Jennifer J. Edwards
Supervisor of Elections

Falling Into Our Election Planning

It is all hands on deck as we inch closer to the year 2020 and with Thanksgiving right around the corner, we cannot express enough thanks to our election workers and community partners who are a part of THE BEST Elections Team in the country!

The Training & Outreach Department has been conducting orientations this fall to recruit new election workers. Thank you to everyone who has referred friends and family members to be a part of this process. Finding new dedicated workers is one of our biggest challenges as we approach election cycles.

Our Vote-by-Mail Department has also been keeping busy with an uptick in activities since our office sent a notice to voters advising them that their Vote-by-Mail ballot request had expired. Voting by mail is a rising trend throughout the entire state and we see similar popularity within Collier County. Give our office a call at 239-252-8683 and make your Vote-by-Mail ballot request today! You can also update your address or make any additional changes to your record with one of our dynamic Customer Service Representatives to ensure a smooth voting experience next year!

Catch up with the rest of our office and meet our newest employees in this edition of News & Views!

High School Voter Registration Challenge

Congratulations to Mr. Woodruff and the students of Gulf Coast High School who won this year's High School Voter Registration Challenge! Gulf Coast High School is a returning champion from last year and turned in 269 voter registration and pre-registration forms at the end of their challenge. Of the 12 participating high schools, we collected 1,149 registrations. This year was extremely exciting as we saw an increase in participation by 22% with five schools turning in over 100 voter registrations and pre-registration forms!

Students who participated in this challenge, and who turn 18 on or before March 17, 2020, will have a voice in the next election!
The Rising Trend In Voting By Mail

More than 57,000 voters took advantage of voting by mail in the 2016 General Election, over 60,000 voted by mail in the 2018 General Election and we are expecting to see even more voters take advantage of casting their ballot by mail in 2020!

In order to prepare for next year, the Vote-by-Mail Department has performed some outreach activities including a notice to voters whose Vote-by-Mail ballot requests have expired and we mailed a Notice of Election with an opportunity to request a mail ballot for 2020. Since the start of these activities, we have already received more than 24,000 requests. Needless to say, we have been quite busy the last couple of months!

Don’t forget to make YOUR Vote-by-Mail request today on our website at www.CollierVotes.com and BE election ready for 2020!

Availability In 2020

Election Worker preparations for the 2020 Election Cycle are revving up! If you are a returning election worker, you should have either received our 2020 Election Worker Availability Notice in your email or have been contacted by your Adopt-a-Precinct coordinator to inquire about your status for the upcoming elections. We are requesting availability responses to be into our office no later than November 30 in order to remain eligible to work next year. Thank you to those who have already responded and are ahead of the game!

As we evaluate personnel, we will potentially have some openings for positions in the Call Center, Rovers and during Early Voting so please be sure to include your willingness to step up in a key role when you reply to your availability notice, or contact us at ElectionWorker@CollierCountyFL.gov to express your interest.

We also continue to host new election worker orientations. These sessions are required for anyone interested in serving as an election worker who has not previously attended an orientation or worked at the polls. Orientations are also a great opportunity to help recruit your friends and neighbors to be part of the process and work with you during elections.

To refer a friend, please guide them to our website at www.CollierVotes.com for more information or they can reach out to Trish or Kevin at (239) 252-VOTE (8683). We are looking forward to seeing you again soon and adding another year to your election worker pin!

In 2007, the Florida Legislature led by Gov. Crist required counties to abandon touch screen units and replace them with paper ballots. That means Collier voters had used three types of voting systems in 8 years.

Jumping forward to 2016, Collier led the state with an 87% turnout for the November Presidential Election. With an alarm for voters and election officials about the potential threat to voting systems from foreign adversaries, Florida was able to secure the integrity of the election because of the paper trail (paper ballots).

Paper ballots can also have their challenges. During the November 2018 election, turnout was the highest in our history for a midterm election with 74% of almost 214,000 voters casting a ballot. This was also the first time in Florida’s history that three statewide offices were subject to a recount at the same time. Because of our two-sheet ballot, staff and volunteers had to sort through over 300,000 pieces of paper.

So, in wrapping up our review from the last few newsletters that covered the past 50 years, Collier’s growth has moved our registration from 14,000 to over 200,000; our voters have voted on four different voting systems; and the office has been led by three great Supervisors.

We have grown through hurricanes, recounts and laws that change yearly. I wonder what new challenges and successes we will face in 2020?
**VOTER OUTREACH**

*National Voter Registration Month Wrap-up*

Although National Voter Registration Month is over (September), our office remains busy registering voters and future voters so they are election ready for next year! Voter registration drives are scheduled across Collier County and our staff continues to visit public, private and charter schools to register our future voters throughout the year.

Below are just a few programs we have participated in:

- **National Voter Registration Day**: Joining thousands of other organizations, we celebrated National Voter Registration Day on September 24. Voter registration drives were performed across the county encouraging citizens to be election ready for 2020.

- **Naturalization Ceremonies**: We partner with the Lee County Supervisor of Elections office to attend as many ceremonies as possible celebrating and registering our newly naturalized citizens. Just in September, we received 100 new registered Collier County voters through this program!

- **High School Voter Registration Challenge**: We spent September and October visiting high schools to pre-register and register students to vote. Congratulations to Gulf Coast High School for their second win in a row!

- **Art for Democracy**: We are celebrating the fifth year of our student art contest! A call for entries opened October 1, and we are so excited to see what our students turn in. New this year is a contest for K-8 students to enter an “I Voted” sticker design.

More information about all of our programs and outreach efforts can be found at www.CollierVotes.com. You can also contact our office to schedule a visit at (239) 252-VOTE (8683).

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**CUSTOMER SERVICE**

*Ensuring You Are Election Ready!*

There are three elections next year and your address and party affiliation will play a big role in what you will see on your ballot. Fortunately, you can quickly update both online by visiting the “Register to Vote” area on our website at www.CollierVotes.com.

Unsure what information we have on file? Take a look at the “Check My Voter Status” feature on our website. With just a couple pieces of information (name and date of birth), you can view your voter status online and can even request a registration update from that platform.

As always, the Customer Service Team is here to help with all of your voter registration needs, so feel free to give us a quick call or stop by for a visit. We are happy to discuss the upcoming election dates, order your Vote-by-Mail ballot or anything else to help you BE election ready for 2020!

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**ELECTION SERVICES**

*Community Partnerships*

Throughout October, we have been working with our voting system vendor Elections Systems & Software on our annual preventative maintenance for the DS200 Optical Scanners and ExpressVote equipment. During this maintenance period, we perform upgrades to the firmware and make any necessary updates or replacements to our inventory as necessary so the equipment is ready for another smooth election cycle.

Since the last newsletter, the Election Services Department has also visited each precinct and has sent out facility use agreements to each. We want to thank our network of partners who allow us to use their space for each election during Early Voting and on Election Day. Our community partners are a huge part of how we are able to run successful elections in Collier County. We truly could not do it without them.

Everyone at the Supervisor of Elections office has worked hard this year to BE election ready and we are looking forward to another record-breaking turnout in 2020.
**SPOTLIGHT: NEW STAFF**

**Lauren Ellis, Customer Service Representative**

Lauren grew up in Chester, New Jersey and after spending many vacations visiting her grandparents in beautiful Naples, she finally decided to move here in August of 2018.

She attended Ohio Wesleyan University where she graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in East Asian Studies. She spent the first year after graduation teaching English to elementary and middle school students in Kameoka, Japan as an assistant language teacher through the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program. After returning to the United States, she worked for Canfield Scientific, Inc., a company specializing in medical imaging and imaging systems.

Lauren enjoys spending time with friends, family, and her dog Tanner. She also enjoys reading, baking, listening to music, and playing video games.

**Michael Russell, Training Officer**

Michael was born in Boston and raised in the New York suburbs. A graduate of New York University, Michael worked for thirty years in the management consulting and publishing fields. He moved to Florida four years ago to be near family, and taught high school history for Collier County Public Schools before joining the Elections team.

Michael has five children and one grandchild. He dreams of building a sailboat in his garage – but that would involve emptying out the garage first!

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**IMPORTANT ELECTION DATES**

- Presidential Preference Primary Election Day: March 17, 2020
- General Election Day: November 3, 2020
- Primary Election Day: August 18, 2020
- Visit us on the web: www.CollierVotes.com

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Supervisor of Elections
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