

IS THERE ANY BETTER WAY THAN RAISING TAXES?

TAXES?

County impact fees no longer support Collier's luxurious lifestyle

BY ROGER WILLIAMS
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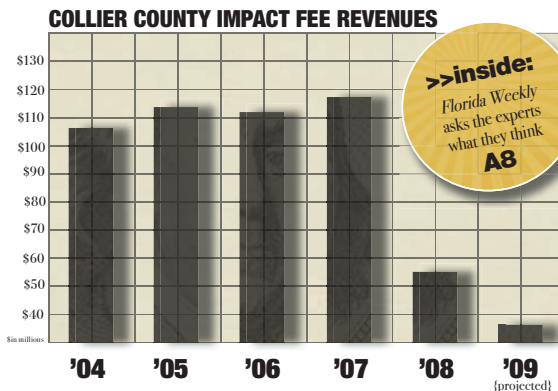
Collier County commissioners are preparing to put the writing on the wall in pure numbers and deliver a message we have already acknowledged individually and as a society: Times are hard and money is tight.

It happens Thursday, Oct. 1.

That's the day the commissioners will open the spigot that connects public money to community needs for the new fiscal year, 2009-2010, and release the flood of dollars that pay the insistent bills of government — for roads, emergency medical services, libraries, parks, independent and dependent fire districts, public schools, the jail, water, sewer, general government needs and law enforcement, among others.

The new budget might as well come posted with a blazing neon caveat that says, "Tighten your belt."

What that might mean for Collier residents appears obvious at first glance: additional taxes of one sort or another, or sig-



>>inside:
Florida Weekly asks the experts what they think
A8

nificant cuts in services, something many say they're reluctant to accept. A sales tax, perhaps, or an increase in property taxes? A real estate transaction tax so that any sale of any property will help fund government spending? Tolls on roads or taxes on utilities? Something else?

Maybe, say the experts. Or maybe there's another way to do things.

Although money is tight everywhere, in one special trust fund there is no deficit, no recession, no hard times: in the brain trust. Here, *Florida Weekly* seeks insight into the demands the future is likely to put on our wallets from several acknowledged experts.

"Collier County has great intellectual

SEE IMPACT, A8 ►

Resourceful Southwest Floridians make big career changes

BY EVAN WILLIAMS
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"You're the kind of guy that knows how to take a hit and keep on rolling." So said his boss from two jobs ago when the newly unemployed chef called in hopes of finding an opening at his twice-removed workplace.

"When my aunt's career managing a high-end fashion store ended shortly after the recession began, she took a job answering telephones at an elementary school." She had to. She was going through a divorce and had two teenagers.

In recent months, thousands of Southwest Floridians have taken a hit and kept



EVAN WILLIAMS/ FLORIDA WEEKLY
Nick Devoucoux went from land surveyor to orchid master and bartender.

on rolling. Here are the stories of a few who have evolved personally and profes-

sionally — and found unexpected rewards — after the economic downturn forced them to make the leap to a new career.

From radio to social networking

Steve Pozgay wasn't sure what he was going to do when his radio program on WINK ended. He was 30 years old and had experienced job loss before, having worked his way up through a tumultuous career in broadcasting.

He scrambled for work and took various turns as an accounts payable clerk at Best Buy, at a carpet outlet and elsewhere.

SEE CHANGES, A17 ►

INSIDE



The Minister of Groove
Percussion Summit 2009 at the Phil will feature drummer Zoro and others. **C1** ►



Old news
Hurricane Donna made headlines 49 years ago this week. **A6** ►



Slow but certain
Signs are encouraging about recovery on the front lines of real estate. **B1** ►



That's the ticket
Coming Friday: Silverspot, 'the boutique hotel of movie theaters.' **C12** ►

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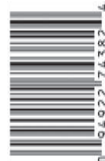
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OPINION A4
NAPLES HISTORY A6
PETS OF THE WEEK A17

BUSINESS B1
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CAREER

From page 1

Although it didn't solve any financial maladies, the turning point for Mr. Pozgay came when he took a volunteer position with The Naples Players at Sugden Community Theatre.

Since then he has also found lucrative spots in commercials, including one for Sonny's Bar-B-Q, and continues to work odd jobs to pay the bills. But joining the Players group "reminded me of the possibilities of what can happen if you become part of the repertory company in a good theater," he says. "From day one, I was hooked... There wasn't any money involved, but it immediately jump started my desire to get back on stage and pursue a performance-based career."

Because of a part he landed in a production of "The Secret Garden," Mr. Pozgay discovered a career path he wants to pursue long term: being a social media consultant.

During rehearsals, he wrote about the troupe's progress every day on his MySpace page. The blog became so popular, he asked the Players' management if he could start up sites for the group on Facebook and Twitter as well. He also studied how social networking sites can be used to sell tickets for the Players. Now theater fans can interact with the Players group through any of these sites.

He's learning how to help other groups communicate through social media and hopes eventually to work full-time doing that. "I've become comfortable with it and really enjoy it," he says. "I guess my story has been one of you have to see what the tide brings you... In my case, it opened up a whole new world and a

career track I never would have envisioned."

While living in South Fort Myers, Mr. Pozgay continues to audition for commercials. He's also going to try out for a part in the Players upcoming production of "Fiddler on the Roof."

Let's get organized

Naples resident Marla Ottenstein likes to take notes about her life to keep herself organized, sort of like a journal, even though she doesn't call it that.

Meticulous note taking helped tremendously when she was busy handling marketing for luxury homebuilders, commercial architects, developers and interior designers. She also wrote magazine articles related to that industry.

But when the housing market collapsed and her assignments started drying up, Ms. Ottenstein had to figure out what to do next. Looking back on how she turned her organizational skills and marketing savvy into a new business, she's convinced there's no time like a recession for someone with drive, ambition and a good idea to blossom.

That's exactly what she did. Drawing on her knack for gently helping friends and family manage their homes, offices, wardrobes and life's daily details, she became a professional organizer. "If you're going to reinvent yourself, you have to find something you love to do that you can stick with," she says.

Ms. Ottenstein will redo a closet or an entire office or garage, or help decide what should stay or go for someone who's moving to a smaller home or putting theirs on the market for sale. In short, she's a "best friend for hire" to any busy person.

She joined the National Association of Professional Organizers and pursued her new career "feet-first and 110 percent." Now she's flush with clients who benefit

from her light touch.

"That's confidential," Ms. Ottenstein says when asked about her clients, many who admit extreme embarrassment over the state of their cluttered spaces. "I'm not there to judge somebody," she says. "I'm there to help them help themselves. I look at the big picture. How can I help this person simplify their life?"

Check out her Web site at www.professionalorganizerflorida.com

High tech advertising

Lesley Marr joined the growing ranks of the unemployed in April, when Naples Transportation and Tours, where she was general manager, was purchased by a big east coast company. Fortunately, they offered her a severance package that left her stable for a few months.

"It was a great time in my life," she says. "I learned a lot, and it gave me the opportunity to do a lot of other things."

She reflected on what she liked about her old job: the event production, technology and rebranding efforts. And what she didn't.

"What I didn't like was the long hours, and (overseeing) employees and making someone else wealthy," she says.

In July, she launched Marr Advertising & Design, a firm that specializes in Web hosting and design and in using Internet destinations like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and Wikipedia to help businesses get their message out.

Her Web site, www.madnaples.com, plays on the name of a popular television show about a generation before X and Y called "Mad Men." Unlike Ms. Marr's company, its characters are part of the "good old days" of advertising, when everyone smoked in the office, ad men ogled their secretaries, and the phrase "building an online presence" didn't exist.

For Ms. Marr, the toughest part of

starting her business was changing the role she was known for. "Getting people to see me not as the tourist-and-transportation Lesley Marr, but as someone who can help them with their advertising, that was probably the scariest part of it," she says.

On to tending bar, then flowers

Nick Devoucoux lost his job as a land surveyor in 2007, when Toll Brothers, a luxury homebuilder, closed its Estero office. His bosses offered to transfer him to Chapel Hill, N.C., but since he couldn't sell the home he owns in Fort Myers, he turned them down.

Mr. Devoucoux had worked as a surveyor since graduating from Edison State College with an associate's degree in construction management nearly nine years ago. He had about a week's notice before the job that helped him support two young daughters and make mortgage and car payments ended.

He decided to forgo applying for unemployment benefits during the two months he was out of work. "I've got two good hands... So I went into the next best thing, the service industry, and started tending bar," he says.

Now he's worked his way up to bar manager at The Sandy Butler near Fort Myers Beach. He finds the work suits him well — and his income is comparable to the \$22 per hour he used to make (although tips drop off sharply in the summer, he says).

But perhaps the best part of Mr. Devoucoux's new career is it gives him time to pursue his true passion, Nick's Exotic Orchid Creations. He buys orchids, then collects driftwood from local beaches and affixes the flowering plants on it. He hasn't made much money doing it, but he hopes one day to run a nursery. To learn more, check out www.nicksexoticorchidcreations.com. ■

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