

# FORT MYERS BEACH



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# FORT MYERS BEACH

A Best Version Media Magazine  
An independently owned community magazine.

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**FEEDBACK / IDEAS / SUBMISSIONS**

Have feedback, ideas or submissions? We are always happy to hear from you! Deadlines for submissions are the 20th of each month, 6 weeks in advance of publication. Email your thoughts, ideas and photographs to [gmooney@bestversionmedia.com](mailto:gmooney@bestversionmedia.com). Submissions must be original and exclusive to *Fort Myers Beach LIVING*, at a maximum of 500 words. *Fort Myers Beach LIVING* reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, space limitations and spelling.

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- FMB Town Hall: 239-765-0202
- FMB Public Library: 239-765-8162
- Lee County Parks & Recreation: 239-533-7275
- Beach Elementary School: 239-463-6356
- FMB Water Department: 239-463-9914
- Trash Collection: 239-334-1224
- Florida Power & Light (FPL): 1-800-226-5885
- CenturyLink: 239-335-3111
- Comcast Cable Company: 239-432-9277
- FMB Chamber of Commerce: 239-454-7500

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# SUDOKU

- By Gary Mooney -

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Each row must contain the digits 1-9.

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			<b>5</b>					

Answers on page 10



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# Hello Friends & Neighbors!

Happy New Year! I hope you enjoyed a wonderful Holiday Season, full of family and friends, parties and events, with a great time had by all!

December marked a significant month in our recovery from Hurricane Ian, as we welcomed back to our island home our most precious resource – our schoolchildren – with the reopening of the Beach Elementary School. December featured the return of the “Christmas Tree Festival” to the island, along with the “Christmas Boat Parade,” “Christmas Bicycle Parade,” and the New Year’s Eve Fireworks Show.

The long-awaited grand opening of the Margaritaville Beach Resort is an economic shot-in-the-arm to every island business that will feel the trickle-down effect from the Resort customers. Sunday evening Bayside Park concerts are a new entertainment staple. The Moss Marina Farmers Market on Wednesdays joins the every-Friday FMB Farmers Market. The Bay Oaks Recreational Center again offers family activities while Lovers Key State Park reintroduced its nature and education programs. If you would have told us islanders on January 1, 2023, that all these things and more would be active by the end of the year, you would have received quite a dose of skepticism, yet here we are!

I predict that the end of 2023 is the sneak preview for what we will get from 2024! Every day it seems like one of our FMB neighbors is returning to their renovated or rebuilt home, including me! By the time you read this, I will either be fully back inside my wonderful home or just days away, as I lived for the past year parked in my driveway in a recreational vehicle loaned to me by family since New Year’s Eve 2022. This is how we mark the ongoing rebirth of our island – one homeowner at a time; today is my turn and hopefully it is you and yours tomorrow. Businesses are on the upswing as

well, with Margaritaville the most obvious example, but restaurants, bars and shops are reopening all the time.

None of these success stories occur in a vacuum. We have all been “FMB Strong” since the morning of September 29, 2022, when we collectively pitched in to literally dig ourselves out of our devastation. That attitude remains enforce today and will continue until every single resident returns and all of our businesses reopen. The old saying is that “we are only as strong as our weakest link” and from what I see on Fort Myers Beach, We Have No Weak Links!

It is impossible to predict what FMB will look like come January 2025, but I believe that the progress we will make over the next twelve months is beyond the wildest imagination any of us can conjure up today; I for one cannot wait to see and experience the new and improved FMB!

Please remember to do your 2024 shopping and socializing right here on Estero & San Carlos Islands, especially with our *FMB LIVING* Magazine sponsors. These good folks work hard every day to help make our island home what it is now and will be in the future due to their dedication and drive.

Let’s Roll in 2024!



*Sandy Sandness*

**Publisher**

*Fort Myers Beach LIVING*

239-222-0129

ssandness@bestversionmedia.com

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*Betty's favorite  
place to be  
is her own  
backyard!  
Cheers!*

## THE LEGENDARY BETTY KAI

### “One Heck of A Party!”

- By Gary Mooney -

“I was born outside of Chicago, in Downers Grove, Illinois,” recalls island icon Betty Kai, who is the mother of 3, grandmother to 8 and great-grandmother of 2, along with her two beloved dogs.

“Dad worked for the railroad at the time – remember, this was the Great Depression – and as I grew older, he kept getting ‘bumped,’ meaning other people took his job, so we moved around quite a bit; in fact, I spent 3rd Grade in five different schools! We ended up in Rockford, Illinois, where I attended East High School, before eventually moving to Wisconsin.

Around that time, my then-husband and I married and lived in a cottage on a lake where we worked at a little bar on weekends, he tended bar and I served cocktails. On New Year’s Day 1964, the owner went to the bathroom and suddenly passed away, and his widow did not want the place, so we purchased it from her and kept it until we divorced in 1981. We had such fun running it that working in bars, taverns and restaurants became my way of life.”

Betty moved to Madison, Wisconsin, where she worked for an attorney. She



*Betty still works 3 days a week at Hurricane Tina’s 5 Star Dive Bar.*

met her significant other and relocated to another lake near Edgerton, Wisconsin, but sadly he passed away. “On top of that, my Stepmother, sister and Dad all died the same year, so I decided that those were signs that I needed to start a new life. In 1990, my daughter was living in the Ocala area and encouraged me to join her, so I said, ‘what the heck; I’m going to Florida!’”

While preparing to call Ocala home, Betty’s stepdaughter was living on FMB and needed help taking care of her daughter for a few weeks, so she asked Betty if she could assist her. “I thought that FMB would be a nice place for a visit, so I said ‘Yes.’ My stepdaughter asked if I could stay another week and by then I met David who became my next significant other. We hit it right off and he and another friend needed a place to stay so we all got a big house together near the Pink Shell Resort and split expenses and that ended my move to Ocala.”

#### **Sunset Betty!**

In December 1990, Betty worked at a lumber store, but in February 1991, the legendary beach bar, Jimmy B’s, opened and they hired her. “I was a cocktail waitress but they soon let their manager go and folks told the owner, ‘Betty owned a bar in Wisconsin; make her the new manager’ and he agreed! It was a Jimmy B’s tradition to distribute complimentary shots at sunset called ‘Sunset Shooters’ and customers began calling me, ‘Sunset Betty!’ The rumor was that I would not let the sun set into the Gulf of Mexico until I distributed a ‘Sunset Shooter’ to each

customer, then led everyone with the toast, 'Shooters Up; Shooters Down!' Unfortunately, Hurricane Charlie basically destroyed Jimmy B's but like I say, 'You can take away the places but you cannot take away the memories!'"

Jimmy B's was just the beginning of Betty's FMB bar and restaurant legacy. "After Jimmy B's, I went to the Channel Mark, then the Fish Monger. Next was Nervous Nellie's, followed by the Sunset Beach Grille, Nauti Parrot Dock Bar and now Nauti Parrot Oasis and Hurricane Tina's 5 Star Dive Bar FMB. I love Hurricane Tina's and hope we soon see more people return that have been gone since the storm."

Like Jimmy B's, several of Betty's former establishments no longer exist, "but remember, 'you can take away the places but you cannot take away the memories!' While they are all special to me, my favorite remains Jimmy B's because it reminded me so much of our old Wisconsin bar."

Anyone who sees Betty from early September through the winter knows she wears her allegiance to her beloved Green Bay Packers on her sleeve – or jersey! So, what is it like now for a devoted Green Bay fan without a Hall-of-Fame quarterback for the first time in three decades, with neither Brett Favre nor Aaron Rogers under center. "It is a little different with those guys gone, but I am still a loyal fan! My son in Illinois said about a year ago that it may be a good time to change my allegiance, perhaps to Tampa Bay since I live in Florida for so long, but I said, 'No Way!' A highlight of my life was when I went to a convention in Green Bay and met Hall-of-Fame quarterback Bart Starr, along with Fuzzy Thurston and several other Packers and had my photograph taken with Bart! Years later, Fuzzy moved to Marco Island and came to the PierSide Grill, then he and the



*Betty is a founding member of the Fort Myers Beach "Little Black Dress" group, here in this 2017 photograph.*

owner walked to Jimmy B's and I got to be friends with him. As great as Favre and Rogers were, the greatest Packer quarterback of all time is Bart Starr!"

### **"Hobby" is Working**

These days, Betty lives a few miles off-island so she weathered Hurricane Ian better than most. "I seriously thought about evacuating but the forecasts indicated that Ian would strike the Tampa area so it seemed safe to stay but it shifted its track. Once Ian hit, I admit I was petrified, it severely damaged my beautiful backyard where I often entertain but fortunately my home is on a slope and that elevation makes it slightly higher than the rest of my neighborhood and made all the difference. At one point, water flooded in through my doggie door but my friend Helen helped put on the cover and everything was fine after that so I had few issues. Most of my neighbors have duplexes so they had some flooding but minimal damage. We are a tight-knit community so it is wonderful we are all still together."

Betty's favorite "hobby" is "Working! Years ago, I enjoyed embroidery but I do not have time for that anymore. I work three morning shifts at Hurricane Tina's and do four evenings and Sundays at the Nauti Parrot Oasis on US41. When the Bel Air Beach Club reopens soon, I will be there Wednesdays and Saturdays. My Dutch Grandmother raised me that you do not sit around, so even as a teenager I joined my Uncle with the Ringling Brothers Circus! I love to work and when people ask me the key to my longevity, I reply, 'You work hard and you party hard!' After my workday shifts, in the evenings I enjoy games of solitaire, a beverage and watching the evening news."

Many on FMB know Betty as "Mrs. Claus!" "I became Mrs. Claus for the Tween Water Resort tree lighting ceremony as well as at various other places, and at the annual FMB 'Christmas Boat Parade,' I hand out cookies and candy near Nervous Nellie's. 'Mrs. Claus' is a big part of my life on the beach." And Betty is a marriage officiant on FMB, marrying well over 200 couples!

*continued on page 17*



*Betty enjoys playing solitaire (with real cards) and watching the news to unwind at the end of the day.*



# Chamber Chat!

*Pay It Forward in '24!*

Happy New Year, Fort Myers Beach, & Welcome to a New Year brimming with the spirit of renewal!

I get such a different vibe from FMB today than I did one year ago. As 2023 began, it was just three months since Hurricane Ian's September 28th devastation. We were all still literally picking up the toothpicks that were formerly our homes and businesses while dealing with something akin to an island-wide reality check laced with an outbreak of PTSD. Most of us were struggling to find a path forward while trying to put the pieces of our new lives together.

2024 sure feels different! Many of us are now back in our homes or soon will be. Many of our beloved island businesses are open or soon will be. Our Beach Kids are back where they belong, in our cherished Beach Elementary School. And the opening of the much-anticipated Margaritaville

Beach Resort has ushered in a brand-new chapter of Fort Myers Beach history.

With island life clearly on the upswing this year, I would like to challenge the FMB community to make 2024 a year of paying it forward. In the spirit of giving and as a tribute to all the people and organizations who rushed to our rescue after Hurricane Ian, I would like to ask our community members to make 2024 the year that we "pay it forward" and reach out to help others in need. This month's cover feature, the ageless Betty Kai, who never stops moving and giving, is a perfect example of someone who continues to pay it forward and give her time, talents and energy. During the past 15 months, we all received so much from so many that I would like to see our community make giving back the focus of one of our New Year's resolutions.

### So Many Worthy Groups

Paying it forward on FMB is easy as we have so many worthy groups. FMB Strong at 820 Buttonwood is our newest beach entity and they do amazing community service work in their first year. Visitors and Islanders alike are aware of the continued generosity of the Fort Myers Beach Baptist Church. The FMB Woman's Club and FMB Community Foundation independently are dynamic but when they join forces like after Hurricane Ian – Look Out! They jointly raised and distributed over \$800,000 in donations

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*Bayside Building has committed to donate a portion of each job's proceeds to FMBStrong as our way of assisting in post-storm humanitarian relief as long as it's needed in our area.*



*New Year ~ New Beginnings  
~ Endless Possibilities!*



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to island residents, one \$500 gift card at a time! In addition to this, they each host fundraising events throughout the year, continuing to promote their missions while supporting FMB. A great example of this is the Woman's Club's upcoming event, the Putt & Pub Crawl on January 20. This is a super cool event where the nonprofit community joins up with island businesses to have fun, raise funds and celebrate our unique island lifestyle!

Soon, the FMB Woman's Club and the FMB Art Association will launch capital campaigns to rebuild their historic buildings that were lost in Hurricane Ian. Another group to remember is the Estero Island Historic Society. They are currently restoring the historic cottages at the Matanzas Pass Preserve entrance, and as our history is now more important than ever, they need your help! Speaking of island history, another worthwhile endeavor is the Restore the Arches campaign that continues to raise funds for the reconstruction of the replica of our beloved arches. When considering where to give, please remember our multiple "Friends" organizations: The FMB Friends of the Arts; The Friends of Bay Oaks; The Friends of the FMB Public Library; The Friends of Lovers Key State Park; and The Friends of the Mound House.

Perhaps your heart leans toward children's charities. Our island kids benefit every day from the Parent Teacher Organization and the youth sports leagues on our island. Often the best way to assist our local youth, especially if you are a retiree, is through the contribution of your time, talents and experiences by mentoring our school students. To find out how to best help out the Beach Elementary School, contact them at 239-463-6356.

As you contemplate paying it forward in ways big and small, remember the example of B. Pat O'Roark who recently passed away after a life well lived in our Southwest Florida community. At his recent memorial celebration of life at the Broadway Palm Dinner Theater, B. Pat, through a video, spoke to the audience and announced that he was giving everyone there a \$25 gift card to share with someone else. He asked his celebration of life guests to pay it forward in his memory. As everyone there listened to B. Pat share his vision of caring for others from beyond the grave, there was not a dry eye in the house! Certainly, a life well-lived and an example of how the gift of giving can and does change lives.

So, my fellow islanders, my 2024 challenge to you is to pay it forward in big and small ways by spreading out our collective charity and generosity to others who need our help today. Please do so, remembering all the people and organizations who stepped forward over the last year and offered us the hand-up when we so desperately needed it.

### A WOW Year!

Now I am going to go into the "Prediction Business!" In the spirit of Gary Mooney's "annual predictions" back when he wrote for "The Island Sand Paper," I will continue his "future-telling" tradition.

Looking into my crystal ball for the next twelve months, I see an island community that is literally HOPPING with life! People everywhere, walking down the street, filling our beach and businesses, spending time with family and friends and sharing our love of FMB! I foresee many more residents who returned to their new or revitalized homes and I see many more open businesses, not only those that rebuilt and returned but many new ones who decided to invest in our community's future! I anticipate many more reopened condominiums that welcome back many more of our island residents and visitors. I see a vibrant, eclectic, tight-knit community that refused to give up in the worst of times who now celebrate life on our barrier island in the best of times! In short, I foresee 2024 as "A WOW Year!"

Remember that the FMB Chamber of Commerce Office is open at 100 Lovers Lane, Suite 2E, on Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. We operate our Times Square satellite office from our cute-as-a-button mobile "Roxie" trailer on Wednesdays through Sundays from Noon to 6 p.m. We always need volunteers to help man "Roxie," especially now in-season, so if you have time, sign up for a shift at [http://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0948aaa72a2ff2-roxie#](http://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0948aaa72a2ff2-roxie#/).

On behalf of our 400-plus FMB Chamber of Commerce members, Happy New Year and remember . . . "Island Life; It's *Our* Business!" ■

*Jacki Liszak, President*

*Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce!*



*We've weathered the storms with you.  
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# January

**Sun., December 31**  
**New Year's Eve Fireworks**

@Times Square  
 Ring in 2024 with a spectacular fireworks display exploding above in the beach in the skies over the Gulf of Mexico! This free show begins at Midnight; see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

**Mondays, January 1 & 15**  
**Caribbean Cruise-In Car Show**

@Parrot Key Caribbean Grill  
 The largest FREE FMB Car Show returns on the 1st & 3rd Monday of each month through April 2024. Enjoy music, food and prizes while marveling at these fantastic cars! 3 to 6pm; see [www.myparrotkey.com](http://www.myparrotkey.com).

**Wed., January 3**  
**AND EVERY WEDNESDAY**  
**Moss Marina Market**

@Moss Marina  
 Enjoy fresh produce, artisan foods, arts, crafts, clothing and more each Wednesday from 9am to 1pm; see [www.41markets.com](http://www.41markets.com).

**Wed., January 3**  
**Mound House Museum,**  
**Grounds & Store**

@The Historic Mound House  
 Built in 1921, the Mound House is the oldest standing structure on FMB. It is a multi-level museum that showcases Calusa artifacts, interactive exhibits and the one-of-a-kind 1,600-year-old underground shell mound attraction. Wednesdays through Saturdays from 9am to 4pm with the Grounds open 7:30am to 6pm. Adults \$15, Students \$8, Kids 6 to 12 \$5, & 5 & under free; Grounds free. See [www.moundhouse.org](http://www.moundhouse.org).

**Wed., January 3**  
**All About Alligators**

@Lovers Key State Park  
 A Park naturalist explains why alligators are integral members of our Southwest Florida ecosystem, what you can do to coexist with them and how you can protect our State reptile. Free with park entry fee at 10am; reservations necessary at <https://bit.ly/FOLKS-Events>.

**Wed., January 3**  
**FMB Woman's Club Monthly Meeting**

@The Historic Mound House  
 Join the most fun social club on the entire island! The meeting starts at 6:30pm and all are welcome!; for up-to-date info go to [www.fmb-wc.org](http://www.fmb-wc.org).

**Thurs., January 4**  
**FMB Chamber "Coffee Connection"**

@LMCU  
 Start your day with your FMB Chamber friends for networking with tasty complimentary coffee and breakfast items at the Lake Michigan Credit Union on Winkler Road. The free "Coffee Connection" is from 8 to 9:30am; see [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

**Fri., January 5,**  
**AND EVERY FRIDAY**  
**Fort Myers Beach Market**

@Times Square  
 This Downtown FMB Market offers fresh produce, artisan foods, arts, crafts, clothing and more every Friday from 9am to 1pm; see [www.41markets.com](http://www.41markets.com).

**Fri., January 5**  
**FMB Art Association Winter Art Show**  
**"Let It Be"**

@Cape Coral Arts Center  
 "Let It Be" is FREE and runs Monday to Saturday through Thursday, January 25, from 9am to 4pm; see [www.fortmyersbeachart.com](http://www.fortmyersbeachart.com).

**Fri., January 5**  
**Mound House Sunset Kayak Tours**

@The Historic Mound House  
 Catch a beautiful sunset in the hidden backwaters of the Estero Bay from a kayak on this 2-hour tour! The MH provides all equipment; ages 12 & up, weather permitting and participants must wear shoes and bring water. The MH repeats the "Sunset Kayak Tours" on Fridays, January 12 & 19, from 4 to 6pm. \$50-per-person including MH admission with reservations necessary at [www.moundhouse.org](http://www.moundhouse.org).

**Fri., January 5**  
**Welcome & Discovery Center**

@Lovers Key State Park  
 The Welcome & Discovery Center educates and informs visitors about Lovers Key habitats through interactive displays Wednesdays through Fridays from 10am to 1pm. The W&DC is FREE with the park entry fee; see [www.friendsofloverskey.org](http://www.friendsofloverskey.org).

**Sun., January 7,**  
**AND EVERY SUNDAY**  
**Bayside Park Concert Series**

@Bayside Park  
 Islanders and visitors alike kick back and relax while listening to fantastic tunes from local musicians at these FREE weekly outdoor concerts from 4 to 7pm! For details, see [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

**Mondays, January 8 & 22**  
**FMB Town Council Meeting**

@DiamondHead Beach Resort  
 The FMB LPA, appointed by Town Council, continues efforts to rebuild FMB following Hurricane Ian at 9am; see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

**Tues., January 9**  
**FMB Local Planning Agency Meeting**

@DiamondHead Beach Resort  
 The FMB LPA, appointed by Town Council, continues efforts to rebuild FMB following Hurricane Ian at 9am; see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

**Tues., January 9**  
**Mound House Lecture Series**  
**"Hurricane Ian Impact on**  
**SW Florida in a Warming Climate"**

@The Historic Mound House  
 Dr. Michael Savarese of the FGCU Water School presents "Hurricane Ian's Impact on the Coast of Southwest Florida in the Context of a Warming Climate: Lessons Learned for Managing Resilience." Mike discusses the history of environmental change in coastal settings, particularly in response to human development, climate change and sea level rise. A complimentary wine and refreshments reception is at 5:30pm with the lecture at 6pm. \$7 Mound House members & \$15 non-members; register in advance at [www.moundhouse.org](http://www.moundhouse.org).

**Wed., January 10**  
**Mound House Eco-Kayak Tour**

@The Historic Mound House  
 Explore the winding mangrove creeks and hidden backwaters of the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve on this 2-hour tour. The MH provides all equipment; ages 12 & up, weather permitting and participants must wear shoes and bring water. The Eco-Kayak Tour is every Wednesday & Saturday from 9 to 11am. \$50-per-person including MH admission with reservations necessary at [www.moundhouse.org](http://www.moundhouse.org).

SUDOKU

Answers from page 3

6	9	2	7	5	3	4	1	8
8	5	3	6	1	4	7	2	9
1	4	7	8	2	9	6	3	5
2	3	9	4	7	6	8	5	1
4	1	6	3	8	5	2	9	7
7	8	5	2	9	1	3	4	6
5	2	4	1	6	8	9	7	3
3	6	1	9	4	7	5	8	2
9	7	8	5	3	2	1	6	4

**Thurs., January 11**  
**FMB Town Council Management & Planning Session**

@DiamondHead Beach Resort  
 The FMB Town Council continues its efforts to rebuild FMB following Hurricane Ian at 9am; see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

**Thurs., January 11**  
**FMB Chamber Membership Luncheon**  
 @TBD

Join your FMB Chamber friends for a scrumptious luncheon at an island restaurant and hear from an informative speaker from 11:30am-1 pm. \$30 members & \$40 prospective members; for the restaurant location see [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org)

**Thurs., January 11**  
**Shell Mound Tour**

@The Historic Mound House  
 Discover the archaeology and history of the Mound House and learn clues uncovered about this 1,600-year-old shell mound on this 30-minute tour every Wednesday through Saturday at 10am & 2pm. \$5-per-person plus MH admission; see [www.moundhouse.org](http://www.moundhouse.org).

**Saturdays, January 13 & 20**  
**"American Boating Course"**

@San Carlos Bay Squadron Classroom  
 This 2-day, 8-hour basic boating class includes Florida navigation rules and how to deal with water emergencies. \$65-per-person & \$20 each additional person from 8:15am to Noon; see [www.scbps.com](http://www.scbps.com).

**Wed., January 17**  
**Munchin' Manatees**

@Lovers Key State Park  
 A Park naturalist explains what these lovable gentle giants are all about and how we can help protect them. Free with park entry fee at 10am; reservations necessary at <https://bit.ly/FOLKS-Events>.

**Wed., January 17**  
**FMB Community Foundation Monthly Meeting**

@The Historic Mound House  
 The FMB Community Foundation is one of the island's leading philanthropic organization, so join in on the fun from 5:30 to 7pm. For up-to-date information go to [www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com](http://www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com).

**Thurs., January 18**  
**FMB Chamber "Business After Hours"**  
 @TBD

Join your FMB Chamber friends for a fun time while enjoying savory appetizers and a cash bar from 5:30 to 7pm. Members FREE & \$15 for perspective members; contact the FMB Chamber for the "BAH" location at [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org)

**Sat., January 20**  
**Putt & Pub Crawl**

@Times Square  
 The Annual "Putt & Pub Crawl" is a putt-putt fundraiser that showcases fun, competition and giving back. Tee off between 10am & Noon at nine island restaurants around the Times Square district culminating with an awards ceremony and dinner beginning at 5pm at the Margaritaville Sun Deck. For up-to-date information go to [www.fmb-wc.org](http://www.fmb-wc.org).

**Tues., January 30**  
**Coffee With A Cop!**

@MoJoe's Coffee Bar  
 Lee County Deputy Sheriffs engage with community members in a casual setting to build trust, foster positive relationships and initiate an open dialog. FREE from 9 to 11am; see [www.sheriffleeflcounty.org](http://www.sheriffleeflcounty.org).

**Sat., February 10**  
**MRS ROPER'S Back to the Beach Party**  
 @The RUDE Shrimp CO.

A curly red wig, a caftan, and some chunky accessories is all one needs to conjure the surprisingly beloved Helen Roper. Join other caftan dressed friends beginning at The The RUDE Shrimp CO. with Regal Beagle hosting the kickoff party for the crawl! Other stops include Wahoo Willie's, Nervous Nellie's, Petey's Upper Deck, concluding on the Sunset Terrace at License to Chill in the Margaritaville Beach Resort Fort Myers Beach. For up-to-date information [www.facebook.com/fmbstrong](http://www.facebook.com/fmbstrong)

**Sat., February 24**  
**Fall in Love with Lover's Key, Again! Gala**

@Lover's Key State Park  
 Enjoy the beauty of the beach while preserving it for today and future generations. Guests will be treated to an elegant dinner "under the stars," live music and lively bidding at the luxury auction showcasing trips and experiences sure to delight! Beach formal attire is requested. Space is limited; advance ticket purchase is required. For up-to-date information go to [www.facebook.com/friendsofloverkey](http://www.facebook.com/friendsofloverkey)

If you belong to a new or existing FMB neighborhood group or community club, please submit your event information to [gmooney@bestversionmedia.com](mailto:gmooney@bestversionmedia.com).  
 The submission deadline is the 20th of each month, 6 weeks in advance of publication.



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# Cioppino

Submitted by Shelley-Sue Williams

## INGREDIENTS

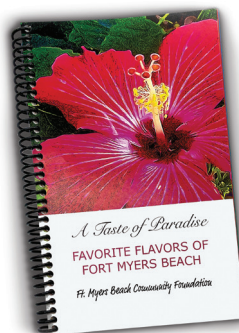
- ¾ cup butter
- 2 onions, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 bunch fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 (14.5 ounce) cans stewed or fire roasted tomatoes
- 2 (14.5 ounce) cans chicken broth
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tablespoon dried or 2 tablespoons fresh basil
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 cup water
- 1 ½ cups white wine
- 1 ½ pounds large shrimp - peeled and deveined
- 1 ½ pounds bay scallops
- 18 small clams
- 18 mussels, cleaned and debearded
- 1 ½ cups crabmeat
- 1 ½ pounds cod fillets, cubed

## INSTRUCTIONS

Over medium-low heat melt butter in a large stockpot, add onions, garlic and parsley. Cook slowly, stirring occasionally until onions are soft.

Add tomatoes to the pot (break them into chunks as you add them). Add chicken broth, bay leaves, basil, thyme, oregano, water and wine. Mix well. Cover and simmer 30 minutes.

Stir in the shrimp, scallops, clams, mussels and crab meat. Stir in fish, if desired. Bring to boil. Lower heat, cover and simmer 5 to 7 minutes until clams open. Ladle soup into bowls and serve with warm, crusty bread!



This delicious recipe and many more are in the Fort Myers Beach Community Foundation's cookbook, *A Taste of Paradise: Favorite Flavors of Fort Myers Beach* that is available for purchase at [www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com](http://www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com).

A great gift that supports the community of Fort Myers Beach!

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# Look for these upcoming charity events!



Proceeds to benefit FMB Strong, a local 501(c)3 charity organization aiding residents in hurricane recovery.

## 1ST ANNUAL MRS. ROPER'S BACK TO THE BEACH

### Cattan Crawl




**10** FEBRUARY 12:00 PM

**SAVE THE DATE**

FORT MYERS BEACH

## FORT MYERS BEACH Woman's Club

PRESENTED BY:




12th Annual Fort Myers Beach

### Putt & Pub Crawl

**Saturday, January 20th, 2024 – "Shotgun Start" at 11:00 a.m.**

**Shoot a Wacky Round of Golf – All for Charity!**  
Grab your sticks and join the King Family Foundation shoot-out of the year. Compete at nine intense holes placed strategically around Time's Square. Duffers Welcome! Grab your friends and register early to help support 10 great non-profits and local island businesses.

**Dinner and Award Presentation at The Sky Deck at Margaritaville to follow.**

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- 1st and 2nd Place Teams
- Duffer's Award (worst score)
- Best Team Name
- Best Dressed Team




**For more information go to [www.fmb-wc.org](http://www.fmb-wc.org)**

Sponsored by:



**A Special thanks to these participating Non-Profits and local area businesses**

La Ola	Lighthouse Tiki Bar	Friends of the Mound House	FMB Chamber of Commerce
Nervous Nellies	Lah De Dah Margaritaville	FMB Little League	FMB Strong
Rude Shrimp	Beach Bar	Friends of Lovers Key	Friends of Bay Oaks
Wahoo Willies	Yucatan	FMB PTO	Friends of the Library
Snug Harbor		Community Foundation	

**Register online at [www.fmb-wc.org](http://www.fmb-wc.org)**

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21461 WIDGEON TER	4 Bed/3	2,391	\$1,564,000
235 VIRGINIA AVE	1 Bed/2	884	\$750,000
161 GULF ISLAND	3 Bed/1.5	1,076	\$670,000

### VACANT LOT 10-27-2023 TO 11-27-2023

Address	Lot Frontage	Acres	Sold Price
3500/3502 ESTERO BLVD	72	0.238	\$3,100,000

### BONITA SPRINGS 10-27-2023 TO 11-27-2023

Address	Beds/Baths	Sq. Ft.	Sold Price
26000 HICKORY BLVD #303	2 Bed/2	1,089	\$1,215,000
26427 HICKORY BLVD	3 Bed/2	2,756	\$900,000
5700 BONITA BEACH RD #3606	1 Bed/	508	\$390,000

Address	Sub/Condo	Sq. Ft.	Sold Price
GRANDVIEW AT BAY BEACH#PH 1103	4 Bed/3.5	2,767	\$3,064,875
PALM HARBOR CLUB #604	3 Bed/2	1,851	\$1,000,000
ISLAND SHORES CONDO #403	3 Bed/2	1,234	\$950,000
SANDARAC CONDO #A507	2 Bed/2	1,244	\$720,000
CANE PALM BEACH CONDO #304	2 Bed/2	774	\$705,000
WATERSIDE AT BAY BEACH #283	3 Bed/2	1,639	\$695,000
WHITECAPS SOUTH CONDO #201	2 Bed/2	910	\$660,000
THE PALMS OF BAY BEACH #3A	3 Bed/2	1,499	\$619,000
CARLOS POINTE #333	2 Bed/2	933	\$525,000
PRIVATEER OF FT MYERS BEACH \$C117	2 Bed/2	1,055	\$475,000
OCEAN HARBOR CONDO #202	2 Bed/2	1,318	\$470,000
PINK SHELL VACATION VILLAS #632	1 Bed/1	647	\$450,000
SMUGGLERS COVE CONDO #4B4	2 Bed/2	792	\$450,000
THE PALMS OF BAY BEACH #D-7	2 Bed/2	1,029	\$449,500
ESTERO COVE CONDO #113	2 Bed/2	778	\$355,000

Based on information from the Florida Gulf Coast MLS, Inc. for the period 10-27-23 to 11-27-23 for FB01-FB07 • Best Version Media does not guarantee the accuracy of the statistical data on this page. The data does not represent the listings of any one agent or agency but the entire real estate community in the area. Any real estate agent's ad appearing in the magazine is separate from the statistical data provided which is in no way a part of their advertisement.



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# FORE!



*"We encourage all foursomes to dress in unique costumes – the crazier the better!"*

*"There is no formal order to play the nine golf holes so every team makes up their own course."*

- By Gary Mooney -

## FMB Woman's Club Hosts Annual Putt & Pub Crawl on January 20

Many island residents participate in golf scrambles fundraisers at various times, but Fort Myers Beach has its own unique golfing fundraiser with the Annual Putt & Pub Crawl, cosponsored by the Fort Myers Beach Woman's Club and the King Family Foundation, on Saturday, January 20.

"Foursomes with colorful and imaginative team names as well as unique costumes make their way to 9 beach bars and restaurants each of which features a unique putt-putt hole manned by an island nonprofit," explains Dawn Thomas, the FMB Woman's Club President and Putt & Pub Crawl Co-chair with Mari Torgerson. "Each nonprofit receives the proceeds from drink specials and other contests held at their respective hole. The nonprofit creates gift baskets that they raffle off at the end of the event."

The "Putt & Pub Crawl" golf round lasts throughout the afternoon as groups compete for 1st and 2nd Place, the Duffer's Award for highest score, the Best Dressed Team and Best Team Name, "but the main goal of the event is to raise money and awareness for the 10

nonprofits," says Dawn. "The Putt & Pub Crawl limits the registration to 60 teams or roughly 240 golfers with sell outs almost every year. If you think you may want to play the week of the event or would just like to attend the awards dinner, email us at [info@fmb-wc.org](mailto:info@fmb-wc.org) and we will get back to you if there are openings and extra meals are \$25 and must be reserved in advance as we cannot add any that day"

An exciting addition to this year's "Putt & Pub Crawl" is the awards ceremony location, raves Dawn! "We are thrilled that the awards ceremony is at Margaritaville, as our entire island community has waited years for this dynamic new resort to open! The Margaritaville Sun Deck will be the perfect spot to celebrate our winners and enjoy the beach views."

### Match Play!

For the 2024 Putt & Pub Crawl, the following nine FMB bars and restaurants partner with corresponding nonprofits: La Ola in Times Square with The Friends of the Mound House; Lah De Dah Beach Bar in Margaritaville with FMB Strong; Nervous Nellie's and the FMB Little League; Snug Harbor Waterfront Restaurant and the FMB

Community Foundation; The Beach Bar along with The Friends of Bay Oaks; The Lighthouse Tiki Bar & Grill for the FMB Chamber of Commerce; The Rude Shrimp Company for The Friends of Lovers Key; Wahoo Willie's and the FMB PTO; and Yucatan Beach Stand with The Friends FMB Public Library; as well as the FMB Woman's Club as the overriding sponsor.

"Putt & Pub Crawl registration is from 10 a.m. to Noon and teams must complete their golf rounds by 4:30 p.m.," says Dawn. "There is no formal order to play the nine golf holes so every team makes up their own course. Each hole sponsor supplies the putters and golf balls for your team. Once all nine holes are completed, teams proceed to the awards ceremony and dinner at the Margaritaville Sun Deck. The ceremony will begin promptly at 5 p.m. with everything concluding at 6:30 p.m. In addition to the prizes, there will be raffles, drink specials and maybe a surprise or two!"

A Putt & Pub Crawl tradition are the unique gift baskets that the nonprofits assemble, with all proceeds from those ticket sales going to each individual nonprofit. Gift baskets will be available

*continued on page 17*



## Plans Forming for a Late April Event

- By Gary Mooney -

Calling all Beach Elementary School (BES) and Fort Myers High School (FMHS) alumni from the “Flower Power” generation of the 1960s! A fledgling committee of your classmates is in the initial stages of formulating a reunion from that era for this upcoming April 2024!

“I am a 1964 FMHS graduate,” explains Dr. Joseph Busta, Jr. At our 50th reunion, a few of us former Beach Kids got together – as practically everyone who graduated from BES back then went to FMHS – and said the next time we do this, we should get the Beach Kids back together for our own reunion, as they are our true peer group! That got me talking

to Melinda (Gammon) Brondstetter and Joan (Eberhardt) Hensley to discuss it.”

Because BES graduating classes are so small, however, Joe and his initial committee are expanding the scope of the Beach Kids Reunion. “Rather than just our class, we welcome anyone who during the decade of the 1960s lived on the island and graduated from BES and/or FMHS. Even if you are a little outside of that age range on either side, join us!”

### What The Future Holds for The Island

Joe is already in communication with roughly 20 to 30 Beach Kids, “so we will soon be emailing reunion information. If you have not heard from me and

would like information, please contact me at [jbusta@southalabama.edu](mailto:jbusta@southalabama.edu) and I will add you to our list.”

Tentative Beach Kids Reunion plans call for a reception and dinner on Saturday, April 27; a BBQ picnic hosted by a FMHS classmate; and perhaps a program on Sunday, April 28, in conjunction with the Estero Island Historic Society, “if people can use the historic cottages by that time, with the Mound House as a back-up plan,” Joe offers. “I am arranging for a speaker who can give us an in-depth perception of what FMB is still going through since Hurricane Ian as well as what the future holds for the island. We are in communication with the new Margaritaville Resort to be our Reunion headquarters.”

### A Special Time in The Life of FMB!

Joe recalls that “FMB was a pretty small place when we were in the BES, with maybe 1,800 year-round residents that ballooned up to around 4,000 people during the winter, so everyone knew everyone and it was common to hitchhike around the island. Everybody was laid back, without much of the commercialism that the island enjoys today, so we were a tight-knit community. The BES was grades 1 through 6 and when we graduated, we took buses to Fort Myers Junior High and FMHS. The big social activities were the FMB Little League, along with church-related events, and clubs like the Cub Scouts and of course hanging out at The Brezzy Freeze! We Beach Kids came together as great friends in a very small-town type of way, with all the small-town trappings that go with that. The idea of getting as much of that group back together from near as well as far-flung places is an ambitious concept but we as a group are not getting any younger!”

The FMB “of our youth is a slice and period of time in FMB history, before commercialization came to the island, that is forever gone,” philosophizes Joe. “Sure, we had our motels and vacation cottages and some restaurants and bars, but we were at heart a small town and that was a unique point in the history of FMB. Time changes everything, often for the better, but the days of our youth were a special time in the life of Fort Myers Beach!” ■



*continued from page 7*



*Of Betty's many jobs she really enjoyed mowing lawns before the Hurricane.*

**One Heck of A Party!**

As to what FMB will look like in the five years, "it will take a while to rebuild," philosophizes Betty, "and sadly those quaint little beach houses are forever gone, along with many island landmarks. It will be more metropolitan than the FMB we knew, with more and higher condominiums. But whatever it ends up being, we will rally because we are FMB Strong! That is because of our people; we are one big family! Everybody knows everybody and even if you do not know their name you recognize their face and you say 'Hi! Hi! Hi!' all day! Everybody helps everybody out and we proved that after Ian. Of course, we all love the water and beach."

Even Hurricane Ian could not convince Betty to leave the beach area. "All I can say is I do not intend to go away! After everything that happened in 2022, I considered Ocala again but all my friends here said, 'No you are not; you are staying right here with us!' And I am still here and do not intend on going anywhere so you still have to put up with me! I will bartend at Hurricane Tina's on my 100th birthday and then we are going to have one heck of a party!" ■



*Each year Betty turns into Mrs. Claus!*

*continued from page 15*



*Many Putt & Pub Crawl golfers dress in crazy costumes!*

for viewing at registration and then at each hole. Tickets will be available at the registration table or at each hole location for \$5 each or 5 tickets for \$20. The general public can buy these in addition to the golfers and the FMB Woman's Club will draw the winning tickets that evening at the awards ceremony.

For Dawn, the best part of the Putt & Pub Crawl is that "you support all these marvelous FMB charities that spread such goodwill across our island. You help out the entire island community all while enjoying an entertaining day with your family and friends. The Putt & Pub Crawl sums up why many of us live on and visit Fort Myers Beach! You get to have fun all while helping each other."

The FMB Woman's Club has been very active in the 15 months since Hurricane Ian. "In cooperation with the FMB Community Foundation, we have raised and directly distributed in excess of \$800,000 to FMB residents through \$500 gift cards and related charitable activities," reports Dawn. "The Putt & Pub Crawl is just another step in our ongoing financial and community assistance efforts, so come out to enjoy a great time and make a positive difference to our island home!" ■



*The main goal of the Putt & Pub Crawl is to raise money and awareness for the 10 nonprofits.*

# After Ian!

## Debby & Steve Kildow

- By Gary Mooney -

Fort Myers Beach LIVING is catching up with our former Cover Story subjects, to learn what life is like for them "After Ian!" This month we speak with Debby & Steve Kildow who we profiled in July 2022.



"We lost everything in our home, including our golf cart, boat and clothes, except for the shell of our house," reports Debby. "A neighbor stayed and took a video where you saw the water come rushing up the channel. He screamed that floodwater was overflowing his house and we knew instantly our home was gone too! It was actually a blessing to see that video because when we finally returned to FMB, we already knew what to expect, but it was still a shock."

Today, the Kildows live in Franklin, Tennessee. "After Ian, we were done with FMB," emphasizes Debby! "Steve has a cousin in the Nashville area who said we must check out Franklin as we would love it and we do! There is greenspace all around, with a lake, trails, and parks and we are three minutes from the historic Downtown where I have a parttime job at a wonderful shop that reminds me so much of where I worked at 'The Islander' at Santini Plaza and I meet a lot of really neat people! It is so different from FMB, with quite a southern vibe and culture. We are in the middle of 'Bourbon Country' and Steve now collects Bourbon and once a month, our neighborhood hosts a 'Bourbon Night!' We however returned to Southwest Florida last May for a visit and will come back again in February."

As for what Debby took from her Hurricane Ian experience, "I really learned to appreciate life and people. When we fi-

nally returned to FMB to see our home, a neighbor said, 'look at this; this is your whole life right here in ruins,' and I thought, 'this is not my life; my life is my husband, family and dog!' I hit me like a ton of bricks that 'things' do not define me; that my life is much more than just 'things!' Every time something major happens like Ian, you learn and grow from that to hopefully become a better person, so Steve and I are thankful and grateful every day and are quite frankly a little guilty sometimes over how happy we are, especially when we think about what all our FMB friends still go through. While we respect their decisions to stay and rebuild, everybody has their own story and we had to do what was best for us." ■



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- ⚓ **Wet Slips**
- ⚓ **Dry Storage**
- ⚓ **Service Department**
- ⚓ **Fuel Docks**



### FORT MYERS BEACH MARKETS

Wednesdays 9am-1pm  
The only market in SWFL where boaters can boat to and freshly-caught fish are tossed off the boat for purchase!

Check our website for local activities held at Moss Marina  
[www.MossMarina.com](http://www.MossMarina.com)

450 Harbor Court, FMB  
26°27'23."N, 81°57'20."W  
(239) 765-6677  
Open daily 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

### THE RUDE SHRIMP CO. - Bar & Restaurant -

HAWAIIAN FUSION GRINDZ  
MADE FRESH DAILY



THE RUDE SHRIMP CO.  
LIVE MUSIC DAILY!  
239.396.0246  
WED-SUN 11AM-6PM  
**EAT ME.**  
FORT MYERS BEACH, FL