSW Bucs baseball or softball game at City of Palms Park in Fort Myers.

To learn more about FSW, visit [www.FSW.edu](http://www.FSW.edu).





**Stephanie Sposato**

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# Hendry Co Dining Guide

Hendry County is a dining destination! Visitors to the area come from near and far for award-winning barbecue, to enjoy a meal on the banks of Lake Okeechobee or to experience our unique locally owned eateries!

## **CLEWISTON**

### **Beef 'O' Brady's**

892 W Sugarland Hwy.

### **Big Eaters Café**

110 W Ventura Ave.

### **Burger King**

1014 W Sugarland Hwy.

### **Café Tropical**

307 E Sugarland Hwy.

### **China Taste Buffet**

930 W Sugarland Hwy.

### **Domino's Pizza**

503 E Sugarland Hwy.

### **Dunkin' Donuts**

100 S Berner Rd.

### **Hawaiian Ice**

444 W Sugarland Hwy.

### **Gator Bait Pub & Grill**

13983 FL-90

### **Jalapeños Taqueria #2**

728 US-27

### **KFC**

411 W Sugarland Hwy.

### **Laliza Juice Bar**

120 WC Owen St.

### **Little Caesars Pizza**

880 W Sugarland Hwy.

### **Main Street Subs**

344 E Sugarland Hwy.

### **Nisbet Enterprises, Inc.**

### **McDonald's**

905 W Sugarland Hwy.

### **Pizza Hut**

921 W Sugarland Hwy.

### **Popeye's Louisiana Kitchen**

504 E Sugarland Hwy.

### **Roland Martin Marina &**

### **Resort**

920 E Del Monte Ave.

### **Scotty's Tiki Bar**

920 E Del Monte Ave.

### **Sonny's BBQ**

1030 W Sugarland Hwy.

### **Staghorn Kitchen**

728 E Sugarland Hwy.

### **Subway**

1005 W Sugarland Hwy.

### **Subway**

940 W Sugarland Hwy.

### **Sunrise Restaurant**

842 E Sugarland Hwy.

### **Thomas Diner**

1019 Harlem Academy Ave.

### **Wendy's**

800 W Sugarland Hwy.





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**7 Mares**

415 S Main St.

**Abbies Deli LLC**

4060 NE Eucalyptus Blvd.

**Ana and Cindy's Cuban Café**

36 E Hickpochee Ave.

**Amigos & Beer**

675 W Hickpochee Ave.

**Beef 'O'Brady's**

21 S Lee St.

**Big V Restaurant**

32 Hall St.

**Bridge Street Coffee**

23 Fort Thompson Ave.

**Burger King**

61 S. Hall St.

**Cactus Mex**

512 Cowboy Way

**China Uno**

90 W. Hickpochee Ave.

**Chinese Fortune Cookie Restaurant**

505 W. Hickpochee Ave #1000

**Contreras Mexican Restaurant**

125 FL-80

**Domino's Pizza Store 5085**

870 W. Hickpochee Ave.

**Dunkin' Donuts**

31 S Lee St.

**El Gran Taco Loco**

863 W Cowboy Way

**Forrey Grill**

280 Bridge St.

**Hungry Howie's Pizza**

180 S Main St.

**KFC**

50 N Lee St.

**LaBelle Brewing Company**

670 W Hickpochee Ave.

**La Victoria Paletteria Ice Cream Shop & Restaurant**

155 W Cowboy Way

**Log Cabin BBQ**

480 W Hickpochee Ave.

**Little Caesar's Pizza**

75 Bridge St.

**McDonald's**

21 E. Hickpochee Ave.

**Papa John's Pizza**

41 S Lee St

**Pelican's SnoBalls of LaBelle**

55 Yeomans Ave.

**Pizza Hut/Wing Street**

505 W Hickpochee Ave.

**Popeye's Louisiana Kitchen**

576 W Hickpochee Ave.

**Sal-Cal Pizza**

732 S. Main St.

**Short Cakes**

311 E. Cowboy Way

**Spuds**

31 Fort Thompson Ave.

**Subway**

139 E. Hickpochee Ave.

**Taco Bell**

50 N Lee St.

**Two Peas Café**

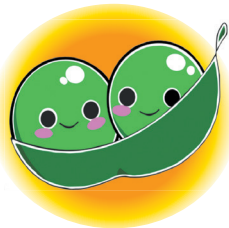
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216 S Main St

**The Quart House**

100 S. Main St.



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# Hometown Healthcare providing personalized care in your own backyard

**H**endry Regional Medical Center (HRMC) is a 25-bed critical access hospital delivering a personal touch through doctors and nurses whom you know and trust, in a warm and friendly environment.

Hendry Regional provides healthcare to the residents of Hendry, Southern Glades, and Western Palm Beach Counties. HRMC strives to meet the needs of the residents by incorporating modern technology with compassionate and competent medical staff to care for its patients. Convenient locations are available in Clewiston and LaBelle.

Hendry Regional Medical Center offers a new modern emergency department, along with imaging services, surgery suites, laboratory services, and

outpatient services.

HRMC also has 6 additional facilities located throughout Hendry County. In Clewiston the Dr. James D. Forbes Family Care Center hosts a dynamic team providing Family Medicine, Pediatrics, and Internal Medicine. Corporate Health Services offers preventative health programs for employers and their employees including worker's compensation management, testing, screenings, site assessment's, and wellness education. Hendry Regional Rehabilitative Services offers a variety of rehabilitation and therapeutic services designed to evaluate and treat problems affecting mobility and function.

The Hendry Regional Convenient Care Center is located in the heart of LaBelle. The facility includes Family Medicine, Pediatrics, and specialty care including gynecology, surgery, and physical and occupational therapy services.

Hendry Regional Medical Center offers a wide array of specialty services for residents including cardiology, surgery, gynecology, and audiology.

Understanding the need of the community HRMC continues to add services and providers to its already expansive list. The most recent additions have been telehealth medicine, 3D Mammography, Infusion Services and additional Family Practice Providers.

At HRMC healthcare is a team effort. The staff is courteous, respectful, and enthusiastic in serving healthcare needs at any of the multiple locations. Hendry Regional has proudly been providing healthcare for over six decades, with roots that run deep within the community!



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## Main Office

101 South Bridge Street  
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863-674-5600



## Clewiston Office

100 East El Paso Avenue  
Clewiston, Florida 33440  
863-805-5000

# Exciting things to do

## Festivals, events, celebrations & more



### Everglades Boogie

Held Jan. 21-23 (usually held at the end of January) this event gives skydivers the opportunity to jump out of all kinds of aircraft, like a De Havilland Otter, a Sky Van, a King Air and a helicopter. Nightly entertainment, bonfires, raffles, vendors and food. Located at 1090 Airglades Blvd. in Clewiston. You can reach them at 800-533-6151 or 863-983-6151 or visit their website at florida.skydivespaceland.com.



### FLW Series Fishing Tournaments

These national events often take place on beautiful Lake Okeechobee. Professional anglers come from across the country to compete for cash prizes. The event is held at the Roland Martin Marina & Resort in Clewiston. The season usually kicks off in January. For more information, visit [flwoutdoors.com](http://flwoutdoors.com).



### Black Gold Jubilee

Celebrating the end of harvest season, this unique festival will be held April 2, shows off Belle Glade's agricultural roots and organic "black gold" soil. Food, entertainment, fireworks, a car show, a volleyball tournament, rides and more. To be held at Torry Island Campground, 5000 W Canal St. N. in Belle Glade. For more information, please call 561-996-2745.



### Sour Orange Festival

This event features the Sour Orange local Bake-Off, boasting delicious sour orange pies; vendors; entertainment; arts and crafts; a quilt show; recipe contests; and a photography display. For more information, please call 863-233-3014 or visit Sour Orange Festival on Facebook. The 2022 festival will be held on Saturday, Jan. 15 from from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at 1239 Red Barn Road in Lakeport.



### Swamp Cabbage Festival

This festival celebrates local heroes with fun activities beginning with the Old Timers Dance and continuing with the Swamp Stomp, the Adult Country Western Dance, the Ranch Rodeo, the Legends of the Road Show, and more. The festival will be held Saturday, Feb. 26 and Sunday, Feb. 27, 2022 beginning at 1 p.m. at 8 Park Avenue in LaBelle. You can visit their website at [swampcabbagefestival.org](http://swampcabbagefestival.org).



### Hendry Co. Farm Tour

Hendry County - City Farm Tour Council and UF/IFAS Co-operative Extension Service will be holding its 42nd Farm Tour of the Hendry County agricultural industry, Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022. Hendry County is one of the largest agricultural counties in the state and is the largest producer of oranges in Florida with over 75,000 acres of groves. Tickets are available on [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com).



### *Brighton Seminole Festival*

The festival grounds are next to the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena, 17400 Sport Complex Road NE, Okeechobee, off State Road 721 in Glades County. This event, to be held Feb. 18-20, 2022 showcases Seminole and other Native American arts, crafts, food, dances and traditions.

They also have a rodeo and XTreme Bull Riding. Call 863-467-6039 or visit their website at rezrodeo.com.



### *Chalo Nitka Festival*

Chalo Nitka will be held on March 4-5, 2022 (usually held the first weekend in March) in Moore Haven in nearby Glades County. Chalo Nitka is one of the state's oldest continuing festivals. The festival grounds are located in Chalo Nitka Park off U.S. Highway 27. There are midway games, rides, a pancake breakfast and vendor booths selling food, crafts and jewelry. Events also include the Big Bass Tournament, the Frontier Days Rodeo, the Kid's Day and Small Fry Fishing Contest, the Chalo Nitka Parade and the Chalo Nitka Queen Pageant. For more info, visit chalonitka.com or call 863-946-0300.



### *Hendry County Fair and Livestock Show*

Celebrating local agriculture with a livestock show and sale, cake auction, petting zoo, exhibits, pageants, a parade, frog racing and more, this week-long event is held in Clewiston on Feb. 8-13. You can visit their website at hendrycountyfair.com.



### *American Indian Arts Celebration*

Dance! Music! Arts! Culture! The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum will host the annual American Indian Arts Celebration Nov. 4-5, 2022 on the museum grounds at the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation, 34725 West Boundary Road, Clewiston. Enjoy traditional and contemporary arts and crafts, dance and music of the Seminole, Southeastern and other Indian tribes from across the country. Along with the Native American vendors, special presentations and wildlife shows, admission to the festival includes free parking and entrance to our award-winning, American Alliance of Museums accredited museum. Visit ahtahthiki.com or call 863-902-1113 for more information.



### *Brown Sugar Festival*

Held in Harlem, just southwest of Clewiston on the first Saturday of May, this festival has arts and crafts, a pageant, music, games, exhibits and food. Funds raised during the festival help send local students to college. For more information, call 863-902-3322



### *Clewiston Fall Festival*

Organized annually by the City of Clewiston, the Clewiston Fall Festival features games, food, kid costume and pet costume contests, local vendors, a car show and more on the Saturday before Halloween. For more information, call 863-983-1492 or visit their Facebook at [facebook.com/CityofClewistonRecreationDepartment/](https://www.facebook.com/CityofClewistonRecreationDepartment/)



### *Clewiston Sugar Festival*

Country music concert, arts and crafts, farming, beauty pageants, dessert contest, farming exhibits, fishing tournament, car show and more. It will be on Saturday, March 19, 2022 at Clewiston's Sugar Festival Park, Civic Park, Osceola Avenue in Clewiston. You can visit their Facebook page at [facebook.com/ClewistonSugarFestival](https://www.facebook.com/ClewistonSugarFestival).



### *Downtown LIVE!*

Free street concerts on Fort Thompson Avenue from 6-9 p.m. on the first Friday of each month from October to April. Find out more on the LaBelle Downtown Revitalization Corporation event page at [downtownlabelle.com](https://www.downtownlabelle.com) or on their Facebook at [facebook.com/downtownlabelle](https://www.facebook.com/downtownlabelle)

### *Shop Downtown October*

Saturday Market Held on the First Saturday of the month from November through March from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. located at 8 Park Avenue, Downtown LaBelle. Vendor booths, entertainment and interactive art classes! Find out more on the LaBelle Downtown Revitalization Corporation event page at [downtownlabelle.com](https://www.downtownlabelle.com) or on their Facebook at [facebook.com/downtownlabelle](https://www.facebook.com/downtownlabelle)





# HOME

## *Sweet* Hendry

Whether you are a nature enthusiast, a CEO, or a growing family, Hendry offers the perfect location for your home or business. With more affordable home, land, and building options, all within a 90 minute drive of either coast of Florida, it's easy to see why more and more businesses and families are choosing to call Hendry "*home*".



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Hendry County Tourism | [www.discoverhendrycounty.com](http://www.discoverhendrycounty.com) |

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Online digital display banner advertising our community newspaper websites

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## South Central Florida Newspapers

**In Print Weekly:** Lake Okeechobee News, Caloosa Belle

**Daily Online:** SouthCentralFloridaLife.com | Indiantown

*Independent, Okeechobee News, Glades County News, Clewiston News, Belle Glade & Pahokee Sun, Caloosa Belle, Immokalee Bulletin*



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**By Leigh Woodham**

Director, Clewiston Museum

Welcome to Hendry County from a person who's new to Hendry County, but not new to the Glades! I have lived in Belle Glade for the past 36 years and have been the director of the museum since February. My connection to the area starts with being married to a native of Belle Glade, whose family has been in the Glades for many years. Cattle ranching and farming drew his family to the area in the 1930s and 1940s and many of the streets in South Bay are named after his family members.

I grew up in Boca Raton and lived there until I married my husband in 1984. We moved to Belle Glade in 1985, where I eventually became the director of the Dolly Hand Cultural Arts Center. It is through the Dolly Hand that my connection to Clewiston began. The theatre had many patrons from Clewiston and through the years, I got to know them through their attendance at the shows

and participation on the theatre's advisory board and many have become dear friends! After I was furloughed from the Center due to COVID-19 in November of 2020, a friend notified me of the opening at the museum and I happily applied.

Being the museum director has been and continues to be a true learning experience for this University of Florida Statistics major with an arts management background. I am thoroughly enjoying my discovery of Clewiston's and Hendry County's rich history and I love sharing it with those who visit the museum! There is an impressive collection of fossils and historical artifacts for you to experience when you visit ... a dugong that dates back 10,000,000 years, mammoth and mastodon fossils among others, and an exhibit about the prehistoric Native American culture that lived around Lake Okeechobee and is the earliest known culture of its kind on record in the state.

>> See Clewiston Museum on page 38

# HENDRY COUNTY PROPERTY APPRAISER DENA R PITTMAN CFA

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Thank you for choosing Hendry County. Our goal is to ensure you receive all the tax savings you are entitled to.

Please visit one of our offices or for more information view us at [hendryprop.com](http://hendryprop.com).

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\$ 50,000 - \$ 75,000	UP TO \$50,000
\$ 1 - \$ 50,000	UP TO \$25,000

**Homestead Exemption** does not automatically transfer to your new home, you must apply.  
*Don't miss out, apply now!*

If you have recently purchased property and would like to apply for ag classification, we begin accepting applications in January.

NOTE: Ag classification is non transferrable.

## OFFICE LOCATIONS

25 E HICKPOCHEE AVE  
LABELLE FL 33935  
863-675-5270

1100 OLYMPIA ST  
CLEWISTON FL 33440  
863-983-3178

OFFICE HOURS  
8AM - 5 PM  
[WWW.HENDRYPROP.COM](http://WWW.HENDRYPROP.COM)



You'll see exhibits about the history of fishing in Lake Okeechobee, the construction of the Herbert Hoover Dike, the Royal Air Force flight training school at Riddle Field that was here during WWII, the Big Cypress Seminole Reservation, the cattle and sugar industries and other interesting artifacts about the history of Clewiston. Take time to relax in the museum's theater and view films on the history of Clewiston and how sugar is made and then be sure to check out the virtual reality exhibit that will take you on a tractor through a sugar cane field and then into the sugar mill. This exhibit was donated to the museum by US Sugar in the fall of 2020. It is unusual to find this quality of a collection in a small-town museum, and I feel the residents have great pride in what we have here.

In addition to the museum's fossils and historical exhibits and archives, we offer the community the opportunity to learn more through the Florida Humanities Council's Florida Talks Speaker Series and through other presentations by residents from the surrounding areas.

We also have an outstanding student outreach program that is funded with a grant from the Batchelor Foundation. As the museum director, I go into Clewiston's schools to teach Florida history to 4th graders! Through eight sessions, the students learn about prehistoric Florida, Native American history in Florida, the European exploration and colonization of Florida, the storms of 1926 and 1928, the history of the cattle, catfishing and sugar industries in Florida and the history of Clewiston and Hendry County. As you can imagine, I am learning and relearning it all as we go along, too! It is truly rewarding to see the students' excited faces as they enter the classroom to see what interesting artifacts I might have for them to experience during each visit, and to hear them exclaim how they love history! This is part of what the museum's mission is all about!

The museum is also here to help residents from the local area and beyond who are doing research or looking for historical photos or information. There is a wonderful archive of photos from the area dating back to the 1910s, and in recent months, the museum helped



the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office to identify the location of their first deputy slain in the line of duty, back in the 1920s. We've also helped First Bank to create a series of historical photos to display in one of their newly renovated branches.

But the museum is not just about history ... the museum also values and exhibits local art. In the museum's theater, you'll find the Sue Corbin and Louis Sullivan Glades Art Gallery, which is specific to Glades artists and showcases their talent. We also have the annual Fancy Pansy Arty Party each October, which recently allowed 15 local artists, photographers and artisans the opportunity to share and sell their work. In addition, Laurie Snow Hein, who was a Clewiston resident as a youth and is now an accomplished artist in Palm Beach Gardens, was featured as a special guest artist. She treated residents to an En Plein Air demonstration on Bond Street and presented a program about her career as an artist during the event.

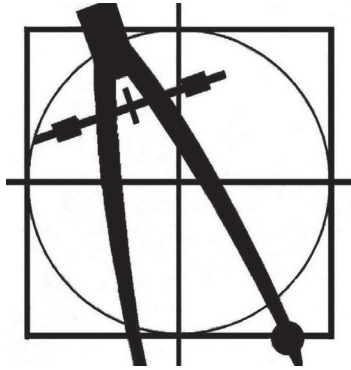
When you visit the museum, be sure to check out the New Picker's Corner as you come through the door. There are many interesting vintage items and antiques that just might pique your interest and they're available for purchase! You'll also want to visit the Museum Gift Shop, which is stocked full of local goodies and historical books.

While many of the programs I have mentioned are free to the public, none of these great things happen without the community's support. The Clewiston Museum is a private not-for-profit organization. We rely on donations, grants, the support of the local business community and our valued members in order to operate. Anyone can join for as little as \$25!

To learn more, visit our newly updated website at [www.theclewistonmuseum.org](http://www.theclewistonmuseum.org) and be sure to follow and like us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest and Google My Business. The Clewiston Museum is located at 109 Central Avenue in Clewiston. The hours of operation of Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. and on Saturday by appointment. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and \$5 for students and children. Contact us at 863-983-2870 or via email at [clewistonmuseum@embarqmail.com](mailto:clewistonmuseum@embarqmail.com).

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# All in, all the time

## A message from the Hendry County Schools Superintendent



**By Michael Swindle**  
Superintendent of Hendry  
County Schools

It has been a remarkable first year in office as Superintendent leading Hendry County Schools into the future of our success and the success of this year wouldn't have been possible without the

hard work and support of our teachers, staff, and administrators. Our schools are growing and there are boundless opportunities offered inside the classroom as well as beyond the classroom setting. Our teachers are providing enriching learning experiences for our students at all levels.

Hendry County Schools is home to some of the best Career and Technical Educational programs available. Our students have a variety of opportunities to learn industry leading skills such as Health Care, Fire Academy, Criminal Justice Program and many others as well as opportunities to earn industry certifications that lead to rewarding careers. We also have a wide variety of athletic programs such as football, volleyball, basketball as well as many other athletic opportunities that promotes physical fitness and competitions that instills ethics and the dignity of hard work.

Additionally, we have many other clubs such as Future Farmers of America (FFA), Florida Public

Service Academy (FPSA), National Honors Society (NHS) and other clubs which promotes leadership and citizenship where students make a positive difference in our schools and in our community. Our focus on driving up academic achievement, coupled with multiple educational opportunities, will ensure our students are college and career ready!

As superintendent, my goals for Hendry County Schools are simple. We will continue to strive to be a high achieving school district. We will provide safe, orderly and inviting schools where students have every opportunity and can take full advantage of their capacity to learn. We will also continue to create an educational culture where teachers continue to grow their knowledge and wisdom to better benefit our students. We are focused on increasing student achievement and opportunities available to them in every school.

Hendry County is blessed with beautiful natural scenery, rich agriculture history and many diverse cultures. From Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee River, multiple state forests and beautiful farm lands, Hendry County is a great place to work, live and play!

Hendry County Schools is thankful to have the support of our communities, businesses, families and volunteers. Working together, we understand the importance of helping our students develop the essentials skills needed so that their full potential can be realized.

As superintendent, I will always maintain an open door policy. Please feel free to contact me anytime at 863-674-4642.



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Mali Gardner, Commissioner • Hillary Hyslope, Commissioner • James Pittman, Commissioner

**For more information visit us online: [www.clewiston-fl.gov](http://www.clewiston-fl.gov)**



# The Hendry County School Board



**Dwayne E. Brown**  
**VICE CHAIRMAN**

District 1

Term expires 11/18/2024  
Email: district1@hendry-schools.net



**Paul Samerdyke**

District 2

Term expires 11/18/2024  
Email: district2@hendry-schools.net



**Amanda Nelson**  
**CHAIRMAN**

District 3

Term expires 11/21/2022  
Email: district3@hendry-schools.net



**Stephanie Busin**

District 4

Term expires 11/21/2022  
Email: district4@hendry-schools.net



**Joe Basquin**

District 5

Term expires 11/21/2022  
Email: district5@hendry-schools.net

## Hendry County Schools

### CLEWISTON

**Clewiston Youth Development Academy**

Principal Martin Espinoza  
475 E. Osceola Ave.  
863-902-4216 or 983-1577

**Clewiston High School**

Principal Phillip Summers  
1501 S. Francisco Street  
863-983-1520

**Clewiston Middle School**

Principal Tina Kelley  
601 W. Pasadena Avenue  
863-983-1530

**Clewiston Adult School**

Principal Kevin Lutkenhaus  
475 E. Osceola Ave.  
863-983-1511

**Central Elementary**

Principal Melissa Carter  
1000 S. Deane Duff Avenue  
863-983-1550 or 983-1551

**Eastside Elementary**

Principal Denise Gibson  
201 W. Arroyo Avenue  
863-983-1560 or 983-1561

**Westside Elementary**

Principal Sarah Sanchez  
205 W. Arroyo Avenue  
863-983-1570 or 983-1571

### LABELLE

**LaBelle High School**

Principal Tammy Bass  
4050 Cowboy Way  
863-674-4120 or 674-4121

**LaBelle Middle School**

Principal John Klingler  
8000 E. Cowboy Way  
863-674-4646 or 674-4647

**Country Oaks Elementary**

Principal Robin Jones  
2052 Eucalyptus Drive NW  
863-674-4140 or 674-4141

**LaBelle Elementary**

Principal Ansley Cockram  
150 W. Cowboy Way  
863-674-4150 or 674-4151

**Upthegrove Elementary**

Principal Karra Rivas  
280 N. Main Street  
863-612-0750 or 612-0751

**LaBelle Adult School**

Principal Kevin Lutkenhaus  
4050 Cowboy Way  
863-983-1511

**LaBelle Youth Development Academy**

Adm. Shawna Prope  
1100 Forestry Division Rd.  
863-674-4590

**Montura Early Learning Center (Pre-K)**

225 N. Hacienda  
Clewiston, FL 33440

### Private schools located in Hendry County

**New Harvest Academy**

Principal Jesse Windham  
370 Holiday Isle Blvd.  
863-805-0485

**Clewiston Christian School**

Principal George Duckstein  
601 Caribbean Ave.  
863-983-5388

**International Christian Academy of LaBelle**

Principal Tracy Co  
233 Clark St.  
863-675-4227

For more information on any of the schools listed here please visit the Hendry County School District website at [www.hendry-schools.org](http://www.hendry-schools.org).  
District Office: 863-674-4642 | Clewiston Sub-Office: 863-902-4244

**H.E.R.E. (Home Educators Reaching for Excellence) of Hendry County**

Home Support Group for Homeschoolers | Contact person: Melanie Rudd 863-228-7840  
To register: Hendry County School District/Home Education Program Office, 475 E. Osceola Ave, Clewiston



Part of LaBelle's old Southern charm includes the clock tower on the historic Hendry County Courthouse.

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# Enjoy the outdoors!

## Parks and trails in Hendry County

### Trails

#### **LAKE OKEECHOBEE SCENIC TRAIL**

Designated as a segment of the Florida National Scenic Trail in 1993, the Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail (LOST) is a 115-mile hike atop the Herbert Hoover Dike. The view is extraordinary — the 35-foot elevation allows the hiker to enjoy the beauty of Lake Okeechobee, at more than 730 square miles the second largest freshwater lake in the United States. Other impressive sights are the fields of sugarcane with silvery tassels waving in the breezes, groves of orange trees, vibrant green crops growing in the black muck, and a variety of wildlife from egrets to alligators. You can even fish along the way. The LOST is open year-round for a variety of uses including hiking, biking, horseback riding, birdwatching, fishing and photography. Fourteen primitive camping sites are provided by the Corps of Engineers. For more information, log on to [www.saj.usace.army.mil/LOST/](http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/LOST/).

#### **CLEWISTON WALKING TOURS**

The weather is perfect for taking one of four walking tours through the residential areas of Clewiston. Pick up a free map at City Hall or the Chamber of Commerce. The map provides Clewiston history and information about the homes

as you pass by. All the tours start at the historic Clewiston Inn, and depending upon the trail you chose, you may wander by historic houses, the Roland Martin Marina, or the Clewiston Museum. Along the way, you will enjoy watching the birds native to our area such as the egrets, blue herons and ibises. Take the green trail and you'll see Lake Okeechobee, the second largest lake within the United States. The view is stunning and it's a great place for waterfront picnicking. The trails range from 1 mile to 2.9 miles and are identified by different colored arrows on the sidewalks that correspond with the tour map. If you are not in the mood to walk, take a driving tour. The ride is relaxing and interesting. Whether you are walking or riding, this is the perfect way to become acquainted with "America's Sweetest Town."

#### **BIG WATER HERITAGE TRAIL**

Big Water Heritage Trail was officially opened in May 2003. It is a regional driving tour on state, county, and city streets that link historical, cultural, natural, recreational and educational points of interest in five counties surrounding Lake Okeechobee.

The counties are Hendry, Glades, Okeechobee, Martin and Palm Beach. The Heritage Trail connects to the Lake Okeechobee Segment of the

Florida National Scenic Trail, offering visitors and community members an array of recreational, educational and historical opportunities. Highway signs and brochures direct the motorists to points of interest where they will find informative kiosks and outdoor interpretive and recreational activities at destinations such as Florida's state parks and preserves, federal parks and reserves, and cultural points of interest.

For more information, stop by the Clewiston Chamber of Commerce, motels and other businesses and destination sites along the trail or at [visitflorida.com/en-us/things-to-do/florida-fishing/big-water-heritage-trail.html](http://visitflorida.com/en-us/things-to-do/florida-fishing/big-water-heritage-trail.html).

## **CITY AND COUNTY PARKS**

### **CLEWISTON AREA**

- Candy Cane Park, 600 S. Olympia St.
- City Pool, 113 W. Osceola Ave.
- Civic Park, 162 Royal Palm Ave.
- Clewiston Municipal Golf Course, 1201 San Luiz Ave.
- Clewiston Recreation, 110 W. Osceola Ave.
- Clewiston Youth Center, 110 W. Osceola Ave.
- Hidden Park, West Sugarland Circle
- Levee Park, Herbert Hoover Dike Road
- Ridgewood Park, 112 Ridgewood Ave.
- Saginaw Park, Saginaw Avenue
- Sikes Park, 515 Valencia St.
- Sugarland Park pavilion, 211 W. Osceola Ave.
- Sugarland Park pavilion, West Arroyo Avenue
- Sikes Park, 515 Valencia St.
- Sweetest Town Playground

(formerly known as Woodworks Park), 209 W. Osceola Ave.

- Triangle Park, Block 174 East Esperanza Avenue
- Trinidad Park, 520 E. Trinidad
- W.C. "Bo" Pelham Jr. Park, 1700 Red Road
- Water Spray Park, 113 W. Osceola Ave.
- John Stretch Memorial Park, 47225 U.S. 27

For more information on Clewiston parks, visit [www.clewiston-recreation.com/Parks.aspx](http://www.clewiston-recreation.com/Parks.aspx).

### **LABELLE AREA**

- Alton "Kid" Jones Park, 455 Withlacoochee Ave.
- Barron Park, 1559 De Soto Ave.
- Bob Mason Park, 497 Old Country Road 78
- Davis-Pratt Park, 1287 Lillian St.
- Hendry Sports Complex, Forey Drive
- Hendry LaBelle Civic Park, 800 Jaycee Lions Drive
- Hendry LaBelle Sports Park, 1101 Forestry Division Road
- Joe Culliver Park, W. Lincoln Ave.
- LaBelle Dog Park, 1200 Pratt Blvd.
- LaBelle Nature Park, 440 Fraser Ave.
- LaBelle River Park, Riverbend Drive
- Main Street Roadside Park, 1040 State Road 29
- Veterans Memorial Park, 26 E Hickpochee Ave.

For more information on LaBelle parks, visit [www.hendrylabellerecreation.org/parks/](http://www.hendrylabellerecreation.org/parks/).

Felda Area

- Felda Park, 1100 County Road 830

## **AREA NATIONAL, STATE, & REGIONAL AGENCY PARKS**

### **BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE**

Established in 1974, Big Cypress is America's first national preserve and consists of 729,000 acres. A freshwater swamp ecosystem, it welcomes approximately 1 million visitors each year. It offers a diverse landscape where one can see cypress and mangroves, alligators and panther tracks all in one day. The Miccosukee and Seminole tribes call Big Cypress home. For more information on Big Cypress National Preserve, visit [www.nps.gov/bicy/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/bicy/index.htm).

#### **Big Cypress National Preserve, Oasis Visitor Center**

52105 Tamiami Trail East, Ochopee

#### **Big Cypress Swamp Welcome Center**

33000 Tamiami Trail East, Ochopee

### **DINNER ISLAND RANCH WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA**

Large acreage and mix of wetlands and uplands. On-site activities include hunting, wildlife viewing, fishing, hiking, camping, bicycling and horseback riding. For more information, visit [myfwc.com/recreation/lead/dinner-island/](http://myfwc.com/recreation/lead/dinner-island/).

17781 County Rd. 833,  
Clewiston



## **RV RESORTS AND CAMPGROUNDS**

Okeechobee Landings RV Resort  
420 Holiday Blvd Clewiston

Roland Martin Marina & Resort  
920 E Del Monte Ave Clewiston

Clewiston RV Resort  
194 CR 720 Clewiston

Crooked Hook RV Resort  
51700 US-27 #9789 Clewiston

Big Cypress RV Resort & Campground  
34950 Halls Rd Clewiston

Oak Grove RV Resort 55+  
500 S Main St LaBelle

Grandma's Grove RV Resort  
2250 SR 80 Fort Denaud

LaBelle Woods Resort  
620 S Main St LaBelle

Moss Landing on the River 55+  
900 Aqua Isles Blvd LaBelle

Whisper Creek RV Resort  
1887 SR 29 SW LaBelle

Riverbend Motorcoach Resort  
5800 W SR 80 LaBelle

Riverside Camp and Retreat  
7305 SR 78 Fort Denaud

RiverLandings – Florida Luxury Motorcoach Resort  
5942 SR 80 W Fort Denaud

Ortona South Lock Campground  
2410 Dalton Ln SW Moore Haven

Meadowlark Shores RV Park 55+  
1880 Williams Rd Moore Haven

The Glades RV Resort  
1679 Indian Hills Dr Moore Haven

Moore Haven KOA  
17192 US 27 Moore Haven

Okaloacoochee State Forest  
6265 CR 832 Felda

Palm & Pines RV Park  
16225 SR 29 Felda

Fisheating Creek Outpost  
7555 US 27 N Palmdale

Sabel Palm RV Resort  
9505 Main St NW Palmdale

*To have an RV park added to this listing, please call Jennifer Klerk de Reus at 863-225-4543 or email [jfroman@iniusa.org](mailto:jfroman@iniusa.org).*

# Local surgical services in Hendry County reduce burden of travel



*Common surgical procedures available at Hendry Regional Medical Center make recovery easier.*

**T**raveling long distances can add to the stress and discomfort of surgery. The need to travel to and from a facility outside the community can also cause a burden for family members. Fortunately for Hendry County residents, common surgical procedures are available at Hendry Regional Medical Center.

The trusted medical team at Hendry Regional Medical Center is able to perform a number of surgeries here in the community, providing convenience and comfort for patients and their families

“Having your surgery performed in the local community is a smart decision,” said R.D. Williams, CEO. “Knowing you are near home can provide peace of mind for your family and make the recovery process easier. The highly trained surgeons at Hendry Regional Medical Center can perform common general surgical procedures like tonsillectomy, laparoscopic cholecystectomy (gallbladder removal), hernia repair, and colonoscopy. In addition, our Specialists can perform gynecological procedures to include hysterectomies or cervical biopsy.

Many common procedures can be performed with laparoscopes or endoscopes which enable the surgeon to see inside the body without having to make large incisions. Other benefits of these techniques include

shorter hospital stays and faster recovery times.

According to Dr. Darayes Mobed, General Surgeon, patients sometimes delay having certain surgeries for various reasons, but doing so can prolong discomfort or raise the risk of complications. “Traveling for a surgical procedure can be inconvenient,” Dr. Mobed said. “The need to travel can disrupt a person’s life, so he or she may opt to wait. Having surgical services available locally makes it easier for people to get the surgeries they need, when they need them.”

Dr. Mobed added that it is best to follow the recommendations of physicians when elective surgery is required.

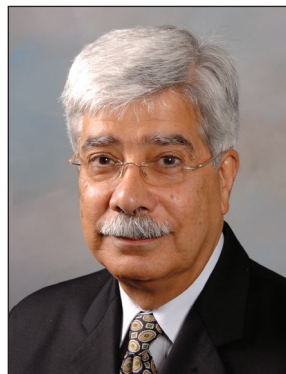
When a physician recommends surgery, choosing the right facility is also important. Dr. Mobed said that convenience is one of the reasons Hendry County residents choose Hendry Regional Medical Center.

Additionally, the convenience of local recovery services can make the transition from hospital to home smoother. The Swing Bed Program at Hendry Regional Medical Center allows patients, covered under Medicare who need extended care, to stay in a hospital setting without the need to change facilities. With a compassionate nursing team on hand around the clock, recovering at the hospital following a surgical procedure can provide comfort to patients and their families.

“In many rural areas, qualified surgeons can be hard to come by,” R.D. Williams said. “We are fortunate to have a team of highly trained physicians and medical providers in Hendry County. Having access to the medical care you need here in

the community is a huge asset and can help you get back to your everyday life quicker.

Talk to your primary care provider about choosing the right facility for your surgical procedure. To learn more about Hendry Regional Medical Center services, please call the hospital at (863) 902-3000 or visit [www.hrmc.us](http://www.hrmc.us).



**Dr. Darayes Mobed**



**HENDRY REGIONAL  
MEDICAL CENTER**

“Where It’s All About Getting Better”

# Clewiston's Business Scene

## Clewiston Chamber of Commerce

By Hilary Hyslope  
Executive director,  
Clewiston Chamber of Commerce

Welcome to Hendry County! The Clewiston Chamber of Commerce invites you to discover “the liquid heart of Florida” and all that Hendry County has to offer. Situated on the southern shores of Lake Okeechobee, “America’s Sweetest Town” has a variety of businesses and amenities. Clewiston is best known for two things, our agricultural contributions and bass fishing! Here at the Chamber of Commerce, we know that our town is so much more. While we take tremendous pride in our agricultural heritage and our wonderful gem (Lake Okeechobee), it is our people and our community as a whole that has given us the title of “America’s Sweetest Town!”

Our economic climate here in Clewiston is absolutely poised for growth. Our largest employer, U.S. Sugar, boasts employment for roughly 2,500 people; other key employers include the Hendry County School District, Hendry Regional Medical Center, Walmart and a wide variety of small businesses and banking institutions. We have several exciting large projects on the horizon, including the expansion of Airglades International Airport (AIA). AIA’s location in our rural community and its proximity to U.S. 27 make it an ideal spot for an international perishable cargo hub. With spaces also available in the City of Clewiston’s Industrial Park, we are eager for the expansion that has historically shown to be moving inland in South Florida. Here in Clewiston we consider ourselves “out in the middle of EVERYWHERE.” We have many of the amenities of the larger cities but maintain the rural, small-town feel we have come to love.

The heart of our community is Lake Okeechobee. “Lake O,” as the locals call it, has fostered the careers of several bass fishing legends. Scott Martin, a Clewiston native, was awarded the 2015 FLW Angler of the Year award and was chosen to lead the USA Bass team



Courtesy Photo/U.S. Sugar

**The Sugar Express is a historic tourist train attraction operated by U.S. Sugar, which is the only sugarcane farming company in the continental United State that transports all of its cane to a sugar factory by railroad. You can learn more about Engine No. 148 at [sugarexpress.com](http://sugarexpress.com).**

competing in South Africa in 2017. Once you get out on Lake O, you’ll be hooked!

The services and amenities that you will find here in Clewiston are sure to meet all of your needs. Start your day with a morning walk on the Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail (LOST). The trail sits atop the Herbert Hoover Dike surrounding the lake and built for flood protection. For this reason, the trail offers a grand vantage point to view everything from the scenic lake to agricultural landscapes. From there, swing on in to the Chamber of Commerce, where we can direct you to a number of activities including airboat tours, fishing expeditions, swamp buggy rides or farm tours. If you are looking for an educational treat, visit the Clewiston Museum or the Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. Looking to pamper yourself, we have a variety of local day and medical spa options. Dining here in Clewiston — well, that’s a tough choice. Breakfast, lunch or dinner, we’ve got you covered with a large variety of choices. We even have a local hangout or two for those night owls!

Whether you are relocating, starting a new business or vacationing, Clewiston is sure to be just the right fit for you! We here at the Clewiston Chamber of Commerce would love to see you stop in.





By Diane E. Fidanza  
Executive director,  
LaBelle Chamber of Commerce

LaBelle ... Huge, live oak trees line the streets of this quiet, graceful little town which is nestled alongside the Caloosahatchee River in Hendry County. This is quintessential small-town Florida, where the pace is slower, the pleasures are simpler, and the surrounding nature entices you to explore its natural beauty.

For many years the Greater LaBelle Chamber of Commerce has proudly represented the businesses of LaBelle. The chamber was founded back in 1963, 48 years ago. Back then the goal of the original chamber was to support and promote the business community of LaBelle. The businesses of LaBelle have changed a great deal over the past 48 years, but the LaBelle Chamber of today proudly maintains the founder's original goals – supporting and promoting LaBelle's business community. Technology has certainly changed over the years, and the chamber helps its membership by listing each of their 250+ members on the chamber's website. On the website not only is the member's information listed, but if they have a website of their own their listing is linked to it. To assist their members even further, the chamber "gets the word out" on their membership's upcoming events, or business specials, on their very active Facebook page. Both venues are excellent resources for locating information on LaBelle businesses.

The chamber membership covers all types of businesses. The LaBelle Heritage Museum keeps alive our history, while the Firehouse Community Theatre has entertained us for over 28 seasons. Local, family-owned shops like Harold Curtis Honey House, K & M Drugs, Me & My Girls Antiques,

# Our Membership is LaBelle

## The Greater LaBelle Chamber of Commerce

Legacy Printing, White's Furniture & Appliances, all line our streets. Two Peas Café, Short Cakes, The Forrey Grill, The Quart House Restaurant, The Big V Restaurant, Bridge Street Coffee & Tea Café, The LaBelle Brewing Company, and Sal Cal's Pizza are all known for their local cuisine.

LaBelle, "The Beautiful", offers spectacular nature trails. The Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest is a 32,270 acre facility approx 20 minutes south of LaBelle which features Hiking, Horse Trails, Picnic Areas, and the 15,400 acres slough marsh, for which the State Forest is named, is great for bird watching. Wildlife viewing opportunities are abundant, and the State Forest is part of the Great Florida Birding Trail. The slough is one of the few places in south Florida where the historic, natural landscape can be observed.

You won't want to miss our Swamp Cabbage Festival the last full weekend of February. Be sure to arrive early on opening day so you can enjoy the parade. At the festival, enjoy all the treats created from the swamp cabbage plant while you watch the LaBelle Rotary's Armadillo Races. Another great attraction during the weekend is the LaBelle Rodeo. Tuesday night leading up to the weekend you can enjoy the LaBelle Chamber's "Night on the Town," where we invite our membership to set up booths on Fort Thompson Avenue to promote and introduce their business to the public. Music and local treats are part of the fun, so come one and all!

Not to be forgotten, LaBelle has always been, and continues to be, the fruit and vegetable basket for the country. This is where most of the country's citrus and "row crops", such as watermelons, tomatoes, and bell peppers, are grown.

Rich bountiful land ... a lazy, winding river ... natural beauty ... friendly people. Whether "born and raised here" or "transplanted," LaBelle is the place we call "HOME."

# *As vaccination rates increase,* **COVID-19 cases decline**

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, health officials in Hendry County have worked to keep Hendry County residents safe.

The Florida Department of Health advises vaccination is the most effective way to reduce the risk of serious illness and death from COVID-19.

Vaccinations are free and widely available through most pharmacies and through the county health departments. To find a vaccination location near you, go online to [floridahealthcovid19.gov/vaccines/vaccine-locator/](https://floridahealthcovid19.gov/vaccines/vaccine-locator/)

As of the Dec. 3, 2021 report from the Florida Department of Health, 69% of Floridians over the age of 5 have been vaccinated.

Florida vaccination rates by age group are:

- 5-11: 9%;
- 12-19: 57%;
- 20-29: 58%;
- 30-39: 67%;
- 40-49: 75%;
- 50-59: 80%;
- 60-64: 87%;
- 65 and older: 89%.

As of Dec. 3, 2021, 55% of Hendry County residents over the age of 5 were vaccinated. As of that same date, Hendry County's new positivity rate had dropped to 1.1%. Since the start of the pandemic, the virus had claimed the lives of 61,701 Floridians.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, nationwide 75.2% of those over age 5 had been vaccinated with at least one dose, as of Dec. 3, 2021.

According to FDOH: If you've been fully vaccinated:

- You can resume activities that you did prior to the pandemic.
- To reduce the risk of being infected with the new variants and possibly spreading a variant to others, wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area of substantial or high transmission.
- You might choose to wear a mask regardless of the level of transmission if you have a weakened immune system or if, because of your age or an underlying medical condition, you are at increased risk for severe disease, or if a member of your household has a weakened immune system, is at increased risk for severe disease, or

is unvaccinated.

- You should still get tested if you've had close contact with someone who has COVID-19 or if you have symptoms of COVID-19.

- If you've had close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you should get tested 5-7 days after your exposure, even if you don't have symptoms. You should also wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until your test result is negative.

- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should get tested and stay home and away from others.

- If your test result is positive, isolate at home for 10 days.

- You will still need to follow guidance at your workplace and local businesses.

Top things to know about variants:

- New variants of the virus are expected to occur. Taking measures to reduce the spread of infection, including getting a COVID-19 vaccine, are the best ways to slow the emergence of new variants.

- Vaccines reduce your risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.

- COVID-19 booster doses are recommended for individuals who are 18 years or older.

- Everyone – vaccinated and unvaccinated – should continue to follow the basic health and safety practices such as: thorough and frequent hand washing, regularly sanitizing high contact surfaces (such as kitchen counters and door knobs), staying home if you are sick, eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly and getting enough sleep.

- Those who have not been vaccinated should take special care to wear masks in places where you cannot maintain at least 6 feet of social distance from others who are not members of your immediate household.

- Consult your doctor about any special concerns regarding your own health.

The Hendry County Health Department has offices at 1140 Pratt Boulevard in LaBelle and 1100 S Olympia St. in Clewiston. By phone, contact the LaBelle office at 863-674-4041 or the Clewiston office at 863-983-1408.



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**To Register or For More Information**

Give us a call at 863-675-6007  
Or Email Us At  
olivia@hendryedc.com

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## Clewiston City Commission



**Kristine Petersen**  
Mayor



**Greg Thompson**  
Vice Mayor



**Mali Gardner**  
Commissioner



**Hillary Hyslope**  
Commissioner



**James Pittman**  
Commissioner

The elected officials who serve as the Clewiston City Commission are a dedicated group of people with great pride for their community. The Mayor, Vice Mayor and City Commissioners are the governing body of the City. They set policies and rules by which the City is operated, including establishing goals and targeting issues as well as setting the tax rates.

Regular Commission meetings are held on the third Monday of each month, starting at 5 p.m. in the city hall commission chambers, 115 West Ventura Avenue. Special meetings may be held at the call of the Mayor or by a majority of the Commission.

If you have an issue you wish to discuss at a city commission meeting, submit a written request to be included on the next commission meeting's agenda. Direct your request to City Clerk Kathy Combass at [Kathy.Combass@clewiston-fl.gov](mailto:Kathy.Combass@clewiston-fl.gov) or telephone 863-983-1484.

## LaBelle City Commission



From Left to Right: Commissioner Thomas A. Smith, Commissioner Bobbie Spratt, Mayor Julie Wilkins, Commissioner Jackie Ratica, Commissioner Daniel Akin.

# Hendry County Board of County Commissioners



**Emma Byrd**  
Vice Chairwoman  
District 1



**Darrell Harris**  
District 2



**Mitchell Wills**  
Chairman  
District 3



**Ramon Iglesias**  
District 4



**Karson Turner**  
District 5

## **CONTACTING THE HENDRY COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

If you need assistance or are unsure of which Hendry County department you wish to reach, please call 863-675-5220 to talk to a live person. If you would like to reach the County via email, please contact [welcome@hendryfla.net](mailto:welcome@hendryfla.net)

**CLERK OF COURT**

LaBelle  
863-675-5217  
Clewiston  
863-983-1586

**TAX COLLECTOR**

LaBelle  
863-675-5280  
Clewiston  
863-983-1593

**PROPERTY APPRAISER**

LaBelle  
863-675-5270  
Clewiston  
863-983-1591

**ELECTIONS SUPERVISOR**

LaBelle  
863-675-5230  
Clewiston  
863-983-1592

**SHERIFF**

LaBelle  
863-674-5600  
Clewiston  
863-805-5000

**STATE ATTORNEY**

863-674-4034

**PUBLIC DEFENDER**

863-675-5263

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

863-675-5220

**OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET**

863-675-5329

**COUNTY FACILITIES**

863-675-5260

**BUILDING CODE ENFORCEMENT**

863-675-5245

**COUNTY PROBATION**

863-675-5340

**COUNTY ENGINEER**

863-675-5222

**COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE**

863-674-4092

**COUNTY ATTORNEY**

863-675-5295

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

863-674-5400

**EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

863-674-5412

**G.I.S.**

863-612-4725

**GRANTS & SPECIAL PROJECTS**

863-675-5264

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

863-675-5242

**HUMAN RESOURCES**

863-675-5352

**PLANNING & ZONING**

863-675-5240

**PORT LABELLE UTILITIES**

863-675-5376

**RECREATION**

863-675-5347

**HOUSING PROGRAM**

863-675-5297

**SOCIAL SERVICES**

863-675-5297

**SPECIAL DISTRICTS (RECYCLING)**

863-675-5252

**VETERANS SERVICES**

863-675-5250

**HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

863-674-4041

**LIBRARY SYSTEMS**

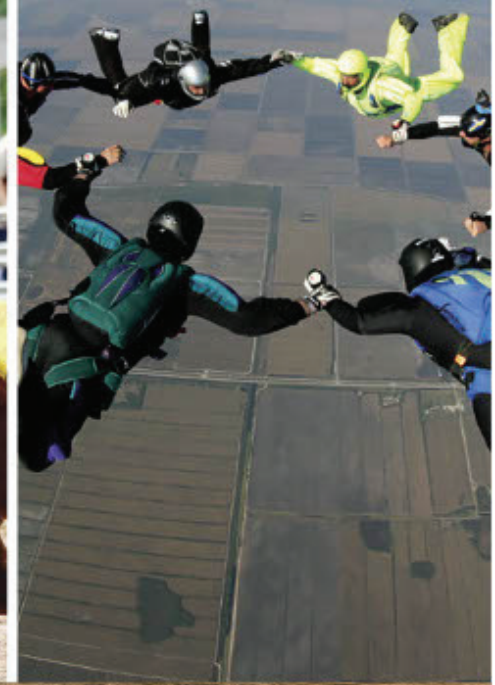
863-902-3322

**AIRPORTS - LABELLE & AIRGLADES**

863-675-1568

**PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER**

863-675-5304



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[/DiscoverHendry](https://www.instagram.com/DiscoverHendry)



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