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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. 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 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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- By Gary Mooney -

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Each row must contain the digits 1-9. Each column must contain the digits 1-9. Each box must contain the digits 1-9.

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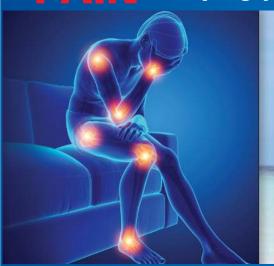
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4

Hello Friends & Neighbors!

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

The first day of Spring is Thursday, March 20 and as we all know, Spring is the season of rebirth and renewal. It seems like FMB has been in a continuous state of regeneration since 2022, with our homes, neighborhoods businesses and now we have more of our island traditions returning!

Perhaps the tradition that best defines FMB is the annual "Shrimp Festival," presented by the FMB Lions Club, that was formerly the 2nd weekend in March but now spans the entire week of March 1 through 9! The island's signature event has been on somewhat of a rollercoaster lately, with the "Festival" canceled in 2020 due to Covid-19, only to return again in 2021 and 2022, but then but then postponement in 2023.

The "Shrimp Festival" returned strong in 2024 and will be better than ever this year. So if you delight in delicious Pink Gold shrimp, enjoy watching a "Norman Rockwell" smalltown parade, savoring scrumptious shrimp, love cheering on an old-fashioned "Queen's Pageant," devouring tasty shrimp, laughing at the antics of a "Shrimp Eating Contest," chowing down on marvelous shrimp, buying new treasures at the "Arts & Crafts Expo," wolfing down delectable shrimp and a host of other fun activities, the 67th "FMB Shrimp Festival" is for you!

I am honored that the Lions Club selected us to produce their "2025 Lions Club Shrimp Festival Guide," a publication that goes back decades on FMB, so keep a sharp eye out for it during the "Shrimp Festival Week." In this edition of "FMB LIVING Magazine," you can find

the complete schedule of 2025 "FMB Shrimp Festival" events as well as a story from the Incredible Fran McCagg Peters on the "Festival's" 67-year history, from its "Beach Day" origin through today.

Another FMB tradition returns this month – The "FMB St. Patrick's Day Parade" on Saturday, March 15, now hosted by the FMB Woman's Club, at 10 a.m. The parade route goes from Santini Marina Plaza to the Woman's Club property at 175 Sterling Avenue. At the conclusion of the St. Paddy's Day Parade, linger at the Woman's Club for their "Post Parade Tent Event" with music, dancing, entertainment, food trucks and free parking from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Speaking of FMB traditions, please continue to 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 that you saw their ad in our magazine so we can continue to provide you with this original entertainment each month!

Enjoy the "Shrimp Festival" and "St. Patrick's Day Parade" and Have An Awesome Beach Day!



Sandy Sandress

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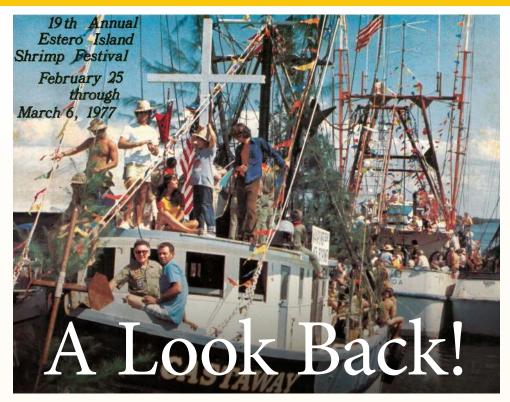
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The 67th FMB Lions Club Shrimp Festival

- By Gary Mooney -

The beloved Fort Myers Beach "Shrimp Festival" traces its roots to the FMB Lions Club taking over the existing "Beach Day" program in 1959. Fran McCagg Peters is a longtime, three-generation FMB Lion who shares her "Shrimp Festival" memories.

"I am too young to really remember 'Beach Days' so what I know of that comes from speaking with Dad," Fran begins. "My late father, Pete McCagg, was a Lion who helped convince the Club that what eventually became the 'Shrimp Festival' would be a great charity fundraiser. 'Beach Days' was a small one-day event that FMB hosted shortly after the 'Edison Festival of Light.' Several FMB Lions in the late 1950s, including Dad, felt that if they expanded it, more people would visit the beach so they assumed its sponsorship in 1959. Once they did, they continued several 'Beach Day' programs, like the 'Blessing of The Fleet' and the 'Princess Pageant.'"

Eat More Chicken!

While the Lions maintained several "Beach Day" events, they soon put their own stamp on the festivities and one was

to make it a "Shrimp Festival!" "Originally, 'Beach Days' served barbeque chicken meals," Fran says with a laugh, "but someone said that since FMB was home to one of Florida's largest shrimp boat fleets and had the freshest, most tasty shrimp anywhere, we should host a 'Shrimp Festival' so they made the switch! The Club acquired huge kettles for the shrimp boil and all we had to do is drop the shrimp in for roughly two minutes, then scoop them out. We pair the shrimp with baked beans, coleslaw and crackers and that is the traditional shrimp dinner. 'Lion Darby' makes the unique cocktail sauce from her secret recipe and for many people, that is just as important as the shrimp!" The "Shrimp Boil Shrimp Dinners" are \$20 each on Saturday and Sunday so everyone has a chance to enjoy the wonderful flavor of our "Pink Gold shrimp"!

If you can't wait until the "Shrimp Festival" Weekend, the "Shrimp Crawl" is for you! Savor all the local Pink Gold Shrimp you want at sixteen FMB restaurants from Monday through Sunday, March 3 through 9.

Another innovation the Lions Club initiat-



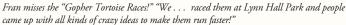
ed is the "Shrimp Festival Parade." "That began in 1959 and I was in the first one," recalls Fran. "It was a small parade, with us school kids decorating our bicycles. There with just one or two floats, with the Princesses riding in convertibles."

The 2nd Weekend in March

Another tradition the "Shrimp Festival" took from "Beach Day" was "The Blessing of The Fleet." "St. Raphael's Episcopal Church conducted the 'Shrimp Fleet Blessings,'" says Fran, "and it still does today. The Episcopal Bishop blessed the fleet, then St. Raphael's Church sold shrimp rolls at Lynn Hall Park. Back then, we scheduled the 'Shrimp Festivals' around the Full Moon because that is bad for shrimping, so most of the crews and boats were back home."

As an additional way to draw people to FMB and make money for their charities, the Lions Club introduced the "Arts & Crafts Fair." "We had vendors from all over Florida and beyond," Fran explains. "We rented Lynn Hall parking spaces to the vendors to sell their products and that became a successful fundraiser. The vendors set their travel schedules a year in advance and said that if we had standard dates, it would be easier for them to be here. The second weekend in March seemed perfect: it was still after the 'Edison Festival of Light' and it was right in the middle of season, so we could practically guarantee large crowds and perfect weather."







The FMB Lions Club carries on the "Blessing of The Fleet" from "Beach Day."

Fit For A Queen!

"The Queen Pageant" is another "Beach Day" tradition adopted by the Lions Club. "The Pageant was originally for girls age 16 to 18 and almost exclusively for those who lived on FMB," Fran relates. "From the beginning through today, it is not a beauty contest, but about how you carry yourself. It was almost a rite of passage that if you were an FMB girl, you became a 'Shrimp Princess' when you turned 16 and I was; we couldn't wait to be 16 and be a Princess riding in a convertible! The 'Queen's Pageant' was on Saturday afternoon at Lynn Hall Park, where you wore a one-piece bathing suit and judges asked questions about your life's goals. Since the judges already knew us island girls so well, we always suspected that maybe they already knew who would win in advance! Princesses found their own sponsoring island business and since my Dad owned 'Tarpon Tackle,' I was 'Miss Tarpon Tackle.'"

Once the Queen received her crown, "you road on the lead shrimp boat the next day for 'The Blessing of The Fleet' and that was a big deal," raves Fran. "The Queen wore a shell crown and returned the next year to lead the new batch of Princesses. Originally, the Pageant had the winner, Runner-Up and Miss Congeniality but over the years added additional categories like the 2nd Runner-Up, Miss Personality, Miss Photogenic and now the People's Choice winner. In a case of life coming full-circle, this year I am a 'Queen's Pageant' judge!'"

The "Shrimp Festival" features two community running competitions. "The 'Kids Run' kicks off the 'FMB Shrimp Festival'

the Saturday prior to the main weekend, on March 1 at 8 a.m.," Fran offers. "Fans and the Princesses crowd the beach to cheer on the children. Cypress Lakes High School became involved several years ago, to get their students running on the beach, so they coordinate it. A separate run takes place the Saturday morning of the 'Shrimp Festival' weekend at 9 a.m. Since authorities already closed the Matanzas Pass Bridge for the 'Shrimp Parade,' the FMB Chamber and Beach Elementary School thought that we should have a run so they created it, including crossing the bridge twice. Cypress Lakes oversees this as well."

The Most Fulfilling Event!

The newest "Shrimp Festival" event is the most fulfilling - literally: the "Shrimp Eating Contest!" "I am especially proud of this one because it is the brainchild of my daughter Shelby," crows Fran! "A few years ago, she thought we needed another event for Sunday afternoon so she suggested this, we gave it a try and it quickly turned into one of the most popular programs! The contestants get sponsors and work the crowd in advance for additional funds as well as to ratchet up the enthusiasm. We provide them with peeled shrimp, with cocktails sauce on the side, and they see how much they can devour in eight minutes. It is hilarious to watch!"

While Fran remains proud of the "Shrimp Festival," there are things from days gone by that she misses, like the "Gopher Tortoise Races!" "We rented them from the Seminole Indians, then decorated and raced them at Lynn Hall Park and people came up with all kinds of cra-

zy ideas to make them run faster! Even though we never hurt the turtles, it was probably good to discontinue it."

Knights of The Blind

While the "Shrimp Festival" is always a great time, there is a serious aspect. "Despite all the fun, in the end we host it to raise funds for the FMB Lions Club," Fran stresses. "In 1925. Helen Keller attended the Lions Club International Convention and challenged the Lions Club to become 'Knights of The Blind' in a crusade against darkness. They accepted her challenge and worked ever since on sight programs aimed at preventing blindness and vision issues. The Lions Club is the world's largest service organization and we ban together to assist thousands of people around the world with funds for things as complicated as eye surgeries to as simple as eyeglasses, all at no charge. We branch out as well, for situations like hearing aids, cancer treatments, and the 'Nurse's Program,' where nurses test every Lee County schoolchild for vision problems. Each May, the FMB Lions Club puts out our call for our Scholarship program that benefits local students at colleges and trade schools."

Fran concludes by saying, "simply put, every child you see in Lee County is someone the Lions Club can help, at no cost. So when you are savoring your shrimp meal, waving to the floats in the 'Shrimp Parade,' cheering on the new 'Shrimp Queen,' or laughing at the 'Shrimp Eating Contest,' know that you are joining hands with the FMB Lions Club to make our island community a better place and continuing a 66-year tradition!"



EVERY DAY

FREE LeeTran Beach Tram

@FMB Public Library to Bowditch Point Park The FREE LeeTran Beach Tram runs every 35 minutes 7 days a week from the FMB Public Library to Bowditch Point Park and back, with the first tram each day leaving from the FMB Library at 9:30am and the last departing Bowditch Point at 10:35pm. www.leegov.com

Saturday, March 1 **FMB Art Association**

Spring Art Show "Awakening"

@First Presbyterian Church Bonita Springs "Awakening" runs through Thursday, March 11 at the First Presbyterian Church Bonita Springs at 9751 Bonita Beach Road SE daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. FREE; see www.fortmyersbeachart.com.

Sunday, March 2 **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 7 p.m.! March 2: "Remedy"; March 9: Unfinished Business; March 16; "Jacob's Ladder"; March 23: "Phenomenal Animal"; & March 30: "Simpli-Fi." See www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Mondays, March 3 & 17

FMB Town Council Meeting

@Town Hall, Bay Oaks Recreational Center The FMB Town Council continues its work to rebuild FMB at 9 a.m.; see www.fortmyersbeachfl.

Mondays, March 3 & 17

Caribbean Cruise-In Car Show

@Parrot Key Caribbean Grill The largest FMB Car Show returns on the 1st & 3rd Monday of each month through April. Enjoy

music, food and prizes while marveling at these fantastic cars! The free car show is from 3 to 6

p.m.; see www.myparrotkey.com.

Answers from page 3 1 9 4 2 3 2 4 5 7 8 6 4 7 2 1 5 3 2 3 5 8 6 9 7 4 1 4 7 2 6 8 3 5 9 8 5 2 9 4 3 7 3 4 9 6 5 2 7 8 1 5 3 6 1 4 7 9 8 2

Tuesday & Thursday, March 4 & 6 AND EVERY TUESDAY & THURSDAY

Santini Marina Plaza Market

@ Santini Marina Plaza

This FMB South End Market offer fresh produce, artisan foods, arts, crafts and more EVERY Tuesday & Thursday through May from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information see www.41markets.com

Wednesday, March 5

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 displays Calusa artifacts, interactive exhibits and the one-of-a-kind 1.600-year-old underground shell mound attraction. Wednesdays through Saturdays 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with Grounds daily from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Adults

Wednesday, March 5

Grounds free. See www.moundhouse.org.

FMB Woman's Club Monthly Meeting

\$15, Students \$8, Kids 6 to 12 \$5, & 5 & under free;

@The Island Pancake House

Join the best club on the entire island! Food & drink for purchase from the restaurant and all are welcome at 6:30 p.m.; see www.fmb-wc.org.

Thursday, March 6

FMB Chamber "Coffee Connection"

@Santini Plaza Coffee Shop

Start your day with your FMB Chamber friends for networking with complimentary coffee and tasty breakfast items from 8 to 9:30 a.m.; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Thursday, March 6

FMB Town Council Management & Planning Session

@Town Hall. Bay Oaks Recreational Center The FMB Town Council continues its work to rebuild FMB at 9 a.m.; see www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov.

Thursday thru Saturday, March 6 to 8

88th Annual Sanibel Shell Show

@Sanibel Harbour Pointe Drive See magnificent shells, shell art, crafts, silent auction, raffles and over 70 local vendors from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. To register or for more information, see www.sanibelshellclub.com.

Friday & Saturday, March 7 & 8 **AND EVERY FRIDAY & SATURDAY**

Fort Myers Beach Market

@ 401 3rd St

The Fort Myers Beach Market offers fresh produce, artisan foods, art, crafts, clothing and more EVERY Friday & Saturday through May from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information see www.41markets.com.

experience one of Florida's most scenic races at the

Saturday, March 8

Turtle Trot 5K

@ Lover's Key State Park Run Through Paradise! Escape the pavement and Turtle Trot 5K in Lovers Key State Park! This unique and exhilarating course takes runners and walkers through the lush trails of the park, winding through maritime hammocks, coastal dune habitats, and mangrove estuaries. The race culminates in a beautiful beachside finish, where the Gulf of Mexico provides the perfect post-run reward! 8am-11am. Registration ends March 3, 2025. www.runsignup.com

Saturdays, March 8 & 9

Fort Myers Beach Shrimp Festival

CHECK OUT SHRIMP FESTIVAL EVENTS **ON PAGE 10!**

Monday, March 10

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 11 a.m. \$25-per-person with advance registration and payment necessary at 239-472-3644, x-229 or reservations@crowclinic.org.

Tuesday, March 11 **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 9 a.m. See www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov.

Wednesday, March 12

Mound House Eco-Kayak Tours

@The Historic Mound House Explore 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 Tours are every Wednesday through Saturday from 9 to 11 a.m. \$50-per-person includes MH admission with reservations necessary at www.moundhouse.org.

Thursday, March 13

FMB Chamber

Membership Luncheon

@Pink Shell Beach Resort

Join your FMB Chamber friends to savor a scrumptious luncheon from the Pink Shell Beach Resort while listening to Tiffany White of "Foo Dog Productions" from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Alex King Group sponsors the March Luncheon. \$31 members & \$42 prospective members; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Friday, March 14

Welcome & Discovery Center

@Lovers Key State Park

The Welcome & Discovery Center educates and informs visitors about Lovers Key habitats through interactive displays Wednesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.. The W&DC is FREE with the park entry fee; see www.friendsofloverskey.org.

Saturday, March 15 "Birding & Brunch"

@The Historic Mound House
Discover the joys of birding as this beginner
program introduces the basics of birding, like
identifying common FMB birds, how to effectively use binoculars, and spot key habitats from 9
to 11 a.m. Following the program, enjoy a light
brunch then take a guided birding walk through
the picturesque Mound House grounds! \$10 MH
members & \$15 non-members; pre-register by
March 8 at www.moundhouse.org.

Saturday, March 15 FMB St. Patrick's Day Parade

@Santini Marina Plaza
The FMB Woman's Club brings back the popular
"St. Patrick's Day Parade" for the 1st time since
Hurricane lan at 10 a.m.! Sponsored by the
King Family Foundation, the Parade runs from
Santini Plaza to the Woman's Club property at
175 Sterling Avenue. Stay for the "Post Parade
Tent Event" with music, dancing, entertainment,
food trucks and free parking from 11 a.m. to 3

p.m. To register for the Parade or for more information, see www.fmb-wc.org or email debnelson913@gmail.com.

Tuesday, March 17 Happy St. Patrick's Day!



Wednesday, March 19 Shell Mound Tours

@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 10 a.m., Noon & 2 p.m. This hands-on tour explores the environment and cultural history of the site and features replica artifact demonstrations. \$5-per person plus MH admission; see www.moundhouse.org.

Wednesday, March 19 FMB Community Foundation

Monthly Meeting

@The Island Pancake House
The FMB Community Foundation is the island's
leading philanthropic organization, so join in on the
fun from 5 to 7 p.m.; see www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com.

Thursday, March 20 FMB Chamber "Business After Hours"

@Scan Design Furniture
Join your FMB Chamber friends for a fun time
while enjoying savory appetizers and a cash bar at
13411 Metro Parkway from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Members
FREE & \$16 for perspective members; see www.
fortmyersbeach.org.

Wednesday, March 26 FMB Community Foundation Social Get-Together

@To Be Determined
The FMB Community Foundation is the island's
leading philanthropic organization, so join in on
the fun from 5 to 7 p.m.; for the location, see www.
fmbcommunityfoundation.com.

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67th Annual Shrimp Festival



- by Gary Mooney, photos by Sandy Sandness & the FMB Lions Club -

The 67th Annual Shrimp Festival returns to FMB on Saturday & Sunday, March 8 & 9, but the activities now last for an entire week. Below is a quick description of the Shrimp Festival events; for more information see www.fortmyersbeachshrimp-festival.com.

Saturday, March 1: "Kids Shrimp Run," 8 a.m. FREE

The "Kids Shrimp Run" is at Gulf Beach Road, Beach Access #25. Children K through 5 compete in age groups with awards to the top 3 finishers. While watching the kids run, meet this year's "Shrimp Festival" Princesses! For information email BettyR@leeschools.net.

Saturday, March 8: "Shrimp Run 5K," 9 a.m.

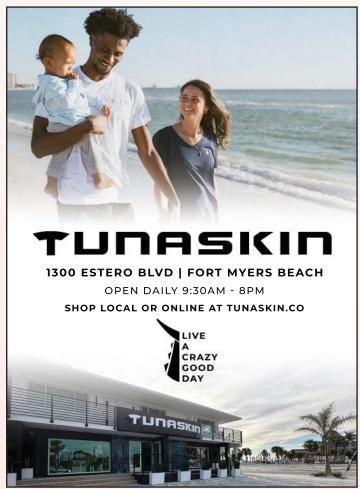
The "Shrimp 5K" takes you over the Matanzas Pass Bridge and back while the crowd cheers you on! The Start / Finish line is at Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille at 708 Fishermans Wharf; for registration information contact BettyR@leeschools.net.



2022 Queen Lilleigh with her court while wearing the ORIGINAL Shrimp Queen crown at the Estero Island Historical Society.

Monday through Sunday, March 3 to 9: "Shrimp Crawl"

Savor all the local Pink Gold Shrimp that you want for the entire week from 16 of your favorite FMB restaurants! Each offers distinctive shrimp meals and drinks specials, so stop by the FMB Chamber Office, Tunaskin Aquatic Apparel, or Erickson & Jensen Seafood to pick up your "Shrimp Crawl" passports at \$5 each and are available at the FMB Chamber Office, TunaSkin Aquatic Apparel or Erickson & Jenson Seafood. Portion of all sales benefit those in need in our community.



Saturday, March 8: "Shrimp Festival Parade," 10 a.m. to Noon

The "Shrimp Festival Parade" runs down Estero Boulevard from the Beach Elementary School to the base of the Matanzas Pass Bridge. Marvel at the wide variety of floats, catch prizes thrown by the participants, and wave to the Shrimp Festival Princesses! To prepare for the parade, the Matanzas Pass Bridge closes from 9 a.m. to Noon.

Saturday & Sunday, March 8 & 9: "Shrimp Boil Dinners,

" 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Lions Club pairs Pink Gold Shrimp with baked beans, coleslaw and crackers, topped off by Lion Darby's secret recipe cocktail sauce! "Shrimp Boil Shrimp Dinners" are \$20 each.

Saturday, March 8:

"Queen's Pageant," Bayside Park, 1 p.m. Princesses age 15 to 20 compete

to become the 2025 "Shrimp Festival Queen." In addition to the Queen,

the Princesses vie for 1st & 2nd Runner-Up, Miss Personality, Miss Congeniality, Miss Photogenic and the People Choice Winner.

Sunday, March 9: "The Blessing of The Fleet," 10 a.m. to Noon

Join St. Raphael's Episcopal Church and the Fort Myers Beach Shrimping Fleet for the traditional Sunday mass service followed by the historic "Blessing of The Fleet," then the "Pink Gold Shrimp Celebration" at 1100 Shrimp Boat Lane.

Sunday, March 9: "Shrimp Eating Contest," Sandy Bottoms, 2 p.m.

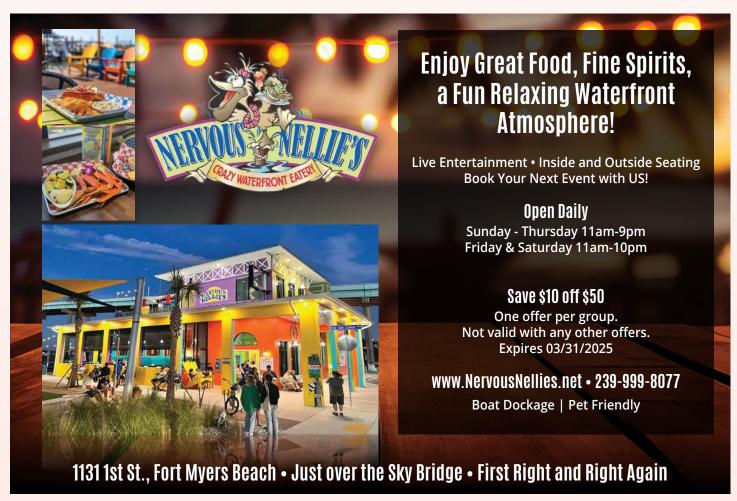
The most "full-filling" part of the Shrimp Festival! Sponsored contestants eat as many pounds of Pink Gold Shrimp as they can in eight minutes. The "Shrimp Eating Contest" is a new island tradition!

Sunday, March 9: "Shrimp Festival Closing Ceremony," Bayside Park, 4 to 7 p.m.

Wrap up your "Shrimp Festival Weekend" with live music, 50/50 raffles, a silent auction & more! ■



The "Shrimp Eating Contest" is the most "filling" aspect of the "Shrimp Festival Weekend!"



Peel & Eat Boiled Shrimp with Cocktail Sauce

by Sandy Sandness

INGREDIENTS FOR THE SHRIMP

- 2½ tablespoons Old Bay seasoning
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 cup beer

- 1 cup water
- 2 pounds extra large shrimp (26-30 per pound), shell split and deveined, thawed if frozen

INGREDIENTS FOR THE COCKTAIL SAUCE

- 6 tablespoons ketchup
- ½ tablespoon prepared horseradish (see note)
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
- Pinch cayenne pepper

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SHRIMP

Combine the Old Bay, butter, beer, and water in a large pot and bring to a boil. Add the shrimp, turn the heat down to medium, and cover the pot with a lid. Cook, stirring once, for 3 to 6 minutes, or until the shrimp are pink and just cooked through. Using a slotted spoon, remove the shrimp from the broth and transfer to a serving platter. Serve hot or cold with cocktail sauce.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COCKTAIL SAUCE

In a small bowl, whisk together the ketchup, horseradish, lemon juice, and cayenne pepper. Taste and adjust seasoning, if necessary.

Note: Prepared horseradish can be found in the refrigerator aisle at your supermarket.

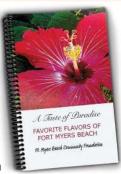
Peel & Eat Boiled Shrimp with Cocktail Sauce



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



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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.









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Chamber Chatter! "Change is Inevitable" & "Civil Discourse"

There's an old FMB maxim that if March is the peak of season, then the Shrimp Festival, held on the second weekend of March, is the peak of peak season!

But the truth today, as many of you know, is that "season" isn't what it was before Hurricane Ian devastated our community on September 28, 2022. Our hotel room stock remains low and won't increase significantly until new projects are complete. Many of our condominiums are still closed, businesses are adapting and residential redevelopment, while making progress, is not happening as quickly as we would all like to see. Two and a half years after Ian, many assumed Fort Myers Beach would be well on its way to normalcy. Instead, we've learned that rebuilding after such devastation takes time, patience and civility.

The good news is that, compared to other communities hit by similar disasters, FMB is not just recovering – it's thriving. I spend a lot of time speaking to people from across Southwest Florida, as well as from other states, to understand how they perceive our recovery. The consensus is clear: we're well ahead of any other community similarly affected by a natural disaster. People who've visited FMB since lan's aftermath are amazed at how far we've come.

While it's easy to overlook progress when you're living through it daily, rest assured that positive changes are happening, even if they aren't immediately obvious.

The New Normal

We all know "change is inevitable," but Hurricane Ian brought a level of change unlike anything most of us have ever experienced. On top of our hurricanes, we've also faced challenges like interest rates, building costs, supply chain issues, shifting populations and more. Old neighbors are gone with new ones arriving. Our local community is undergoing a significant change and we are all learning to adapt to our new normal.

When you look around FMB today, you'll see progress: more people returning to their homes, more businesses opening, a strong employment sector, and incredible generosity from residents toward local non-profits. Seasonals and vacationers continue to love FMB and return year after year, a testament to the resilience and charm of our community.

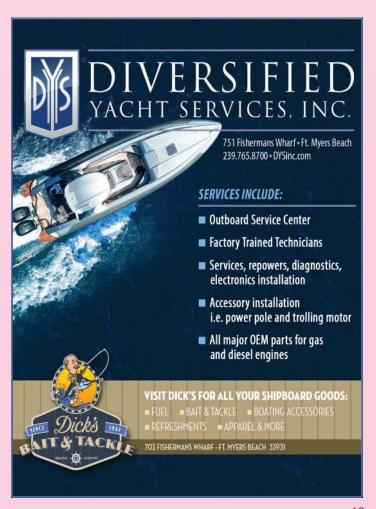
"Change is Inevitable," and while it's natural for emotions to run high as we work to preserve our homes, businesses and community, it's important to approach one another with respect. Recently, we lost a valued Town Manager due to threatening comments directed at his family, and our Town Council members have received challenging communications. We've seen disagreements between neighbors and friends, but many have called for a return to civility as we navigate these times. As Mayor Dan Allers has observed, he has witnessed both the strengths and the challenges of our community since Hurricane Ian.

I encourage everyone to embrace civil discourse. Before sending a message, take a moment to reflect on its impact and ensure it fosters understanding. While frustration is natural, kindness and respect will help us work together to rebuild and renew our community. We are capable of handling these challenges with grace, and together, we can create a positive path forward.

The FMB Chamber Office is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., on the 3rd floor of 100 Lovers Lane. We also have a satellite office at "The Roxie" in Times Square, next to the Trolley Stop, open daily from 10 a.m. to sunset.

Enjoy the Shrimp Festival, and please be kind to one-another. 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!





- by Gary Mooney -

2025 Event Sees Record Fundraising & Sponsorships

This year's 'Putt & Pub Crawl' was a sellout-plus," raves Dawn Thomas, the Fort Myers Beach Woman's Club President and event Co-chair with Mari Torgerson. "We reached our registration limit of 330 golfers in advance of the 'Putt & Pub Crawl' and that is wonderful." The event raised \$65,000 for our nine FMB non-profits and that is more than 20% over our 2024 total.

Putt & Pub Partners

For the 2025 Putt & Pub Crawl, the following nine FMB bars and restaurants partnered with the corresponding non-profits: La Ola Surfside Restaurant with The Friends of the Mound House; Lah De Dah Beach Bar in the Margaritaville Beach Resort with the FMB PTO; Lighthouse Tiki Bar & Grill for the FMB Lions Club; Nervous Nellie's Crazy Waterfront Eatery and the Friends of Lovers Key State Park; Petey's Upper Deck with FMB Revival; Smokin' Oyster Brewery and FMB Strong; Snug Harbor Waterfront Restaurant and the FMB Community Foundation; Wahoo Willie's Tiki Bar & Grill and the FMB Chamber of Commerce; and Yucatan Beach Stand with The Friends of the FMB Public Library; as well as the FMB Woman's Club as the overriding sponsor.

"The Alex King Family Foundation was the 'Putt & Pub Crawl' Title sponsor," Dawn relates. "Our Platinum Sponsors were Coconut Jack's Waterfront Grille, Ennovation Engineering Services Inc., Suncoast Beverage Sales, and Sweet Melissa's Homemade Ice Cream Shop. Our Gold Sponsors were the Breeze Newspapers, CCMSI Insurance, Cheney Brothers, Eisner Amper, Gavin's Ace Hardware, John R. Wood Properties, Margaritaville Beach Resort, and Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits. We had a record number of sponsors this year, I believe, because area businesses realize that the 'Putt & Pub Crawl' sells out every year, it constantly gets bigger and better, and the sponsors acknowledge the benefit of being associated with an event that helps many of FMB's most noteworthy charities all in one outing."

The "Flip Flippers," composed of Teresa & Kenny Christie and Jodi & Nick Lapinsky, posted the Lowest Score, with the team of John Beerman, John Cahill, and Mike & Scott Miller coming in second place, while "The Safari Swing Squad" earned the dubious distinction of the Duffers Award for their last-place finish! The Best Team Name went to "Whoops: Touched By An Uncle" while the Best Team Costume went to the "Barbie & Ken" foursome. "Smokin' Oyster Brewery" took home the inaugural "Best Hole Award" as voted on by the golfers.

The 14th Annual Putt & Pub Crawl will be held on January 17, 2026. Registration will begin in the Fall of 2025 so start checking the FMB Woman's Club website www.fmb-wc.org for all the details.

Dawn expresses special thanks "to our wonderful FMB Woman's Club volunteers who made the day flow seamlessly and we could not successfully host the 'Putt & Pub Crawl' without them. To join the FMB Woman's Club, see our membership information at www.fmb-wc.org or come to one of our monthly meetings the first Wednesday of each month at the Island Pancake House at 6:30 p.m. The FMB Woman's Club is not only one of the island's leading philanthropic organizations but a tremendously fun group of people!"



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