



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF COLLIER COUNTY**

VOTER

February 2006

Volume 31 Issue 5

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 20

Lively League...10:30 am

Lifting the Veil or How to Take the Daze out of our Lobby Days

We did it! Yes, you and I and all those other people who thought that the PATRIOT Act had gone too far and needed to be reined in. We did it by lobbying. Not just with paid lobbyists but due to grassroots lobbying. The internet has brought a whole new level to grassroots lobbying—it is easier and many more people can be energized. The tools may be modernized but it still gets down to letting elected officials know what is important to their constituents. In addition to honing our lobbying skills, learn more about this year's legislative priorities at the State and National level.

General Meeting...12:30 pm

"Is the water safe for swimming? Drinking? Are the fish safe to eat?"

The Estuaries Report Card for Southwest Florida will give us the answers to these questions. This region's water quality and the state of the Southwest Florida estuaries and their connection with land use and growth are a vital concern to all of us. Jennifer Hecker, Natural Resources Policy Manager for the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, will give us a presentation on the study that was recently completed on this region's water quality.

Where: Norris Center, 8th St. Naples, opposite City Hall. When: February 20, 2006

Lively League... 10:30 a.m. ... Lunch 12 Noon... General Meeting 12:30 p.m.

Lunch cost is \$12.00. Reservation deadline is Noon, Friday, February 17. Call the League at 263-4656

Reservations must be honored or cancelled before the deadline.

Government 101---Short Course

We don't do it like they do it UP NORTH in government either. For all of us that thought that we lived in Naples only to discover that we don't, for those of us that considered ourselves as independents and missed out on an entire voting cycle, for those of us who were surprised when we voted for the tax collector or the property appraiser or the supervisor of elections and didn't have a clue what the Clerk of Courts did, there is a chance to learn the Collier County/Florida way of government. Join Chris Straton for one hour on Friday, February 17, 2006 at noon at Veteran's Park.

President's Message

Our League has been so very active with Legislative Delegation, Candidates Forum, Equal Rights Amendment and Metropolitan Planning Organization Long Range Transportation Planning presentations. A big thank you to Jen Walker for all the publicity she has generated for our endeavors. In addition to several Letters to the Editor, she arranged a Guest Commentary on Reapportionment also. I do hope you have been as delighted as I have been with the great coverage we have received.

During the past eight months your League Board has spent many hours discussing and revising the Nonpartisan Policy of our League. The result is contained on pages 6-7 of this Voter. I want you to understand the change is to create a more active board without changing the public perception of or respect for our League. Under the past policy all board members had all of the restrictions placed on the President and the Voter Service Director in the current policy. Our community has grown so much that very few people are aware of who is on our board.

Now it is time to get ready to lobby our legislators during the March 5 to May 5, 2006 legislative session. Please do respond to requests to contact our legislators. We do make such a great difference for good government. The Florida Legislative Seminar will take place on March 19 through 21, 2006. Please contact me if you would like to attend.

I know I express the sincere regret we all feel for Alda Pierce, our International Relations Chair, on the loss of her husband, Dick, on January 10, 2006.

Janet Smith, our Hospitality Chair, is moving to Massachusetts to live near her family in March. We will miss her and need help with hospitality and the telephone tree for March and April. Please contact me if you would be willing to help.

I look forward to seeing you at the February meeting to learn more about How to Lobby at ***Lively League*** and learning about the natural resources in our area with an explanation of the Estuaries Report Card from the Conservancy.

Sheilah Crowley

LWVCC Board Members

President	Sheilah Crowley
1 st Vice President – Administration & Publicity	Jennifer Walker
2 nd Vice President – Membership	Sandy Parker
Secretary	Nancy Wolfe
Treasurer	Marjorie Joder
Hospitality	Janet Smith
Voters Service	Sandra Brown
Natural Resources	Nicole Ryan
Justice	Dr. Bernice Schmelz
Education	Dr. Kathleen Ryan
Government	Chris Straton
International Relations	Alda Pierce
Work Force Housing	Co Chairs:
	Kathleen Slebodnik
	Chris Straton

LWVCC Off Board Members

Social Policy	Ann Campbell
Historian	Barbara Elliott

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome, New Members! A warm welcome is extended to the new members who joined our League since the last Voter was published:

Membership Drive: In less than 12 months, Collier County voters will go to the polls to elect a U.S. Senator, two U.S. Congressmen, a Governor and his cabinet, 5 representatives to the Florida legislature, 2 county commissioners and 3 school board members. There will most likely be constitutional amendments on the ballot as well.

As a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, the League of Women Voters plays an important role at election time, sponsoring candidate forums, registering citizens to vote, and manning polling places. Come the fall, we're going to have a lot of work to do!

Help us hit the ground running by forwarding names and contact information for prospective members to Sandy Parker, Membership Chair. Our goal is to welcome 30 new members by March 31st!

Glenda Armstrong

Joyce Evans

Sally Lam

Lillian Lopes

Carol Moseman

Nancy White

Information Sessions for New and Prospective Members: Our next get-together will be on Monday, February 13th, from 10-11:30a.m. If you or someone you know might be interested, please contact Sandy Parker, Membership Chair.

Corrections to the Membership Roster: Please update your Roster for the following:

Name change: from Alda Rowe-Pierce to Alda Pierce

New email addresses:

Bartlett	Barbara
Bedell	Elinor
Hansen	Renee
Norbom	Ellen
Pierce	Alda
Warshauer	Gladys

Sandy Parker, Membership Chair

LEAGUE TAKES AIM AT PARTISAN REDISTRICTING

Washington, DC – January 12, 2006 As a part of its Democracy Agenda, the League of Women Voters has called on the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the partisan gerrymander imposed on the citizens of Texas in 2003.

In an amicus curiae, or “friend of the court” brief the League of Women Voters of the United States and the League of Women Voters of Texas argue that the Texas legislature’s mid-census redistricting was unconstitutional because it was carried out solely to achieve partisan advantage. The law firm of Wilmer, Cutler, Pickering, Hale and Dorr LLP prepared the brief on behalf of the League. The Court will hear arguments in the case, *LULAC v. Perry*, on March 1, 2006.

“Partisan gerrymandering undermines the basic principles of representative government,” according to Kay J. Maxwell, president of the national League. “The Texas League fought this plan when it was presented, and we are proud to join with them in asking the Court to overturn it. Partisan gerrymandering subverts the democratic system because it allows politicians to choose their voters, rather than vice versa. This turns representative government upside-down,” Maxwell said.

The Texas mid-census redistricting case involves the threshold decision of whether to redistrict *at all* and not just a decision about how to draw the lines in a redistricting plan. While acknowledging that redistricting policy necessarily has an effect on election outcomes, the League in its brief urges the Court to decide that “there is a stark difference in kind between, on the one hand, relying on neutral considerations that incidentally affect partisan outcomes and, on the other, adopting exclusively partisan criteria for which specific partisan outcomes are the *goal*.”

By filing this brief the League of Women Voters continues its long history of fighting against attacks on the basic constitutional right to fair and equal representation guaranteed to all citizens by the Constitution. Leagues have worked vigorously across the country to secure representative redistricting plans in their states after each census and are seeking reforms to assure that the redistricting process is nonpartisan, equitable and open. These are core rights for citizens of a free and democratic nation.

The League’s Democracy Agenda is an advocacy and public education program to strengthen and renew the basic tenets of American democracy. This effort seeks to protect our electoral processes through election reform and campaign finance reform, advance our representative government through nonpartisan redistricting, and preserve our constitutional rights by safeguarding civil liberties.

The brief is available on the League’s Web site www.lwv.org.

VOTER SERVICE

Our Naples City Council Candidates Forum was held on January 19. My thanks to all the members who assisted at this forum as greeters, time keepers, question checkers and other important roles.

Know Your County Government, a teen citizenship program under the leadership of LWVCC, CCPS Social Studies Departments and Collier County Extension/4-H Youth Development will be February 23 through March 14. The program for 35 high school students exposes them to the purpose and function of county government, how it operates and what career opportunities it offers. Their on-site visits include the Health Department, Sheriff’s Department, Animal Control, Tax Collector, Supervisor of Elections, a water treatment plant, the county landfill to name a few. The students also have the opportunity to interact with the constitutional officers, county commissioners, county manager and a school board member to list a few.

Sandra Brown, Voter Service Chair

INSIDE THE BELTWAY

For more information on these League activities, go to www.lwv.org and click on news events.

Opposed the Reauthorization of the USA PATRIOT Act

The League of Women Voters opposes the conference report on the reauthorization of the USA PATRIOT Act. While the House of Representatives passed the conference report on December 14, the Senate failed to follow suit. Several days later, a Senate vote to stop a threatened filibuster failed, 53-47, falling short of the 60 votes needed. We must stop the reauthorization in the Senate.

Opposed Torture; Support the McCain Amendment

Earlier this month, the League issued an [Action Alert](#) urging members of Congress to support the amendment opposing torture, sponsored by Senator John McCain (R AZ), in the Department of Defense Appropriations bill.

President Maxwell Speaks at Presidential Public Financing Conference

At a conference on Capitol Hill sponsored by the Campaign Legal Center and Democracy 21, LWVUS President Kay J. Maxwell spoke on a panel about "The Issue of Presidential Public Financing: Its Goals, History, Current Status and Problems."

Bill of Rights Day

December 15 was Bill of Rights Day. The LWVUS put out a press release urging the protection of civil liberties in honor of this day.

HOMELAND SECURITY IN COLLIER COUNTY

The study committee met with Dr. Judith Kolva, Assistant Professor at International College to review the activities of her interdisciplinary students' project on Homeland Security in Southwest Florida. While they focused only on terrorism, we are looking forward to reading their case study when it is available.

In the meantime, a meeting with Dan Summers, Emergency Operations Director, is scheduled for January 23, 2006 at 8:30 am. The purpose is to gain insight into the County's hurricane planning---one aspect of homeland security. Anyone wishing to participate in this League project should contact Ann Campbell, Bernice Schmelz or Chris Straton.

OUR LEAGUE IN ACTION

January 12 – Sheilah Crowley presented testimony to the Metropolitan Planning Organization on the Long Range Transportation Plan on our position for energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation systems (see page 8).

January 17 – Sue Bookbinder, Sandy Parker and Chris Straton met with Representative Mike Davis (District 101) to encourage him to sponsor the Equal Rights Amendment in the upcoming Legislative Session. Also helping develop the presentation were Sally Lam, Cecile Rivel and Nancy White. LWVCC told Rep. Davis: "We believe that only a constitutional amendment can guarantee that all constitutional rights are held equally by all citizens regardless of gender, just as the 14th Amendment was necessary to ensure equal protection regardless of race.

January 18– Chris Straton and Sheilah Crowley met with Representative Mike Davis for the 2006 Legislative interview, asking questions from the LWV of Florida to help with lobbying in the coming legislative session.

January 19 – LWVCC hosted a Forum for candidates for the Naples City Council. Sandra Brown organized the forum, Kathleen Slebodnik moderated, and many members assisted that evening.

LWVCC NON PARTISAN POLICY

Preamble

The purpose of the League of Women Voters is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government. The LWV is nonpartisan in that it does not support or oppose any political party or candidate; it is political in that it takes positions on selected governmental issues after member study and agreement.

The League recognizes the role of the political parties in our form of government and believes that participation in the activities of the political parties is an essential ingredient of citizen responsibility. While the League urges its members to be politically active, certain constraints are necessary in order to maintain the nonpartisanship of the organization. The Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Collier County has established the following guidelines.

General Policies

1. All statements made in the name of the League shall be cleared through the President or the President's designated representative(s).
2. League members (non-Board) are encouraged to run for office and participate actively in the party of their choice.
3. Discussion of candidates shall be avoided at all League meetings except in connection with Voter Service discussion of all candidates.
4. Other than invited speakers, no one may distribute materials at a League meeting without prior approval of the President. Campaigning politicians or their representatives cannot campaign or distribute campaign literature in League meetings.
5. Only petitions approved by the Board may be circulated at League meetings.
6. Once League (local, state or national) takes a position on an issue, members may not identify themselves as League members when publicly expressing an opinion that is in opposition to a League position.
7. Members representing the League in the community should be sensitive to their responsibilities. When acting in the public as League representatives, members must not allow partisanship to be discernable. These members should be fully aware of League positions.
8. Members may serve on governmental committees at their own discretion. If the appointment is League-related, the appointee should be fully aware of the League positions as they relate to the committee's responsibilities.
9. Members in the leadership roles at committee and other public meetings have the responsibility to ensure the nonpartisanship of the meeting and its environment.
10. The membership directory shall not be used by members for other than League business.
11. To avoid misunderstanding, if a situation is not clearly defined and regulated under this policy, a League member shall seek Board advice.

Board Members

1. The Board has the responsibility of maintaining the fact of the nonpartisanship of the organization.
2. If a Board member plans to engage in political activity, that member must seek a Board decision as to whether the activity would affect the community's perception of the League's nonpartisanship.

cont.

Nonpartisan Policy, cont.

3. The President and Voter Service Director may not take an active, visible role in a campaign for a political candidate or for a non-League issue.
4. A Board member shall resign from the Board before publicly declaring candidacy for elective office.
5. During his/her term of office, a Board member **MUST NOT** give/sponsor candidate coffees or other fundraising parties or events; permit his/her name to appear in any media endorsement ad; hand out or display campaign literature; act as campaign manager or treasurer for a candidate; or hold office in a political party.
6. A Board Member other than the President and Voter Service Director may make financial contributions to political parties and candidates in national (other than the U.S. House of Representatives) and statewide elections.
7. A Board member **MAY**:
 - a. Attend political meetings, but keep a low profile.
 - b. Accept appointments to Advisory Boards.
 - c. Participate or hold office in other community organizations, as long as those organizations do not actively promote candidates. It must be clarified whether she/he is serving as an individual or as a representative of the League. If participating as a League representative, she/he will be expected to adhere to established LWV positions, if applicable.
 - d. Express publicly through letters to the editor, etc. personal views on non-League issues.
8. The political activities of a spouse or relative of a Board member are to be considered as separate and distinct from the activities of the Board member.

This nonpartisan political policy applies to all elections - partisan and nonpartisan.

Revised and adopted by the LWVCC Board of Directors, January 2, 2006.

GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE MONITORING ACTIONS

The Government Committee has monitored Collier County Board of County Commission meetings, Collier County Planning Commission meetings and the Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting. We wear our large League buttons and observe the meetings. We monitor these meetings to ensure that good government principles are being followed. We brought to the attention of the Planning Commission that there was an error in one of the Public Notices which, if uncorrected, would have resulted in failure to hold a legal meeting.

All indications from elected officials, appointed officials and members of staff are that they are glad to see that the League is involved and participating. If you would like to become a member of the Observer Corps, please contact Chris Straton. You don't need to be there for an entire meeting but it is important that we show up.

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

League members were treated to the opportunity to learn first hand about the transportation plans for Collier County. We learned about the proposed I-75 bypass, a brand new interchange on I-75, and extensions of various roads to address the expansion east of Collier Blvd., to name just a few. Details of the plan can be accessed at <http://collierlrtp.net/> In answer to a question about the relationship between land use and transportation; we learned that there is an effort underway to analyze Collier County at build-out and its transportation needs. We plan to bring the responsible persons to a meeting with the League.

On January 12, 2006 President Crowley presented testimony to the Metropolitan Planning Organization on the Long Range Transportation Plan. Her remarks follow:

"The League members thank you for your public service to the betterment of our community. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony.

The League of Women Voters of Collier County has been a voice for good government in Collier County for 31 years. Our position states, "energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation systems should afford better access to housing and jobs..." We encourage the foresight provided by the plan presented this evening and urge the Collier County Metropolitan Planning Organization to continue to plan for the improved quality of life for our entire county and consider the greater good as opposed to the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) special interest groups. The League supports governmental action that results in meeting the needs of the present without endangering the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

LWVCC Website Redesign Is Underway

In November, LWVCC members Ann Bleakley, Sandy Parker, Jennifer Walker and Trudy Weisberg formed a committee to redesign and update the LWVCC website, which is currently at www.naples.net/presents/lwvcc. Our new website will be well-designed and user-friendly, thanks to templates developed by LWVUS.

At its January meeting, the LWVCC Board approved the committee's proposed website content and the Request for Proposal they developed to solicit bids from four Naples-based firms to implement the new website. After evaluating the bids and interviewing the candidates, the committee will make a recommendation to the Board at its February meeting. The committee's goal is to complete the transition in the spring.

Online Roster: One of the many advantages of the new website is that members will be able to update their contact information (address, phone number, and email address) online through a password-protected portion of the website. Members will also be able to access each other's contact information in this online Roster, in the same way they look up this information in their paper Rosters today. Members who would prefer not to be listed in the online roster should notify Sandy Parker before March 31st.

Stay tuned for updates on the website project in upcoming issues of The Voter!

Sandy Parker, Website Committee Chair

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES TOPIC OF JANUARY SOCIAL POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Don Williams, Ph.D., a retired clinical psychologist and program director for the Mental Health Association of Southwest Florida (MHA), had the rapt attention of the members as he talked about mental health services in Collier County. MHA, begun in Collier in 1957, partners with 22 of the 27 United Way Agencies. MHA is one of two mental health advocacy organizations in the county; the other is the local chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI). While there is some overlap of services, according to Don, the two agencies work well together and have separate missions. MHA's mission is *to advocate for mental wellness through education, prevention and support*; NAMI is a *self-help, support, and advocacy organization of consumers, families and friends of people with severe mental illnesses*. Don says that both agencies advocate for the same legislation, i.e., Medicaid and Medicare reform, and provide outreach services for those with limited income.

When we first contacted Don, we asked him about community response to the hurricane-related mental health problems of our citizens. During the 2004 hurricane season that saw people from other areas seeking shelter in Collier County, MHA had an on-call group of mental health providers including psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers. As of the 2005 season, the Health Department contracted with the David Lawrence Center for services. Don noted that the mental health effects of the hurricanes often come later, after the excitement has died down. He went on to describe the many services of MHA: support groups, free referral to "every agency in Collier", education programs, and counseling programs. Since there are no licensed mental health professionals on staff, MHA cannot provide medical services but can refer clients to physicians for prescriptions and then refer them to NAMI where "stabilization meds" can be provided. Catholic Charities' counseling center also helps with medications for individuals who cannot afford to pay for them.

Don discussed other issues related to mental health including the financial implications of sharing one's residence with a mentally ill individual, the national problem of the mentally ill in jails and prisons and the need for legislation and funding to keep people out of psychiatric institutions AND jail. Mental illness is truly one of our nation's major health problems. MHA says that one in four families is in need of mental health services. To learn about MHA, call (239) 261-5405, E-mail: ccmha@mindspring.com, or see their Web page: ccmha.org.

Ann Campbell, Chair

Editor's note: Our thanks to Kathy Ryan who has volunteered to edit and publish next month's newsletter, the March issue. Kathy was editor and publisher of the LWVCC VOTER in 2005. Submissions for the March issue should be sent directly to Kathy Ryan.

DELINQUENCY PREVENTION AND ENFORCEMENT

On January 9, the Justice Committee was fortunate to have as its speaker Commander Beth Jones of the Collier County Sheriff's Office (CCSO). Commander Jones, head of the new Delinquency Prevention & Enforcement Bureau, provided a comprehensive overview of the Bureau. While she explained the various programs under Enforcement and Prevention, including the Weekend Consequence Program, one-day D.R.I.L.L., S.H.O.C.A.P, and the Truancy/Run-away service, the committee was most interested in the newest focus of the bureau - Services/Mental Health.

Commander Jones advised that the overall goal of Services/Mental Health is "... early identification of 'at risk' youth and family education and intervention." The youth (ages 8-18) are referred by family, school staff or other community agencies and don't have to be involved in the Juvenile Justice System in order to receive intensive services. As part of Services/Mental Health, the Sheriff's office has identified a new assessment tool to be given to all juvenile offenders. The Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT), based upon the Washington State Juvenile Court Assessment, is going to be implemented statewide. According to Jones, "The assessment tools will help identify the risk of recidivism, future criminal behavior factors and identify appropriate treatment based upon High, Moderate or Low risk profiles." Following the assessment, treatment plans will be developed which direct the youth into services provided by the CCSO Delinquency Prevention and Enforcement Bureau or by community partners. Parent counseling, parent and community education, and follow up services will be important components of the intervention provided. Jones shared that the overall goal of education is to reduce juvenile crime and recidivism.

The committee also learned about Florida native Beth Jones' 16-year career in law enforcement. Given her experience as a parent, as a YRD (Youth Relations Deputy), DARE officer, and, most recently, Commander of D.R.I.L.L., she seems well positioned to head up the new bureau. It was clear that Commander Jones has a commitment to mentoring and guiding youth, and the committee looks forward to monitoring the accomplishments of the new bureau.

Bernice Schmelz, Justice Chair

Dates to Remember

LWVFL 2006 Florida Legislative Seminar, Tallahassee, March 19-21

LWVFL Council at the Hilton Orlando Almonte Springs, May 20-21

LWVUS National Convention in Minneapolis MN, June 9-13

FEBRUARY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Government Committee Program Planning

It is time to develop our government program plan for the 2006/2007 calendar. We will have a government committee meeting on Wednesday, February 15, 2006 at noon at the Silver Spoon restaurant off Golden Gate Parkway and U.S. 41. Bring your ideas for activities that you would like the League of Women Voters of Collier County to engage in for the remainder of this year and next year. Call Chris Straton if you have any questions.

Chris Straton, Government Chair

Justice Committee Meetings

In its continuing effort to learn more about juvenile justice in Collier County, the Justice Committee has invited Lt. Ron Byington to speak to the committee about the work of the Sheriff's Gang Unit. All members are welcome to the meeting.

The meeting will be on **February 13, 2006 at the Naples Branch of the Collier County Library on Central Ave. beginning at 9:00 a.m.** Please contact Bernice Schmelz by February 8 if you plan to attend.

The final committee meeting of the year is scheduled for **March 13, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. at the County Courthouse.** The Honorable Lauren Brodie will discuss youth substance abuse, the status of the new Substance Abuse Coalition and be available to answer general questions about juvenile justice.

Bernice Schmelz, Justice Chair

February Social Policy Meeting will look at Universal Pre-K Program

The road to universal voluntary pre-kindergarten has been a bumpy one since voters passed an amendment to the Florida Constitution. At our February 8 meeting we will learn about implementation of the program at one facility, STEP BY STEP Early Childhood Education & Therapy Center, located in Golden Gate. Our speaker, Executive Director Jean Mekeel, will also tell us about the therapy and early education her agency provides for children with developmental disabilities as well as typically developing children ages birth to five. Please mark your calendars for what promises to be an interesting and informative program. The breakfast meeting is to be held at Crissy's Wild Side Café on Wednesday, February 8, at 8:00 a.m. Breakfast is \$8.50 including tax and tip with a choice of four items including a fruit plate. All members are welcome and guests are invited. Contact Ann Campbell for reservations by Monday, February 6.

Ann Campbell, Social Policy Chair

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Welcome new and returning members

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

LWVCC Board Meeting	Monday, February 6	Noon	River Park Community Center
Social Policy Committee	Wednesday, February 8	8 a.m.	Chrissy's Wild Side, page 11
Justice Committee	Monday, February 13	9 a.m.	Naples Branch Library, page 11
New Member Meeting	Monday, February 13	10 a.m.	Page 3
Government Committee	Wednesday, February 15	Noon	Silver Spoon, page 11
Government 101	Friday, February 17	Noon	Veteran's Park, page 1
Lively League	Monday, February 20	10:30 a.m.	Norris Center, page 1
Monthly General Meeting	Monday, February 20	12:30 p.m.	Norris Center, page 1
LWVCC Board Meeting	Monday, March 6	Noon	River Park Community Center
Monthly General Meeting	Monday, March 20	Noon	Norris Center

The VOTER is published monthly, during the winter season, by the League of Women Voters of Collier County. Editor: Jennifer Walker, Publisher: Alan Walker. Next issue will be March 2006. Please send newsletter items to Kathy Ryan for the March Issue; deadline is February 15.