

An exclusive magazine serving the residents of Fort Myers Beach

August 2025

FORT MYERS BEACH



*"I Treasure
Fort Myers Beach!"*

"Beach Person" Ceel Spuhler!



Cover by Sandy Sandness

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FORT MYERS BEACH

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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. 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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- By Gary Mooney -

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SUDOKU

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Answers on page 11



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Hello Friends & Neighbors!

This month's cover feature is a true Fort Myers Beach Grande Dame – the incomparable Ceel Spuhler! Not only is Ceel a true community leader and passionate island volunteer, but she was one of the dedicated few who rarely missed a Town Council or Local Planning Agency Meeting, keeping all of our elected officials on the straight-&-narrow. On top of her numerous community and volunteer achievements, she is a vibrant fashion plate! In addition to her own unique style, many islanders swear that Ceel has never worn the same outfit twice!

FMB Chamber President Jacki Lyszak gives us a “sneak peek” into the major FMB programs and events for the second half of 2025, starting with “Mullet Madness” this month, so channel your inner Billy Ray Cyrus for this “Redneck Meets the Beach” weekend! While I don't want time to fly by too fast, I love the “Island Hopper Singer-Songwriter's Festival” in September, Halloween parties, November's “American Sand Sculpting Championship,” and pulling out my ugliest Christmas sweater for the Holidays!

Now, for an absolutely joyous topic! The Bay Oaks Recreational Center has undergone a partial reopening, following its closure after Hurricanes Helene & Milton, and by the time you read this, perhaps even more of it will be open. Hours as of now are Mondays through Thursdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Indoor Pickleball is Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. with Open Gym on Fridays from 5 to 7 p.m. Both are FREE to FMB residents and \$5

for all others. The Weight & Cardio Room is open again as well. For Bay Oaks updates, see www.fortmyersbeachfl.org.

Now, for an absolutely serious topic. We are entering the peak of hurricane season, so have your preparations ready, including where you will evacuate should the need arise. Remember, **PREPARE AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT, AS IT JUST MIGHT!** We lost too many friends and loved ones in September 2022 to let history repeat itself.

Speaking of FMB friends and loved ones, please continue to support our advertisers because we cannot deliver “Fort Myers Beach LIVING Magazine” to you free of charge without them. When you visit, please let them know that you saw their ad in our magazine so we can provide you with this community-oriented original entertainment each month!

*Enjoy “Mullet Madness”
& Have An Awesome Beach Day!*



Sandy Sandness

Publisher

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Ceel at the 2024 grand re-opening of "The Islander," with longtime friends Betty Simpson and "Islander" owner Anita Cereceda.

"I Treasure Fort Myers Beach!"

"Beach Person" Ceel Spuhler!

- By Gary Mooney -

Ceel Spuhler is originally from Boston, Massachusetts. "My father was a salesman so we moved around often when I was younger. We ended up in Northeast Ohio where I began college. I was just 16-years-old however, so my parents thought it best that I attend an all-girls school, so I went to Lake Erie College for Women in Painesville. That was a blessing, as we were near the Case School of Engineering that was an all-male school and those guys liked to date so that is how I met my future husband, Peter. He and I met on a blind date and it was love at first sight! Peter was good-looking, a hydraulic engineer, tall at 6'4", and a wonderful man! Our marriage lasted just over 50 years until his passing; Peter was the best thing that ever happened to me."

Peter and Ceel raised four children: Steven, Val, Ceel Junior, and Jim. Today, Ceel is the grandmother to Nick and his wife Sara as well as to Sam and his wife Leah, and great-grandmother to Sophie and Jackson. In Northeast Ohio, they

owned "P. A. Spuhler, Incorporated," a hydraulic engineering company. "I was the Inside Man and Peter was the Outside Man," laughs Ceel at the memory! "We sold hydraulic machinery for almost 25 years, until we relocated to FMB."

Unfortunately, Peter started to undergo health issues and he and Ceel thought that a warmer climate might benefit him. Ceel Junior already lived in Southwest Florida so they explored destinations close to her and "we found FMB," raves Ceel! "Back then, FMB was beautiful and not overdeveloped. We found the Creciente Condominium at the south end of the island, near Santini Marina Plaza, and loved it; I remained at Creciente until relocating from the island after Hurricane Ian, as it is just a jewel on FMB. It had a marvelous pool and Peter loved to swim – he was a swimmer straight through college and swam up north at the YMCA. Once we moved, he could swim year-round at the pool or in the Gulf, and that did wonders for his health, as did the sunshine as opposed to the gloomy Northeast Ohio

skies. I really believe that moving to FMB added years to Peter's life."

Beach People

When Ceel contemplates what she misses most about living on FMB, "certainly the sun and the beach, but what I miss the most are the people, especially in getting together with old friends. Everyone is so wonderful and unique. They come from all stages and walks of life, yet everyone calls FMB home. I discovered that after you live on FMB for a while, you become a 'Beach Person!' Beach People don't think about themselves but are always looking for ways to help their neighbors. I can't even begin to guess how many fundraisers the island community hosted for those in need, and of course everyone rallies around each other after our hurricanes and related flooding."

Ceel recalls lunching once a month with old friends from Ohio and they would say, "Ceel, you are now a different person; you have become a 'Beach Person,' and I understood what they meant. People who live on FMB are different because we live a different lifestyle than almost everyone else. I take immense pride in the title: 'Beach Person!'"

In addition to her island friends, Ceel misses her "morning walks along the beach as well as those after supper, and just staring at the Gulf. In fact, I formerly wore glasses but it seemed like my vision was improving so I went to the optometrist. He said that all that staring at the water improved my eyes, so today I am a 95-year-old who does not wear glasses!"

"The Rest is Literally History"

Ceel takes great pride in her efforts to preserve The Historic Mound House, the oldest standing structure on FMB that is now a museum and environmental education complex. "When we first relocated to FMB, I wanted to get involved in my new community, so I went to see the original Town Manager, Marsha Se-



Former Mound House Director Alison Giesen with Ceel. "In 2019, the Mound House gained acceptance onto the National Register of Historic Places," recalls Ceel. "That is an evening and reception that I will never forget!"



When Ceel contemplates what she misses most about living on FMB, "I miss the people, especially in getting together with old friends. Everyone is so wonderful and unique."



Ceel with Betty Simpson and the late FMB Mayor Dan Hughes. "Dan and I lost our spouses in the same year, so we wanted some format where people our ages could go out but not on a formal date, so we began 'The Supper Club'... to go to dinner each Friday night."

gal-George. She explained that the Town was only a few years old and it wanted to preserve the Mound House but needed help in convincing the citizens that it was worthwhile. I joined forces with Betty Simpson and we gathered stories about the history of the Mound House, including speaking with former residents, and she and I became the first Mound House docents!"

The Town opened the Mound House for guided tours each Wednesday and Saturday, "with cookies and punch," continues Ceel. "We explained to residents that saving the Mound House would cost each beach household just \$12. In the late 1990s, the Town purchased the Mound House with grant dollars, and thank goodness we did, as the Mound House is a treasure! Finally, in 2019, the Mound House gained acceptance onto the National Register of Historic Places and that is an evening and reception that I will never forget! In addition to Betty and Marsha, Anita Cereceda and then-Assistant Town Manager John Gucciardo were essential to preserving the Mound House, as were many others who are too numerous to mention but too important to forget. Saving the Mound House was a joint effort by the entire community and the rest is literally history!"


In addition to her Mound House efforts, Ceel conducted tours of the former Seven Seas Cottage at Newton Beach Cottage, as well as contributing her time and talents to the FMB Public Library. She loves to do Crossword and word puzzles, along with reading. Finally, Ceel was the organizer of "The Supper Club," along with late FMB Mayor Dan Hughes. "Dan and I lost our spouses in the same year, so we wanted some format where people our ages could go out but not on a formal date, so we began 'The Supper Club' where six of us would go to dinner each Friday night. Before you knew it, the group ballooned up to roughly 20 people and restaurants would actually telephone me to be our host dinner location! Even though it was not to be a 'dating club,' three marriages came out of 'The Supper Club!' It was a lot of fun. After I lost Peter, my family and volunteer activities kept me going."

"A Small Town on a Large Beautiful Island"

Ceel contemplates what FMB will look like in five years: "It will certainly be a big change. FMB will always be beautiful, no matter what, as the beach and Gulf are gorgeous, but you will see many more high-rise condominiums and far fewer quaint

beach cottages, but bigger can still be beautiful. FMB will always be charming, as the 'Beach People' will not have it any other way; it will just be charming in a different way. For those of us who used to live on and miss the old FMB, we have our wonderful memories."


One new FMB development that Ceel looks forward to is the new Town Hall. "To me, the old Town Hall was like the island's 'Community Center!' I liked to arrive at Town Council Meetings and other community forums early, then would talk to people afterwards, and you got to hear all sides of the issues. FMB is a small town on a large beautiful island! I treasure FMB; I treasure it!" ■



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Always Something to Do on FMB!

The 2nd Half of 2025 is Full of Activities

- by Gary Mooney -

With The Fourth of July now in our collective rearview mirrors, the 2nd half of 2025 is well underway. So, what can Islanders and our Seasonals and Tourists look forward to throughout the rest of this year?

“Mullet Madness’ kicks things off from Friday through Sunday, August 1st to 3rd,” says FMB Chamber of Commerce President Jacki Liszak. “This is a new initiative organized by Dawn Miller of The Whale. ‘Mullet Madness’ is a weekend full of food and fashion, with the greatest tagline ever: ‘Business in the front and party in the back!’ Island bars and restaurants will feature an assortment of Mullet (the fish) recipes along with a 100% ‘Redneck Cool Coastal Vibe’ all weekend. There will be a ‘Mullet Toss Route’ that will feature at least 15 island bars and restaurants, with activities galore, like a parade, a pet ‘twinning’ look-a-like contest, live music, raffles, prizes, and more for just a \$20-per-person entry fee that includes a tank top, Crawl Pass and raffle entry. You can pick up your ‘Mullet Toss’ Crawl Passes at Tunaskin Aquatic Apparel or FMB Sun and Fun. This will be a fun-filled weekend, aiming to keep the heart of offseason lively, so come on out and join us, and don’t forget to wear your favorite Mullet hairstyle!”

SEPTEMBER

This month’s highlight is the annual “Island Hopper Singer-Songwriter Festival” that “USA Today” ranked as the fourth-best “American Music Festival” in 2024! This year’s event will be from September 19th through 28th, with the musical programs exclusively on FMB from Friday through Sunday, September 26th to 28th.

“You will not only enjoy some of the best musicians anywhere in the nation,” Jacki says, “but they tell you the story behind the songs! The singer-songwriters will perform at venues all over the island and most of the shows are FREE; check out the entire schedule at www.IslandHopperFest.com. Look for special shows at The Historic Mound House, Margaritaville Beach Resort FMB, and Sunday’s closing concert at the Pink Shell Beach Resort pool. Island Hopper organizers have announced that Chris Young will headline the closing concert at the Pink Shell Pool Party on September 28th.”

After the “Island Hopper” concert concludes, “mosey on over to Bayside Veterans Park on FMB to keep the party going with the ‘Bayside Park Concert Series’ from 4 to 7 p.m.,” encourage-



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es Jacki. "Following the Bayside show, finish out your Sunday evening by sliding over to the nearby Lighthouse Resort 'Tiki Bar' for the Sunday evening Reggae show from 6 to 9 p.m."

OCTOBER

On Friday evening, October 24, the Margaritaville Beach Resort FMB will host the "Sand Ball," the official kickoff for November's signature program, "The American Sand Sculpting Championship." "The 'Sand Ball' is an evening of entertainment, beverages and light food," Jacki explains. "A highlight will be a magnificent 'satellite' sand sculpture, live sand sculpting demonstrations, entertainment and more. Margaritaville will be the first FMB location to have a satellite sand sculpture that will be up for viewing all through November. You will then see other satellite sculptures beginning to appear throughout November at various FMB locations leading up to the 'American Sand Sculpting Championship.'"

The FMB Community Foundation is clearly thinking Halloween, as it will host the "Haunted Carnival Pub Crawl" on Saturday, October 25, beginning at 6 p.m. Details are still coming together so check out www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com for updates as the event draws near.

While there are no formal FMB Halloween activities announced yet, Jacki expects "Halloween events all up and down the island, especially with Halloween on Friday this year. Check out the FMB Chamber website for details at www.fortmyersbeach.org."

NOVEMBER

The 35th "American Sand Sculpting Championship" returns to FMB from Thursday, November 20 through Monday, November 24, at the DiamondHead Beach Resort daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Championship features Master and Advanced Amateur Sand Sculptors from all over the world. The FMB Chamber, 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," raves Jacki! "This is one of the beach's signature events that everyone loves. FMB looks forward to this feel-good festival every year and many islanders bring their families and friends to this one-of-a-kind competition. Get more details and purchase your tickets in advance at www.FMBsandsculpting.com."

Jacki explains that many of the Championship's traditional elements will return. "There will be sand sculpting demonstrations, 'Quick Sand' speed sculpting shows, hands-on sand sculpting lessons, a Kid's Zone, and the 'Sand Vendor Village.' The Championship is FREE on Thursday, with Monday being added as an additional viewing day."

Once again this year, residents and guests can interact with the sculptors at the "Sculptor Meet & Greet" hosted by the Pink Shell Resort. The tentative date for this event is Wednesday, November 19th from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

continued on page 11



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August

Monday Through Friday Bay Oaks Recreational Center

@Bay Oaks Recreational Center

The Bay Oaks Recreational Center is undergoing a partial reopening, following Hurricanes Helene & Milton. Hours are Mondays through Thursdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Indoor Pickleball is Tuesdays & Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. with Open Gym on Fridays from 5 to 7 p.m. Both are FREE to FMB residents and \$5 for all others. The Weight & Cardio Room is open as well. For further Bay Oaks updates and programs, see www.fortmyersbeachfl.org.

Beginning Monday, August 11 CLUB REC!

@Bay Oaks Recreational Center

Bay Oaks hosts this incredible "After School Program" for Beach Elementary School students EVERY Monday through Friday throughout the academic year, with games, snacks and homework from 2 to 6 p.m. Just \$125 for FMB residents & \$175 for non-residents per semester.

Friday to Sunday, August 1 to 3 "Mullet Madness"

@FMB Bars & Restaurants

The Mullet Toss Crawl hits FMB! Enjoy a weekend of "redneck meets coastal fun" with mullet tosses, owner- & pet look-a-like contests, live music and more, across participating FMB bars & restaurants. \$20 entry fee includes tank top, crawl pass, and raffle entry. Mullet required – the hairstyle, not the fish! Pub passports on sale at Tunaskin Aquatic Apparel or FMB Sun and Fun.

Sunday, August 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, weather permitting, from 4 to 7 p.m.! August 3: "Soapy Tuna"; August 10: "Remedy"; August 17: Unfinished Business; August 24: TBA; & August 31: Simply-Fi. See www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Sunday, August 3 AND EVERY SUNDAY Reggae Party

@Lighthouse Island Resort Tiki Bar

After you enjoy the "Bayside Park Concert Series," boogie on over to the nearby Lighthouse Island Resort Tiki Bar to get your Reggae on from 6 to 9 p.m. Dreadlocks optional!

Mondays, August 4 & 18 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, August 5 FMB Art Association August Show: "Summer Sizzle"

@FMBAA Gallery

Marvel at the Fort Myers Beach Art Association's August Show, "Summer Sizzle," through August 19 at their new Gallery at 13451 McGregor Boulevard, Unit #1, in Cypress Square in Fort Myers, near the Prawn-broker Restaurant & Fish Market. The Gallery is open Thursdays through Saturdays with free admission from Noon to 6 p.m.

Tuesday, August 5 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.

Wednesday, August 6 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, August 6 & EVERY WEDNESDAY "Story Time"

@The FMB Public Library

The perfect way to educate and entertain your little ones, with a family-friendly story each Wednesday at 10 a.m. There is something for everyone at the fabulous FMB Public Library! For information, see www.fmb.lib.fl.us.

Thursday, August 7 FMB Chamber "Coffee Connection"

@Santini Marina Plaza Coffee Shop

Start your day with your FMB Chamber friends for net-working with complimentary coffee and tasty breakfast items at the Santini Marina Plaza Coffee Shop. The FREE "Coffee Connection" is 8 to 9:30 a.m.; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Thursday, August 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.

Thursday, August 7 Mound House Eco-Kayak Tours

@The Historic Mound House

Explore the winding mangrove creeks and hidden backwaters of the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve on this

2-hour tour. The MH provides all equipment; ages 12 & up, weather permitting and participants must wear shoes and bring water. The Eco-Kayak Tours are every Wednesday through Saturday from 9 to 11 a.m. \$50-per-person including MH admission, with reservations necessary at www.moundhouse.org.

Friday, August 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 Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The W&DC is FREE with the park entry fee; see www.friendsoflovesskey.org.

Friday, August 8 "Swing Out of Summer" FMB Chamber Golf Tournament

@Topgolf

This year, the FMB Chamber takes its 6th annual "Swing Out of Summer" Golf Tournament to the comfortable confines of TopGolf at 2021 Topgolf Way in Fort Myers! Your group can have up to six players or you can register as a single and we will match you with a team. "Beat the Pro," "Hole-in-One Contest," and a raffle for fabulous prizes. Admission includes golf, drink package, Smokehouse BBQ Buffet, Dessert Trio, & more, and spectators can join in on the fun, too! For information or to register, see events@fmbchamber.com.

Saturdays, August 9 & 16 "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, August 9 Second Saturday: "Back to School Ice Cream Social"

@The Historic Mound House

Cool off at the Mound House with our "Back to School Ice Cream Social," with FREE Mound House admission! Check out a variety of family-friendly activities, games and crafts from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Mound House admission is on us, with guided tours at \$5-per-person at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. No reservations necessary; for information see www.moundhouse.org.

Tuesday, August 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 9 a.m.; see www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov.

Wednesday, August 13 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

powerful and innovative Indigenous society thrived across our region for centuries, leaving an enduring legacy still visible today with their shell mounds. Explore how the Calusa shaped their environment and 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.

Thursday, August 14

FMB Chamber Membership Luncheon

@DiamondHead Beach Resort

Join your FMB Chamber friends to savor a scrumptious luncheon from the Coste Island Cuisine at the DiamondHead Beach Resort while listening to Carrie Bloemers from Lee Health from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Valcourt Building Services sponsors the August Luncheon. \$32 members & \$42 prospective members; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Thursday, August 14

FMB Woman's Club Monthly Social

@Sweet Melissa's Ice Cream Shoppe

In the heat of August, who doesn't want ice cream? Join us with your family – bring the kids – for a tasty treat at Sweet Melissa's Ice Cream Shoppe at 4445 Bonita Beach Road SW in Bonita Springs from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Let's support this major benefactor of the FMB Woman's Club and enjoy a scrumptious cold treat! See www.fmb-wc.org.

Thursday, August 21

FMB Art Association August Show:

"Anything Goes!"

@FMBAA Gallery

Marvel at the Fort Myers Beach Art Association's August Show, "Anything Goes," through September 19 at their new Gallery at 13451 McGregor Boulevard, Unit #1, in Cypress Square in Fort Myers, near the Prawnbroker Restaurant & Fish Market. The Gallery is open Thursdays through Saturdays with free admission from Noon to 6 p.m.

Thursday, August 21

FMB Chamber "Business After Hours"

@The Moose Lodge of FMB

Join your FMB Chamber friends for a fun time at the Moose Lodge of FMB at 19090 San Carlos Boulevard on San Carlos Island. Enjoy delicious complimentary appetizers and a cash bar from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Members FREE & \$15 perspective members; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Friday & Saturday, August 22 & 23

FSW "Battle at The Beach" Volleyball Tournament

@Suncoast Credit Union Arena

The Florida SouthWestern State College Lady Buccaneers are the reigning Three-Time Junior College Volleyball National Champions! They begin their "four-peat" quest by hosting their annual "Battle at The Beach" tournament. On Friday, the Lady Bucs take on Southern Idaho at 10 a.m., then Utah State Eastern at 3 p.m. Saturday FSW meets Snow Junior College at 11:30 a.m., then Trinity Valley at 4:30 p.m. \$8 per-person-per-day covers all eight matches each day; see www.fswbucs.com.

Friday, August 22

Fort Myers Mighty Mussels v. Tampa Tarpons

@Hammond Stadium, Lee Health Sports Complex

The Mighty Mussels, the Low A affiliate of the Minnesota Twins, take on the Tampa Tarpons of the New York Yankees organization at 7:05 p.m.! Following the game is a fantastic fireworks extravaganza, so Play Ball! The Mussels & Tarpons play on Saturday, August 23 at 6:05 p.m. and Sunday, August 24 at Noon; tickets \$10 to \$17. See www.mightymussels.com.

"We will announce the event winners, including the People's Choice, at the Awards Show on Sunday," Jacki explains. "When you visit on Monday, all the sculptures will be complete, and the artists will be in residence and available for you to interact with. This year, the DiamondHead will be featuring night shows in the big tent, and be prepared for a big 'Saturday Night Surprise!'"

DECEMBER

The "Christmas Month" features a plethora of island activities to ring in the Holidays!

The annual "Christmas Boat Parade" kicks everything off on Saturday night, December 6, from Salty Sam's Marina from roughly 6 to 8 p.m. Watch a flotilla of Holiday-decorated boats that will circle the Back Bay parade route twice, with plenty of outstanding viewing locations from many of FMB's most popular restaurants and bars; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Another popular island Holiday tradition is the annual "Christmas Tree Festival," hosted by the FMB Woman's Club, on Friday and Saturday, December 12th & 13th. Attendees purchase, via a silent auction, these one-of-a-time Christmas Trees handcrafted by FMB Non-Profits. The weekend features a VIP Reception, Preview Party, Vendor's Market, "Christmas Treats & Bake Sale," and "Chili Cookoff & Tasting," along with terrific grand raffle drawing prizes! Bring a new unwrapped toy for the Beach Kids Foundation; for the "Christmas Tree Festival" location and more information, see www.fmb-wc.org.

On Saturday, December 20th, put on your ugliest Christmas sweater and hop on your favorite two-wheeler and peddle over to Bayside Park for the "Christmas Bicycle Parade!" Join us as we peddle through the streets of FMB enjoying Holiday lights and spreading Christmas Cheer. The Bike Parade starts at 6 p.m.

Remember to save the date for the traditional FMB Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony in Times Square. "The lighting of the Times Square Christmas Tree is an all-time island fan favorite, so don't miss it," implores Jacki! "For Christmas Tree Lighting information, go to www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov. Then, bring on New Year's Eve and Fireworks! Happy 2026!" ■

SUDOKU

Answers from page 3

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



Chamber Chatter!

"The Comeback Kids!"

You can call Fort Myers Beach residents and businesses owners "The Comeback Kids!"

While progress on our Hurricane Ian comeback may seem slow and even glacial at times, FMB is now firmly in its rebuild cycle. Just take a good look up and down the island.

By the time you read this, The Beach Bar will have had its reopening, and another beloved island dining and drinking destination – The Whale – is close behind with an anticipated September grand reopening.

Major FMB projects are in the works and/or have permission to proceed; the Arches Bayfront Development, The Salty Crab Bar & Grill, the Pink Shell Resort and Light-house Resort additions, Seagate Development Group, The Neptune, Myerside Resort, Surfside Casual Furniture, and the Estero Island Beach Club. The FMB Fire Department hopes to open our new fire station this fall. Interiors Unlimited's building is moving along quickly and more tenants are scheduled to open at Santini Marina Plaza. In April, we welcomed a new Santini business, Gavin's ACE Hardware, owned by FMB Chamber past Chairman, John Gavin. The Best Western Plus Beach Resort and the Lani Kai Island Resort are both open and welcoming guests. The SOB (Smokin' Oysters Brewery) is serving delicious mouthwatering food and Matanzas on the Bay restaurant will reopen soon.

The Bonita Fish Company hopes to complete its transformation from the old Bonita Bill's Waterfront Café by the end of the year, including its events space. We can now bank again on FMB with the opening of the Sanibel Captiva Community Bank branch, operating out of its satellite office two days a week on the 3rd floor at 100 Lovers Lane. The SanCap Bank is scheduled to begin construction on its new building at 2670 Estero Boulevard sometime before the end of 2025.

On top of all of these business developments, construction continues on houses from one end of the beach to

the other, returning more residents to their beloved FMB homes. So, the next time you feel a little down and think things are still stuck in neutral, take a good look around – progress can be seen everywhere!

7-Miles of Pure Paradise!

I know of a beautiful island paradise, with a 7-mile-long, sugar white sand beach, that people travel to from all over the world. People save all year long, just to visit for a day, a week or a month. This delightful tiny island charms them with its funky eclectic vibe, natural beauty and outstanding hospitality, and they return year after year. Right now, you will never find a better time to visit this vacation gem. Of course, I am talking about Fort Myers Beach!

During our slow fall and early winter season, island accommodations are a bargain! It seems like every FMB bar and restaurant is offering some type of astounding "Happy Hour" or lunch and dinner special. The water is beautiful, the traffic minimal, and your favorite restaurant table and bar stool is available! When I describe FMB in the offseason, I say, "Cold drinks, warm vibes, hot music, restful accommodations, activities galore, and 7-miles of Pure Paradise." The time is right to fall in love with FMB all over again, so come to spend your day or – better yet – your weekend with us!

The FMB Chamber Office is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., on the 3rd floor of 100 Lovers Lane. Our satellite office, The Roxie in Times Square, next to the Trolley Stop, is open Tuesday through Sunday, weather permitting, from 10 a.m. to sunset. Interested in volunteering at The Roxie? Contact us at info@fmbchamber.com or call 239-454-7500.

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!*



2025 FMB Hurricane Preparation

Get Ready Now!

- by Gary Mooney -

After the last three years, few things inspire more trepidation for Southwest Floridians and FMB residents and businessowners than these two words: "Hurricane Season!"

The 2025 Hurricane Season is officially from June 1 through November 30, but the peak months for Southwest Florida are August through October, meaning that now is the time to have your hurricane preparations in place. As Ian taught us, these monster storms can ravage a barrier island. Careful hurricane preparation can alleviate some of that anxiety while potentially saving you and your loved ones.

EVACUATE!

If the Lee County Emergency Management Office declares a voluntary or mandatory evacuation order for Fort Myers Beach, EVACUATE!

While you want to have on-hand all the necessities to ride out a hurricane in the comfort of your own home, being that we live on a barrier island that is in the primary Evacuation Zone A that can suffer everything from storm surge to wind damage to flash flooding and more, leave if the Lee County Emergency Operations Center declares an evacuation.

If your best option is a Lee County shelter, go but know upfront that it will have no creature comforts, so that should be your last option. You do not need to evacuate hundreds of miles away from FMB however to be safe; traveling as little as 15 miles so that you end up east of I-75 is generally a safe zone. Do not wait until the last minute to leave, as Lee County and FMB will close both island bridges when wind conditions dictate.

There is already a concern about hurricane evacuation complacency following Hurricane Milton in October 2024.

Forecasters predicted that Milton would bring devastation, so most Southwest Floridians wisely evacuated. Milton however gave FMB just a glancing blow rather than a direct hit, causing many to question if they really needed to

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evacuate and they may not do so the next time Lee County leaders issue another notice. Follow the old adage of “Better Safe Than Sorry” & GO! We already lost too many good friends and neighbors to Ian.

AlterLee.com & CODE RED

Register at AlertLee.com for all emergency warnings, along with its app, LeePrepares. Pay attention not only to the area media outlets but various social media sites like the FMB Fire Department, the Town of FMB and the Lee County Emergency Management Office for instructions. In addition to AlertLee.com, sign up for the Town’s CODE RED alert system at www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov that can provide you with information about bridge closures, evacuation notices and more safety issues. Remember that before, during, and after a hurricane, reputable social media sites can be your best friends, not only to provide you with valuable hurricane information but, equally as important, squashing untrue rumors.

FMB Hurricane Reentry Passes

If you already have a **GREEN** Reentry Pass from the prior hurricane season, you DO NOT need a new one for 2025. People who live, own property or manages a business in the Town can receive two Hurricane Re-Entry Passes. To obtain your Hurricane Re-Entry Passes, visit Town Hall at the Bay Oaks Recreational Center at 2731 Oak Street from

Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You need one form of identification to receive your passes. If you are out-of-town, email hurricane@fmbgov.com with attached photographs and/or document files to prove your eligibility and include the address for where you want the Town to mail your passes. Should a hurricane strike in 2025, based on the storm’s severity, FMB may close for up to 48 hours and possibly longer, until the Town, Lee County Sheriffs Office and FMB Fire District can certify the island’s safety. For additional information, contact the Town at 239-765-0202 or email hurricane@fmbgov.com.

Special Needs Shelters

Lee County offers Special Needs Shelters for those with medical necessities, but you must register in advance every year at 239-533-0622 or through the “Emergency Management” page at www.lee.gov.com.

Hurricane Kit Essentials

Everyone should have a minimum supply of essentials to be self-sufficient for 72 to 96 hours, including for your pets. For a comprehensive list, see the FMB Fire Department’s “Hurricane Preparedness Resources” link at www.fmbfirefl.gov.

FINALLY, DO NOT BE COMPLACENT: PREPARE AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT, AS IT JUST MIGHT! ■

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