

## Hopefuls differ: taxes, security

U.S. House race between two who never have held office

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Southwest Florida's congressional District 19, with its Gulf Coast beaches, pristine golf courses and closely manicured streetscapes across Collier and Lee counties is, as Republican candidate Francis Rooney put it, "one of the last paradises."

Rooney and his Democratic opponent, Robert Neeld, are pledging to sup-

port proposals in Congress that would maintain key aspects of the district — namely improving the economy, keeping residents safe and cleaning up the area's water.

But even as the candidates agree on limiting the harmful water discharges from Lake Okeechobee, they are split on government spending and tax plans that could stimulate growth.

And there's a stark difference in how they would approach protecting Collier



Francis Rooney, left, and Robert Neeld, right.

to wage an all-out war on radical Islamic extremism."

Neeld, 60, who ran unopposed in his primary and who lost his congressional races in 2004, 2006 and 2008, took a different stance. He said the country's mass shootings are an issue of mental health, which he considers "more responsible for the violence than the religion."

"It just so happens that those who do the violence espouse to a certain religion," Neeld said. "I'm more concerned

and Lee County residents from violent acts, like the June mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando.

"He's a radicalized Islamic terrorist," Rooney, 62, said about Omar Mateen, the Pulse nightclub shooter who called 911 to pledge his allegiance to the Islamic State group before killing 49 people. "We need

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## Should sex be added to Halloween frights?



BRENT BATTEN

It's almost Halloween and you know what that means.

Kids in costumes, candy and graphic sexual content.

The Bonita Blackout Asylum haunted house is promising the latter tonight through Monday at the Southwest Florida Performing Arts Center in Bonita Springs.

Patrons are duly warned about the "graphic sexual content," as well as "explicit language," in the advance notices.

The performing arts center makes it clear no one under age 18 will be admitted and those attending have to sign a waiver before entering.

The creators are offering a milder version of the asylum from 6 to 8:30 p.m. before the adult version starts at 9.

So my fear isn't that some unsuspecting soccer mom will be exposed to "graphic sexual content," when she was really looking for Casper the Friendly Ghost meets The Great Pumpkin.

But what's concerning is the societal movement toward sexualizing everything that can be sexualized.

The Southwest Performing Arts Center certainly isn't the first or worst offender, but in an era when loose, lewd remarks can derail a presidential campaign, why inject sex into a tradition that until recently had gotten along just fine without it?

Halloween as we know it traces its roots to pagan harvest festivals of more than 1,000 years ago.

With Christianization, the observance was renamed All Hallows Eve to honor departed saints and martyrs, thus the connection to ghosts and the afterlife.

Other traditions, such as wearing costumes and carving pumpkins, have evolved over the centuries.

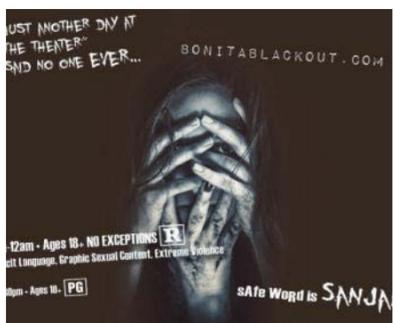
We have come to expect a certain level of Michael Myers-style gore and mayhem with Halloween, but in recent years, Halloween has taken on a different sort of "adult" flavor.

A 2012 article in Forbes magazine under the headline, "How Adults Have Hijacked Halloween from Kids," offers some reasons.

Safety concerns over kids going house to house, and nutrition concerns over too much candy, have put a damper on trick or treating.

Meanwhile, younger adults want to extend the fun of Halloween beyond adolescence, leading to costume days

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SOUTHWEST FLORIDA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER  
A poster for the Bonita Blackout Asylum haunted house at the Southwest Florida Performing Arts Center in Bonita Springs.

# CORKSCREW EXPLORATION



Florida master naturalist Rich Kuntz, center, leads a group Wednesday on the monthly Ancient Forest Tour at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. At right, Kuntz shows the group's location on a map. The 2.25-mile tour goes into the world's largest remaining old-growth bald cypress forest, which was protected from logging in 1954. The boardwalk tour highlights Corkscrew's history and ecology.



PHOTOS BY DOROTHY EDWARDS/NAPLES DAILY NEWS



See more photos of the tour. [inthe239.com](http://inthe239.com)

## Collier hospital gets updated robot system for surgery

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Business owner Morgan Marcos couldn't fathom being sidelined for days and told to avoid physical work for several weeks.

So when the 51-year-old learned from Dr. Anthony Vernava that he could have colon surgery by a "closed" method using the newest da Vinci robot system, the choice was clear.

"The next day I got up and by 6 p.m. I was home," Morgan said.

Six days later, he was back at work at his gate installation company in Collier



Vernava

County.

Vernava, a colorectal surgeon with Physicians Regional Medical Group in North Naples, said the latest version of the da Vinci robot for minimally invasive surgery is superior because it provides the surgeon with greater flexibility in movement with the instrument arms, among other reasons, compared to an earlier version of the surgical system.

Vernava was among half a dozen physicians who lobbied leaders of Physicians Regional Healthcare System to invest \$2.4

million to upgrade the da Vinci system because it's a better tool and improves patient outcomes, he said. Nobody else in Collier County has the newest version, which arrived at Physicians Regional at Pine Ridge in late July, he said.

"It gets booked out," he said. Scott Lowe, chief executive officer of the two-campus Physicians Healthcare, said being the first community in Southwest Florida to have the latest da Vinci system is part of the hospital system's commitment to optimizing patient care and surgical excellence.

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