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ANNUAL REPORT

2025



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Engage Estero

2025 Annual Report

Ensuring a Better Future for Our Community

Published by:
Engage Estero

A Community Engagement Organization
www.esterotoday.com

Date of Publication: January 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2025 marked significant progress and growing responsibility for Engage Estero. As Greater Estero continues to experience rapid growth, evolving development pressures, and heightened environmental and infrastructure challenges, our role as an independent, community-focused organization has never been more essential.

For more than twenty-five years, Engage Estero has served as a trusted voice for residents—ensuring transparency, fostering collaboration, and advocating for decisions that protect quality of life. In 2025, we strengthened that role through focused leadership, strong community partnerships, and actionable results across multiple areas of public concern.



Key Achievements in 2025

1. Transportation & Roadway Advocacy

We were the first to alert residents to FDOT's planned expansion of I-75 through Estero and took a leading role in advocating for comprehensive noise-mitigation solutions. Through public awareness efforts, media engagement, and coordinated resident feedback, we championed stronger protective measures for surrounding neighborhoods.

2. Urbanization & Development Oversight

We released a widely referenced 61-page development report, now viewed more than 7,000 times per month, and continued to inform residents through public meetings on critical planning and growth issues.

3. Environmental & Water Quality Leadership

Through ongoing pressure to accelerate the septic-to-sewer conversion, attention to resiliency needs, and expanded environmental reporting, we helped ensure that Estero's precious natural resources remain protected for future generations.

4. Community Cleanliness & Volunteer Mobilization

Our Adopt-A-Highway program oversaw the removal of more than 2 tons of litter in a single year—and **more than 12 tons since 2020**—thanks to exceptional volunteer support.

5. Support for Education and Youth

We strengthened partnerships with local schools, provided direct funding for STEM initiatives, and supported safety improvements at Estero High School—collaboration with FGCU’s Barbara Wright’s Composition Class.

6. Healthcare & Wellness Initiatives

Engage Estero continued to provide trusted health-education resources and advocated for improved healthcare infrastructure, including inpatient hospital capabilities at Coconut Point.

7. Expanded Communications & Community Engagement

With email subscriptions surpassing 14,000 residents and a surge in social media engagement, 2025 was our strongest year for community outreach. The launch of our new podcast series further strengthened our ability to communicate timely, reliable information.

Our Mission and the Path Ahead

Engage Estero remains dedicated to nonpartisan, fact-based community service. However, maintaining and growing our efforts requires more financial support. While 26 senior leaders each volunteer over 25 hours weekly, our annual operating cost is \$75,000, and we have only one paid staff member.

With enhanced funding, we can:

- Expand scholarships and student support
- Strengthen health and wellness programs
- Establish a \$750,000–\$1 million emergency relief fund
- Engage subject-matter experts for analysis of key issues
- Improve community meetings, outreach, and multimedia resources

Looking Forward

As Estero continues to grow, residents will depend on Engage Estero more than ever. Our commitment is unwavering:

to protect community interests, ensure responsible growth, champion transparency, and preserve the exceptional quality of life that makes Estero home.

We thank all who support our mission—and invite every resident, HOA, business, and donor to join us in shaping a better future for Greater Estero.

Engage Estero

2025 Annual Report

Ensuring a Better Future for Our Community



Introduction

For more than twenty-five years, Engage Estero has worked tirelessly to protect and enhance the quality of life in Greater Estero. As our community grows and changes at an unprecedented pace, residents increasingly rely on us to monitor key issues, share accurate information, and act when it matters most.

Engage Estero's 2025 Annual Report provides an in-depth look at the work we have undertaken on behalf of residents, aimed at protecting, enhancing, and advocating for the long-term livability of Greater Estero, and this year brought rapid growth, complex development decisions, environmental pressures, and shifting public policy challenges.

Through all of this, Engage Estero remained a reliable independent voice, bringing residents, local leaders, and experts together to ensure that progress never comes at the expense of the community we call home.

This report highlights not only what we achieved, but why it matters. Every project, policy review, environmental initiative, and public-safety effort supports one central goal: **preserving the character, well-being, and long-term sustainability of Estero**. In 2025, Engage Estero delivered results that strengthened quality of life—from development oversight and environmental protection to transportation improvements, public-health advocacy, and sustained community engagement.

Residents' Opinions Matter

Residents deserve a meaningful voice in shaping the future of their community. Engage Estero listens, informs, advocates, and collaborates—ensuring that local decisions are transparent, responsible, and aligned with the needs of all who live, work, or invest in Greater Estero.

It is no surprise that **75% of residents** believe an organization like Engage Estero is essential, citing reasons such as:

- The need for nonpartisan, nonpolitical leadership in a divided society.
- Advocacy for responsible growth and environmental protection.
- The desire to limit unnecessary development in order to safeguard quality of life.
- The importance of shaping Estero's long-term future with community-centered planning.

Greater Estero's rapid pace of change demands an organization that protects community interests with diligence, expertise, and independence. Residents have told us:

"Your organization is needed to provide perspectives that official government representatives and employees either don't see or refuse to acknowledge."

With a volunteer team of 26 and only one paid staff member—our Communications Coordinator and Webmaster—we operate with remarkable efficiency. But sustaining this mission requires broader financial support from within the community.

Accomplishments in 2025

Road Traffic Initiatives

Engage Estero was the first organization to alert residents that the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) planned to expand I-75 through Estero from six lanes to ten, with significant implications for traffic noise.

Key actions included:

- Informing hundreds of residents about the proposed widening and advocating directly with FDOT for

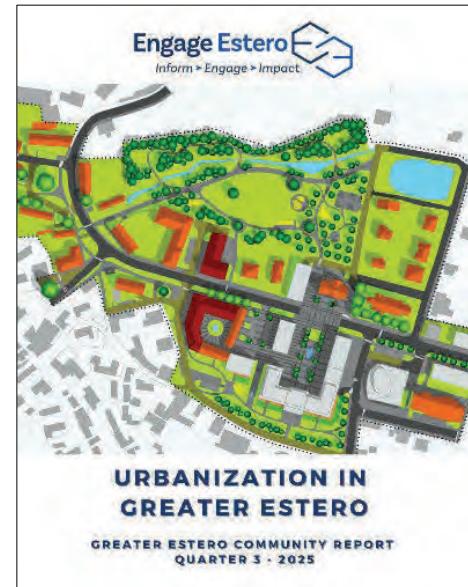


stronger noise-mitigation measures, including continuous noise walls and sound-deadening asphalt.

- President Allan Bowditch discussing residents' concerns on WINK News in June.
- Collecting 150 resident comments and submitting them to FDOT, Congressman Byron Donalds, the Village Manager, and Mayor Joanne Ribble.
- Submitting a unified communication on behalf of the Brooks neighborhoods requesting a 24-foot-high continuous sound-mitigation wall.
- Sharing information with additional neighborhoods likely to be affected.
- Supporting Village-led dissemination of the 2024 Estero Road Traffic Study results and recommendations.

Urbanization in Greater Estero

- Engage Estero produced a **comprehensive 61-page regional development report** in printable and website versions.
- We hosted public meetings on high-priority topics, including:
 - Title fraud
 - Southwest Florida Proton Center updates
 - Reviews of major development activity
 - Sports and recreation planning
 - Village Utilities Expansion Program (Septic-to-sewer conversion) progress
 - "Estero on the River" project updates
 - Speakers included experts and local officials including Village Manager Steve Sarkozy, Director of Public Works David Willems, Clerk of Circuit Court Kevin Karnes and many more.
- A central public forum will be held in March 2026 at FGCU's Cohen Student Union Ballroom, featuring an expert panel on future development and planning.





Community Cleanliness – Litter on Our Roads

Under the leadership of **Julie Yellig**, Engage Estero's Adopt-A-Highway coordinator:

- More than **2 tons** of litter were removed from U.S. 41 between April 2024 and April 2025.
- Since October 2020, volunteers have removed **over 12 tons** of litter along U.S. 41—an extraordinary community achievement.

Julie has also assisted other neighborhoods in establishing similar roadway cleanup programs.

Sports and Recreation

Engage Estero supports the Village's efforts to expand sports and recreational facilities. Residents have shared priorities they hope will be included:

- Children's water park
- Replacement of the former golf driving range
- Veteran Recognition Area with Gold Star Monument
- Large public pool and water-therapy facility for rehabilitation

We also continue to support the **Rails to Trails** initiative led by the BERT organization.

We continue to query Lee County Parks and Recreation on the management Plan for Larry Kiker Preserve and access from Corkscrew Road.



Education Initiatives

Engage Estero expanded support for local students through ongoing collaboration with educators, school engagement programs, and the work of Lead Estero.

Highlights:

- A **\$2,500 donation** to Three Oaks Elementary School to support a STEM initiative by teacher Molly Roberts, which was warmly received by staff and students.
- Sponsored **\$1000 scholarship** in “governance” for an Estero High School senior.
- Collaboration with Estero High School Principal Jennifer Seluk to
 - Share communications, events, and activities
 - Address safety concerns following an accident earlier in the year.
- Collaboration with FGCU’s Barbara Wright’s Composition Class, where 19 students wrote 11 articles about Koreshan History and Park, Estero Bay and River environment, and the need for veteran recognition for publication on <https://www.esterotoday.com>.
- Breaking Par — Engage Estero has been the host for this annual event for the last 13 years. In the last three years, we have supported LEAD Estero, which produces this event, which raised approximately \$100,000 in each of those three years, all for educational initiatives. In 2025, thousands of dollars in scholarships were awarded, and a donation of \$40,000 was added to the LEAD Estero & Engage Estero Endowment Fund at FGCU, bringing the total to \$65,000.”

Environment and Water Quality

- **Septic-to-Sewer Conversion:**
Engage Estero continues to advocate for accelerating this major Village initiative. Although delays are tied to funding complexities, the eventual conversion will significantly improve the Estero River and Estero Bay.
- **Climate Resiliency:**
With increasing threats from storms and flooding, resiliency is becoming a community priority. The Village has begun implementing initiatives, and residents are encouraged

to review the suggested actions in the 4th Greater Estero Community Report on our website.

Healthcare & Community Wellness

Engage Estero expanded its health education efforts, covering topics ranging from dementia awareness to emerging cancer treatment protocols. (You can find a complete list of 2025 articles in the appendix.) We also continue advocating "behind the scenes" for inpatient hospital facilities at Coconut Point.

New Engagement Initiatives



- More than **14,000 residents** now subscribe to Engage Estero email updates.
- Our Head of Social Media in 2025, **Alena Brogan**, expanded our reach significantly, especially among younger residents.
- **Mike Wasson and Terry Flanagan** launched a series of podcasts covering timely community issues, attracting a rapidly growing audience.
- **Professional videography** of meetings and forums to maximize access to community information.
- Engaged with FGCU professors and students for analysis of timely efforts.
- Reached out to community members, consultants, and experts to perform research and write articles for sharing.
- **In February 2025 Engage Estero held the 2nd Don Eslick Person of the Year Award.** This has become an important annual event in the Greater Estero calendar. Past and present mayors, Jon McLain and Joanne Ribble have expressed their support for this event that recognizes the many residents that volunteer or carry out their work with the aim of enhancing the value and quality of people's lives in our community.
 - **In 2024**, the recipient of this prestigious award was Jim Shields. The award was in recognition of Jim's commitment, time, and talent in service to the citizens of Estero. His involvement and support of Junior Achievement, The Entrepreneurial School at FGCU, and financial support for many local organizations, as well as helping to establish Breaking Par to help fund educational issues in Estero. Thank you for your invaluable leadership and support.

- The **2025** award went to Joe and Joni Pavich. Joe and Joni have shown incredible dedication through their volunteer work with various organizations in Estero, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Estero Forever Foundation, and Engage Estero. Their contributions are exemplary examples of community spirit and teamwork.
- The **2026 Award** recipient is Dr Larry Antonucci, President and CEO of Lee Health. His passion and leadership at Lee Health have helped to transform the quality and range of healthcare services in Greater Estero over many years. This has significantly improved many people's lives. Dr Antonucci is a worthy recipient of the 2026 Don Eslick Person of the Year Award.

Our Mission

Our mission defines how we achieve progress for our community, and our vision inspires all who share our goals to join the movement. We remain committed to delivering clear, values-driven leadership that reflects integrity, transparency, and service to Greater Estero.

Our Future Plans



Sustaining and expanding Engage Estero's work requires increased financial support. We are deeply grateful to the HOAs, gated communities, and local businesses that contribute annually—and we encourage those who have paused support to reconsider. Membership costs **less than \$1 per resident**, yet the benefits impact thousands.

Individual donors also play a vital role. Our annual operating requirement is **\$75,000**, and only one staff member receives compensation—our Communications Coordinator and Webmaster. Meanwhile, **25 senior executives volunteer more than 25 hours per week**, contributing expertise collectively valued at over **\$2 million annually** if compensated at market rate.

Opportunities with Increased Funding

With stronger financial support, Engage Estero could:

- Expand scholarships, school programs, and education collaborations.
- Broaden community health-education initiatives.
- Establish a **\$750,000–\$1 million emergency escrow fund** to assist residents during crises—with **100% of donations distributed directly to those in need**.
- Retain consultants and subject-matter experts to provide independent analysis on traffic, environmental, planning, and development issues.

- Improve public forums and community meetings, including high-quality video production to reach more residents.

Why Community Support Matters

When you support Engage Estero, you:

- **Amplify Your Voice:** Ensure that local leaders hear residents' concerns.
- **Strengthen Community Influence:** Shape policies benefiting homeowners and businesses.
- **Enhance Livability:** Promote safe roads, protected natural resources, and improved recreational facilities.
- **Support Education & Workforce Development:** Invest in students and essential workforce housing.
- **Champion Healthcare & Veteran Initiatives:** Improve access to vital services.

Looking Ahead

With continued community growth and significant development on the horizon, residents will rely on Engage Estero more than ever. We remain dedicated to informing, engaging, and empowering our community on the issues that matter most—and ensuring that Estero remains a place where quality of life is always the top priority.

Engage Estero: A Community Engagement Association

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Engage Estero's 2025 Financial Report

The following table provides the key information from our documented financials.

While the support for our work covers our need for \$75,000 to support our objectives, as stated earlier, it leaves little room for the opportunities and support we would like to provide if we had more substantial financial support.



Engage Estero

Statement of Activity by Class

January - November, 2025

	TOTAL
Revenue	\$83,929.71
GROSS PROFIT	\$83,929.71
Expenditures	
Administration	18,229.77
Communications	25,742.83
Engagement Activities	16,020.49
Grants Issued	4,500.00
Scholarships	1,000.00
Total Grants Issued	5,500.00
Operations	3,538.21
Total Expenditures	\$69,031.30
NET OPERATING REVENUE	\$14,898.41
Other Revenue	
Interest Income	1,083.41
Total Other Revenue	\$1,083.41
NET OTHER REVENUE	\$1,083.41
NET REVENUE	\$15,981.82

Appendix 1: Health Related Article provided in 2025

- ❖ Autism Spectrum Disorder- What You Should Know! Written by Allan Bowditch.
- ❖ A Review of the Overall Health of Estero Residents! Written by New Newland.
- ❖ A Sudden Golf Course Emergency. Written by Brian Hurwitz.
- ❖ New Options for Women Undergoing Mammograms. Written by Allan Bowditch.
- ❖ Lee Health's Life-Saving Stroke Protocol. Written by Brian Hurwitz.
- ❖ Nourish Your Mind: The Benefits of a Whole Food Diet. Written by Anne Butcher.
- ❖ Revolutionizing Healthcare: Why the Internet of Medical Things (IoMT) Will Significantly Improve Delivery and Patient Outcomes. Written by Allan Bowditch.
- ❖ The Big "C": Significant Advances in Cancer Treatments. Written by Allan Bowditch.
- ❖ The State of Community Health in Estero. Written by Jim Gilmartin.
- ❖ Skin Cancer: Why Regular Checkups Are Important! Written by Allan Bowditch.
- ❖ The Value of Music Therapy in a Patient's Medical Treatment. Written by Allan Bowditch.
- ❖ Alternative Medical Treatments – Worthwhile or Not? Written by Lisa Khorey.
- ❖ How much (alcohol) is too much? Written by Allan Bowditch.
- ❖ Determining Whether Forgetfulness is simply a matter of Aging or whether it is the Onset of Dementia. Written By Allan Bowditch.
- ❖ How to Handle a Family Member with Dementia, Part 1 &2 Written by Allan Bowditch



Read them Online at: <https://esterotoday.com/health>

Articles

The Retirement Crisis No One Warns You About!
Jan 29, 2025
The Retirement Crisis No One Warns You About! Introduction: The following summary is drawn from Jennifer Risheny Wallaco's new book, "Mattering: The Secret to a Life of Deep Connection and Purpose," which will be published by Portfolio on Jan. 27. The article below is...

Can Alzheimer's Disease ever be cured? There is hope!
Dec 31, 2025
Introduction As of 2025, approximately 7.2 million Americans aged 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's disease, representing about 11% of that age group—roughly 1 in 9 individuals. Various authoritative sources indicate that around 10–11% of Americans over 65 are...

Southwest Florida Proton Center Now Accepting Patients
Dec 23, 2025
Engage Estero is pleased to report that our local Proton Therapy organization, located on the northwest corner of Three Oaks Parkway and Estero Parkway and affiliated with Lee Health, is now accepting patients. As reported earlier this year at our Community Meeting...

Appendix 2

A warm thank you to both our members and donors from all of us at Engage Estero. Your support is greatly appreciated. Please Note: If a donor wishes to specify a particular use of their donation, Engage Estero will endeavor to adhere to those wishes wherever possible.

2025 Members & Supporters of Engage Estero

Bella Terra	Grandezza MPOA	Reserve at Estero
Copperleaf	J. Pavich Real Estate	Riverwoods Plantation
Corkscrew Woodlands	Lee Health	Shadow Wood
Estero Country Club	Lighthouse Bay - Harbor Club	State Insurance USA
FineMark Bank & Trust	Miromar Outlets	The Club at Grandezza
Florida Gulf Coast University	Pelican Sound	Vines Community Assn
	Preserve at Corkscrew	

Donors that Have Supported Engage Estero in 2025

Joseph Archazki	Robert Levy	Evelyn Vargas
Richard Batterberry	Judy Molloy	Thomas Vogelsang
Jon Beasley	Charles Mulvihill	Jim Wallace
Blake Chapman, State Insurance USA	William Persinger	Dan Williams, Renaissance Charitable Foundation
Paul Cornez	John Quin	
Mike Denesha	David Rees	
Gregory Fittinghoff	Robert Roop, Miromar Development Corporation	Engage Estero Personnel
Diana Genotti	David Rubin	Karen & Matt Bodeman
Bettie Gilmartin	Clarissa Rudinsky	Allan Bowditch
Steven Goldman	Stan Saucke	Terry Flanagan
Kathy Gregory	Herbert & Diane	Barry Freedman
Larry Hannah	Schneider	Jim & Bettie Gilmartin
Kem Hawkins	Gary Skalski	Reas Gruber
Jeff Hunt	Michael Stevens, LEAD	Mark Novitski (Student Scholarships in Estero)
Robert Iorizzo	Estero	Michael Wasson
Gregory Karasinski	Lois Strauss-Wilgosz	
Jed Krohnfeldt	Greg Toth	

THANK YOU

To Our Supporters



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LEE HEALTH

Appendix 3: Board and EMT Members of Engage Estero

Board of Trustees



Jim Gilmartin

Chairperson

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Brawley Adams

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Joe Pavich Sr.

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[Bio](#)



Barry Freedman

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Mike Wasson

Communications Deputy
Director & Education
Coordinator

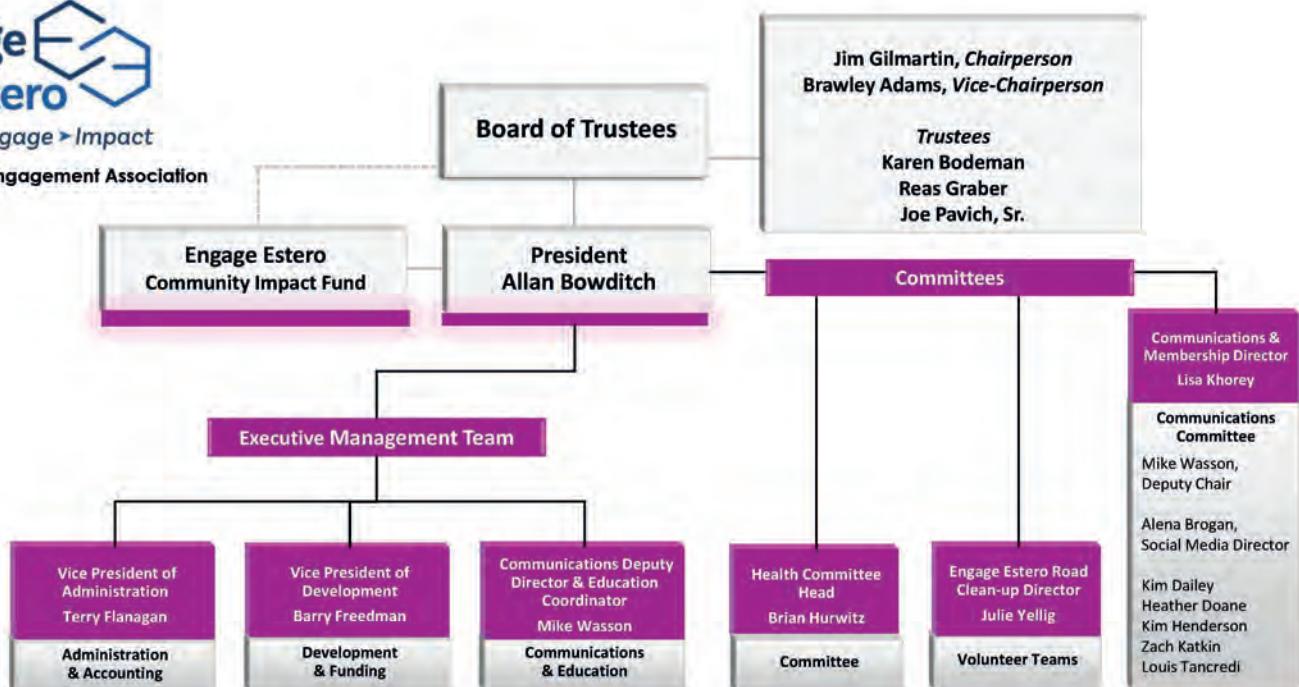
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A Community Engagement Association



Revised
10.02.2025



THANK YOU

