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An exclusive magazine serving the residents of Fort Myers Beach

May 2025

FORT MYERS BEACH

Living



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FORT MYERS BEACH

A Best Version Media 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. 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

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SUDOKU

- By Gary Mooney -

SUDOKU RULES:

Each row must contain the digits 1-9.

Each column must contain the digits 1-9.

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Answers on page 8

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Hello Friends & Neighbors!

We cover quite a bit of ground in this month's edition of "FMB LIVING Magazine!" You will find our cover story this month on Joy and Kevin Sullivan to be fun and entertaining. The Sullivans are firm believers in giving back to the FMB community, like so many of our friends and neighbors.

In this month's "Chamber Chatter," FMB Chamber President Jacki Liszak chronicles the Chamber's visit to Tallahassee, where they spoke face-to-face with many of Southwest Florida's elected leaders at the 25th annual "Southwest Florida Days" at the State Capital. While there are literally thousands of bills under consideration by the Florida Legislature, our Southwest Florida contingent stressed the need for our state leaders to continue to fund Clean Water initiatives so that we never again have to endure 2018's twin water crisis of Red Tide and Blue-Green Algae.

Following along that same line, The Everglades Foundation provided us with a tremendous feature that chronicles all the excellent work they do to ensure that our water remains clean now and into the future. Toward the end of the article, The Everglades Foundation lists five items that every one of us can do to keep our water clean. As we all learned in 2018, Clean Water is EVERYTHING to Fort Myers Beach! It is our health, economy, tourism, and business foundation – without it, we are just a 7-mile crescent of sand.

In addition to all of us FMB residents, business owners, employees and tourists, our Loggerhead sea turtles require clean water, particularly now that we are entering our six-month stretch of turtle nesting season from May 1 through October 31. Eve Haverfield and her unbelievable band of terrific volunteers make "Turtle Time, Inc." one of Fort Myers Beach's most beloved institutions!

Speaking of beloved FMB institutions, please continue 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!

Happy Mother's Day to all the Moms out there on Sunday, May 11, and on Monday, May 26, take time on Memorial Day to remember all the Veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice for all of us.

Have An Awesome Beach Day!



Sandy Sandness

Publisher

Fort Myers Beach LIVING

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ssandness@bestversionmedia.com



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The World's Most Beautiful Place!

Kevin & Joy Sullivan are Committed to FMB

– By Gary Mooney, Photos by Sandy Sandness and Joy & Kevin Sullivan –

"I grew up in Cincinnati but once I attended the University of Indiana, I never returned," laughs Joy Sullivan! "After graduating and eventually marrying Kevin, we lived in Indianapolis for ten years, then relocated to Chicago for the next thirty." "I was born in South Bend," relates Kevin. "Dad settled there after returning from his service in the Second World War and the Korean War and I became his fourth son. We lived on the Notre Dame campus, in the area that now houses the Joyce Center. When I was

three, we moved to Terra Haute where Dad practiced law. I left to attend Indiana University as well, but Joy and I did not meet there. After graduating, I moved to Indianapolis to work for Indiana Bell Telephone Company and it was through that where I encountered Joy."

They met at a Marketing Department promotion-party "and it was love at first sight for me," enthuses Kevin! "Joy was with a friend of mine and I moseyed over to meet her." "I was in the Accounting Department

so we crashed the Marketing Department party," Joy adds. "I won't say it was love at first sight for me, but Kevin immediately intrigued me." They dated for roughly two years and when it came time to propose, "I did so at the same bar where we met," Kevin proudly recalls!

Joy and Kevin married on June 19, 1982, with their reception at the Eli Lilly House & Gardens Museum in Indianapolis, "and it was gorgeous," says Joy. "Our wedding date became so significant," Kevin observes, "that the Federal Government now commemorates it as a national holiday so the entire nation can celebrate with us!" After marrying, they received promotions and moved to the Chicago suburb of Barrington where they helped to build up Ameritech after the divestiture of AT&T.

After working for the Telephone Company for 20 years, Joy moved on to JP-Morgan Chase for another 20 years before retiring, saying that "40 years was enough!" Kevin eventually formed his own Management Consulting agency, "working with Fortune 50 companies with strategic program management, to help them decompose, fund, launch, staff and measure their strategic initiatives."

The Sullivans have two sons: Patrick lives in Chicago with his wife Coleen and their three sons, James who is 6, 4-year-old Benjamin and Harrison who is two. Kyle resides in the state of Oregon with wife Amanda and their two children, 2-year-old Brynn and 9-month-old Beckett.



"The natural beauty of FMB, combined with its people, make this island the world's most wonderful place!"



Joy and Kevin married on June 19, 1982, with their reception at the Eli Lilly House & Gardens Museum in Indianapolis, "and it was gorgeous," says Joy

The Hidden Gem of FMB

While Joy was “love at first sight” for Kevin, that was not his initial impression of FMB. “We vacationed here roughly 25 years ago and it did not infatuate me. The parents of some of our best friends, however, lived at the Palms of Bay Beach so we went to visit them and that immediately changed everything! I grew up vacationing in the Florida Keys and always thought that we would eventually buy a second home there but when we walked into the Palms and saw that beautiful Estero Bay view, we agreed that FMB was not only a mini-Florida Key but it came with a 7-mile stretch of sugar white sand as well as being about a ten-mile drive from around a hundred golf courses. Shortly thereafter, in 2004 and about a week prior to Hurricane Charlie, I bought us a place in the Palms, even before Joy could even see it for herself.” “Kevin picked a great unit,” Joy concludes: “It is 21 years later and we are still in it!”

The Sullivans rave about the Palms. “We call the Palms ‘The Hidden Gem of FMB,’” explains Joy. “Our views are spectacular, with a huge pool, and when we are not in Season, we have easy access to Bonita Springs and the mainland.” “The Palms is on a stunningly beautiful 13 acres and that is a decent piece of land for FMB,” Kevin relates. “We have a magnificent view of Big Carlos Pass and whenever we travel, all we do is close the hurricane shutters and go.”

Committed to The Island

Joy volunteers on the Town’s Bay Oaks Recreational Center Advisory Board (BORCAB) as well as being a member of the FMB Community Foundation and the FMB Woman’s Club. “Sadly, Bay Oaks remains shut due to the aftereffects of Hurricanes Helene and Milton, but we hope to reopen the gymnasium this Spring. We still host Senior Softball as well as the outside pickleball courts. As for the Community Foundation and Woman’s Club, they are wonderful organizations that benefit our island community in innumerable ways. The Woman’s Club recently reintroduced the annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade and it was a total blast! The women in both clubs are fantastic; in addition to all the community initiatives, it is the deep friendships I have in both organizations that mean the most to me.”

Krista Photography



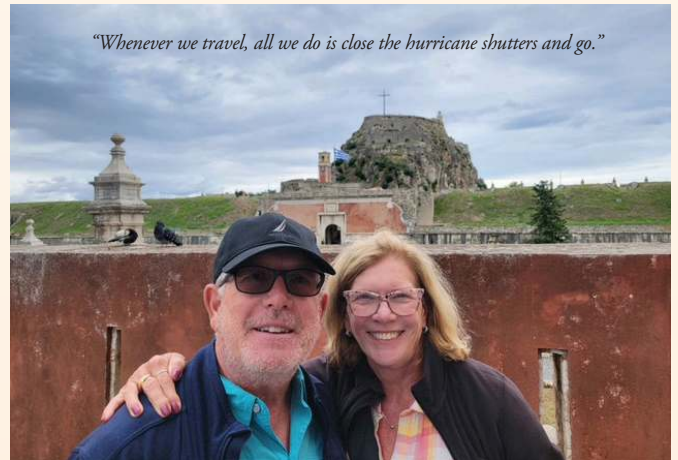
Kevin is on the Condo Grounds Committee and on the Board of the community’s neighborhood association. “We maintain Bay Beach Lane and the water reclamation system for the adjacent 57 acres that was formerly the old FMB Golf Club. The natural beauty of this area is priceless!” “We love to volunteer,” Joy summarizes, “because we are committed to the island.”

The Sullivans enjoy golfing, pickleball, boating and kayaking, and they love to keep track of their nearby Bald Eagles nest and their annual eaglets! “I walk a lot as well,” Kevin offers. “I used to do six miles a day but when I began working on the Grounds Committee, I discovered that I covered 20,000 steps a day so now I kill two birds with one stone while making our island look nicer! I soon discovered that I did not know much about our flora and fauna, so every day I took a photograph of one critter and vegetation, then would explore Wikipedia to learn what they were. Volunteering always meant a lot to me; when I was younger, I volunteered with Junior Achievement of Central Indiana and was the president of my Kiwanis Club, but then you travel for work and raise a family and you do not have time. Now that we are retired, we enjoy paying it back along with all the positive benefits we get from doing so.”

Great People & Natural Beauty

When Joy and Kevin gaze into their crystal balls, what do they foresee for FMB in the next five years? “Hurricane Ian, and hurricanes in general, have changed so much that it is difficult to predict the next five years,” says Joy. “I hope it will look like something that is in the spirit of the Comprehensive Plan and Local Development Codes,” Kevin states. “We did a terrific job over the past 25 years in preserving what is important to islanders but now we seem to be getting away from that.”

Kevin calls the Town’s residents “the best part of FMB! They are great and resilient and I love to call them friends and neighbors. I hope that FMB fully recovers from Ian’s devastation, to become once more the special place we all love. May future hurricanes be minor, storm surges minimal and the quaint character remain.” Joy concludes by saying, “the natural beauty of FMB, combined with its people, make this island the world’s most wonderful place!” ■



May

Monday Through Friday Bay Oaks Recreational Center

@Bay Oaks Recreational Center
As of press time, The Bay Oaks Recreational Center remains closed following Hurricanes Helene & Milton. To learn its current status, see www.fortmyersbeachfl.org.

Thursday, May 1 FMB Chamber "Coffee Connection"

@The Railroad Museum of South Florida
All Aboard the mini-train at Lakes Regional Park, while enjoying complimentary coffee, refreshments & networking at The Railroad Museum of South Florida from 8 to 9:30 a.m. The "Coffee Connection" is FREE; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Friday & Saturday, May 2 & 3 AND EVERY FRIDAY & SATURDAY THROUGH MAY

Fort Myers Beach Market

@Santini Marina Plaza
Hurricanes Helene & Milton forced the relocation of this Downtown FMB Market to Santini Marina Plaza. The FMB Market offers fresh produce, artisan foods, arts, crafts, clothing and more EVERY Friday & Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The FMB Market ends for the season on Saturday, May 31; see www.41markets.com.

Friday & Saturday, May 2 & 3 AND EVERY FRIDAY & SATURDAY THROUGH MAY

Moss Marina Farmer's Market

@Moss Marina
Savor scrumptious food items, along with lovely arts & crafts, every Friday and Saturday at 450 Old San Carlos Boulevard from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Moss Marina Farmer's Market ends for the season on Saturday, May 31; see www.mossmarina.com.

Saturdays, May 3 & 10 "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 8:15 a.m. to Noon; see www.scbps.com.

Saturday, May 3 Arches Cinco De Mayo

@Erickson & Jensen Seafood Docks
The 5th "Rock The Arches" Music Festival is at Erickson & Jensen at 1100 Shrimp Boat Lane from 1 to 9 p.m. Enjoy Mariachi America Del Sol, Latin dancers & music, Matrasa Lynn, Way Out South, Dirty Work, Rollin Low Car Club, Mexican shrimp, cocktails & beer, vendors, raffles & more to "Restore The Arches." For more information, contact mickyds2002@yahoo.com.

Sunday, May 4 AND EVERY SUNDAY Bayside Park Concert Series

@Bayside Park
Relax while listening to fantastic tunes from local musicians at these FREE weekly outdoor concerts, weather permitting, from 4 to 7 p.m.! May 4: "Limited Edition"; May 11: "Thunder Beach"; May 18: "The Echo"; & May 25: "Soapy Tuna." See www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Monday, May 5 CINCO DE MAYO

Mondays, May 5 & 19 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.gov.

Tuesday, May 6 AND EVERY TUESDAY & THURSDAY THROUGH MAY Santini Marina Plaza Market

@Santini Marina Plaza
This FMB South End Market offers fresh produce, artisan foods, arts, crafts, clothing and more EVERY Tuesday & Thursday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Santini Marina Plaza Market ends for the season on Thursday, May 29; see www.41markets.com.

Tuesday, May 6 FMB Community Foundation Annual Awards

@TBA
The FMB Community Foundation is the island's leading philanthropic organization. The Community Foundation hosts its General Membership Meeting, where it distributes its Annual Monetary Awards and Scholarship Recipients from 5 to 8 p.m. For the location, see www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com.

Wednesday, May 7 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.

Wednesday, May 7 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 a.m. to 6 p.m. Adults \$15, Students \$8, Kids 6 to 12 \$5, & 5 & under free; Grounds free. See www.moundhouse.org.

Wednesday, May 7 FMB Woman's Club Monthly Meeting

@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, May 8 FMB Chamber Membership Luncheon

@Nervous Nellie's Crazy Waterfront Eatery
Join your FMB Chamber friends to savor a scrumptious luncheon from Nervous Nellie's Crazy Waterfront Eatery while listening to Jacqueline Arambles of Waste Management from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Waste Management sponsors the May Luncheon. \$32 members & \$42 prospective members; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Friday, May 9 Fort Myers Mighty Mussels V. Dunedin Blue Jays

@Hammond Stadium, Lee Health Sports Complex
The Mighty Mussels, the Low A affiliate of the Minnesota Twins, take on the Dunedin Blue Jays of the Toronto organization at 7:05 p.m. Enjoy fantastic fireworks following the game, so Play Ball! The Mussels & Blue Jays play Tuesday through Sunday, May 6 to 11, with weekdays at 7:05 p.m., Saturday at 6:05 p.m. & Sunday at 12:05 p.m.; tickets \$12 to \$17. For details see www.mightymussels.com.

Saturday, May 10 Spring Into Summer Tea Party

@The Historic Mound House
Enjoy a refreshing iced tea bar and grazing table snacks. Learn about Florida's native flowers while building a bouquet and capture the memory at our beautiful photo op spot so dress in vibrant summer attire! Perfect for the Mothers or Mother figures in your life, just in time for Mother's Day! \$20-per-person; reservations necessary at www.moundhouse.org.

Sunday, May 11 HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

Monday, May 12 CROW Campus Tours

@Center for the Rehabilitation Of Wildlife
An in-depth look at what the animal patients experience,



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3	9	1	5	6	4	2	7	8

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, May 13

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, May 14

Mound House Eco-Kayak Tours

@The Historic Mound House
Discover Florida's natural beauty on a guided kayak tour of the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve. The Mound House 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. \$45-per-person includes MH admission with reservations necessary at www.moundhouse.org.

Thursday, May 15

FMB Chamber "Business After Hours"

@LMCU
Join your FMB Chamber friends for a fun time at Lake

Michigan Credit Union at 7580 Winkler Road, while enjoying savory appetizers and a cash bar from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Members FREE & \$16 for perspective members; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Friday, May 16

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.friendsofloversonkey.org.

Saturday, May 17

FMB Art Association

Summer Show: "Ripples"

@Tribby Arts Center
Marvel at the FMBAA's Summer Show, "Ripples" at the Tribby Art Center at Shell Point at 17281 On Par Boulevard! "Ripples" runs through Saturday, July 19. "Ripples" is FREE and all are welcome; see www.fortmyersbeachart.com.

Wednesday, May 21

Calusa Tours

@The Historic Mound House
Discover the incredible history of the Calusa, the

original stewards of Southwest Florida, on this 30-minute guided outdoor tour. Learn how this innovative Indigenous society thrived across our region for centuries, leaving an enduring legacy still visible today with their shell mounds. Uncover the stories revealed by archaeologists through hands-on activities such as an atlatl demonstration. Calusa Tours are Wednesday through Saturday at 11 a.m. & 1 p.m. \$15 includes Mound House admission; see www.moundhouse.org.

Monday, May 26

MEMORIAL DAY: GOD BLESS OUR VETERANS!

Thursday, May 29

FMB Woman's Club Monthly Social

@Old San Carlos Boulevard
Join the best club on the entire island for a "Pub Crawl" at SOB's, Wahoo Willie's, & Snug Harbor beginning at 5 p.m.! Visit all three bars to be eligible for a wonderful prize package. Open to all members, friends, and families; for information see www.fmb-wc.org.

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The Everglades is one of the world's most unique ecosystems, spanning 16 Florida counties, including Lee County.


Saving America's Everglades: It's All About Your Water

- by Liz Jakeway, The Florida Everglades Foundation -

As a resident of Fort Myers Beach, you may be familiar with the Everglades. It's one of the world's most unique ecosystems, spanning 16 Florida counties, including our own. It supplies critical drinking water for millions, while supporting world-class fishing, buffering coastal communities from storm surge, helping stabilize our pristine coastline, and bolstering our state's vital tourism and real estate sectors. The Everglades also provides habitat for more than 70 threatened and endangered species, and encompasses 14 National Wildlife Refuges and four National Parks, including Everglades National Park.


Unfortunately, though, the Everglades is suffering from massive environmental damage. Over the past century, man-made water diversions and flood control projects altered historic water flows in the Everglades thereby converting large areas to agricultural and residential uses. Consequently, too much polluted water is often pumped from Lake Okeechobee to the coasts of Florida – sparking outbreaks of toxic algae blooms damaging the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries – while too little freshwater is flowing south to the Everglades and Florida Bay.

Everglades restoration is the answer to reversing the harm to the ecosystem. Since its founding in 1993, The Everglades Foundation has been the leading champion for restoration by providing bipartisan solutions backed by sound scientific research led by its own in-house team of world-class Ph.D. scientists. Through science, advocacy, and education, The



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Everglades Foundation is devoted to restoring and protecting America's Everglades.

In 2000, Congress passed the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) – a plan whose 68 projects represents the largest ecosystem restoration project on the planet. CERP serves as an international model for ecosystem restoration.

The Foundation works tirelessly to secure the state and federal funding needed to implement restoration projects to fix South Florida's outdated water infrastructure. These projects will restore the flow of desperately needed water to the Everglades and Florida Bay, and reduce discharges of pollutants that cause perennial outbreaks of red tide to our coast.

Among the most noteworthy restoration projects is the Everglades Agricultural

Area (EAA) Reservoir, considered "the crown jewel" of Everglades restoration. Ground was broken in February 2023 on the reservoir, which, together with other projects completed and those underway, will send clean freshwater south to the Everglades and Florida Bay. No other project will play a bigger role in reducing harmful discharges from Lake Okeechobee.

The Foundation also works to educate future generations on the vital importance of Everglades restoration and protection through its Everglades Literacy Program. Established in 2014, the free program offers the world's only comprehensive PreK-12 curriculum complete with customized teacher training courses, symposia, and other resources.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can help The Everglades Foundation in its mission to restore and protect

America's Everglades:

- Tell your neighbors and elected officials that Everglades restoration matters to you, your family, your real estate, your business, and the future of Florida.
- To learn more about the EAA Reservoir (ADD URL)
- Join the conversation at Instagram.com/evergladesfoundation, Facebook.com/evergladesfoundation, and X.com/evergladesfoundation.
- Become an Everglades water advocate by subscribing to our newsletter at EvergladesFoundation.org/get-involved.
- Support the Foundation's mission to restore and protect the Everglades through science, advocacy, and education. Visit EvergladesFoundation.org/Giving.

For more information about The Everglades Foundation, visit EvergladesFoundation.org. ■



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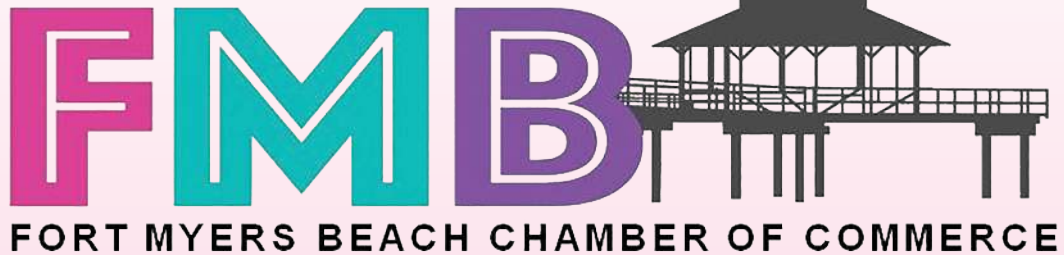
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Chamber Chatter!

Tallahassee Road Trip!

From March 23rd to 25th, thirty-plus fellow Southwest Floridians from all industries and backgrounds, including myself, made the 8-hour journey to Tallahassee for "Southwest Florida Days!" This is a fantastic opportunity to meet with our state legislators to discuss pending legislation that will impact both our businesses and daily lives.

The Chamber of Southwest Florida hosted the trip that included the 2025 Leadership Lee class, along with the Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers, representing seven of SWFL's Chambers including the FMB Chamber. Special thanks to David Miller, Executive Director of the Chamber of Southwest Florida, for organizing the impactful annual trip. Additional thanks to Alliance Chair Donna Germain, President of the Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce, for their generous sponsorship of the event. The FMB Chamber also helped to host the trip that celebrated the 25th anniversary of "Southwest Florida Days."

Our group was composed of business leaders from across Southwest Florida, non-profit partners, local government representatives, construction and home-building professionals, real estate agents and others. It was a great cross-section of our community. In addition to myself, FMB Chamber Board Members Ron Clayton of Waste Management and Kathy Stefanski of Lake Michigan Credit Union represented their companies and the FMB Chamber.

With such a diverse group, each sector has its own legislative priorities, but we all shared common goals like securing continued funding for Everglades Restoration. We urged legislators to keep supporting vital water quality improvements, especially those related to water flowing from Lake Okeechobee down the Caloosahatchee River and into FMB. As we all learned in 2018, during the twin crises of Red Tide and Blue Green Algae, water quality is EVERYTHING for FMB!

Our group met with, among others, State Senator Jonathan Martin, State Senator Kathleen Passidomo, Representative Yvette Benarroch, and Representative Adam Botana. Our legislative leaders all expressed appreciation for our trip to Tallahassee during session, noting that many of us are small business owners who took time away from our businesses during peak season to speak with them. They emphasized the importance of trips like this, as Florida's Legislature will propose roughly 2,000 bills in this session, yet only about 200 will become law.

Hot Topic for 2025

One of the major topics of discussion was Single Member Districts for Lee County Commissioners. If this legislation moves forward, it will certainly be a hot topic for 2025. This is a complex issue for a small community like FMB,

given our relatively small voting bloc. Currently, we can petition all five Lee County Commissioners when relevant issues arise, but a Single Member District Commissioner system would mean appealing to just one. Which format would give FMB a louder voice? Voters should pay close attention to this issue as it progresses, and the Chamber will work to keep FMB constituents informed without taking an official stance.

In addition to meeting our legislators, we heard presentations from Samantha Padgett, Vice President of Governmental Relations and Chief Counsel of the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association, as well as from Andrew Wiggins, the Senior Director of Political Affairs & Coalitions Advocacy for the Florida Chamber of Commerce. We appreciate their insights on important topics and ongoing legislation.

Amid all our advocacy work, we squeezed in some fun! We toured the Judicial Chambers, the Old Capitol Building, the Florida Senate Chamber and the recent Capitol Building renovations. Our visit coincided with that of Florida Gulf Coast University so we hosted a Monday evening reception for the students and faculty, where we visited with former Representative and FGCU Political Science alum Spencer Roach. When speaking with these dynamic Political Science, Business and Law majors, it's clear that our future is in good hands with such engaged, sharp, young professionals.

As a veteran of eight "Southwest Florida Days" trips, I can confidently say that these face-to-face meetings are invaluable, leading to positive results through contacts, friendships, and business relations. If you've never been, I highly encourage you to join us next year. It's fascinating to see the legislative process in action, and you'll gain a deeper understanding of how our state operates and how your voice truly matters.

"We Are Back!"

Now that we're in May, we can officially declare the 2025 season over! So, how did we do? The crowds this year were BACK! While we're not quite at pre-lan levels yet, we're well on our way.

Between the beaches, bars, restaurants, resorts, shopping, the Shrimp Festival, the reopening of our FMB Library, and the return of the St. Patrick's Day Parade & Woman's Club party, the month of March felt like there was always something amazing happening. It felt like FMB again! There were more people on the island this season, and you could feel the energy and positivity. My prediction: book your 2026 seasonal reservations now because next season is shaping up to be a "Humdinger!"


Let me put it simply – We are FMB & We are Back!

The FMB Chamber Office is open Monday through Friday from 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. If you'd like to volunteer at Roxie, please contact us at info@fmbchamber.com or call 239-454-7500.

Enjoy dining at your favorite restaurant and watering hole, and please be kind to one-another. On behalf of our 400-plus FMB Chamber members, remember . . . "Island Life; It's *Our* Business!" ■

Jacki Liszak, President

Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce!



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IT'S TURTLE TIME!

Volunteers Patrol FMB Through October



– by Gary Mooney, photo by Eve Haverfield & Turtle Time, Inc. –

The all-volunteer non-profit Turtle Time, Inc., begun by Eve Haverfield in 1989, begins its 36th consecutive season of monitoring marine turtles on Fort Myers Beach as well as Big Hickory Island and Bonita and Bunche Beaches. Florida's nesting sea turtle season is May 1 through October 31, though Turtle Time in recent years starts their monitoring on April 15 because turtles can nest as soon as the Gulf waters reach 80 degrees. Fort Myers Beach is the almost-exclusive domain of Loggerheads (*Caretta caretta*), though Turtle Time found its first documented Green (*Chelonia mydas*) nests on FMB in 2019.

"Turtle nesting is cyclical," explains Eve. "Loggerheads tend to nest every other year so we look to 2023 for clues. We had just 71 nests that year but these things are not written in cement so you never know what you will get until the end of each season. In addition to that low 2023 number, turtle nesting may be a challenge this year because the Town of FMB is doing a beach restoration that is not yet complete. Hopefully the turtles will avoid the renourishment pipe area where it is redistributing the sand for spots where they can crawl well up onto the beach to lay their nests. We will relocate any nests in the active construction area; however, we are required to leave all nests deposited on the completed beach even if the nest is too close to the Gulf. Because of the renourishment pipe, we do expect a considerable number of false crawls this year, but we will have to wait and see."

The primary bane to nesting turtles and their hatchlings is visible artificial light from beach properties. Turtles

continued on page 14

for millennia had quiet dark beaches to themselves, but now they must compete with businesses and coastal residents. These lights can prevent females from coming ashore or they choose an inferior nesting location from which few hatchlings survive. Lights disorient hatchlings, causing them to move toward that source and away from the Gulf, resulting in their death from dehydration, exhaustion, or automobiles.

A “Win-Win” All the Way Around

Eve constantly stresses that people who live on or within the visible view of the beach need to use turtle-friendly Amber LED lighting. “An exciting development is that the Town will retrofit all the Estero Boulevard streetlights with Amber LED lighting beginning this year,” she relates. “Amber LED lighting is safe and easy on the eyes and bright enough for people yet has a wavelength that does not bother or attract the nesting turtles so it is truly a ‘Win-Win’ all the way around.”

Turtle Time encourages FMB residents to proactively protect sea turtles and hatchlings. Please switch to Amber LED lights that are turtle-friendly, close drapes and blinds after dark, never shine a flashlight or use flash photography on sea turtles, move boats or beach furniture behind beach vegetation nightly, keep dogs on a leash, and fill in any holes dug into the sand as hatchlings and adult turtles can fall in and die. Only 1 to 4 out of every 1,000 hatchlings survive to adulthood. It takes 30 to 50 years for them to reach maturity, so living nesting sea turtles survive long odds and need the help of humans.

Loggerheads are the primary sea turtles to nest on FMB. “In 2019 a Green sea turtle nested here,” raves Eve! We sure would like to bask in the joy of 2019 again, when we had a total of 11 Greens on the beaches that we monitor. Sanibel, meanwhile, has documented multiple Green nests and even

Leatherbacks (*Dermochelys coriacea*) in recent years! Perhaps our Greens will return to FMB or Bonita Beach this year!”

You Are The Best!

Like everyone on FMB, Eve hopes for a calm Southwest Florida 2025 hurricane season. “Storms are hard on turtle nests and 2024 with Hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton was a perfect example,” offers Eve. “Last year, we had 257 total nests but just 124 hatched and some of those nests had just 2 or 3 hatchlings that survived. While that is tragic, sad and depressing, the thing that keeps us positive is that nesting sea turtles have existed for millions of years, through all kinds of storms and challenging environments, so they are hearty! Each nesting sea turtle will lay multiple nests each season, so the odds that one of her nests will survive are reasonable so they continue to replenish their genetic material. While seasons like 2024 occur, we can tolerate those because that is nature; the turtles we lose from human incursions like improper lights or tampering with turtle nests are the ones that are truly tragic and upsetting because of those losses are preventable.”

If you accidentally hook or catch a sea turtle, or find one in distress or dead, immediately contact Turtle Time at 239-481-5566 or www.turtletime.org, the FWC Hotline at 888-404-3922, or the Town of Fort Myers Beach at 239-765-4222. “Of these, contact us at Turtle Time first,” stresses Eve. “We can respond the quickest, because when are you dealing with a hatchling or a distressed turtle, every minute matters.”

Eve expresses her sincere appreciation “to all the people who care enough about nesting sea turtles, nature and our fragile coastal environment to share the beach with nesting sea turtles and shorebirds in a responsible and friendly way – You Are The Best!” ■

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