

# Editorial Opinion

## Naples Daily News

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### Naples Winter Wine Festival

## One way or another, event benefits us all

The buzz around the Naples Winter Wine Festival gets heady in the coming days, leading into a weekend of 16 lavish dinners at local mansions and a private auction of about 65 fanciful bidding lots Saturday at The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort.

Considered an event for the elite that was of little concern to the masses in its early years, the trustees and staff of the sponsoring Naples Children & Education Foundation (NCEF) have positioned the festival into one that makes a difference to just about everyone in Collier County.

Start with the numbers: Entering its 16th year, the event has raised more than \$135 million, including more than \$12 million a year ago. NCEF staff says it has helped 200,000 children who either reside in Collier County or who did at the time. About 50 nonprofits compete for grant awards each year, from small startups to major charities such as the Boys & Girls Club of Collier County, which serves 3,000 children and teens, age 6 to 18, in clubs and after-school programs.

### Making the grade

The event that started in 2000 is making a difference for anyone who has children in Collier County public schools, works for the district or pays taxes to it.

For example, 2016 event co-chairman Jim Dixon says the effects show up in long-term improvement in graduation rates. According to a January memo to Collier School Board members from Superintendent Kamela Patton, Collier's graduation rate in 2015 hit a 12-year high at 84.3 percent, a 16.7 percent improvement since 2003-04.

That absolutely comes from the hard work of preschool and K-12 district educators, but we note that wine festival grants go to various after-school and tutoring programs that no doubt have played a role.

During this year's event, there is a special focus on early childhood learning, programs which also have benefited from NCEF grants in prior years.

The focus is a result of a successful initiative in Immokalee that can be expanded into Golden Gate and East Naples, according to Maria Jimenez-Lara, CEO of NCEF.

"We've seen children start school ready to learn in neighborhoods and areas where five or 10 years ago people would have said that's not possible," she said.

A prior initiative of the wine festival focused on creating a mobile clinic that goes to schools, conducts eye exams and provides two pair of glasses to schoolchildren — one pair for home and one that stays at school. When children couldn't see properly, it was holding them back from learning, NCEF staff and district educators determined.

Another prior initiative was hunger in a county where half of the children are on free or reduced-price lunch programs, Jimenez-Lara says. It's easy to understand why a hungry child may lack focus and nutrition to properly learn.

For taxpayers, that all translates into less of a burden for remedial programs if children are put in position to succeed in the classroom, thanks in part to NCEF.

"Studies equate early learning with higher earning power, decreased crime and less reliance on public social services," NCEF noted in a statement. That's certainly another benefit the event brings to any local or federal taxpayer in Collier County.

### Within reach

A few hundred of the wealthiest, many from other areas of the country, attend the exquisite dinners and auction in Naples.

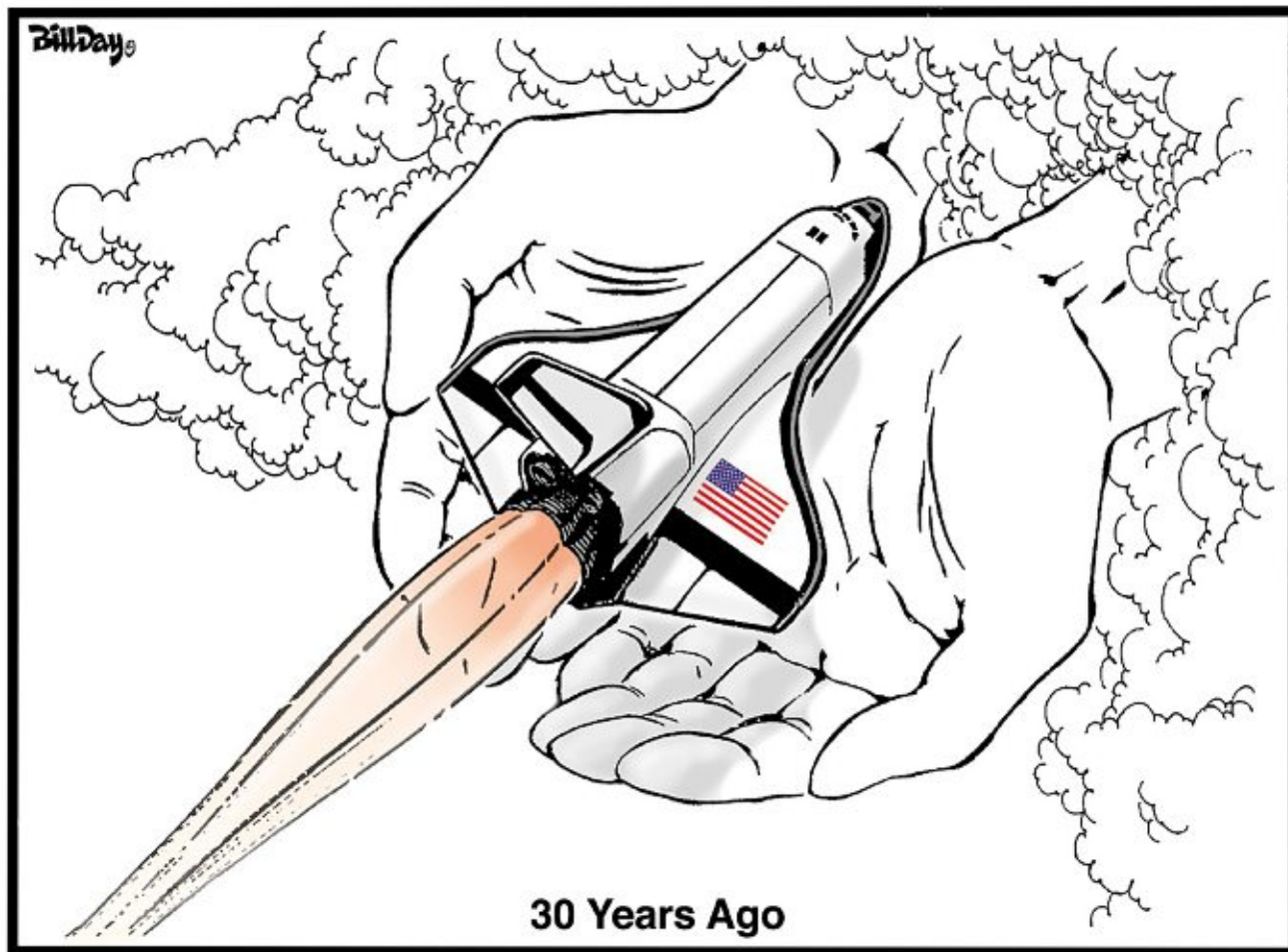
Auction lots are financially way out of reach for most, such as this year's Rolls-Royce Dawn; the winning bidder gets the first of that model in the world.

For the vast majority who can't afford to attend, event co-chairman Tom Moran points to the online auction, an innovation now in its second year.

Continuing until 11 a.m. Sunday, anyone with Web access to Napleswinefestival.com can take part by online bidding on scaled-down versions of the high-priced auction lots up for bid Saturday at the Ritz.

There are, for example, wine-tasting trips to Barolo, Italy, and other destinations; 18-karat gold chandelier earrings; a Naples sunset wine dinner cruise for eight; a private, four-course dinner for 20 fountainside at Waterside Shops, and much more.

So a toast to NCEF and the 2016 Naples Winter Wine Festival participants, staff, volunteers and online bidders. Let's raise a glass to an event that benefits us all.



## LETTERS

David Goldstein, *Naples*  
President, Collier County ACLU

### Weapon conversion

Robert Bloch's recent letter about assault rifles in general and the AR-15 in particular is disingenuous to say the least. Although the AR-15 as sold is a semi-automatic weapon, converting it to fully automatic operation is relatively trivial.

If you Google "AR-15 conversion to automatic" you will get more than a million responses, including several how-to videos and many conversion kits. In short, anyone who buys an AR-15 can readily convert it into an assault rifle.

In the Supreme Court decision in District of Columbia v. Heller, which interpreted the Second Amendment, the court upheld the right of individuals to bear arms. However, the court also said, "Like most rights, the Second Amendment right is not unlimited. It is not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose ..."

On March 24, the Collier County ACLU and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Greater Naples will hold a forum on what constitutes reasonable gun regulation, which will explore these issues in greater detail.

William N. Butler, *Naples and Frederick, Md.*

### Storm costs

Naples Mayor John Sorey was quoted in the Daily News as saying of post-storm restoration costs, "If there's any money out there, we want more than our share."

Did he really say that, and is that the Naples spirit?

And if wealthy Naples gets more than its share, what communities do you suppose would get less? Say it isn't so, Mr. Mayor.

Ray Eifler, *Bonita Springs*

### Write arms

It's hard to believe but it is true that some people in America believe that our Constitution, as one letter writer stated, contains "the perverse concept that it is an individual's constitutional right to keep and bear arms."

And, with our freedom of the press, H.H. Hermann of Naples wrote that in a letter to the editor.

We need to be aware of people who need to read the Declaration of Independence and the preamble to our Constitution that gave the reasons for all the rights (freedoms) the people retained when they formed our government.

All Americans have the right to protect themselves from anyone who would do harm to them, their family, their beliefs or their country. And, should it ever come to pass that

### Letter of the Day

Phyllis Alden, *Naples*

### Contributing to corruption

I wonder how any U.S. citizen could argue against full disclosure of campaign donations by every person whether contributions are made personally or through another entity.

When a contributor is undisclosed, that money is being paid "under the table." Of course there is expectation by the contributor of return on the dollar. Undisclosed contributions contribute to corruption.

their country would do harm to its citizens, they retained the right to protect themselves.

Remember, the first thing Adolf Hitler did was take away the guns of all the people; and the Japanese believed they should achieve their political aims without invading America for the expressed reason that there were more guns in the possession of the American people than people.

Guns don't kill people — people kill people. I believe our Constitution protects us from those who would reject our Constitution because of their lack of knowledge of what our Declaration of Independence and Constitution say and the reasons behind those documents.

Allen Hergenbahn, *Bonita Springs*

### Marina district

Nearby boating opportunities attracted my wife, me and others to Bonita Springs.

For 11 years, I have owned a Coconut Shores condo. There was a buzz of excitement when WCI's original Plan A was announced: Building a marina with all the amenities, wet slips, boat storage, a restaurant, casual dining and waterfront bar with great views of the Gulf on old Weeks Fishing Camp property.

Community leaders of Bonita Springs gave full support to WCI's Plan A.

It was great for people of Estero and Bonita Springs.

Bonita Mayor Ben Nelson said it would enhance and protect the public use of and access to the marina and waterfront of Estero Bay.

Bonita quickly adopted a change of its comprehensive plan to create a new marina zoning area.

The Colony's new towers near the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point are causing serious concerns about safety of congested traffic on Coconut Road. Now WCI's amended Plan B is four 20-story-high towers with only a kayak launching ramp.

If Bonita Springs approves the

amended Plan B, four 20-story-high towers, traffic worsens. The towers will accommodate 700 more people driving along a dead-end road.

WCI will get the big money it really wanted. The public loses once again.

Maria Mercer, *Naples*

### Learning a language

Reading the letter from Clifford Landers, I agree with his viewpoint. I came to this beautiful country 50 years ago.

I had to learn English not only to survive, but to show respect to the American people; this country opens arms to everyone, one of the best countries in the world, with the most compassionate people I will ever know.

Why is it that Americans had to learn other languages instead of the immigrants learning the English idiom? It is an old saying that when you go to Rome, you speak as Romans do.

You don't see in Sears, Kmart or J.C. Penney stores the signs in Chinese, Arabic or other languages, but Spanish ... I wonder.

I learned the language reading, asking questions. I taught myself; no one did it for me. It is called respect. I have been able to get good jobs and practically survive. I go sometimes to some places to shop, ask questions and the answer is "no hablo Ingles" ("don't speak English"). My question is why? I was able to learn and they can't?

How did they get those jobs? There are free Spanish classes after hours in high schools. Many people go after work to these classes.

I was a nanny. The position required speaking English, plus a probe of legal documents. I had all that and I was able to work even if I was a legal American citizen.

They don't realize how crucial it is to learn the language — if you are a care provider or baby sitter, a clerk who can help the customer, or in case of emergency you will be able to explain in plain English the nature of the emergency.

Remember if I can do it, you too can do it!

Fred Tobias, *Naples*

### Random thoughts

■ If Wall Street had a lottery, it would be called Sourball!

■ Do you think Wayne LaPierre's favorite drink is gun and tonic?

■ Why diet? If you want to drop pounds, go to England.

■ In February, every GOP candidate but one will Cryowa.

■ A golf friend of mine is in sand traps so often they call him Lawrence of Arabia.

■ Is there any truth to the rumor there's going to be a Broadway musical about Donald Trump called "Fiddler of the Truth"?