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ENTITLEMENT AND THE LOSS OF CIVILITY THE UNFOUNDED BELIEF THAT YOU ARE ABOVE THE RULES

Inside Hillcrest gets emails. Some are complimentary. Some... not so much. Not surprising, most fall into one category: questions about the legality of board actions.

If it's a bylaw issue, I used to answer those directly. As a Realtor, I have everyone's condo documents. But a few months ago, I returned the hard copies to the buildings. It finally hit me that owners should be reading their own documents. And when it comes to Chapter 718 issues, I now encourage people to look them up themselves. The information is readily available.

Then there are the recurring complaints, like the strong smell of weed. Yes, I understand: you may have a medical card and the legal right to smoke marijuana. But it would be nice if there were at least some effort to minimize the impact on everyone else. The saddest email came from a resident who couldn't let her grandchildren use the balcony because the smoke from the unit below was so thick. That's not a legal issue; that's an entitlement issue. The "I'm special, everyone else be damned" mindset seems to be everywhere these days.

Some ESA animal owners fall into the same category. I polled buildings with lobbies, and only two reported ongoing problems with ESA owners ignoring pet rules which, by law, they are still required to follow. In one building, a first-floor owner deliberately walks his small dog through the lobby, taking the long way around, rather than carrying it out the service entrance, not because he has to, but because he wants to make a point. Or irritate people. Or both.

Building postings say a lot about a community's culture and about the professionalism of its board. Most notices are well written and positive. Which is why it's so alarming when a board posts something

negative where visitors and potential buyers can see it. I've seen notices near elevators announcing a roach infestation. I've seen defamatory postings about unit owners and even fellow board members (one was related to a recall attempt) posted at the front desk and by the elevators.

But the prize for the most offensive posting ever goes to this: a letter, allegedly slipped under a resident's door, describing graphic and disgusting sexual acts involving the building president and the office clerk. The board was notified and chose NOT to remove it. The irony? The letter included the assertion, "I am an educated woman..." Let's just say the writing did not support the claim. Education aside, basic judgment and decency were clearly missing, not only from the writer but also the Board of Directors.

KIDS SAY THE DARNDDEST THINGS

If you remember that the above title was the name of a TV show back in the day with Art Linkletter, than you are probably a grandparent and may find this interesting also.

I like kids better than grown-ups - always have. Even the kid who looked at my picture on my business card and said, "Wow, this was taken a really long time ago, huh?" At least there is no overt malice in their observations. Unfortunately, there is also too much truth to a lot of what they say.

That is why I like to read articles about raising healthy, happy kids. One of my favorite authors is **Reem Raouda**, a leading voice in conscious parenting. If you are a parent, grandparent or involved in a profession like teaching that deals with children, her books are a must read! She is amazing. The world has changed and so have children. Her writings help me with my granddaughter for sure. Plus, kids are way

different than they were when my daughter was her age, so it is once again a learning process for me. **See page 4.**

POLITICIANS SAY THE DARNDDEST THINGS

The first time a Commissioner told me they had to vote yes because "the law requires it," I was stunned. If there is no real choice, why does the issue need a vote? Yet this thinking has quietly become normalized. **Steve Schnieder** addresses it on page 2, and what it reveals is deeply troubling: the steady erosion of integrity in public service, especially when developers are involved.

Hillcrest has already paid the price. Our elected officials voted unanimously to place a rental building directly in the heart of our neighborhood on Hillcrest Drive, despite the fact that the developer already owned appropriate land on Park Road. That decision was not inevitable. It was a choice, and one that permanently alters our community.

Turn to page 14 and the picture gets even darker. Those considering an assisted living facility may be in for an unpleasant shock. ALFs are rapidly joining private medical practices, hospitals, and medical device companies in being swallowed up by large corporations and developers. When care for our most vulnerable neighbors becomes just another commodity to be bought and sold, the discussion is no longer about efficiency or progress. We are talking about a system in serious trouble.

ON A POSITIVE NOTE...

This issue has all kinds of good stuff - a plethora as my Cousin Lonna would say. She loved words and her greatest wish was to come up with a quotable quote, one that would "go viral" in modern lingo. And this was the result: (I swear I am not making this up) "Raging rivers take many strange paths but only God can make a tree". Words to live by.

Go ahead and flip through this issue, page by page and read the articles that catch your eye. From Roy Orbison to Redecorating, from hot dogs to cool cats, from money saving ideas to spending time with friends, and more! Enjoy.



'BUT IT'S THE LAW. OUR HANDS ARE TIED.' – by Steve Schneider

From time to time, members of the Hollywood City Commission will say something like this here after they vote to approve a request by developers, even though residents oppose the request.

"We feel your pain. But the law is the law. So, we are obligated to approve the request from the developer."

This, of course, is true, but incomplete. It's also true that — from time to time — our leaders on the dais vote to change an ordinance or a land use or zoning provision. The City Commission members do this after our high-paid staff prepare the recommendations for the elected leaders to discuss, accept, amend, or reject.

In other words, once the good folk on the dais approve something — it's the law. Their hands are tied.

Now, many different things are possible. For starters, perhaps most, if not all of our City Commissioners favor a change because it means more development and more tax revenue, or they truly believe the proposed change is appropriate.

In the alternative, though, maybe some of the Commission members either oppose the proposed change or want to make amendments to it to make it more acceptable to their constituents. But, and this is a big but. These leaders may realize they're in the minority and don't have the votes to get their way.'

For sure, there are countless other possibilities. However, the bottom line is our leaders sometimes tie their own hands, or, by inaction, fail to amend the decisions of previous City Commission members who essentially tied their hands years before.

This is worth discussing because the Hollywood City Commission held a "time certain" public hearing on May 6, at 2 pm, or as close to 2 pm as possible. A second time certain public hearing on a similar development issue started around 2:30 pm.

At least one question was answered when all of our local leaders voted unanimously to approve both development ordinances on a First Reading. We also got a glimpse into an answer to another question: **Will anyone ask for changes to the proposals to create a fairer balance between the property rights of developers and the property rights of long time homeowners and residents?**

That didn't happen on May 6, although City Commission members and staff discussed whether the City could ask developers in the Regional Activity Center to plant tall trees to create a barrier between long-time single story homes and newly approved four-story structures. The answer appeared to be yes, although, sadly, no further effort seemed forthcoming to establish a more balanced approach between the property rights of long-time residents and homeowners and the property rights of developers.

We also got a look at how the City of Hollywood grapples with communication between staff and residents who more than once have indicated they didn't know about this or that proposed change at City Hall. Elected leaders asked staff to do more outreach before the two development ordinances return for a Second Reading.

2:00 PM TIME CERTAIN ITEM

(Or as soon thereafter as the agenda permits)

PO-2026-010 An Ordinance Of The City Of Hollywood, Florida, **Amending The City's Adopted Comprehensive Plan By Amending The Text Of The Future Land Use Element To Add 4,379 Mid-Rise And High-Rise Residential Units And Reduce 1,000,000 Square Feet Of Commercial Within The City's Transit Oriented Corridor (TOC)/State Road 7 Activity Center; Providing For Transmittal; Providing For Conflicts; Providing For Severability; And Providing For An Effective Date. (25-L-39)**

2:30 PM TIME CERTAIN ITEM

(Or as soon thereafter as the agenda permits)

PO-2026-011 An Ordinance Of The City Of Hollywood, Florida, **Amending The City's Adopted Comprehensive Plan By Amending The Text Of The Future Land Use Element To Add 8,000 Mid-Rise And High-Rise Residential Units And Reduce 200,000 Square Feet of Office Uses Within The City's Regional Activity Center (RAC); Providing For Transmittal; Providing For Conflicts; Providing For Severability; And Providing For An Effective Date. (25-L-50).**

You can review the backup documents for these time certain public hearings by going to: <https://hollywoodfl.legistar.com/calendar.aspx>. Once there, scroll down to the May 6 City Commission meeting, click the Agenda, and scroll down the Agenda until you find these two items, with lots of backup material.

LEAF BLOWERS



IH recently received an email from Kenny Walrond, Hillcrest 18, about the deafening noise from leaf and grass blowers. Honestly, until I read it, I hadn't fully appreciated how bad the problem is. Like most people, I've been affected by the noise and always wondered why the operators weren't wearing ear protection. The writer also had a suggestion. He pointed out that gas-powered blowers are the main culprit and that electric ones are significantly quieter. That jogged my memory about the smell, too. I suppose I've always just tried to escape the noise and fumes as quickly as possible without giving it much thought.

I'm sharing this so building boards can have a real conversation with their landscapers. Some issues aren't just annoyances; they affect quality of life. And those are worth paying attention to.

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RAISING SUCCESSFUL KIDS: THE SKILL MANY PARENTS FORGET

– Condensed from an article by Reem Raouda



Most parents want the same things for their children: good grades, good behavior and the ability to succeed in a challenging world. But research and real life experience point to something far more important. Confidence and resilience grow out of a child feeling emotionally safe enough to be fully themselves.

After studying more than 200 children and through her own experience as a mother, **Reem Raouda** found a consistent pattern. Beneath defiance, withdrawal or behavior problems is often a child who does not feel safe expressing what they feel or need. How safe a child feels with their parents today strongly shapes who they become as adults.

One of the biggest mistakes parents make is rushing children through their feelings. When kids cry, get angry or feel overwhelmed, adults often jump in to fix or quiet the moment. While well meaning, this teaches children to shut down their emotions instead of understanding them. What they need most is a parent who can stay present and calm while the feelings pass, even when it feels uncomfortable.

Another common habit is overriding a child's inner experience. Statements like "you cannot be hungry" or "you are fine" may seem harmless, but they slowly teach children to doubt their own feelings. Over time, this can lead to adults who struggle to trust their own judgment. Simply asking what a child feels or thinks and truly listening helps them learn that their inner world matters.

It is also important to understand the difference between a child who is thriving and one who is merely adapting. Some of the most well behaved children are not the most emotionally secure. They have learned that staying quiet and agreeable keeps relationships stable. In contrast, a child who feels safe enough to express frustration or disagreement is showing real emotional security.

Parents can also create safety by shifting from constant evaluation to simple noticing. Instead of praising or correcting every action, describing what you observe and showing curiosity about feelings builds connection. Children learn they are seen, not judged.

Not every moment needs a response. When parents explain, correct or guide constantly, children lose the space to process their own thoughts and emotions. Sometimes being present without an agenda is the most powerful support.

Finally, emotional safety starts with the parent. Children sense when calm is real and when it is forced. Taking a moment to reflect on your own reactions, especially when something feels triggering, can change the entire interaction. Even one slow breath before responding can make a difference.

Raising successful kids is not about perfect behavior. It is about helping children feel safe enough to know themselves, trust themselves and grow into emotionally healthy adults.

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL – Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young



You, who are on the road, must have a code that you can live by.
And so become yourself because the past is just a goodbye.

Teach your children well, their father's hell did slowly go by,
and feed them on your dreams, the one's they fix, the one's you'll know by.
Don't you ever ask them why, if they told you, you would cry,
so just look at them and sigh and know they love you.

And you, of tender years, can't know the fears that your elders grew by,
and so please help them with your youth, they seek the truth before
they can die.

Teach your parents well, their children's hell will slowly go by,
and feed them on your dreams, the one's they fix, the one's you'll know by.
Don't you ever ask them why, if they told you, you would cry,
so just look at them and sigh and know they love you.

Father and Son speaks to a familiar family moment: a parent trying to protect, and a child needing to figure things out for himself. Both are coming from love, but they can't quite hear each other. The father fears his son will make mistakes, while the son fears he'll never become his own person.

FATHER AND SON - by Cat Stevens

[Chorus: Father]

It's not time to make a change; just relax, take it easy
You're still young, that's your fault, there's so much you have to know
Find a girl, settle down, if you want you can marry
Look at me; I am old, but I'm happy

[Verse 1: Father]

I was once like you are now, and I know that it's not easy
To be calm, when you've found something going on
But take your time, think a lot; why, think of everything you've got
For you will still be here tomorrow, but your dreams may not

[Verse 2: Son]

How can I try to explain? When I do, he turns away again
It's always been the same, same old story
From the moment I could talk, I was ordered to listen
Now there's a way, and I know that I have to go away
I know, I have to go

[Chorus: Father & (Son)]

It's not time to make a change; just relax, take it slowly (Away, away, away)
You're still young, that's your fault, there's so much you have to go through (I know, I have to make this decision)
Find a girl, settle down, if you want you can marry (Alone)
Look at me; I am old, but I'm happy (No)

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MARTY KIAR BROWARD COUNTY PROPERTY APPRAISER



2026 Estimate of Taxable Values

The preliminary 2026 property values are now showing on our website at web.bcpa.net. Florida Statutes require our office to use January 1 as the date of assessment each year. Our office must consider changes in market conditions – up or down – when developing the Just/Market Values. The 2026 Just Values are based on the market data from January 1, 2026 back through January 2, 2025 with January 1, 2026 being the date of assessment. If you purchased your property in 2026, your 2026 purchase price along with comparable market data from 2026 will be used in setting your property's 2027 Just/Market Value.

Our office will mail the 2026 TRIM (proposed tax) Notices to all Broward property owners in mid-August. This notice will show your property's 2026 Just/Market Value, Assessed/Save Our Homes Value, all tax-saving exemptions you are receiving, and the proposed tax rates as set by the various taxing authorities listed on the notice.

Quarterly Tax Payment Installment Plan

While the Property Appraiser's Office does not set or collect taxes, our office receives many calls from residents inquiring about installment tax bills and their recently approved exemptions. The Broward County Tax Collector is responsible for the billing and collecting of property taxes.

For property owners on the 2026 installment payment plan, the first two installment payments (June 2026 and September 2026) are based on the previous (2025) tax year. This means residents who have been approved for 2026 Homestead Exemption or other exemptions will not see these 2026 exemptions on either the June or September installment bills. The final two 2026 installment bills (December 2026 and March 2027) will be adjusted to include any 2026 exemptions or changes to the property's taxable value. The deadline to apply for Broward County's Installment Payment Plan was April 30, 2026. Should you have any questions regarding the payment of property taxes, the Tax Collector's Office can be reached at 954.357.4829 or by email to revenue@browardtax.org.

If my office can ever be of assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at martykiar@bcpa.net.

Take care,

Marty Kiar, ESQ, CFA

GENTLE FOODS, BETTER DIGESTION



Foods that may help reduce acid reflux include high fiber foods like vegetables, whole grains, and quinoa, which help prevent overeating and absorb stomach acid.

Bananas and other alkaline foods such as melons and cauliflower can help neutralize acid. Salad greens are gentle on the stomach, especially when eaten without heavy dressings. Low fat milk, yogurt, and kefir can temporarily soothe the esophagus and support digestion. Ginger tea may reduce inflammation and help food move through the stomach more efficiently. Lean proteins like salmon, chicken, and turkey are easy to digest and less likely to trigger reflux. Water rich foods such as cucumbers, celery, watermelon, and apples help dilute stomach acid. Root vegetables like sweet potatoes, carrots, and beets are filling, mild, and easy on digestion.

How you eat matters, too. Maintain a healthy weight, since excess belly fat increases pressure on the stomach. Sit upright while eating and wait at least two to three hours before lying down. Eat smaller meals, slow down, and avoid overeating. Wear loose clothing around the waist and choose gentle exercise like walking instead of movements that strain the abdomen.

Common heartburn triggers include fried and fatty foods, citrus fruits, tomatoes, chocolate, peppermint, carbonated drinks, coffee, and alcohol. You do not necessarily need to eliminate them completely, but moderation and awareness can help you identify what causes problems for you.

THE SPECIALIST STANDARD: WHY YOUR PET'S 'RHYTHM' MATTERS THIS SUMMER

As the South Florida humidity climbs, a walk is no longer just a walk—it is a diagnostic event. At Pawsitively Happy Paws LLC, we don't just "watch" pets; we audit their Gait.

What is Gait? Simply put, it is the mechanical rhythm of how your pet moves. Think of it as a physical fingerprint. When the heat rises, joint fluid expands and muscles fatigue faster. A specialist catches the "glitch" in that rhythm long before a limp appears.

The Specialist Breakdown: Large Breeds: Noticeability is high. Look for "The Sway"—excessive hip oscillation or a dropped shoulder as they try to offload weight from hot pavement. Small Breeds: Noticeability is low. Their fast pitter-patter masks pain. Watch for "The Skip"—a momentary hitch or "bunny hop" that signals their joints are struggling with the 140°F asphalt.

Felines: Cats are masters of hiding discomfort. A change in their "climb rhythm" or a more grounded, flat-footed gait often indicates heat-induced lethargy or silent joint inflammation.

Standard pet care stops at the door; the Specialist Standard starts with a baseline. Humidity at this level spikes "High Arousal" and physical stress. So, for the month of May, I am opening **5 exclusive slots for a Summer Mobility & Heat Audit**. We will establish your pet's physical baseline before the June peaks arrive. The PHP Bond—Because they can't tell you it's too hot, but their rhythm will.

Contact Rho at Pawsitively Happy Paws LLC to secure your Summer Audit.




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SMALL BUDGET, BIG IMPACT: INSIDE THE HILLCREST 26 LOBBY REDESIGN

The lobby redesign at Hillcrest Building 26 began when the board started discussing ways to refresh and modernize the building's lobby area without spending a fortune. What followed became a great example of creativity, smart shopping, and modern technology working together.

The project started when one of the residents mentioned that a friend of hers was selling a beautiful oversized white Italian leather couch. The elegant sofa looked like something you would find in a luxury hotel lobby, yet it was offered to the building for only \$250.

Instead of hiring an expensive interior designer, AI was used to create design concepts centered around the white leather couch. Different

layouts, color palettes, rugs, chairs, artwork, and tables were digitally explored until the perfect design for the space came together.

Once the design was finalized, all of the furniture, artwork, rugs, tables, and accessories were purchased online and carefully selected to match the modern upscale look of the lobby. Remarkably, the entire redesign was completed for approximately \$2,700. Some of the pieces were donated by board members.

Today, the lobby at Hillcrest Building 26 feels bright, modern, elegant, and welcoming — proof that with creativity, vision, and careful planning, beautiful design does not have to come with an enormous price tag.



MY LOVE FOR ROY ORBISON – by Cindy Abraham

Roy Orbison was one of my all-time favorite singers. His voice was unique and so was his life story. He was just a little before my time compared to my love for the Beatle era, but there is not one of his songs that I do not love.

Southbound Jericho Parkway was one of his lesser known songs and probably stayed that way because it was seven minutes long. Written in 1969, it was basically a mini opera about a middle aged man who commits suicide by driving his car into a wall, and the reactions of the people who knew him. It was dark, dramatic, and completely

absorbing. A wild ride, so to speak. I loved it.

I also remember watching a black and white video of him singing **Running Scared** in front of a live audience and waiting for their reaction to the last line. It was brilliant. The song was about a man terrified that his girlfriend had not gotten over the boyfriend who left her. He was “running scared” that if the ex-boyfriend ever showed up again, she would leave him. The look on the audience’s faces at the end was unforgettable. He sang:

All at once, he was standing there,
So sure of himself, his head in air.
My heart was aching, which one would it be...
She turned around and walked away
With me.

That was Roy Orbison. Drama, emotion, vulnerability, all wrapped in a voice that could stop you cold.

Born in Vernon, Texas on April 23, 1936, Roy Orbison had one of the most distinctive voices in popular music. He started out as a songwriter, first gaining attention when the Everly Brothers recorded his song **Claudette**. His own breakthrough came in 1960 with **Only the Lonely**, followed by **Crying**, **Running Scared**, and the song everyone knows, **Oh Pretty Woman**.

What made him different was that he did not try to be cool. While other rock and roll stars were all swagger and attitude, Roy sang about heartbreak, insecurity, longing, and fear. He was willing to sound exposed, even fragile, and then hit notes that seemed impossible. Nobody sounded like him, before or since.

As extraordinary as his music was, his personal life was filled with tragedy. In 1966, his wife Claudette was killed in a motorcycle accident. Two years later, while Roy was on tour, a fire destroyed his home and took the lives of two of his young sons. It is almost impossible to imagine that kind of loss, let alone survive it.

His popularity faded for a while in the late 1960s, but Roy Orbison never quit. After serious health problems, including open heart surgery, his career came roaring back in the 1980s. He won a Grammy, was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and joined forces with **George Harrison**, **Bob Dylan**, **Tom Petty**, and **Jeff Lynne** as part of the **Traveling Wilburys**.

Just before his death in 1988, he completed *Mystery Girl*, a comeback album that included *You Got It*. He was only 52 when he died, but he had already reclaimed his place as one of the most respected and admired voices in music.

Roy Orbison lived through unimaginable heartbreak, but he never stopped singing. And every time I hear his voice, I am reminded that great art often comes from the deepest pain, and that resilience can sound absolutely beautiful.

THE DINNER-TIME DILEMMA: WHEN YOU EAT MATTERS MORE THAN YOU THINK

Remember back in the day, all the movie dinner date requests ended with, "I'll pick you up at 8." I never would have had a dinner date back then. I need to eat between 5 and 6PM. In fact, that has been a bone of contention (pun intended) with some of my Latin friends.

But we have all done it, had a late dinner, a little dessert, maybe a snack while watching TV... then off to bed. Unfortunately, my body wasn't nearly as relaxed about this routine as I was.

Eating too close to bedtime can interfere with blood sugar levels, digestion, and even how well you sleep. And here's the surprise: when you eat may matter just as much as what you eat.

Meet Your Internal Clock

Your body runs on a built-in schedule called your circadian rhythm, basically, your biological clock. It helps regulate things like:

- When you feel sleepy or alert
- When you feel hungry
- How your hormones, heart, and metabolism function

One key player here is melatonin, the hormone that tells your body it's time to wind down for the night. So... When Should You Eat Dinner? There's no one-size-fits-all dinner hour. The best time to eat depends on your personal rhythm, not the clock on the wall.

A few things to keep in mind:

- Your "biological night" starts when melatonin kicks in. For some people, that's as early as 7:00 p.m.; for others, it may not happen until much later.
- Late eating can spike blood sugar. Melatonin reduces insulin release, so eating when melatonin is high can cause higher blood sugar levels than eating earlier in the day.
- Give your body time to digest. Aim to finish dinner at least 2–3 hours before bedtime (some experts suggest up to 4 hours). This gives your digestive system a head start before sleep mode begins.

As a bonus, eating breakfast 1–2 hours after waking helps reset your internal clock for the day.

Why Timing Matters

When your eating schedule doesn't match what your body expects, things can get out of sync. Over time, that mismatch has been linked to weight gain, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.

Keeping regular mealtimes can help:

- Support healthy sleep and hormone balance
- Reduce extreme hunger and mood swings
- Improve digestion and overall energy

A Simple Eating Rhythm That Works

A healthy, body-friendly pattern might look like this:

- Breakfast: Within 1–2 hours of waking
- Lunch: About 4–5 hours later
- Dinner: 2–4 hours before bedtime

If needed, enjoy a small snack with protein, healthy fats, and carbs between meals, but try to skip snacking after dinner.

A Few Practical Tips

- Your body learns from routine. Consistent eating times shape hunger cues.
- You may not feel hungry early in the day at first—but stick with it. Your body will adjust.
- Aim to eat within a 12-hour window, with most calories earlier in the day.
- Try not to go more than 4 hours without eating during that window.
- Adjust portion sizes based on hunger—don't skip meals and overdo it later.

Bottom line: Your body loves predictability. A little earlier dinner and a consistent schedule can go a long way toward better sleep, steadier energy, and happier digestion. And who doesn't want that?

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SCAMS TO WATCH OUT FOR IN 2026 (IN PLAIN ENGLISH)

AARP just ran a great article on the biggest scams coming our way in 2026. The takeaway is simple: **do not engage**. If you don't recognize the phone number, don't answer. If it's important, they'll leave a message. Don't click links in emails. Ever.

And no government or law-enforcement agency is randomly calling average people living their lives.

If someone really wants to talk to you, offer to meet them at a coffee shop at noon and bring a friend. (If they show up, order something expensive and say you forgot your wallet). And yes, Ed McMahon is still dead, so ignore those letters too.

The biggest scams to expect:

1. "Free money" or relief checks

Calls or texts claiming you have unclaimed government money waiting. They're just fishing for your personal info. If money were real, it would come by mail, not a robocall.

2. Fake job offers

With layoffs up, job scams are exploding. If a job asks for fees, promises huge pay for little work, or contacts you out of the blue, it's a scam.

3. Recovery scams

Already been scammed? Criminals may come back pretending to help you get your money back, for a fee. Real help never asks for gift cards, crypto, or wire transfers.

4. "Digital arrest" scams

Terrifying calls claiming you're under investigation, sometimes with fake video, documents, or threats. Real police do not interrogate people by Zoom or demand instant payments.

5. Romance/Friendship Scams

Romance scams remain one of the biggest threats for 2026 because they are everywhere and often financially devastating. Scammers create fake identities on dating apps, social media, or messaging platforms and slowly build trust. Once they have it, the story turns to money, often a request for help or a pitch to invest in cryptocurrency.

Many now pose as "friends," not romantic partners, copying your interests straight from social media. If you run, they run. If you traveled, they've been there too. The goal is the same: gain your confidence, then make the ask.

Bottom line:

No clicking. No answering. No engaging. Fear, urgency, and "too good to be true" offers are the biggest red flags of all.



What's Happening In The Real Estate Market in Hillcrest and Parkview?



Cindy Abraham



Brian Gaiefsky

The 2026 market started out flat, showings have picked up and we are seeing our listings sell. The momentum is still leaning toward buyers. Slower sales and more listings mean they have more choices and more negotiating power. Inventory keeps climbing and selling times are longer, but Keller Williams A Team Florida continues to be the leader in Hillcrest sales.

Sellers who align with the market (realistic pricing, good presentation) can still do well, but patience may be necessary. Hillcrest has the perfect location, but price and condition are still major considerations for buyers. One of A Team Florida's key advantages is knowing exactly what matters most to today's buyers, so we can guide our sellers on how to make every showing count. Another is that we have been selling Hillcrest since 2005, and we know the buyer agents who shop here regularly. With our in depth knowledge of Hillcrest, we make the process from contract to close smooth and stress-free.

Looking to buy or sell? Let's talk. Or send us an email or text:

Chat – 954-964-2559 - Email – Info@ATeamFlorida.com

Text – Cindy – 954-895-1617 Brian – 954-415-5323



ateamflorida.com info@ateamflorida.com 8-HILLCREST (844) 552-7378

HILLCREST/PARKVIEW REAL ESTATE IN A BUYERS MARKET

– by *Cindy Abraham, Keller Williams A Team Florida*



BRIAN GAIEFSKY



CINDY ABRAHAM

Sales have finally picked up and it's not magic or momentum. It's math. Sellers lowered their prices to meet the market and buyers reappeared. I truly sympathize with anyone who bought between 2022 and early 2024, but the reality is unavoidable. Prices in 2026 are down more than 30 percent. Numbers do not negotiate.

What still baffles me is buyer behavior. When prices were sky high, buyers were tripping over each other to outbid. Now that homes and condos are far more affordable, many are standing on the sidelines like wallflowers at a dance. It makes no sense. Maybe it's human nature. "If everyone wants it, I want it more." And worse: "If it looks reasonable, I'll wait."

The irony is that today's buyers are smarter than ever. They study sales online, compare buildings and question everything. Overpaying is no longer fashionable. I'm often asked why one building has so many listings. Sometimes there's no clear answer, but often it traces back to leadership issues, real or perceived. That theory gains traction when an owner sells and buys a nearly identical unit in a different building. That has happened more than once recently.

First impressions still matter. Yes, even for condos. Buildings that refreshed their lobbies and upgraded landscaping deserve credit. Front desk staff matter too. Professional, efficient and welcoming goes a long way. And here's the part people forget. Residents themselves are part of the showing. The culture of a building is visible. One buyer walked away from a midrise because of a sign

by the elevator she described as "mean." In another building, a unit owner had aggressive political displays taped in a kitchen window facing the parking lot. Deal breaker.

So, when you see a new face in or around your building, put your best foot forward. One day you may be the one selling, and you'll hope your neighbors remember that too.



APRIL 2026 MARKET REPORT FOR HILLCREST AND PARKVIEW AT HILLCREST

- by Cindy Abraham, Keller Williams A Team Florida



The good news is that we are down to 84 active condo listings. Currently there are 14 townhomes and five single family homes on the market ranging from \$539,000 for a 3/2/1 town home to \$1,450,000 for a 5/3 single family home. Days on market are worrisome with more than 50% of the total active listings in triple digits after undergoing numerous price reductions.

The good news is that pending and closing sales for condos spiked nicely during the month of April. However, after having two of our listings expire recently, which hasn't happened in a very long time, I am repeating below what I wrote last month about pricing properly. I also noticed that a client who refused to lower and changed agents, finally sold his - at the price we told him he should be listed at in the first place. I guess we could "collect" listings by lying to clients because it seems to work but...Nah!

Pricing Is Everything

Days on Market are brutally high if a property isn't priced correctly. Unless your unit is fully updated, has a great view, and a reasonable maintenance fee, the market is unforgiving. When you look at the pending and closed sales below, pay attention to the Days on Market. Anything longer then 90 days lowered their price at least once and in some cases, over 10 times.

If you've had no showings in the first week or two, that's not bad luck, it's feedback. The market is telling you your price is too high. And every month you sit unsold, it costs you real money.

A hard truth: if you bought in 2022 or 2023, you are very unlikely to get back what you paid. Denial only makes the loss larger.

FOR THE CLOSED SALES LISTED BELOW, WE WILL USE THE ORIGINAL LIST PRICE RATHER THAN THE PRICE AT THE TIME OF SALE, SINCE MANY OF THESE PROPERTIES WENT THROUGH MULTIPLE PRICE REDUCTIONS.

Hopefully landlords read our last issue about overpricing because in their case, each month the unit sits empty, you lose 1/12 of you annual gross income. I say that ELEVEN went under contract or closed last month.

Smart sellers (and buyers) will zig when others zag. The market always rewards those who act with clarity when others are frozen by fear. You need to hire agents who tell you what you need to know about the current market, not what you want to hear. **Call Brian Gaiefsky and Cindy Abraham, Keller Williams A Team Florida!**

PENDING AND CLOSED SALES DURING APRIL 2026

(R-Rental building, C- Corner unit, T – Townhome, S – Single Family

Building	Address	SF	B/B	\$ ORIG LIST	SOLD	DOM
S	1612 Trailhead Terr	2,220	3/2/1	855,000	820,000	157
R-20	919 Hillcrest 704	1,100	2/2	245,000	240,000	46
R-19	901 Hillcrest Dr 515	1,150	2/2	243,000	237,000	113
R-20	919 Hillcrest Dr 304	1,100	2/2	246,000	235,000	67
2	5100 Washington St 207	992	2/2	225,000		23
21	4400 Hillcrest Dr 303	1,132	2/2	285,000	205,000	306
23	4330 Hillcrest Dr 519	1,284	2/2	205,000	184,000	192
R-24	4200 Hillcrest Dr 406	844	1/1/1	179,000	170,000	11
8	1101 Hillcrest Ct 103	899	2/2	205,000	167,000	406
R-19	901 Hillcrest Sr 311	830	1/1/1	150,000	147,000	17
4	1000 Hillcrest Ct 207	744	1/1/1	176,000	147,000	157
23	4330 Hillcrest Dr 214	1,132	2/2	170,000	130,000	327
27	3850 Washington St	844	1/1/1	175,000	117,700	468
8	1101 Hillcrest 307	672	1/1/0	89,999	85,000	161



HILLCREST/PARKVIEW APRIL 2026 RENTALS

Building	Address	SF	B/B	\$ ORIG LIST	RENT	DOM
T	1190 Eucalyptus Dr	1,421	3/2/1	3,300	pending	138
S	1465 Bursera Terr	2,502	5/2/1	8,300	8,300	48
T	1033 Eucalyptus Dr	2,104	3/2/1	5,200	5,000	20
T	1595 Evergreen Terr	1,759	3/2/1	4,100	4,000	43
T	4144 Greenway Dr	1,561	3/2/1	3,300	3,300	128
20	919 Hillcrest Dr 314	1,150	2/2	2,200	pending	44
19	901 Hillcrest Drive 409	1,100	2/2	2,150	2,100	77
24	4200 Hillcrest Dr 206	844	1/1/1	1,700	1,700	11
19	901 Hillcrest Dr 503	830	1/1/1	1,650	1,650	7
16	950 Hillcrest Dr 207	700	1/1/1	1,550	1,550	26



May Kitchen Korner - by Cindy Abraham

SAY CHEESE (if you love cheesy titles for articles)

High blood pressure usually comes with a long list of food rules and cheese often feels like the first thing to go. The good news is it does not have to. Some cheeses are naturally lower in sodium and high in calcium which can actually support healthy blood pressure when enjoyed in moderation.

Nearly half of U.S. adults deal with high blood pressure and only a small percentage have it under control. Making smarter food choices helps and that can still include cheese if you pick the right kinds.

Swiss cheese is one of the best options because it is lightly processed and very low in sodium. **Fresh mozzarella** is another smart choice especially the kind packed in water. It is lower in salt and easy to use in salads or homemade pizza with lots of vegetables. **Goat cheese** is also a winner since fresh cheeses tend to be less salty than aged ones and it pairs well with fruit or veggies. **Ricotta** rounds out the list with plenty of calcium and a creamy texture that works beautifully in pasta and baked dishes.

The takeaway is simple. Lowering your blood pressure does not mean giving up everything you love. Choose lower sodium cheeses enjoy reasonable portions, and you can still savor your favorite flavors while taking care of your heart.

FYI - if you can find the packages of baby mozzarella balls, buy them, separate them in a bowl, pour a little olive oil on top and your favorite Italian seasonings, and store them for future use.

I have a friend with a Villa in Tuscany (no I am not making this up, and I love saying it). She brings me back the best Italian olive oil every year and a package of Aglio, Olio, Peperoncino spices. I put them on EVERYTHING. According to the package, the ingredients are 50% garlic, 12.5% each dried chili, parsley, tomato flakes and chervil. How's that for specific?

FANTASTIC RECIPES USING EACH TYPE OF CHEESE

RICOTTA TOAST for Two

- 2 slices whole grain Italian bread
- Olive oil for brushing
- 2 TBS ricotta cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 3 TBS shredded low-moisture mozzarella cheese
- 1 TBS grated parmesan cheese

Preheat toaster oven to 350. Coat lined baking sheet with oil. Bake bread until crisp on both sides, 4-5 minutes each side, brushing with oil after turning. Stir ricotta and ½ TBS olive oil in a small bowl and season with salt and pepper. Spread on toasts. Bake until cheese is melted, about 5 minutes, then broil until cheese is brown and bubbly, about 1 minute. Serve.



TOMATOES, MOZZARELLA AND KALAMATA OLIVE SALAD

I have this at least once a week especially since I have a basil plant. I halve grape tomatoes and mix them in a bowl with Kalamata olives and baby mozzarella balls. Then I slice a bunch of basil leaves and stir them in with some olive oil. Top with Aglio, Olio, Peperoncino seasonings and enjoy.



BEST PIZZA EVER!

Buy the thinnest crust cheese pizza you can find. Mix the above WITHOUT the olive oil and top the pizza with thinly sliced grape tomatoes, sliced Kalamata olives, baby mozzarella balls and a mixture of freshly chopped basil and oregano (ant Aglio, Oglio, Peperoncino seasonings). Unbelievably delicious!

I got hooked on these sandwiches. They really call for cucumbers, but I am not a fan so I use Zucchini.

ZUCCHINI, TOMATO AND GOAT CHEESE/YOGURT SANDWICH

(makes enough for 6-8 sandwiches.)

- 1 cup crumbled goat cheese
- ½ cup whole-milk plain Greek yogurt
- 2 TBSs chopped fresh dill
- 1 TBS extra-virgin olive oil
- 1½ tsp lemon juice
- 1 medium clove garlic, grated
- ½ tsp ground pepper
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 small cucumber, thinly sliced
- 1 medium avocado, thinly sliced
- 1 medium beefsteak tomato, thinly sliced



Combine crumbled goat cheese, yogurt, dill, oil, lemon juice, grated garlic, ½ tsp pepper and ¼ tsp salt in a medium bowl. Mash with the back of a fork until smooth and creamy. Store in an airtight container.

When you are ready for a sandwich, spread goat cheese mixture on one side of two slices of toast. Top one slice of toast, cheese-side up, with cucumber, avocado and tomato slices. Top with the remaining slice of toast, cheese-side down, pressing gently to adhere. Cut in half, if desired.

ROTISSERIE CHICKEN AND SWISS CHEESE CORN SKILLET (fast and easy)

- 15 oz. can whole kernel corn, drained OR 6 oz. frozen corn
- 2 cups shredded rotisserie chicken
- ½ cup Swiss cheese plus ¼ cup for topping
- 1/3 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- ½ tsp sugar
- Salt and pepper
- 2 TBS cup thinly sliced scallions



Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Mix together corn, ½ cup cheese and mayo in a medium bowl.

Stir in chicken, sugar, garlic and seasonings.

Toss remaining cheese with scallions. Transfer to 8" baking dish and bake for 11 minutes.

Switch setting to high broil for 2 minutes until mixture is bubbling and slightly charred in spots. Serve hot.

May 2026 IH KITCHEN TIPS – by Cindy Abraham

MY FREEZER IS MY FRIEND



I love to cook and I think the prep stage is my favorite, kind of like knitting, the redundancy of the movements are soothing. And, of course, I get to have a knife in my hand...

But sometimes I don't want to spend a lot of time "prepping". So, I bought an extra freezer that I keep on the balcony because if there is a

good deal, I buy in bulk. I will bring home a 5-lb. bag of potatoes, make mashed potatoes and freeze portions in large muffin trays. I pop out the frozen "potato pops" and vacuum seal them in portions. When I want mashed potatoes, I defrost in the microwave, throw them in a pan with melted butter and voila – good to go.

I prefer fresh mushrooms and spinach but buy frozen and not canned. Canned veggies are full of salt. They are great to have on hand in a pinch but only use half the amount in a recipe that calls for fresh chopped spinach. And if you prefer fresh mushrooms when cooking, you can always sauté them ahead of time and freeze a cup or two just in case.

I also love Lupini Keto orzo rice, so I make the whole bag and then freeze it (al dente) in 3 one-cup container. Those of you who have had my Lebanese Italian Chicken Soup – that is the rice I use. HEALTHY!

For "ingredient" items, I use the small two-ounce plastic containers with lids, for things like:

Diced prosciutto

Chopped jalapeno (doesn't stay firm when thawed, but works for cooking)

Lemon, orange, lime and apple juice

Lemon, orange and lime zest

Anchovies in oil

Because some of my favorite people are snowbirds, I freeze mangos in 6 lb. portions so I can make them chutney in the off-season. I also vacuum seal frozen cubes of Mango juice so I can make mango tequila or rum when they are here.

I was surprised when I finally realized that frozen bread thaws beautifully (especially in BOGO situations). I have a vacuum sealing machine (best investment ever) so I can divide anything I buy in bulk. Any types of meat and poultry holds up wonderfully. I do have to freeze them first so that the vacuum sealer doesn't suck out the liquid. I put the meats/poultry on a plate sprayed with Pam. As soon as they are frozen, I put them in the vacuum bags and seal them.

When we were eating beef, I would buy a 7 or 8 pound Beef Tenderloin during the holidays, cut it into 1 or 2-pound portions, freeze and vacuum seal. I am not kidding when I say we cooked and ate the last one two years later. My sister turned me on to the machine because of all the fish they catch in Lake Michigan. The only time anything goes "bad" is if the vacuum seal loosens and air gets in.

The only seafood I don't freeze is stone crabs. For some reason the meat sticks to the shell once they have been frozen and thawed. And anything dairy-related or fibrous vegetables do not freeze well like onions and celery. The exception to dairy is ice cream of course.

Pre-prepping saves time and buying in bulk saves money - a win-win.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU EAT BLUEBERRIES EVERY DAY? (BESIDES TURNING YOUR FINGERS PURPLE)



I have been preaching high fiber for a while now. As someone who rarely ate pasta or rice because of the "empty carb", thanks to brands like Carbe Diem Pasta, with a higher percentage of fiber than carbs, we eat pasta at least twice a week.

That said, fiber has a bit of a learning curve. Best to start out with 1/2 cup of blueberries per day. If you suddenly start eating more than that in the beginning, as extra fiber is wont to do, you could get bloating, gas, or loose stools, if your body isn't used to high-fiber foods.

In other words, don't cannonball into the blueberry pool. Start with ¼ to ½ cup and work your way up over a week or two. Your digestive system will thank you by not embarrassing you.

If you go from occasional blueberry dabbler to daily blueberry devotee, your body may start noticing the difference within the first week. The longer you keep it up, the more those benefits quietly stack up, like compound interest, but tastier. Here's what's happening behind the scenes.

By week one, your body is adjusting to the extra fiber and antioxidants. Think of it as your internal systems saying, "Oh, we're doing this now?"

The higher antioxidant intake helps support metabolic health. Your digestion may start to feel more regular, and your energy a bit steadier, less rollercoaster, more cruise control.

Because blueberries contain natural sugars, eating them at the end of a meal with lean protein and healthy fats is recommended, so your blood sugar doesn't spike like it just heard some shocking gossip.

After a few weeks, the benefits move beyond digestion and into the "quiet but important" category.

You won't feel your neurons cheering, but you might notice better focus and less fatigue, like your brain finally had its coffee.

Longer-term, blueberries also support blood vessel health. A study followed people with metabolic syndrome who ate either ½ cup or 1 cup of blueberries daily for six months. The group eating about a cup a day showed improved endothelial function which means that their blood vessels were better at relaxing and expanding.

In other words, better circulation. Exercise may feel a little easier, and your body may regulate temperature more efficiently. Not exactly superhero powers, but definitely an upgrade.

Blueberries aren't a magic wand for perfect health, but paired with a balanced diet, they can meaningfully support metabolic, heart, and brain health. Not bad for something you can eat by the handful... even if it does occasionally leave evidence on your fingertips.

WHEN CARE BECOMES A COMMODITY: ASSISTED LIVING IN THE AGE OF INVESTORS

I was genuinely surprised when I recently recommended Presidential Place to someone looking for an Assisted Living Facility, only to learn it had been closed and sold to an investor.

That surprise quickly turned into concern. I had already been uneasy watching investors snap up medical practices, hospitals, medical device companies, and even car dealerships. But seeing an assisted living facility sold off and converted into yet another apartment building felt different and far more troubling.

Then I came across an article on another growing trend: investors buying assisted living facilities or nursing homes, then leasing them back to private operators who may, or may not, be vigilant about care. In one neglect lawsuit, the property owner's defense was chillingly simple: "We own the building, not the operations."

Over the past decade, real estate investment trusts (REITs) have quietly acquired thousands of properties housing nursing homes, hospitals, assisted living facilities, and medical offices. Court filings and corporate records show these landlords often wield far more influence than the public realizes.

Documents reveal that REITs frequently select the management companies that oversee daily operations and keep them in place even when they are aware of skeletal staffing, weak governance, repeated safety violations, or other serious issues that undermine quality of care.

Despite how common this arrangement has become, REITs remain largely invisible to state and federal health regulators. Hospitals and nursing homes are not required to disclose rent payments or even identify their landlords in the reports they submit to Medicare. A Biden-era rule that would have required nursing homes to disclose REIT involvement has been indefinitely suspended.

Regulators say they focus on quality of care, not corporate structure, but who are they kidding?

Today, REITs own roughly one-fifth of the nation's senior housing, including assisted living, memory care, and independent living. They also hold stakes in one out of every six nursing homes. Publicly traded health care REITs are now worth nearly a quarter of a trillion dollars.

Research paints a mixed and unsettling picture. One study found higher spending on nursing wages after REIT investment. Others found that facilities often replaced registered nurses with less skilled staff, and that health inspection results worsened after acquisition. Investor-owned hospital chains that sold their buildings to REITs were also more likely to close or go bankrupt. In many cases, private equity investors pocketed the sale proceeds while hospitals were left burdened with new rent obligations.

REITs are required to distribute most of their income and are exempt from the 21% federal corporate income tax, but only if they don't directly operate the facilities. To preserve this tax advantage, they lease properties to separate operating companies. On paper, this keeps care decisions "independent." In practice, it creates a convenient buffer of accountability.

Lawsuits for neglect often end in settlements, but the payouts are a fraction of the profits being generated and a poor substitute for the hundreds of lives lost or irreparably harmed. One company that owns multiple assisted living facilities and long-term care hospitals earned \$33 million in net income last year on \$155 million in rent. A 21% profit margin, even as families grieve and residents suffer.

Traditionally, REIT leases push nearly all costs like taxes, insurance, maintenance, onto operators. In 2008, Congress opened the door for healthcare REITs to go even further, allowing them to create subsidiaries that profit directly from healthcare operations. While these subsidiaries must pay taxes and maintain nominal independence, many REITs have embraced this model, often burying ownership and control under layers of shell corporations.

Meanwhile, some facilities rack up years of violations: untrained staff administering medications, inadequate staffing for dementia care, routine neglect leading to severe injury or death. Many quietly settle with families. Some simply change the facility's name and move on.

The bottom line is clear. These entities do not answer to patients or families. Their allegiance is to investors. The money is there but far too often it is not being spent on care. And that should concern all of us.

BEAUTY IS ONLY SKIN DEEP YADA YADA YADA



I like to read almost as much as I like to write, so when I came across an article with beauty tips that I hadn't heard of (or forgot), picked out the ones that made sense to me. These aren't miracle cures, but they are not hard to do. Here goes:

Wake Up Your Face Before Makeup Goes On

This one doesn't sound very appealing, but I must admit it makes sense. Dunking your face into a bowl of ice water for five seconds, repeating it three times, de-puffs, tightens pores, and shocks you awake faster than coffee. It's not glamorous and I am not going to do it, but people swear it works.

Face Moisturizers Matter

I don't think they even make it anymore, but my mom used Lady Esther face cream religiously and had beautiful skin her entire life. I inherited my dad's Lebanese olive skin, which tends to stay smoother longer, while my mom was Dutch, meaning light skin and blonde. Different genetics, same rule. Keep your skin moisturized. I'm a big believer in hyaluronic acid, but I still put a layer of moisturizer on because there's no such thing as too much hydration.

Soft Eyeliner Wins Every Time

Skip the inky liquid liners and go with soft pencils. They're easier to smudge and soften, which looks much better and more natural. If you do it right, it can even double as the illusion of lower lashes.

Castor Oil for Eyelashes

This one truly works. Castor oil is expensive, but it's all natural and worth it. It's supposed to help brows too, but since mine need more assistance and aren't quite as close to my eyes, I use store-bought brow serums with real chemicals and no apologies.

Warming Up Your Eyelash Curler

Probably not the safest beauty advice, but wow, it makes sense. I warm my eyelash curler with a blow dryer and then use it very carefully. Emphasis on carefully. The same curling hair principle applies. Heat makes everything hold better, just don't burn your lashes off in the process.

Silk Pillowcases

I should have been doing this all my life because my hair is thin and breaks easily. Silk pillowcases are an oldie but a goodie, especially if you have thin or frizzy hair. I did get one and ABSOLUTELY my hair is easier to comb in the mornings. Less friction = less damage, and hopefully fewer bad hair days.

Velcro Hair Rollers

I finally gave in and ordered some. Curling wands work, but they can't be great for your hair, and I have very little patience for standing still while holding a curl for ten seconds. I like to keep moving. Rollers let me multitask. I can put them in and do important things like something or other while they sit. I do remember people wearing them to the store and even to church back in the day. Please don't bring that trend back.

WELCOME TO HILLCREST! IT IS A BEAUTIFUL DAY TO MEET A NEIGHBOR.



Ah, the good old days. Back when we were in school, making friends felt effortless. There was time built into every day to talk, laugh, and connect in the lunchroom, on the playground, or walking home. New faces appeared every semester. Neighborhood kids were close by. Friendship happened naturally, without planning or pressure.

Fast forward to today and many adults find themselves feeling lonelier than they ever expected. We are more connected by phones and screens, yet genuine friendships can feel harder to come by. As we get older, routines set in, circles shrink, and meeting new people does not just happen the way it used to.

This can feel especially true if you are new to the building. Moving into a new community later in life can be exciting, but it can also feel isolating at first. You may be surrounded by people who already seem to know one another, while you are still learning names, routines, and where everything is. The important thing to remember is that many of your neighbors have been exactly where you are now, and most remember how it felt to be the new face in the hallway.

The good news is this. Friendship at this stage of life is still very possible. It just takes a little intention and a willingness to think differently. Here are three simple ways to make that happen.

Be a Little Less Judgmental

When we were kids, we did not overthink friendship. If someone was fun, kind, or interesting, that was enough. We did not worry about politics, backgrounds, appearances, or lifestyles. We just showed up and played.

When I first moved into my building, there were a couple of women who took an instant dislike to me and, to this day, won't even say hello. One in particular would shuffle past on her walker and glare as if I'd personally offended her by existing. It was baffling at first, but I've learned that sometimes people rule others out before ever giving them a real chance. Old habits die hard. Those who were mean girls, bullies, or chronic gossips growing up often slip right back into those roles as adults. In a building setting, they're usually the first to latch onto newcomers, sharing stories and stirring the pot, especially if they happen to sit on the board.

The key is not to take it personally. Ignore the noise and focus on the people who matter. Strong, positive social connections are closely tied to better health, greater happiness, and even longevity. Being open, kind, and accepting isn't just good for your social life, it is NORMAL behavior and good for your overall well-being, too.

Get Creative About Where Friendships Begin

Friendships thrive on familiarity. The best places to meet people are where you see the same faces again and again. Hillcrest doesn't have a lot of community activities, so you may have to seek out faith based gatherings, exercise classes, walking groups, volunteer efforts, book clubs, or even casual routines like the same pool time or morning walk.

You can create opportunities for connection. For those new to the building, these shared spaces are often the easiest places to start. A simple hello by the elevator or a short conversation by the pool can be the beginning of something more. Kudos to the buildings (22 and 25) who routinely have fun events to help bring people together. The key is showing up consistently. Over time, small conversations turn into shared experiences, and shared experiences turn into friendships.

Be the One Who Reaches Out

The most awkward part of making a new friend is the in between stage. You have chatted a few times in the elevator or mailroom, maybe enjoyed a laugh or two, but no one quite knows how to take the next step. This is where many friendships stall. We tell ourselves we are busy or that if the other person was interested, they would call. In reality, most people are thinking the same thing, especially newcomers who may be hesitant to impose.

Taking the initiative does not have to be uncomfortable. A simple, genuine invitation works best. Something like I am heading to the pool this afternoon or I usually walk the grounds in the morning if you would like to join me feels natural and low pressure. Small gestures keep the connection moving forward and help friendships grow.

Making friends later in life does take a bit more effort than it once did. We no longer have built in social circles handed to us. But the friendships we do build now are often deeper, richer, and more meaningful. Think of it as an investment in yourself and in your community. Whether you have lived here for years or just unpacked your boxes, reaching out can make Hillcrest feel not just like a place to live, but a place to belong.

FREEDOM OR LONELINESS

(Ed Note: My friend who sent me this quote said it stopped her in her tracks because it hit home. We both have many neighbors who like being by themselves and others who need constant human contact. These are her thoughts on the subject)

"And when nobody wakes you up in the morning, and when nobody waits for you at night, and when you can do whatever you want. What do you call it, freedom or loneliness?" – Charles Bukowski (submitted by MH)

At first glance, it sounds like freedom at its best, no alarms, no expectations, no one telling you what to do or where to be. For many people like me, especially later in life, that kind of independence can feel earned and well-deserved.

But then Bukowski turns the question around. When no one is there to greet you in the morning or wait for you at night, that same freedom can quietly slip into loneliness. The silence that once felt peaceful can start to feel a little empty at times.

Bukowski wrote often about living life on his own terms, and he never pretended it was easy or glamorous. His writing reminds us that independence has two sides. There is joy in making my own choices, but there is also comfort in connection, in knowing if someone notices if I am here or not.

In today's world, this feels especially relevant. Many of us in our later years enjoy flexible schedules, privacy, and the ability to do exactly what we want, when we want. But some of us are also learning that real freedom feels richer when it's shared through friendships, conversations, and simple moments with others.

I don't think Bukowski's quote is meant to be gloomy. It's more of a quiet nudge, asking us to think about balance. I like my freedom. I can be alone when I want to, and I can choose when and with whom I share my life. I like my freedom.

ITS TIME TO BE COOL

by BK ARUNA LADVA London, England - Submitted and revised by BK Etta Stevens



Image by Dee from Pixabay

When life heats up ... Do you cool down? Coolness is not about the temperature outside but the climate inside us. What is the environment like in your own mind? Is the weather there fair and sunny or wild and turbulent? Are you creating thoughts of peace and tranquility or chaos and confusion? We often see the conditions of our inner world reflected in the outer world!

Who reading this thinks they are cool? Is that most of the time?? If yes, then you are off to a good start. It shows that there is stability in your mind, and you are not influenced by the many multitudes of external changes that take place, not even daily but hourly.

Can you stay cool when faced with insults, lies, rudeness and disrespect!? That's cool.

Can you stay and look cool in busyness and haste? Then that's being cool. Are you stable when you face the challenges of life? That's a cool stage to have!

Cool is not something you wear, it's something you are, it is a state of mind with a grounded inner being. Cool is an internal thing, not external and showy like with black glasses, the leather coat and the OTT bling!! Cool is an inner peacefulness. There are many fake "cools"; people out there pretending to be cool but inside they are fearful, insecure and weak. They are decidedly very uncool, fake and afraid. Their willpower weak, therefore their resilience can be like that of a snowflake, melting at the first waft of heat.

A fake cool is not strong and sturdy from inside. They are hollow – seeking to fill that gaping hole of a lack of self-esteem with validation from outside. They try to impress others with fake smiles and fake brands. They lose their own sense of self in the many labels they wear. Is anyone really taken in by this? Or are these people only fooling themselves.

Cool people are also warm-hearted people. They have a lot to give. A lot to share. They are generous and kind. They don't have hang ups or insecurities about sharing and caring. That's why they are cool – because they are calm in their thinking. They are simple thinkers. They do not make life complicated. They come from the heart. Not deceitful and calculating. They are genuinely open hearted.

Cool people are aware of their inner strength and inner beauty which is why they are happy with their inner world. They are at peace with everything because in their (inner) world they are the hero of their life. They have been working on their act (not on others), seeking fulfilment for themselves to be the best that they can be. They see the perfection growing ... and other people can see it too. This stage stays constant; it

does not blow around in the wind like a kite. These souls have spiritual weight, because they have filled themselves with spiritual values, with love, truth, peace, kindness and compassion. So, they can embrace change in a positive way when it comes.

To keep a cool head under pressure is a wonderful stage to have. This stage does not come without effort. Some people have developed the art to make their coolness look effortless and natural.

It's Time... to free ourselves from that which is fake and remain authentically cool and stable.

When life heats up ... Do you cool down? Coolness is not about the temperature outside but the climate inside us. What is the environment like in your own mind? Is the weather there fair and sunny or wild and turbulent? Are you creating thoughts of peace and tranquility or chaos and confusion? We often see the conditions of our inner world reflected in the outer world!

Learning meditation and practicing it daily will help you understand yourself better and learn to discern what is real from what is not. To understand exactly what it is you are searching for in your life, and how to become the best ME you can BE!

I am conducting a FREE ZOOM meditation class on Tuesday mornings, so that we can all learn to live more positively, with HAPPINESS in our heart and mind, by putting the self first, especially in these troubling times. It begins promptly at 10:30 AM until approximately 11:30AM.

Just use the following Zoom ID: 852 5673 8420 Password: 123

Thank you and have a beautiful LOVE month!!

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THE 2026 PRICE HIKE PARADE: HIDE YOUR WALLET



Just when it felt like we could finally exhale, March came along and jacked up the prices. Rising tensions in Iran sent energy costs flying, inflation climbed back to 3.3 percent, and even the items already on track to cost more in 2026 are now racing ahead of schedule. It is a gut punch for retirees and anyone living on a fixed income, but make no mistake, everyone is about to feel it at the checkout line.

Here is the short list of where your money is quietly sneaking off to this year and what you can do about it.

GAS

With global oil squeezed by conflict in the Middle East, gas shot past four dollars a gallon for the first time in years. When gas was low, we didn't think twice about jumping in the car if we needed one or two things from the grocery store. You can save by keeping a running grocery list so you can make one trip. Use free delivery as much as you can. You can also take advantage of gas station and grocery loyalty programs. You should keep your car tuned and you may want to ease up on the accelerator.

HEALTH INSURANCE

This one is a tough one. Health insurance is one of those things that you want the best policy you can afford - and then hope you never use it. Health care costs are rising twice as fast as inflation, and insurance premiums are following right along. Marketplace plans are especially painful now that extra tax credits expired. Before you book care, compare prices through your insurer. The same test can cost a few hundred dollars in one place and thousands in another.

I have told my Billy the Book (yes, he was a bookie) story before about insurance but I will never forget what he said when a guy was talking about how he never gambles. Billy laughed and said, "Really? You don't gamble? Do you have health insurance, auto insurance, life insurance? Do you know what that is? You're betting you will get sick, the insurance company is betting you won't. You're betting that you will get in an accident, the insurance company is betting you won't. You're betting you are gonna die, the insurance company is betting you won't. And you want to know something, buddy? When you win, you LOSE!!"

UTILITIES

Electric bills are climbing thanks to higher demand and energy costs. Two things that greatly reduced my electric bills were impact windows and buying a tabletop air fryer/oven that bakes, broils, etc. Cook times are way less and instead of scrubbing my oven, I just have to dust it once in a while. Seriously, they are GREAT time and energy savers.

Turn the thermostat down at night, close the blinds during hot days, especially on the west side, and ask your FP&L about energy audits.

GROCERIES

That old adage, "never shop on an empty stomach" still holds true. Food prices keep inching up, especially beef and canned goods.

Produce blows my mind! Almost 2 bucks for an apple?! And years of food inflation mean even small increases hurt. My new saying is, "IF IT ISN'T BOGO, IT'S A NOGO." And if it is not on sale, we don't eat it that week.

I bought an extra freezer to take advantage of sales on items to buy in bulk and I have a vacuum sealer that is worth its weight in gold, as they say. I can buy a huge pork tenderloin, slice it into portions, and freeze them. I did learn the hard way to pre-freeze them on a plastic plate first because the vacuum sealer will suck up the juices and damage the appliance. But for any food that you can freeze, it has been a Godsend and preserves the food much better than a freezer bag.

AUTO AND HOME INSURANCE

Rates are still rising, especially in disaster prone areas. Some insurers are even packing up and leaving. However, we had had mild hurricane seasons AND El Nino has done a good job of diverting storms away from South Florida for the past few years, so shop around every year and ask about discounts for bundling policies. Also, take a good look at your coverage. Make sure you are only paying for what you need. If you can afford it, go with higher deductibles.

CLOTHES AND SHOES

Tariffs are finally catching up with retailers, and prices are rising. Hit end of season sales, buy secondhand or host a clothing swap and call it fashion recycling. Especially in a condo building that could be fun!

PHONES AND COMPUTERS

Chip shortages driven by AI demand are pushing prices higher, especially for premium devices. Refurbished models can save you hundreds and usually come with warranties.

JEWELRY

SERIOUSLY? Is this really on the list? Apparently, precious metals hit record highs, and jewelry prices followed. Check consignment shops, estate sales or resale sites instead of buying new. Or do what I did, google; and this is what I found: "Lab grown diamonds are widely considered the best overall diamond alternative. However, because lab grown diamonds actually share the same physical, chemical, and optical properties as natural diamonds, calling them an "alternative" is a bit of a misnomer." You're welcome.

SHIPPING AND POSTAGE

Mailing packages and even letters costs more this year, with more increases coming. Compare shipping rates, reuse boxes and go paperless on bills when you can. Yes, checks are so yesterday. Zelle, auto-pay, and options are out there if you don't mind being dragged kicking and screaming into the 21st century.

The bottom line is simple. Prices are rising again, but a little flexibility and comparison shopping can keep your budget from needing therapy (shouldn't "therapy" be number one on this list?! Just sayin')





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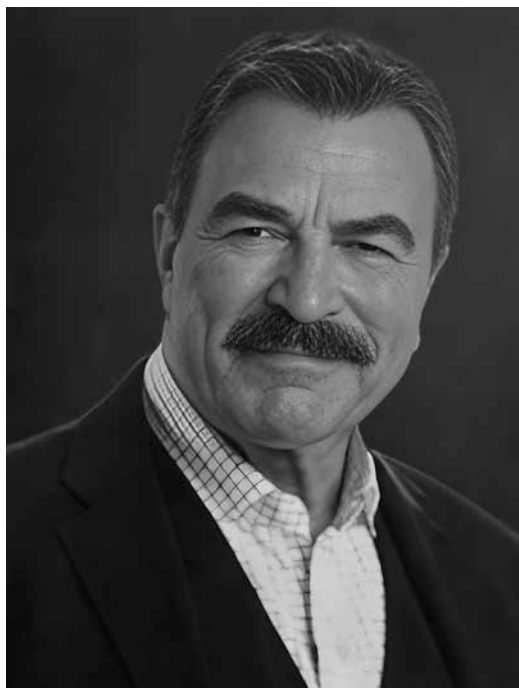
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