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# Living



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Cover by Sandy Sandness

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# **MORE OPTIONS, LESS RISK — Gardner Orthopedics**

# 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 Fire Department: 239-590-4200
- 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
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- Florida Power & Light (FPL): 1-800-226-5885
- CenturyLink: 239-335-3111
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# SUDOKU

- By Gary Mooney -

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Answers on page 10



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# Hello Friends & Neighbors!

The funny / strange thing about producing a monthly magazine is that we compose these stories and articles for you roughly six weeks before *FMB LIVING* hits your hands. That means I am writing today on September 28, Ian's 2nd anniversary and just two days after Hurricane Helene's frighteningly close encounter.

I am sure many of you felt exactly as I did when Helene's roughly 6-foot storm surge overtook our barrier island that evening: "Oh, No – Not Again!" Like many of you, I just recently moved back into my home, after living for months in my driveway in a recreational vehicle friends loaned me, and when Shell Mound Boulevard turned into a river and water once again poured into my home, my heart sank. I evacuated to the new elevated home of neighbors and could only pray that the surge would soon peak.

The next morning I returned home to find a waterline of 12" and another coat of that nasty ugly mixture of slim and sludge coating everything. Compared to Ian's destruction, however, I found this tolerable, which shows you what perspective can do. If not for Ian, Helene's damage would devastate me, but compared to Ian, this was simply a matter of rolling up my sleeves and getting going.

So, with Thanksgiving rapidly approaching, take

the time to reflect on how lucky we were, rather than unlucky, and count our blessings for all the wonderful things in our lives, like our family and friends, pets, beautiful beach, dynamic sunsets, gorgeous Gulf, and good health. Remember my message from last month and volunteer at one of our island's many charitable organizations and / or Friends groups, to make a positive impact on our community.

Speaking of making a positive impact, please support our advertisers because we cannot deliver *Fort Myers Beach LIVING* to you free of charge without them. When you do visit, let them know you saw their ad in our magazine so we can continue to provide you with this original entertainment each month!

Have An Awesome Beach Day!



*Sandy Sandness*

**Publisher**

*Fort Myers Beach LIVING*

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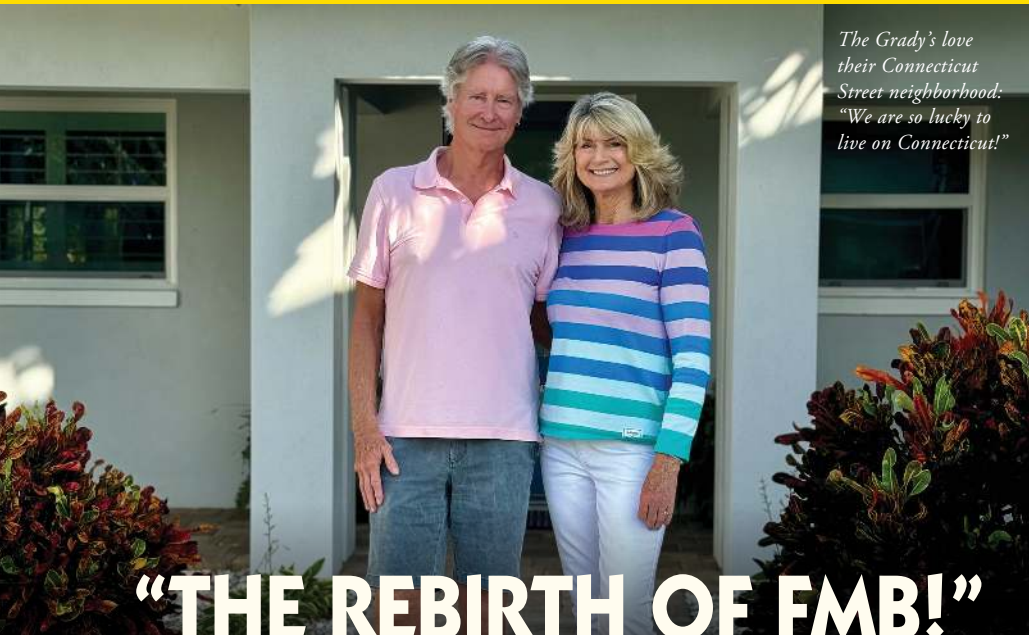


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*The Grady's love their Connecticut Street neighborhood: "We are so lucky to live on Connecticut!"*

## "THE REBIRTH OF FMB!"

### Bill & Roz Grady

- By Gary Mooney -

Bill Grady is originally from Queens, "though I lived all over the country, from Chicago and Detroit to Lexington; Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Atlanta, and now FMB." Bill's wife of 46 years, Roz, is from the suburbs of Chicago, "but I eventually relocated to New York City when I began working for IBM. I then met Bill as he worked for IBM as well. After that, I moved to Miami, where Bill lived." "It turns out that Roz briefly dated my twin brother Rich," Bill recalls with a laugh! "He was in her IBM training class and later introduced us. We wed on October 21, 1978, meaning we recently celebrated our 46th anniversary."

Roz and Bill have two children, Bill IV and Meghan, who both live in Austin, Texas. "Bill and his wife Allison finally made us grandparents," exclaims Roz! "Katherine, who will all call Kate, is 4-years-old and her 2-year-old brother is William, who everybody calls Will."

The same year Bill and Roz wed, her parents and her brother bought a place at The Palms of Bay Beach, "so we have been coming to FMB for 46 years! Bay Beach was so convenient as we lived in Miami. We came here all the time and FMB became not only our second home but to our kids as well. We were always here for Christmas, Spring Breaks and even sometimes the summer." "The cool

thing is now our grandkids play on FMB and they enjoy the beach as much as we have," Bill explains. "It is wonderful to have three generations of our family all together on the beach."

When Roz and Bill began to explore second home and retirement options, FMB rose to the top. "Around the year 2000, when we still lived in Atlanta, Roz and I began discussing a second home, near the water and beach, where we could have a small boat. Over the next few months, we explored various places, but when we visited her parents for Christmas, we thought, 'what about FMB' and soon purchased our 1967-built home on Connecticut Street." "Years later, after 23 years in our Atlanta home," Roz recalls, "Bill asked Meghan, who was born in Atlanta, 'what if we sell our Atlanta house and move to FMB?' She replied that if we were relocating to a place like Phoenix, she would be unhappy, but she already loved FMB!"

Bill retired from IBM after 31 years. "Our son, Bill, is the eleventh person in our families to work for IBM," he relates. "Growing up, my family always joked that IBM stood for 'I've Been Moved' as we relocated every two or three years, and each time we finished off the basement with our Dad to have a place for five kids to play. I've always enjoyed creating things so when I retired in 2003, I became a Licensed

Builder in Georgia and did that for 8 years. Both our children had tool belts at young ages and are fantastic remodelers in their own right."

They love their Connecticut Street neighborhood! "We are just a few houses from the Mound House and Back Bay," says Roz. "The island's shortest canal is behind us and we call it 'Honeymoon Lagoon' because the water is so warm that manatees gather in it and roll all around each other!" "When I began our home renovations," Bill adds, "I went to all the neighbors to explain what I was doing and the next thing you knew, we not only knew everyone but we were all helping one another, as everyone knew where they could borrow a tool, and socializing. We are so lucky we live on Connecticut!"

#### "... But Ian Was!"

In late September 2022, with Ian approaching, Bill and Roz evacuated to the home of good friends east of I-75. The following morning, they crossed the Matanzas Pass Bridge and walked the two miles to their house. "Our hearts sank when we saw that our friends' homes on Connecticut closest to Estero Boulevard were either gone or decimated," Bill recalls, "but fortunately, since we are closer to the Back Bay, our home was structurally intact. When we forced our way through the front door, however, everything inside was thrown around as if inside a giant blender with eight feet of water. We were in Miami when Hurricane Andrew hit in 1992 and never thought we would see anything worse than that but Ian was!"

Fortunately, Roz's brothers own Southwest Florida residences so they stayed in those as Bill began to rebuild their home. "We spent the first four months at one brother's North Naples villa, then the next nine months at my other brother's place at Bay Beach. When people asked my brothers why they did not go to Florida that winter, they replied: 'we can't; homeless people live in our places!' In all that devastation, we felt fortunate that our house survived and we had nice places to live."

Bill began their renovation. "I wanted to be back home by Ian's first anniversary but missed that by 27 days, returning in





*"I thought I would like to live in a cool place . . . and I was right – FMB is Cool!"*



*Grandchildren Kate & Will being so cool that they have to wear shades!*

October 2023. All but one of our neighbors returned and many of them were back in their homes within six months of lan. The great thing was that when one neighbor worked with a terrific contractor, they shared that information all down the block. We wanted to help each other get home."

As Roz reflects on her lan experience, it amazes her that "I never once cried, despite losing almost everything, because we kept everything in perspective. We were safe and healthy and the generosity of our family, friends and neighbors was overwhelming! Friends from all over flocked to us, despite the complete lack of power, water and air conditioning. We lost all our family photographs and recipes, so our children contacted relatives and friends and assembled new photo albums and a recipe book. These actions are the rainbows from the storm!" "It is so nice now to be back home," enthuses Bill. "When we bicycle around the island now, it is exciting to see all the construction." Roz gushes: "The Rebirth of FMB!"

### **FMB is Cool!**

When they contemplate what FMB will look like in five years, "GREAT" raves Roz! "I love most of the newly-approved plans, such as those for 'The Whale,' 'The Cottage,' and 'Myerside Resort.' FMB will

be back better than ever, and while I really miss all those colorful old cottages, I've seen some pretty new streetscapes. Between updated building codes, FEMA regulations and hurricane precautions, most of our new buildings and developments will be expensive. Despite that, I hope we can still attract young families with small children to the island." "The new large homes are very colorful, with attractive architectural detail, so FMB will remain a beautiful place to live," adds Bill. "I hope our new Town Council will adhere to the spirit of our Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code."

Roz and Bill love FMB's uniqueness! "When we moved here from Atlanta," Roz mentions, "I sent friends FMB videos, showing things like the Pirate Ship sailing under the bridge, my drive home from Bonita Springs over the five bridges, and our spectacular sunsets; who else has that? When you combine that with the Gulf, beach and our natural beauty, that makes FMB special and unique." "When I was young, I looked at my parents' old black-&-white photographs from their Miami honeymoon, with the beach and palm trees," Bill reflects, "and thought I would like to live in a cool place like that and I was right – FMB is Cool! But the coolest thing is not the beach or palm trees but how everybody pulls together!" ■



*"Bill and his wife Allison finally made us grandparents," exclaims Roz, about 4-year-old Kate and 2-year-old Will.*



# 34th American Sand Sculpting Championship

## Beloved FMB Tradition Makes Triumphant Return!

- by Gary Mooney, photo by Sandy Sandness -



*The American Sand Sculpting Championship returns to FMB for the first time since 2019!*

The American Sand Sculpting Championship returns to FMB for the first time since 2019! The DiamondHead Beach Resort is the host site, and the event will run from Thursday, November 21 through Sunday, November 24 daily, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Championship features eight Master Sand Sculptors and ten Advanced Amateur Sand Sculptors from five nations and ten states, including many longtime FMB fan favorites. The FMB Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the DiamondHead Beach Resort and The Sand Lovers, LLC, a leading name in the sand sculpting industry, are the Championship presenting sponsors.

"It is incredibly exciting to bring this beloved tradition back to FMB for the 34th time," raves FMB Chamber President Jacki Lizak! "This is one of the beach's signature events that everyone loves. This beloved event has fans from not only Southwest Florida but from all over the world. When we announced that the FMB American Sand Sculpting Championship would return, the response was tremendous! The Championship will provide a huge economic boost to the island business community and, just as importantly, an emotional and psychological uptick, not only from Ian two years ago, but our close brush with Helene in September. FMB looks forward to this feel-good festival every year and many islanders bring their families and friends with

them to this one-of-a-kind competition. Tickets are just \$5, with children age 2 and under free, and your well-mannered dogs on leashes are welcome, too! Purchase your tickets in advance or get more details at [www.FMBsandsculpting.com](http://www.FMBsandsculpting.com)."

Participating Master Sand Sculptors are Delayne Corbett from Nelson, British Columbia; England's Paul Hoggard; Remy Hoggard from The Netherlands; "The Amazing Walter" McDonald of South Padre Island, Texas; Todd Pangborn of Jamestown, New York; Bruce Peck from St. Louis, Missouri; Mexico's Brett Stocker; and Bruce Waugh from Canada. The Advance Amateur Sculptors are Marcie Cowles of Louisville, Ohio; Shannon Fishback from Acworth, Georgia; Bob Lechtenberg of Heartland, Wisconsin; Tyler Morris from Floresville, Texas; Kathy Nichols of Summers Point, New Jersey; Darrell O'Connor from Dewey Beach, Delaware; Brendan Schaffer of Oxford, New Jersey; Scott Triplett from Grand Rapids, Michigan; Lauren Waldo of Floresville, Texas; and Mark Wilson from Astatula, Florida. Information on the sculptors who the Championship invited to compete is at [www.FMBsandsculpting.com](http://www.FMBsandsculpting.com).

Jacki explains that many of the Championship's traditional elements return. "In addition to the Master and Amateur championships, there will be sand sculpting demonstrations, 'Quick



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Sand' speed sculpting shows, Hands-On sand sculpting lessons, Kids Zone, and the 'Sand Vendor Village' at two locations. We will have 30 to 40 vendors at the DiamondHead, with another 30 to 40 vendors on Old San Carlos Boulevard between 1st and 3rd streets. The Old San Carlos Vendor Village will feature live music all four days from Noon to 5 p.m. There will be food and beverages available for purchase at the DiamondHead, with port-a-potties on site. The Lee County Supervisor of Elections, Tommy Doyle, will have voting booths set up at the DiamondHead location and will oversee the always popular 'People's Choice Awards' vote! The Amateur contest is on Saturday, with the Awards Ceremony on Sunday at 4 p.m."

There will, however, be some changes from years past. "We will just have a Singles contest this year and no Doubles event, as we wanted to start out slow to get the Championship off the ground again and successful," Jacki offers. "In addition to the masterpieces at the DiamondHead, there will be up to six satellite sculptures placed strategically at sponsoring businesses around town. The Sand Sculpting events guide will have a treasure map inside of it that will lead you to the satellite locations and the free Beach Tram will get you there and back. Rather than having everyone park at Lovers Key State Park and taking shuttles to the Championship, we will use the island's available public and private parking areas. If you need to find open spots, check the 'Where to Park' page on the event's website at [www.FMBsandsculpting.com](http://www.FMBsandsculpting.com). An element that will really blow people away will be the 'Sand Under The



*The DiamondHead Beach Resort is the host site of the American Sand Sculpting Championship.*

Stars!' Each evening, we will illuminate the sand sculptures so that they can be viewed from the Coste Island Cuisine Restaurant at the DiamondHead; they will take your breath away!"

The FMB Chamber will need volunteers for the Championship, "so if you can help, sign up via the link at [www.FMBsandsculpting.com](http://www.FMBsandsculpting.com)," urges Jacki. "Help us make the return of The 34th Annual American Sand Sculpting Championship a great success!" ■



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# November

## Monday Through Friday Bay Oaks Recreational Center

@Bay Oaks Recreational Center  
The Bay Oaks Recreational Center is open and back to full operation! Attend fitness classes, indoor pickleball, open gym, after-school care, weight room & more. Monday through Thursday 7am to 7pm; Friday 7am to 8pm. See [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

## Fri., October 25 Bay Oaks "Fright Night!"

@Bay Oaks Recreational Center  
Calling all Princesses & Pirates, for a hauntingly good time, come to Bay Oaks for "Fright Night" for indoor & outdoor fun from 5 to 9pm! Enjoy the Haunted House, Corn Maze, big inflatables & bounce houses, Costume Contest, "Trunk or Treat," food & drink & music for the family & Lots of CANDY! The FREE "Kids Market" opens at 5pm. \$6 per person or \$20 for a family of four; see [www.FMBGOV.com](http://www.FMBGOV.com).

## Sat., October 26 "Monofilament Madness"

@Salty Sam's Marina  
Grab your gloves and kayak if you have one and meet at Salty Sam's Marina to help remove monofilament fishing lines and other debris from the water and shoreline from 8am to 2pm. To register and for more details, see [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com); the first 200 registrants received a complimentary t-shirt with a FREE Parrot Key luncheon following the cleanup!

## Fri. & Sat., Nov. 1 & 2 AND EVERY FRIDAY & SATURDAY 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).

## Sun., Nov. 3 AND EVERY SUNDAY Bayside Park Concert Series

@Bayside Park  
Relax while listening to fantastic tunes from local musicians at these FREE weekly outdoor concerts from 4 to 7pm! Nov. 3: Remedy; Nov. 10: The Echo; Nov. 17: Thunder Beach; & Nov. 24: Rock Candy. For details see [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

## Mondays, Nov. 4 & 18 FMB Town Council Meeting

@Town Hall, Bay Oaks Recreational Center  
The FMB Town Council continues its work to rebuild FMB at 9am; see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

## Wed., Nov. 6 FMB Woman's Club Monthly Meeting

@Bay Oaks Recreational Center  
Join the best club on the entire island; bring a dish to share and all are welcome! The meeting starts at 6:30pm; see [www.fmb-wc.org](http://www.fmb-wc.org).

## Thurs., Nov. 7 FMB Chamber "Coffee Connection"

@LMCU  
Start your day with your FMB Chamber friends for networking with complimentary coffee and tasty breakfast items at the Lake Michigan Credit Union at 7580 Winkler Road. The FREE "Coffee Connection" is 8 to 9:30am; see [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

## Thurs., Nov. 7 FMB Town Council Management & Planning Session

@Town Hall, Bay Oaks Recreational Center  
The FMB Town Council continues its work to rebuild FMB at 9am; see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

## Thurs., Nov. 7 AND EVERY THURSDAY THROUGH APRIL

### Santini Marina Plaza Market

@Santini Marina Plaza  
This FMB South End Market offers fresh produce, artisan foods, arts, crafts, clothing and more EVERY Thursday from 9am to 1pm; see [www.41markets.com](http://www.41markets.com).

## Fri., Nov. 8 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.friendsoflovesskey.org](http://www.friendsoflovesskey.org).

## Mon., Nov 11 VETERAN'S DAY

## Tues., Nov. 12 FMB Local Planning Agency Meeting

@Town Hall, Bay Oaks Recreational Center  
The FMB LPA, appointed by Town Council, continues its work to rebuild FMB at 9am; see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

## Wed., Nov. 13 CROW Campus Tours

@Center for the Rehabilitation Of Wildlife  
An in-depth look at what the animal patients experience, from intake to release, including the hospital and treatment process. The 90-minute tour is Monday through Friday at 11am; \$25-per-person with advance registration and payment necessary at 239-472-3644, x-229 or [reservations@crowclinic.org](mailto:reservations@crowclinic.org).

## Thurs., Nov. 14 FMB Chamber Membership Luncheon

@TBD  
Join your FMB Chamber friends to savor a scrumptious

luncheon from a favorite local restaurant, with a guest speaker to be announced, from 11:30am to 1pm. WrightWay Emergency Services sponsors the November Luncheon. \$30 members & \$40 prospective members; for the November luncheon location, see [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

## Fri., Nov. 15 Mound House 9th Anniversary Celebration

@The Historic Mound House  
While the Town of FMB purchased the Mound House for preservation in 2000; the historic home did not open to the public as a Museum Complex until 2015! To celebrate this anniversary, the Mound House offers FREE admission from 9am to 4pm. Several original community members who were a part of the preservation team will be on hand to discuss the achievement and everyone savors a FREE Cupcake at Noon! See [www.moundhouse.org](http://www.moundhouse.org).

## Wed., Nov. 20 FMB Community Foundation Membership Meeting

@TBD  
The FMB Community Foundation is the island's leading philanthropic organization, so attend the Membership Meeting to learn all about us at 5pm. For the Meeting location, see [www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com](http://www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com).

## Thurs., Nov. 21 FMBAA Fall Juried Show: "Dreams to Wings"

@Bonita Performing Arts Center  
As the FMB Art Association prepares to rebuild its iconic gallery destroyed by Hurricane Ian, its annual "Fall Show," entitled "Dreams to Wings," is FREE at the Bonita Performing Arts Center on 10150 Bonita Beach Road SE from Thursday, November 21 through January 2, 2025. 9am to 5pm; closed Sundays. See [www.fortmyersbeachart.com](http://www.fortmyersbeachart.com)

## Thurs.-Sun., Nov. 21-24 34th American Sand Sculpting Championship

@DiamondHead Beach Resort  
The American Sand Sculpting Championship returns to FMB for the first time since 2019! The DiamondHead Beach Resort is the host site that runs from Thursday, November 21 through Sunday, November 24, daily from 10am to 5pm. Tickets are \$5, with children age 2 and under free. Purchase tickets in advance or get more details at [www.FMBsandsculpting.com](http://www.FMBsandsculpting.com).

## Thurs.-Sat., Nov. 21-23 Bayside Park Concert Series

@Bayside Park  
In conjunction with The American Sand Sculpting Championship, The Bayside Concert Series offers special shows featuring fantastic tunes from local musicians at these FREE outdoor concerts from Noon to 5pm! Nov. 21: Limited Edition; Nov. 22: Joe Yeoman Band; & Nov. 23: Guilty Pleasure. For details see [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

## Thurs. Nov 28 HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Answers from page 3

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

SUDOKU



# FMB Strong Racks Up The Awards!

## Organizational Transition Underway

- by Gary Mooney, photos by Tim Ryan-

FMB Strong is a 501c3 nonprofit organization founded by Hurricane Ian survivors dedicated to playing an essential role in the recovery efforts of FMB and Lee County. Focused on long-term recovery and resilience, FMS Strong provides essential supplies through food pantry donations, organizes community events, and works closely with other nonprofit and governmental agencies to promote proactive storm relief efforts. The organization supports community members through various initiatives, including relief efforts, workforce development, and partnerships with local agencies.

CareerSource Southwest Florida recently presented FMB Strong with its prestigious 2023-24 Champion Award! CareerSource did so in recognition of FMB Strong's unwavering partnership and commitment to supporting CareerSource Southwest Florida's mission of connecting individuals to quality career opportunities and fostering economic growth in the region.

"I feel strongly about the Champion Award," says Tim Ryan, Founder and President of FMB Strong Inc. "A group of Hurricane Ian survivors founded FMB Strong to help our neighbors with food supplies and related items as well as access to other social service agencies, but we tried to do so with one paid employee and all the rest volunteers. We soon discovered you can only accomplish so much with one employee so we had to build a professional staff through full-time and well-paid jobs. CareerSource had a grant program where they fund these types of positions for people displaced by Ian and they put eight highly-skilled people back to work through FMB Strong, making us their biggest partner site. Even though the grant recently expired, FMB Strong and CareerSource have a strong relationship."

In addition to the Champion Award, Tim received the "Workforce Partner Award" from the Florida Workforce Development Association in Orlando, for his commitment and dedication to advancing Florida's Workforce Network to help create lasting impacts on individuals and families. "The Workforce Development Award committee could have presented this to thousands of large and small businesses throughout the State, but they selected us and that is a great honor. Technically, the award went to me but the entire FMB Strong staff deserve the credit. When outside organizations take an impartial look at us and see all the good things we accomplish, that is a tribute to our amazing team!"

Back in early June, SWFL Inc., hosted its annual "INCredible Awards" and FMB Strong took home hardware from there as well, as FMB Strong received "The Nonprofit of The Year



*"We soon discovered you can only accomplish so much with one employee," explains Tim, with the FMB Strong staff and Champion Award, "so we had to build a professional staff through full-time and well-paid jobs."*

Award!" SWFL Inc., selected FMB Strong for its dedication to the Fort Myers Beach community by providing much-needed supplies through food pantry donations, ensuring that no one went hungry in Ian's aftermath, as well as for its ongoing efforts to make a meaningful impact to the beach community. "This one came as a complete surprise," chuckles Tim! "I don't know how we got on their radar or even who nominated us. They visited our facility, saw how we operated, interviewed staff and came away quite impressed."

### American Red Cross Partnership

FMB Strong is undergoing a transition, explains Tim. "We began as a response to Ian, but now we are morphing into a preparedness organization, to better ready FMB before the storms to minimize their impact after. Fast forward from Ian to now, and there were already three other named storms that struck FMB to various degrees, changing the way we lead our lives, so now we operate as a disaster preparedness as well as a relief center. With each storm, we gain more experience, as they will continue to happen."

In addition to its recent awards, FMB Strong is now a "Community Adaptation Partner" with The American Red Cross! "This is extremely exciting, not only for FMB Strong but the entire FMB community," emphasizes Tim. "The Red Cross works in partnership with local non-profits like FMB Strong to help communities become more resilient. They come on-site and assess your strengths and weaknesses and they use their vast resources to help us help our community be better prepared for natural disasters like hurricanes. As I said to the Red Cross representatives, when people see that Red Cross logo, that signals hope during the darkest of times from this world-class organization with deep and vast resources, so we are thrilled!"

An example of the Red Cross partnership, Tim explains, "is that FMB Strong over the next 60 days will become an American Red Cross 'Cooling Center!' When they toured FMB Strong, they discovered we did not have any emergency back-up generators so they arranged for us to receive a grant to acquire those, meaning that 820 Buttonwood will become a 'Cooling Center' for those in need. This may not seem like a big deal now, but after Ian, many people on FMB were without power for 30 or more days, including the elderly, homeless and underprivileged, so we are happy we can provide this invaluable type of assistance."

### Hurricane Helene

The needs for FMB after Helene are similar to, though not on the same scale as after Hurricane Ian. "We found ourselves in what I call Phase I," says Tim, "where we are literally clean the

*continued on page 13*





## Chamber Chatter!

### Sand Sculptures & Boat Parade!

After our typically slow Summer season – one that was a tad off due to our continuing recovery from Hurricane Ian – islanders are ready to welcome back our Snowbird friends and visitors from all over the nation and the world. Their return will bring a huge bump to our local economy and to spur that along, the FMB Chamber of Commerce brings back two of our most popular events to inaugurate the Winter & Spring seasons.

For the first time since 2019, The American Sand Sculpting Championship returns! The FMB Chamber in partnership with the DiamondHead Beach Resort and The Sand Lovers, LLC, a leading name in the sand sculpting industry, will host The 34th Annual American Sand Sculpting Championship from Thursday, November 21 through Sunday, November 24. This four-day competition features eight Master Sand Sculptors and ten Advanced Amateur Sand Sculptors from five nations and ten states, including many longtime fan favorites like “The Amazing Walter” McDonald, Bruce Peck and Remy Hoggard. For much more information on The American Sand Sculpting Championship, please see the related article in this edition of *FMB LIVING* Magazine or go to the FMB Sand Sculpting website at [www.FMBsandsculpting.com](http://www.FMBsandsculpting.com).

Two weeks after Sand Sculpting is an FMB Holiday tradition, The Fort Myers Beach Christmas Boat Parade, on Saturday evening, December 7! To give the audience extra viewing time of the boating fleet, beautifully decorated in Holiday lights, the Chamber is extending the route a bit longer by parading around the Back Bay not once but twice!

The Christmas Boat Parade launches from Salty Sam’s Marina at 6 p.m. and will proceed down the Back Bay, passing by some of FMB’s most popular waterfront restaurants, providing the absolute best viewing locations. It will then cut around the US Coast Guard Station along San Carlos Island, popping out from the Getaway Marina area and cutting across the Bay toward the Pink Shell Beach Resort. The Boat Parade will turn south along Estero Island, back under the Matanzas Pass Bridge, cutting across the mooring field and repeating the loop again. People’s Choice Voting will take place all along the parade route, where guests can participate by downloading a QR Code or signing up at one of the viewing spots along the way. Come early and grab a front row table, enjoy a savory dinner from one of our tasty restaurants, and kick off your Holidays with the festive Fort Myers Beach Christmas Boat Parade.

The American Sand Sculpting Championship and the Christmas Boat Parade are just the first two major events in an exciting FMB seasonal calendar, so be ready for several months of fun!



Remember that the FMB Chamber Office is open on the 3rd floor of 100 Lovers Lane, Mondays through Fridays, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. In addition to our Lovers Lane location, the Chamber operates our Times Square visitor information satellite office from “The Roxie,” located next to the Trolley Stop and open daily from 10 a.m. to sunset.

A Big Salute to our Veterans, Happy Thanksgiving, and on behalf of our 400-plus FMB Chamber of Commerce members, remember . . . “Island Life; It’s Our Business!” ■

*Jacki Liszak, President  
Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce!*





*continued from page 11*

muck out of our houses again, so our neighbors needed shop vacuums, shovels, garbage bags, gloves, cleaning supplies, disinfectants and everything else necessary for that. The difference today between Ian and Helene is that FMB Strong has an established and efficient supply chain through outlets like the Midwest Food Bank, Harry Chapin Food Bank, and employs an Amazon Wish List campaign to keep those supplies coming. Now that we are a few weeks past Helene, those needs are now changing to items like drywall, building materials and hand tools for the next phase of island recovery. That is the value of our experience from Ian through today; we know that recovery occurs in phases and we can help you along every step of the way."

Tim offers that "the message of FMB Strong to you is this: If you need help, we are here to help you, whether that means with food, supplies or connections to other social service agencies, so please see us. If you can help others, we need you too, whether that means with a donation of supplies or by physically volunteering. For assistance or to make a difference to our FMB community, stop by 820 But-tonwood Drive or see [www.fmb-strong.org](http://www.fmb-strong.org)." ■



*"Technically, the award went to me," says Tim of the Workforce Partner Award, "but the FMB Strong staff deserve the credit."*

## "Christmas Tree Festival" Returns to Woman's Club Campus

### 7th Annual Festival on December 13 & 14

- by Gary Mooney -

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas with the 7th Annual FMB Woman's Club "Christmas Tree Festival" on Friday & Saturday, December 13 & 14, with "Festival" raffle tickets now available to the public. The raffle's Grand Prize is the winner's choice of three options valued at \$3,500: a Lake Tahoe getaway, a "Heart of Hawaii" trip or a "Canadian Culinary Experience." Raffle tickets are \$20 each or 6 for \$100; go to [www.fmb-wc.org](http://www.fmb-wc.org) to purchase tickets online or see any "Christmas Tree Festival" committee member. Winners need not be present to claim their prize, with each entry eligible for all drawings. The FMB Woman's Club, a 501(c) 3 organization at 175 Sterling Avenue, will sell a maximum of 5,000 "Christmas Tree Festival" raffle tickets.

"The FMB Woman's Club returns this year's 'Christmas Tree Festival' to our campus at 175 Sterling Avenue for the first time since Ian," explains Megan Allers, the FMB Woman's Club Vice President of Facilities and the "Christmas Tree Festival" Co-Chair with Mari Torgerson. "This year's 'Festival' will be a big tent party! It is important to the Woman's Club that we bring the 'Festival' back to our campus, especially now that our Capital Campaign to replace the clubhouse we lost to Ian is underway. We love our Sterling Avenue neighborhood and hosting the 'Festival' on-site is another way of showing it."

The "Christmas Tree Festival" highlights an array of beautifully decorated and one-of-a-kind holiday trees and wreaths for attendees to bid on and take home, with all auction proceeds going back to the Non-Profit that created the trees. The "Festival" is open to the public but you can purchase VIP tickets for \$100 to kick off the festivities on Friday, December 13, but buy those now as the Woman's Club sells just 50 VIP tickets. VIP benefits include a private bar and lounge, a Food Truck Meal Ticket, two drink tickets, the VIP Reception on Friday evening and Saturday's "Chili Cookoff."

The "Christmas Tree Festival" starts on Fri-

day, December 13, with the "VIP Reception" from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. and the doors opening to the general public from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. On Saturday, December 14, doors open in conjunction with the Vendor's Market and Christmas Treat & Bake Sale at 1 p.m. The always popular "Chili Tasting & Cook-Off" starts at 4:30, with chili-tasting tickets just \$10. The FMB Woman's Club will conclude the "Festival" by announcing the Christmas Tree Auction winners, "Chili Cook-Off" winner and Grand Prize winner at 8 p.m.

"People love to see the marvelously-decorated Christmas Trees and the 'Chili Tasting' contest is a must-see event," raves Megan! "The Christmas trees are so unique, made up of everything from wooden ladders to fishing equipment to wine bottles and it is the creativity of the Non-Profits that makes these so magical! New this year is the 'Mystery Gift Wall' with gift-wrapped boxes for \$25, \$50 and \$100. We have 'Mystery Gift Boxes' for kids as well for \$10 to \$20."

You do not have to wait until December 13 however to inaugurate the "Christmas Tree Festival," as the FMB Woman's Club hosts three \$250 "Early Bird" drawings; the first was in October, with the next two on November 4 and December 2. There will be ten \$100 drawings at the "Christmas Tree Festival," with a \$500 drawing at the "VIP Event" on December 13 and the Grand Prize Drawing on December 14.

This year's "Festival" is brought to you by Event Sponsor, The Alex King Group. Others that make this event possible include Suncoast Beverage and Sanibel Captiva Community Bank. The FMB Woman's Club encourages all attendees to bring a new and unwrapped toy for the Beach Kids Foundation. Look for more information on the "Christmas Tree Festival" in the December edition of *Fort Myers Beach LIVING*. To purchase "Festival" raffle tickets, for more information, and how to become an FMB Woman's Club member, see [www.fmb-wc.org](http://www.fmb-wc.org). Be a part of this beloved FMB Holiday tradition! ■



# Chicken Enchilada Soup

by Sandy Sandness



## INGREDIENTS

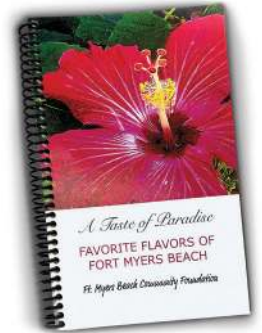
- 1 Tbsp Butter or Ghee or avocado oil
- 1 Medium Onion diced
- 2 Celery Stalks sliced
- 1 Medium Carrot thinly sliced
- 1 Large Red Bell Pepper diced
- 2-3 Garlic Cloves chopped
- 1½ Tsp Ground Cumin
- 1 Tbsp Chili Powder
- 1 Tsp Dried Oregano
- 15 oz Diced fire-roasted Tomatoes 1 can
- ¼ Cup Tomato Paste
- 4 Cups Low Sodium Chicken Broth
- 14.5 oz Red Kidney Beans drain and rinsed, 1 can
- 14.5 oz Black Beans drain and rinsed, 1 can
- 1 Cup Fresh or Frozen Sweet Corn
- 2 Cups Shredded Cooked Chicken
- 1 Cup Mexican Shredded Cheese Blend for garnishing
- Salt and pepper, to your taste

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Melt butter or ghee (add avocado oil if using) in a large stockpot over medium-high heat.
- Add onion, celery, carrots, bell pepper, garlic and cook until softens, about 5-6 minutes.
- Stir in seasonings, diced tomatoes, tomato paste, and chicken broth and bring to a boil.
- Lower the heat and simmer for about 10-15 minutes, or until veggies are very tender.
- Remove from heat and using a hand blender, blend the soup until smooth and creamy.
- Place the soup back over medium heat and add in beans, corn and shredded cooked chicken.
- Stir to combine and boil for a couple of minutes, just to heat it all up.
- Pour into bowls and top with shredded cheese or your favorite toppings. **Enjoy!**

## A Taste of Paradise

If you love to cook, the Fort Myers Beach Community Foundation's cookbook, *A Taste of Paradise: Favorite Flavors of Fort Myers Beach*, is full of delicious recipes from the kitchens of our locals! It is available for purchase at



[www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com](http://www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com)



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