

River Country

NEWS COURIER

ESTATES

JULY 2026

ISSUE 7 • VOL 25

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President.....	Cliff Moody
Vice President.....	Andrea Fusco
Secretary.....	Mary Weigly
Treasurer.....	Marissa White
Directors.....	Marybeth Ulsaker
.....	Jonathan Worthington

RCEOA OFFICE

5331 Commercial Way, Suite 106, Spring Hill, FL 34606

Phone: 352-596-0740

Email: rivercountry79@gmail.com

Website: www.rivercountryestatesfl.org

Office Hours:

Tuesday: 4:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Wednesday, Thursday: 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Saturday: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Board meetings are held on the 2nd Monday of each month at 4:00pm in the Board office.

*all
New!*



IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Hernando County Sheriff Department	352-754-6830
Emergency	911
Emergency/General Info	352-754-4083
Florida Highway Patrol.....	352-754-6767
Hernando County Fire Rescue	352-540-4353
Hernando County Health Department	352-540-6800
Hernando County Animal Services	352-796-5062
Hernando County Utilities.....	352-754-4037
Withlacoochee River Electric.....	352-596-4000
Hernando County Code Enforcement	352-754-4056
Florida Statewide HELPLINE.....	800-227-8678
Referral Line	211
FEMA Tele Registration.....	800-621-3362

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

From the President of River Country Estates HOA

Dear Neighbors,

As we celebrate our nation's 250th birthday, this newsletter gives us a chance to reflect on the significance of this milestone. Throughout this issue, you'll find thoughts and quotations that honor our country and this historic occasion.

I hope you'll join us for our July 4th parade celebrating America 250. The parade will begin and end at the park, with participants gathering at 9:30 AM and the parade starting at 10:00 AM for a route through River Country Estates. If you're not marching, please come out and cheer from along the route—we'll be tossing patriotic beads to spectators. For more details, visit our website or check the bulletin boards at the mail stations. Contact the office with any questions or to sign up.

Our Office Administrator, Brandi, has stepped away from office work, and Caye has joined us in the role. With Caye's arrival, we're now able to offer evening hours one day a week as well as Saturday hours. Please see the updated office hours in the column to the left of this message.

I'd also like to share a brief Board update: Chuck Buzzy, Nancy Jones, and DJ Zerwekh have resigned from their positions. The Board has elected Andrea Fusco as Vice President of RCEOA. We thank our departing members for their time and service, and we wish them all the best.

We are pleased to report that the park walkways were successfully repaired on June 22, 2026. While the primary restoration is complete, we have identified two specific areas requiring additional attention; these are scheduled for repair next month. Furthermore, we are currently in the process of planning and budgeting for several upcoming enhancement projects. Should you notice any other issues within the park that require our team's focus, please contact the office directly.

The DRAC team continues to document violations and send notices when needed. In some cases, the legal team is also involved. We understand these matters can be sensitive, and we appreciate your cooperation as we work to uphold our community standards.

We encourage everyone to take a few minutes to review the deed restrictions so we can prevent problems, support one another, and keep River Country Estates a community we are all proud to call home.

We know trust is built over time through steady, thoughtful service, and we remain committed to serving this community with care, responsibility, and transparency. Our focus continues to be:

- Maintaining our common areas
- Upholding our deed restrictions
- Managing community resources responsibly and within budget

Your involvement matters, and every neighbor has something valuable to contribute. Whether you attend a meeting, share an idea, or lend a hand, you help make this community stronger. Together, we can continue building a neighborhood that feels connected, welcoming, and full of pride.

Board members are here for you, so please feel free to call, email, write, or stop by. Thank you for your support, your time, and the care you continue to show for our neighborhood. It means more than you know.

Cliff Moody
President, RCEOA Board

WELCOME TO RIVER COUNTRY ESTATES!

River Country Estates is a **DEED RESTRICTED** scenic community on the Nature Coast beside the Weeki Wachee River and State Park. The neighborhood features over 480 properties with large parcels. Businesses are found at the entrance. A private park at the south end of the community has a children's play area, a bird sanctuary lake, basketball and pickleball courts, mature trees, and a gazebo for relaxing in nature.

The park is for resident use only. It is open from dawn to dusk daily. Pets are to be leashed when in the park. Please pick up after pets. Remember, the park is for *all residents* of RCE.

A NOTE TO REALTORS

Realtors, contact our office for a Welcome Packet with key selling information about our community.

To all home sellers and realtors: all "For Sale" signs must face the same direction as the road (parallel to the road) and clearly show a sign or sticker saying "Deed Restricted."

Please review our Governing Documents on our website at www.rivercountryestatesfl.org.

"The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

~ Thomas Paine

DEED RESTRICTION EDUCATION

Waste, Garbage, Junk and Trash

River Country Estates has rules for storing and disposing of waste around your home. In this area, our Deed Restrictions take precedence over County regulations.

Below are the definitions and specific Deed Restrictions related to refuse on your property. Please note that one violation can lead to others. Improper waste management can also affect neighbors, including those with health conditions.

We strongly encourage you to read the Deed Restrictions in full for a better understanding. If you need help maintaining your property, please call or email the office. As a community, we are willing to support residents in need.

The DRAC team continues to patrol the community. To avoid issues, please review and follow the Deed Restrictions. All governing documents are available online at www.rivercountryestatesfl.org.



DEFINITIONS AS WRITTEN IN RCEOA DEED RESTRICTIONS ARE:

- **Waste** - Includes garbage, junk or trash, each separately defined herein.
- **Garbage** - Includes organic waste (primary food in origin), packaging material and cleanings from pet boxes, cages, containers or pens.
- **Junk** - Includes discarded hardware items or construction materials, furniture, packing cases or any refuse materials not covered by definitions for garbage or trash included elsewhere in this section.
- **Trash** - Includes all waste materials of a non-odorous nature, including grass clippings, leaves, logs, garden trimmings and other disposable refuse.

• Section 5, LAND USE, LANDSCAPING AND SIGNS

LAND USE —1. Activities: No noxious or offensive activity shall be carried on upon any lot, nor shall anything be done thereon which constitutes a nuisance.

—4. Burning of waste of any type on any lot in River Country Estates shall be prohibited.

• Section 8, WASTE MATERIALS

A. STORAGE —1. Waste Containers: All waste shall be kept in sanitary, covered, animal proof containers. These containers shall be located in an appropriate place, concealed from street view.

—2. Waste Pick-Up: Waste Containers shall be placed at the foot of the driveway no sooner than the evening before the scheduled pick up. These containers must be returned to their storage places by nightfall of the day of pick up.

—3. Storage Time No waste shall be stored in excess of seven (7) days.

—B. DISPOSAL: No waste materials shall be buried, dumped, or otherwise stored on any lot in River Country Estates. No owner or occupant shall dump or store any waste material on any lot, including wooded areas of their owner property. Garbage may be collected by a licensed Hernando County contractor or delivered to a Hernando County waste disposal area. Properly constructed and maintained compost facilities may be permitted under these rules.

—C. NON-COMPLIANCE: Failure to comply with any part of this Section of this Declaration within seven (7) days of receipt of written notice requesting compliance, by certified mail, where no hardship or mitigating circumstances exists shall be subject to action, as defined in Section 9.

According to Florida State Statute, Associations can no longer fine residents for leaving garbage cans out within 24 hours of collection day.

BE IN THE PARADE THIS 4TH OF JULY!

Jump in, decorate, and celebrate with your neighbors, friends, and family!

Everyone is invited to join the parade and make AMERICA 250 unforgettable. Bring your decorated car, golf cart, bike, motorcycle, classic car, or walking shoes and help turn our neighborhood into a moving celebration!



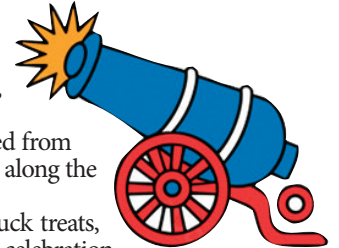
Whether you ride, walk, roll, or cheer, this is your chance to be part of the fun! Round up your family, decorate your wheels, and join a hometown parade filled with smiles, waves, music, and community pride!

- **Classic Cars** • **Muscle Cars** • **Motorcycles**
- **Family Cars** (decorate for the holiday – let the kids help!)
- **Golf Carts** (dress them up in red, white & blue!)
- **Bicycles** (let your creativity shine!) • **Patriotic Dog Walkers**

No float? No problem—decorate your house, wave from the curb, or join the fun your way!

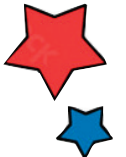
PARADE DETAILS

- **Start:** River Country Estates Park, 10:00 AM (meet up at 9:30)
- **Festive parade fun:** Beads tossed from parade vehicles and plenty of cheers along the route!
- **Finish:** Back at the park for pot luck treats, visiting with neighbors, and more celebration after the parade!



Contact the office today to sign up:

Email: rivercountry79@gmail.com, Phone: 352-596-0740



COMMITTEES NEWS

RCEOA aims to build a vibrant neighborhood through community participation. We invite you to apply your skills to aid in our committees' tasks. Opportunities are listed on our website at www.rivercountryestatesfl.org. Email the office at rivercountry79@gmail.com to volunteer for a committee or with an idea for a new committee.

We are in need for volunteers for the following committee:

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

This committee helps strengthen community connections through social events and engagement opportunities.

We're looking for residents who want to bring neighbors together by helping plan and run social events and other community activities already underway. Volunteers are especially needed to help coordinate this year's Board Election, Fall Festival, and Community Garage Sale.

Looking ahead, the committee may also help organize a winter holiday event. Next year's 45th anniversary of RCEOA will be a great opportunity to celebrate the community's history and achievements.

Residents interested in joining are encouraged to contact the office by email.



WHAT RESIDENTS NEED TO KNOW / DO

- Join or watch the July 4th Parade: Meet at the park at 9:30 AM; the parade begins at 10:00 AM and returns to the park for a potluck celebration.
- Use the updated office hours: The RCEOA office is now open Tuesday evening, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, and Saturday morning.
- Consider serving the community: Board candidate applications and Nominating Committee volunteers are being accepted; email the office if interested.
- Review deed restrictions: Please check the rules for waste, garbage, junk, trash, signs, and property upkeep to avoid violations.
- Protect pets and family from rabies exposure: Keep pets vaccinated and supervised, avoid wildlife, and report animal bites to DOH-Hernando.
- Lock vehicles and report suspicious activity: Remove valuables, lock doors, and call the Sheriff's Office at 352-754-6830 or 911 in an emergency.
- Report streetlight outages: Contact Withlacoochee River Electric so dark areas can be repaired and community safety improved.

CALL FOR CANDIDATES

October is approaching, and RCEOA is now accepting candidates for the Board of Directors. Candidates must be residents in good standing, have no outstanding assessments or violations, have no felony convictions, and not live with a current Board member. To apply, email your name, address, contact information, and a brief statement about why you would be a strong Board member to rivercountry79@gmail.com. Elected Board members must complete the state-required four-hour certification class.



We are also looking for volunteers to serve on the Nominating Committee, which will include one Board member and at least two residents. The committee will review applications and nominate candidates who meet the eligibility requirements. If you are interested, please email the office.

The election will be finalized at the General Membership Meeting on October 19, 2026, at 6:00 PM at Christian Church in the Wildwood, 10051 Country Road, Building D, Weeki Wachee.

—RCEOA Bylaws: ARTICLE V

Nominations and Election of Directors

Section 1: Nominations for election to the Board of Directors shall be made by a Nominating Committee. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the General Meeting. The Nominating Committee shall consist of a Chairperson, who shall be a member of the Board of Directors, and two or more members of the Association. The Nominating Committee shall be a standing committee appointed by the Board of Directors. The Nominating Committee shall make as many nominations for election to the Board of Directors as it shall in its discretion determine.

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A STORY OF INDEPENDENCE, 250 YEARS AGO

by Andrea Fusco

Two hundred and fifty years ago, the summer air in Philadelphia felt heavy with heat, dust, and expectation. Horses clattered over uneven streets, church bells sounded over the rooftops, and in the State House, men argued over words that might change the world. Outside, ordinary people waited—printers, blacksmiths, shopkeepers, mothers, apprentices, and children—listening for scraps of news and wondering what kind of future was being written inside.

For months, the colonies had been pulled between fear and resolve. To challenge the most powerful empire on earth was no small thing. Some worried about war, about lost homes, about hunger, about whether thirteen separate colonies could ever stand together. Others believed the danger of doing nothing was even greater. They spoke of rights, of liberty, of government by consent—not as distant ideas, but as promises worth risking everything for.

Then came the decision. In July 1776, the Continental Congress approved the Declaration of Independence, announcing that the colonies were no longer subjects of the British crown, but free and independent states. The words did not end the struggle; in many ways, they began it. Yet those lines gave shape to a new national purpose. They declared that power should answer to the people, and that freedom was not a gift from a king, but a right that belonged to human beings.

If you had stood in that city 250 years ago, you might not have seen fireworks or grand parades. You might have seen uncertainty in people's faces and heard worry in their voices. But you also would have seen courage—the quiet kind that appears when people choose principle over safety. The independence declared that year was not merely the birth of a nation. It was the beginning of an unfinished experiment: whether a people, imperfect and divided, could still build a country around liberty, self-government, and hope.

★ **"But a Constitution of Government once changed from Freedom, can never be restored. Liberty, once lost, is lost forever."** ~ John Adams ★



DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The condition of the parchment Declaration of Independence is a sign of the place it has held in the hearts of many Americans. Years of public display have faded and worn this treasured document. Today it is maintained under the most exacting archival conditions possible. ~ National Archives.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

To view the Declaration of Independence and other founding documents, scan the QR code or visit: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>



PIECES OF THE PAST

Suzanne and Joel Jensen have a set of bicentennial plates purchased at that time (1976) by Joel's grandmother. They also have a full set of Presidential silver spoons that go from Washington through Ford by the William Rogers Co. The spoons have each president's name on the handle with pictures on the bowl of the spoons.

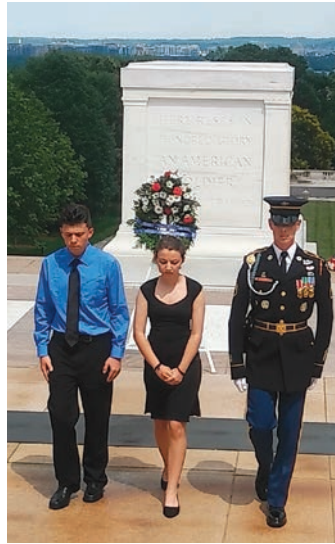
What will be the semi quincentennial collectible of choice? Write us with what you will be collecting!





HONORS AT ARLINGTON

River Country resident, Mackenzie White, had the honor of presenting the wreath at Arlington National Cemetery. Mackenzie is the daughter of our Treasurer, Marissa White.



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CONCORD HYMN by Ralph Waldo Emerson

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.
The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.
On this green bank, by this soft stream,
We set to-day a votive stone;
That memory may their deed redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.
Spirit, that made those heroes dare,
To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.



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COUNTY NEWS

RABIES ALERT:

The Florida Department of Health in Hernando County (DOH-Hernando) has issued a rabies alert for a portion of Spring Hill after a confirmed rabies case involving an unvaccinated cat.

According to health officials, the cat was attacked by a wild raccoon in the Norvell Road area on Wednesday. The incident prompted an investigation and monitoring efforts to determine whether rabies may be present among local wildlife populations.

The alert area includes portions of Spring Hill bounded by Elgin Boulevard to the north, Spring Hill Drive to the south, Barclay Avenue to the east, and U.S. Highway 19 (Commercial Way) to the west.

DOH-Hernando said the rabies alert will remain in effect for 60 days as officials monitor the area and work to reduce the risk of exposure to residents and pets.

Rabies is a viral disease that affects the nervous system of mammals, including humans. Health officials warn that wild animals such as raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats, and coyotes can carry the disease and should be avoided.

Residents are being urged to take precautions to protect themselves and their animals, including ensuring that pets and livestock are current on rabies vaccinations, keeping pets supervised and on leashes when outdoors, securing garbage containers, and removing outdoor pet food that may attract wildlife.

Officials also recommend taking steps to prevent wild animals, including bats, from entering homes and other occupied buildings.

Anyone who is bitten or scratched by an animal should immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water and seek medical attention. Animal bites should be reported to DOH-Hernando at 352-540-6812.

Residents needing assistance with stray animals can contact Hernando County Animal Services at 352-796-5062.

Health officials emphasized that the alert is being issued as a precautionary measure to inform the public that rabies has been identified in wildlife within the area and to encourage residents to take steps to prevent exposure.

BIG NEWS, HERNANDO COUNTY!

Weeki Wachee High School is launching the first-ever Firefighter Academy in Hernando County Schools. This brand-new program gives students a pathway into the fire services profession through hands-on, career-focused training.

• **Only 50 seats are available for the inaugural class.**

Students entering high school as freshmen or sophomores must apply to attend WWHS and be accepted into the academy.

Fire Academy Interest Form: <https://tr.ee/O7ZDLJ>

STREETLIGHTS OUT?

Report it to Withlacoochee River Electric at 352-569-4000 or go to their website at WREC.net, click the Outage Center tab, then Street Light Repair. A lighted street is a safer street!

WATERING SCHEDULE:

One day per week watering restrictions apply to all sources of water in Hernando County. This includes all private wells, rivers, lakes and streams. If your house number ends in 0 and 1, you can water on Monday; 2 and 3, Tuesday; 4 and 5, Wednesday; 6 and 7, Thursday; 8 and 9, Friday. No watering days on Saturday and Sunday. Watering Times: Morning Hours 12:01 am – 8:00am OR Evening Hours 6:00pm – 11:59pm.

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CRIME WATCH

On Saturday, May 30, 2026, the Hernando County Sheriff's Office responded to attempted vehicle break-ins in our community, and the suspects were apprehended. We will obtain more information from the Sheriff's Office at the next Crime Watch meeting, on July 2, 2026, 7:00PM at 8088 Floral Drive, the home of Chuck Buzzy.

Please remove valuables from your vehicle and keep them locked at all times, day or night. If you see suspicious activity, call the Sheriff's Office at 352-754-6830, or dial 911 in an emergency.

The Hernando County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) is training Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers. During the first hours following a disaster, emergency personnel may be overwhelmed and unable to respond to every situation needing help. Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers are trained to assist their families, friends, neighbors and co-workers before, during and after a disaster event until professional responders arrive. They also report back to the HCSO Emergency Operations Center with reports of impacts to their area.

The CERT team is made up of citizens, friends, neighbors and co-workers who realize that their actions make a difference. Following a 21-hour basic training program, CERT volunteers can extinguish small fires, provide lifesaving basic medical intervention and perform basic search and rescue operations. CERT volunteers can also help with shelter staffing and damage assessment.

Throughout the year, CERT also helps with community events by providing disaster education and outreach, radio communications support, basic first aid and hydration stations, parking assistance and support for drills and exercises to evaluate emergency response procedures.

Contact Emergency Management at (352) 754-4083 for more information about the CERT program, or to request a Hernando County Volunteer Application. Or contact our River Country Estates Crime Watch Coordinators, Mike Lutman at 352-346-7149, or Chuck Buzzy at 810-599-6359.

Community Alert Bulletins

The Hernando County Sheriff's Office is providing Community Alert Bulletins to inform the community of suspects and/or suspicious incidents in Hernando County. You can access the CAB at <https://www.hernandosheriff.org/applications/communityalertbulletins/>. If you have any information about the incidents or individuals listed on this site, please take the time to fill out an online Crime Stopper tip or call 1-866-990-8477. You will remain anonymous.

Report suspicious activity to the Sheriff's Department at 352-754-6830. "If you see something, say something."

Interested in joining River Country Estates Crime Watch? Email the office and we will get you in touch with Mike Lutman and/or Chuck Buzzy, our Crime Watch coordinators. Or attend a Crime Watch meeting, usually held on the first Thursday of the month, 7:00PM at 8088 Floral Drive.

Please note that RCE Crime Watch is overseen by the Hernando County Sheriff's Office, not RCEOA.

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