

An exclusive magazine serving the residents of Fort Myers Beach

December 2025

# FORT MYERS BEACH Living



*“FMB Fits Us”*  
*Justin, Kelly & Isla Turnbull*

Cover by Katy Bonkowski

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# FORT MYERS BEACH

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- By Gary Mooney -

**SUDOKU RULES:**

- Each row must contain the digits 1-9.
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Answers on page 10



*We've weathered the storms with you.  
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# Hello Friends & Neighbors!

If you are like me, you are hearing various versions of “It’s Beginning to Look a Lot like Christmas” over and again in your head! Whether it is the one sung by Bing Crosby, Johnny Mathis, Michael Buble or a host of other crooners, this classic and other Holiday standards lets us know that we are for sure in the Christmas Season!

For those with any doubts, this edition of Fort Myers Beach LIVING Magazine will surely put them to rest, as we are jammed packed with Christmas – Island Style! When you attend such annual FMB Holiday programs and events like the “Christmas Boat Parade” on Saturday evening, December 6; the FMB Woman’s Club’s marvelous “Christmas Tree Festival” at the Margaritaville Beach Resort FMB Ballroom on Friday and Saturday, December 12 & 13; and the eclectic “Christmas Bike Parade” on Saturday evening, December 20, and you know that Fort Myers Beach Christmas 2025 is well underway! We have in-depth articles on each of these FMB Holiday traditions in this issue, so read away for all the specific details.

Please take time to especially check out the tale of the Times Square “Poinsettia Christmas Tree!” This story is most probably the all-time favorite one of FMB LIVING readers, so we reprised it for this 2025 Holiday issue. While two generations of FMB families and tens of thousands of visitors over the last three decades used the “Poinsettia Christmas Tree” as the backdrop for vacation photographs and Christmas Card pictures, the story behind it is touching and inspiring.

Keep your eyes open for Christmas programs from island institutions like the FMB Community Foundation and the FMB Chamber, as well as Holiday parties hosted by family, neighbors and friends. FMB

restaurants, bars and shops will all be open and are eager to help you make this the best Holiday Season ever. And of course, NOTHING brings out the ENVY in family and friends all over the nation than those Christmas Day photos on FMB, where even Santa wears short pants and flip-flops!

I think I speak for all islanders here, however, when I say that the one single thing that we are Most Grateful For this Holiday Season was a HURRICANE-FREE 2025! That is the best present that Santa can bring us all for Christmas. Let’s establish a new beloved island tradition and make all upcoming Holiday seasons hurricane free!

Speaking of beloved island traditions, please support our advertisers because we cannot deliver Fort Myers Beach LIVING Magazine to you free of charge without them. When you visit, 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 a Merry Christmas & Have An Awesome Beach Day!



*Sandy Sandness*

**Publisher**

*Fort Myers Beach LIVING*

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**FORT MYERS BEACH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

## Chamber Chatter!

*“Christmas Boat Parade” is Saturday, December 6... “NO WAY!”*

– Jacki Lyszak, President Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce! –

Someone recently asked me if there is a better way for Fort Myers Beach to ring in the holidays than the annual Christmas Boat Parade – and my answer was a firm “No Way!”

When you live on an island where the closest thing to snow is our seven miles of sugar-white sand, a feel-good community event is exactly what we need to get into the holiday spirit. The Boat Parade does just that! It feels especially meaningful this year as Fort Myers Beach continues to shine brighter every day. Three years after Ian, and following a calm, uneventful

2025 hurricane season, we can all take a deep breath and celebrate the holidays together.

As for when the Christmas Boat Parade began, there’s no definitive record, but Chamber archives from 1988 mention the event, and highlighted the brand-new Pink Shell Beach Resort tower. That’s the earliest documented reference we’ve found, so we’ll mark 1988 as our benchmark year. The parade only missed two seasons: 2020 due to COVID and 2022 following Ian, making this long-running tradition a true island classic.

### A Holiday Tradition That Shines

The parade launches from Salty Sam’s Marina at 6 p.m. and will circle the Back Bay area twice, cruising from Salty Sam’s to the Pink Shell Beach Resort and back. The route offers ideal viewing from many of Fort Myers Beach’s favorite waterfront spots -- including Doc Ford’s Rum Bar & Grill, Snug Harbor Waterfront Restaurant, On The Bay, Nervous Nellie’s, Dixie Fish Company, Bonita Fish Company, and others along the Back Bay and Matanzas Pass Bridge.

For the best experience, share those great viewing spots. If you have a front-row seat for the first pass, consider letting others enjoy the second pass. The twinkling lights reflected on the water make the scene truly magical – that is the word we hear again and again!

My favorite view? Looking back from the lead boat and seeing that long line of vessels glowing like a string of Christmas lights sparkling across the bay. It gets me every time!

### Join the Parade or Vote for Your Favorites!

If you’re reading this in late November or early December, there’s still time to register your boat. Entry fees are \$35 for private boats and \$50 for sponsored ones, and we expect around 40 participants this year. Register at [www.fmbboatparade.com](http://www.fmbboatparade.com).

Spectators can take part too through the People’s Choice Awards! QR codes located at restaurants along the parade route, on the boat parade website or posted in Bayside Veterans Park will make it easy to vote for the most festive boats in multiple categories.

*continued on page 14*

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## “FMB Fits Us!”

### Justin, Kelly & Isla Turnbull

- By Gary Mooney, Photos by Kelly Turnbull -

Kelly Turnbull is an honest-to-goodness “Beach Kid!” “That’s right – I was born right here on FMB,” she raves! “I’ve lived here my entire life and cannot imagine being anywhere else.” Husband Justin is a native Southwest Floridian as well, born and raised in Fort Myers. “I may not have been born on the island but I have been coming here since I was a kid, as my Dad was a shrimper and later a boat captain, so I never remember a day without Fort Myers Beach.”

The two lifelong locals met in high school. “We both attended Cypress Lake where we got to know each other as freshmen and became great friends,” Kelly recalls. “We did not start dating until years after we graduated. We share the same

group of close friends and they all wondered when we would finally get together, so when it happened, they all said, ‘it’s about time!’ Justin and Kelly are still newlyweds, having married in January at the Margaritaville Beach Resort FMB, with their 3-year-old daughter Isla as their Flower Girl!

Justin’s marriage proposal was memorable! “Kelly loved to shell and as anyone who knows anything about shelling knows, the Junonia is the one everyone wants to find. My boss at Jensen’s Marina had one in a display case so I begged him to borrow it. I set the shell up on Caya Costa beach with her engagement ring inside, and had someone secretly guard it so no one else would see the Junonia and keep it!” “I just thought we were shelling,” adds Kelly, “when suddenly I saw the Junonia. I am a sheller my entire life and never found one, so I was so excited, then I was even more excited when I discovered the engagement ring – I reluctantly gave back the Junonia but kept the ring and Justin!”

Justin and Kelly live mid-island on Donora Boulevard, in a house she rented from the age of 18 until she purchased it in 2022, just a few months before Ian. “We used to come to this house to party when we were younger and now our family lives here,” laughs Justin at the irony! “We’ve come full-circle in our home; no parties anymore with a 3-year-old!”

#### The Gulf Looked Angry

Isla was one month old when Ian struck. “We stayed on the island because that is what we always did, no matter if it was Andrew, Charlie, Irma or any of the storms in-between,” reasons Kelly. “I however took a look at the water the day Ian was supposed to hit us and thought, ‘this one looks different; the Gulf looks angry.’ Our home is on the ground level, so I thought, ‘let’s go to the neighbor’s elevated home on the Bay, in case the storm surge gets too high.’ We hunkered down in that home overnight with my Mom, Stepdad, Cousin and all of our dogs. In the morning, we found some bicycles in the wreckage and made our way home.”

They encountered a house still structurally standing but ravaged by 7-1/2 feet of water. “It was devastating,” says Kelly. “Everything we owned was gone: every picture, family heirloom, even the nursery we had just finished for our daughter. My Mom’s house was knocked off its stilts and she lost everything as well. But at the end of the day, it is just stuff. The important thing was that we were all safe, healthy and determined to rebuild.”

“We started rebuilding almost immediately,” explains Justin. “Kelly’s uncle is in the electrical and construction industry and they gutted and rewired the entire house. Her sister and brother-in-law, Katy and Matt McClellan, drove supplies down from Jacksonville to get started. Family and friends all came together to get us back in our home, and we ended up receiving a big assist from a television show, of all things!”

The Weather Channel had a program called “Fast: Home Rescue,” Kelly says. “They come in to help put houses back together after natural disasters and Southwest Florida after Ian was certainly that. We learned that a boat captain on Captiva nominated

us, but at first, we thought someone was just joking! After figuring out that the offer was real, they were a great help, even furnishing the house and putting in the kitchen.” “Our first and last TV experience,” laughs Justin. After roughly six months, they returned home.

### Our Little Beach Girl!

Kelly and Justin rightly brag on Isla. “Our little beach girl,” exclaims Isla’s Mom. “She is in pre-school now and her favorite thing to do currently is to come with us on the golf cart to look for iguanas at the Mound House and then end each evening on the beach for sunset! She is starting to learn all the names of the shells that she finds. She is already a ‘Beach Girl’ through and through!”

Justin works as an Operations Manager for two marinas – Port Sanibel Marina and Jensen’s Twin Palm Marina on Captiva. Kelly has been a Realtor for over eight years with Century 21 TriPower Realty where her Mom, Deborah Groll, is a legend! “She has been a Realtor on the island for forty years, so when I learn from her, I learn from the best! We call her ‘Momager!’” Deborah is also the President of the Beach Kids Foundation and on the Board of the Estero Island Historical Society.

In their free time, Kelly and Justin are outdoors with Isla. “Boating, fishing, camping, hiking, shelling – we are most definitely an outdoor family,” boasts Kelly. “Before Isla even turned one, she was on her first camping trip to the Ten Thousand Islands!” “Living on an island, we feel that it is important that we let Isla experience all of these things. We are outside as much as possible,” adds Justin. Kelly is a 10-year Turtle Time volunteer “who often drags me along with her,” laughs Justin!

### Hurricanes & Beach Elementary School

With Kelly being a lifelong Islander, might hurricanes or some other FMB change make them consider leaving? “My mindset about hurricanes is that they are just a part of island life and I am fine with that. The issue for me is: will the Beach Elementary School reopen? I am a proud ‘Beach School Graduate’ and I want Isla to also have that experience. Without the Beach School, FMB will no longer be a true community so I would have to think long and hard about that. I commend our FMB Mayor, Dan Allers, for being a huge advocate for keeping the Beach School open.”

When they contemplate what FMB will look like in five years, “I hope for development that is not overly excessive,” explains Justin. “I am fine with development,” agrees Kelly, “as long as it is not unchecked development. For example, I have no desire to live in the shadow of a 17-story building, when talking about the redevelopment of the former Red Coconut RV Park.”

Kelly hopes that FMB preserves the family atmosphere that she loves from her youth. “I was so lucky to grow up here and I want that for Isla. This is a close-knit community with a tremendous small-town charm. Keeping that and the Beach School are essential, as this is still the greatest place to raise kids.” “All of our family lives on the island or close by,” concludes Justin, “so we are truly blessed to live on FMB, with all that it has to offer. FMB fits us!” ■



*Isla loves nothing more than to “end each evening on the beach for sunset!”*



*“Isla is already a ‘Beach Girl’ through and through!”*



*Justin and Kelly participating in the annual Christmas Boat Parade.*

# Poinsettia Christmas Tree

The Origin of An FMB Holiday Tradition!

- By Gary Mooney -



*The Poinsettia Christmas Tree in Times Square is a beloved FMB Holiday tradition.*

One of the most popular and certainly the most photographed of all FMB Holiday traditions is the “Poinsettia Christmas Tree” in Times Square, but what is the story behind this beloved display?

“I was in on the ground floor of this one,” laughs Anita Cereceda, who is not only the Town’s very first Mayor but also its only three-time Mayor who people lovingly refer to as the “First Lady of Fort Myers Beach!” “Somewhere around 1997, about two years after the birth of the Town and shortly after the Community Redevelopment Agency created Times Square, they planted a little palm tree there in front of the fishing pier. As that Holiday season approached, my friend David and I strung Christmas lights around it. The palm tree was so small we only needed a step ladder to do it and everyone loved the concept.”

One couple, however, came up to the Mayor and David and cautioned them: “You two better be careful because the Town has a Mayor now and HE may not like this so you better check with HIM!” “David looked at me and asked, ‘Is this all right’ and I laughed. As being a woman in politics back then was still rare, I then introduced myself and that couple cooed, ‘Oh My Goodness!’”

During the following year, Anita was at the Naples Waterside Shops “and in this little pond there was a pyramid of poinsettias and I thought, ‘That looks wonderful; we could do that!’ When I returned to Town Hall the next day, I went to then-Town Manager Marsha Segal-George and then-Public Works Director Ed Lawler, who was a one-man operation, and said, ‘I have an idea’ and they gasped, saying ‘Oh No – what is it this time!’ I showed them a sketch and said, ‘what if we stacked poinsettias in a pyramid all around that palm tree to create a Christmas Tree, with the palm fronds acting as the “star.”’ They liked it so we did it and that began the tradition! As the palm tree grew larger each Holiday season, the base of the Poinsettia pyramid got correspondingly bigger. Folks loved it so much that they took family photos in front of the Poinsettia Christmas Tree!”

**PUBLISHER’S NOTE:** By popular demand, *FMB LIVING Magazine* is reprinting this story from December 2023 on the origin of the famed “Poinsettia Christmas Tree” that the Town of FMB puts up each Holiday season in Times Square.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year! — Sandy

Then Ian struck on September 28, 2022, literally wiping out Times Square and the palm tree and it seemed as though the “Poinsettia Christmas Tree” tradition was lost. “Then, all a sudden, a poinsettia plant spontaneously appeared near the newly plant-

ed palm tree,” marvels Anita! “To my knowledge, this was not an organized campaign, just some unknown someone who did not want Ian to end this beloved island tradition, and then another poinsettia showed up and another and another, almost as a tribute, and before you knew it, there were poinsettias everywhere around the palm – it was amazing! When I heard what was occurring, I made my first trip to Times Square since Ian and found the sight powerful and emotional. Then the Town rebuilt the frame and the ‘Poinsettia Christmas Tree’ came back to life. For me, it was very emotional, as it stands right by the ruins of my family’s long-time ‘Pier Peddler’ Times Square store and even now, I still get emotional thinking about it.”

#### **A Sign of Hope**

Anita contemplates what the “Poinsettia Christmas Tree” means to the FMB community. “It is a sign of the Holidays, a gathering place, a location where you take your Christmas Card and family photographs, and quite simply, just something that everyone loves. In 2022 specifically, after Ian, it was a sign of hope and a statement that FMB is not giving up or giving in to our individual and collective devastation. It was islanders and visitors alike coming together, saying that we love Fort Myers Beach and we will rise again – we will not let Ian be the end but a new beginning. It became such a beautiful and fantastic tribute to the past as well as a sign of hope for our future; it was a beacon of hope, at least that is how it felt to me. Fort Myers Beach in general and Times Square specifically is such an important place to so many and an important part of my life.”

Now that we are in the Holiday season, “this is the perfect opportunity to take stock of where we all are, now that Ian is behind us,” Anita philosophizes. “To me, some days it seems like Ian was a long time ago and on others, it feels like yesterday, as many emotions are still so raw, so when you go through one of those rough days, remember our signs of hope, like the ‘Poinsettia Christmas Tree,’ and know that brighter times are ahead. It can be easy to let everything overwhelm you but the ‘Poinsettia Christmas Tree’ reminds us to be grateful for what we had and still have!” ■

Fort Myers Beach LIVING



## Bikes & Golf Carts & Scooters, Oh My!

**“Christmas Bike Parade” is Saturday, December 20**

- By Gary Mooney -

Since the beginning of time, FMB residents have grappled with one continuous question – is it the “Christmas BICYCLE Parade” or the “Christmas BIKE Parade”?

“It’s the ‘Christmas Bike Parade,’” laughs FMB Mayor Dan Allers, who with a dozen friends began the first Bike Parade in 2016! “It was just myself, my wife Megan and a few family and friends. We put on some ugly Christmas sweaters, hopped on our bikes and pedaled down a few sidestreets, singing Christmas carols. We had such a good time that we said that we would do it again during the next Holiday season and we did. We get more participants every year, with the 2024 Bike Parade drawing roughly 120 people.”

The 2025 “Christmas Bike Parade” is Saturday, December 20, informs Mayor Allers. “Festivities begin at Bayside Veterans Park, where the fantastic band, ‘American Jones,’ will entertain from 4 to 6 p.m. ‘Nervous Nellie’s,’ ‘Snug Harbor Waterfront Restaurant,’ and ‘Wahoo Willie’s’ are all right there and are all ‘Christmas Bike Parade’ sponsors so come early and grab some dinner and perhaps a cold one. Better yet, book an FMB hotel room for the weekend and stay straight through Sunday!”

*continued on page 13*



# December

**EVERY DAY**

**LeeTran FREE Hop-On, Hop-Off Tram**

Looking for a way to ditch that car as you traverse FMB in Season? Then hop aboard the FREE LeeTran Tram that runs daily from the FMB Public Library to Bowditch Point Park daily through April 2026. The Tram runs approximately every 35 minutes, from 9:30 a.m. to 10:40 p.m. For details, see [www.LeeTran.com](http://www.LeeTran.com).

**Monday Through Friday**

**Bay Oaks Recreational Center**

@Bay Oaks Recreational Center  
The Bay Oaks Recreational Center is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. FMB residents \$7 with all others \$10, with memberships available. For information see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

**Mondays, December 1 & 15**

**FMB Town Council Meeting**

@Town Hall  
The FMB Town Council continues its work to rebuild FMB in the New Town Hall at 6231 Estero Boulevard at 9 a.m.; see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

**Mondays, December 1 & 15**

**Caribbean Cruise-In Car Show**

@Parrot Key Caribbean Grill  
FMB's largest Car Show returns on the 1st & 3rd Monday of each month through April 20, 2026. 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](http://www.myparrotkey.com).

**Tuesday, December 2**

**AND EVERY TUESDAY & THURSDAY THROUGH APRIL**

**Santini Marina Plaza Market**

@Santini Marina Plaza  
This FMB South End Market offers fresh produce, artisan foods, arts, crafts, clothing and more EVERY Tuesday & Thursday through April 2026 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; see [www.41markets.com](http://www.41markets.com).

**Tuesday, December 2**

**FMB Art Association Fall Juried Show: "Coming Around"**

@Arts Bonita – Performing Arts Center  
"Coming Around" is the FMBAA's "Fall Judged & Juried

Show" at a special location: Arts Bonita – Performing Arts Center at 10150 Bonita Beach Road. "Coming Around" remains on display through January 8, 2026, Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. See [www.fortmyersbeachart.com](http://www.fortmyersbeachart.com).

**Wednesday, December 3 AND EVERY WEDNESDAY THROUGH APRIL**

**Moss Marina Market**

@Moss Marina  
The Moss Marina Market at 401 Old San Carlos Boulevard offers fresh produce, artisan foods, arts, crafts, clothing and more EVERY Wednesday through April 2026 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; see [www.41markets.com](http://www.41markets.com).

**Wednesday, December 3 & 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! See [www.fmb.lib.fl.us](http://www.fmb.lib.fl.us).

**Wednesday, December 3 & EVERY WEDNESDAY THROUGH SATURDAY**

**The Historic 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. Wednesday through Saturday 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](http://www.moundhouse.org).

**Thursday, December 4**

**FMB Chamber "Coffee Connection"**

@Mom's Home Cooking & Heavenly Biscuit  
Start your day with great coffee, conversation and connections at our morning "Coffee Connection," this month hosted by "Mom's Home Cooking & Heavenly Biscuit!" Enjoy complimentary coffee and breakfast while you network with fellow Chamber members and staff. "Mom's" is at 2450 Estero Boulevard, with the FREE "Coffee Connection" from 8 to 9:30 a.m.; see [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

**Thursday, December 4**

**FMB Town Council Management & Planning Session**

@Town Hall  
The FMB Town Council continues its work to rebuild FMB in the New Town Hall at 6231 Estero Boulevard at 9 a.m.; see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

**Friday & Saturday, December 5 & 6 AND EVERY FRIDAY & SATURDAY**

**Fort Myers Beach Market**

@Times Square  
This Downtown FMB Market offers fresh produce,

artisan foods, arts, crafts, clothing and more EVERY Friday & Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; see [www.41markets.com](http://www.41markets.com).

**Friday, December 5 AND EVERY FRIDAY**

**Bayside Park Concert Series**

@Bayside Veterans Park  
The "Bayside Veterans Park Concert Series" each Sunday evening proved so popular that it now expands to EVERY Friday! Relax while listening to fantastic tunes from local musicians at these FREE weekly outdoor concerts from 6 to 9 p.m.! December 5: "The Echo"; December 12: "Wayward Souls"; December 19: "Cinnamon Crows"; & December 26: TBA. See [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

**Saturdays, December 6 & 13**

**"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](http://www.scbps.com).

**Saturday, December 6**

**"Christmas Boat Parade"**

@Salty Sam's Marina  
Light Up the Night with the return of this annual island Holiday tradition from 6 to roughly 8 p.m.! Watch a flotilla of Holiday-decorated boats that will circle the Parade route twice! For the complete "Christmas Boat Parade" route, see the "Christmas Boat Parade" article in this edition. People's Choice Voting takes place all along the parade route; see [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

**Sunday, December 7 AND EVERY SUNDAY**

**Bayside Veterans Park Concert Series**

@Bayside Veterans Park  
Relax while listening to fantastic tunes from local musicians at these FREE weekly outdoor concerts from 4 to 7 p.m.! December 7: "Limited Edition"; December 14: "Joe Yeoman Band"; December 21; TBA; & December 28: TBA. See [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

**Monday, December 8**

**FMB Art Association Show: "Art Devine" Holiday Sale**

@FMBAA Gallery  
Looking for that truly unique Holiday gift? Then hurry over to the "Art Devine" Holiday Sale at the FMB Art Association Gallery, where all the "Art Devine" works are under \$200! "Art Devine" is from December 8 through January 2, 2026, at the FMBAA's new Gallery at 13451 McGregor Boulevard, Unit #1, in Cypress Square in Fort Myers, near the Prawnbroker Restaurant & Fish Market. The Gallery is open with FREE admission Monday through Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. & Thursday through Saturday Noon to 6 p.m. See [www.fortmyersbeachart.com](http://www.fortmyersbeachart.com).

**Monday, December 8 & EVERY MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY**

**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.

SUDOKU

Answers from page 3

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

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@crowdclinic.org.

**Wednesday, December 10 & EVERY WEDNESDAY THROUGH SATURDAY**

**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](http://www.moundhouse.org).

**Thursday, December 11 FMB Chamber Membership Luncheon**

@TBA  
Join your FMB Chamber friends to savor a scrumptious luncheon, then listen to a presentation from Jennifer Diaz of "The Everglades Foundation." Heidrick & Company Insurance & Risk Management sponsors the December Membership Luncheon from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. \$32 members & \$42 prospective members; for the location see [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

**Thursday, December 11 FMB Art Association Holiday Mixer**

@FMB Art Association Gallery  
Ring in the Holidays with your FMB Art Association friends at the Holiday Mixer at their new Gallery at 13451 McGregor Boulevard, Unit #1, in Cypress Square in Fort Myers, near the Prawnbroker Restaurant & Fish Market. For details including the time, see [www.fortmyersbeachart.com](http://www.fortmyersbeachart.com).

**Friday, December 12 Welcome & Discovery Center**

@Lovers Key State Park  
The Welcome & Discovery Center educates and informs visitors about Lovers Key habitats through interactive displays Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The W&DC is FREE with the park entry fee; see [www.friendsloverskey.org](http://www.friendsloverskey.org).

**Friday, December 12 & EVERY FRIDAY**

**Sunset Kayak Tours**

@The Historic Mound House  
Immerse yourself in the breathtaking beauty of a guided "Sunset Kayak Tour!" Paddle through a pristine landscape as the Golden Hour transforms the Estero Bay into a picturesque landscape. The "Sunset Kayak Tours" include a two-hour guided experience, kayak and paddling equipment, and Mound House admission. \$45-per-person, with reservations required and starting times at [www.moundhouse.org](http://www.moundhouse.org).

**Friday, December 12 Annual Christmas Tree Festival**

@Margaritaville Beach Resort FMB  
The auction of these one-of-a-kind Christmas Trees, handcrafted by FMB Non-Profits, is an island Holiday tradition! The VIP Reception is 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., then the Preview Party opens to the public for FREE from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Bring a new unwrapped toy for the Beach Kids Foundation. See [www.fmb-wc.org](http://www.fmb-wc.org).

**Saturday, December 13 Annual Christmas Tree Festival**

@Margaritaville Beach Resort FMB  
The "Christmas Tree Festival" returns for its final day! Shop the "Vendor's Market" from 1 to 8 p.m.; savor the "Christmas Treats & Bake Sale" from 1 to 8 p.m.; and partake in the "Chili Cookoff & Tasting" from 4:30 to 8 p.m., with Chili Cookoff tickets at \$10. The FMB Woman's Club concludes the "Festival" by announcing the Christmas Tree Auction winners, "Chili Cook-Off" winner and Grand Prize winners at 8 p.m. Bring a new unwrapped toy for the Beach Kids Foundation; see [www.fmb-wc.org](http://www.fmb-wc.org).

**Saturday, December 13 St. Raphael's Church "Shrimp Dinners"**

@St. Raphael's Comfort Hall  
St. Raphael's Legendary "Shrimp Dinners" return on the second Saturday of each month through April 11, 2026! Savor scrumptious "Pink Gold" shrimp, along with baked beans, slaw, cornbread, dessert and a beverage. Dine in or carryout; St. Raphael's Comfort Hall is at 5601 Williams Drive; see [www.straphaelschurch.org](http://www.straphaelschurch.org).

**Tuesday, December 16 FMB Local Planning Agency Meeting**

@Town Hall  
The FMB LPA, appointed by Town Council, continues its work to rebuild FMB in the New Town Hall at 6231 Estero Boulevard at 1 p.m.; see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

**Wednesday, December 17 FMB Community Foundation Holiday Party**

@Island Pancake House  
Enjoy the Holiday Party of the FMB Community Foundation, the island's leading philanthropic organization, from 6 to 8 p.m. See [www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com](http://www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com).

**Thursday, December 18 FMB Chamber "Holiday Hop!"**

@FMB Chamber Office  
Join your FMB Chamber Friends as we "hop" around the Chamber building at 100 Lovers Lane, sharing Holiday cheer with our neighboring businesses! Each business will have a signature Holiday drink

and cheerful snacks, with raffles and an Ugly Sweater Contest. In addition to the FMB Chamber, attendees will visit the Alex King Realty Group, Sea Gypsy Vacation Rentals, State Insurance USA & Access Title Agency from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Members FREE & \$15 perspective members; see [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

**Saturday, December 20 Christmas Bike Parade**

@Bayside Veterans Park  
Join us as we groove to "American Jones" from 4 to 6 p.m., then hop on your two-wheeler and join us as we peddle through the streets of FMB! Following the "Bike Parade," join us at Margaritaville Beach Resort FMB as we rock out to the incredible "Ben Allen Band" from 7:30 to 10 p.m. FREE! See the article in this edition of FMB LIVING for more details.

**Thursday, December 25**

*Merry Christmas!*

Many of your favorite FMB bars and restaurants are open up-&-down the island! Town Hall closed on December 24 & 25.

**Wednesday, December 31 NYE 5K**

@DiamondHead Beach Resort  
Wrap up 2025 with a morning run on the beautiful sands of FMB at the 3rd Annual "NYE 5K" cosponsored by Beach Talk Radio and the DiamondHead Beach Resort, to benefit the FMB Woman's Club, to help build its new clubhouse. There is a "Virtual 5K" and a "Fun Run" as well. Registration includes a race shirt with medals to the top three finishers in each age group at \$35-per-person, with the race beginning at 8 a.m. To register, go to <http://runsignup.com/newyears5k>.

**Thursday, January 1**

*Happy New Year!*

Many of your favorite FMB bars and restaurants are open up-&-down the island! Town Hall closed on December 31 & January 1.

**MEDICARE QUESTIONS?**

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*Visit my BLOG for updated info for 2026*

# CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

## FMB Woman's Club Signature Event Returns for the 8th Year

- by Gary Mooney -

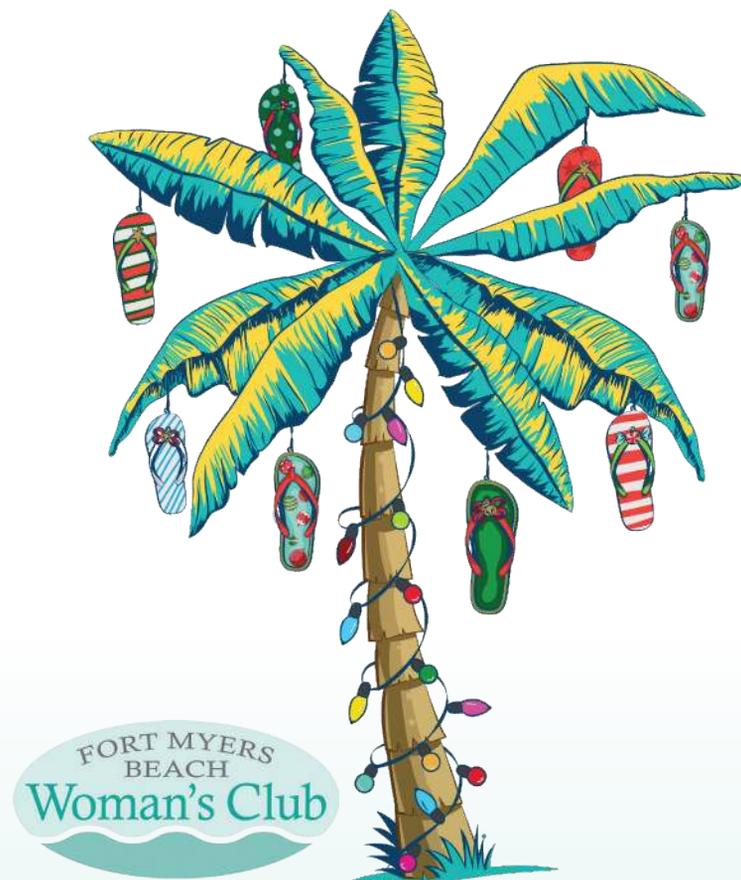
While the 8th annual "Christmas Tree Festival," hosted by the FMB Woman's Club on Friday and Saturday, December 12 & 13, is another of the island's most-beloved Holiday traditions, it has been a bit of an orphan since Hurricane Ian destroyed the Woman's Club campus on September 28, 2022.

"We've been all over the island since Ian," recalls Megan Allers, the 2025 "Christmas Tree Festival" Chairperson. "The Woman's Club hosted it as a parking lot party the year after Ian, then it was to be at the Mound House, but we had to pivot to the FMB Public Library garage, then last year we shifted to the Bay Oaks Recreational Center, even though it sustained damages from Hurricanes Helene and Milton. This year, we longed for a beautiful, stable and elevated location and the Margaritaville Beach Resort FMB Ballroom & Terrace checked all the boxes! We are proud to partner with Margaritaville, as the good folks there never say 'No' to any community group."

The "Christmas Tree Festival" highlights an array of beautifully decorated and one-of-a-kind Holiday trees and wreaths for attendees to bid on and take home, with all proceeds going back to the Non-Profit that created the tree.

Friday's festivities kick off with the "VIP Reception" at 4:30 p.m. "We sell just 100 tickets to the VIP Reception, at \$100 a ticket," Megan explains. "There is a private bartender, with all kinds of goodies and a nice experience all the way around, plus you bid on the Christmas Trees an hour before anyone else."

The "Preview Party" immediately follows, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. "This is totally FREE and open to the public," Megan



adds. "This is a wonderful opportunity to take your time while marveling at the unbelievably decorated trees and deciding on which ones you want to bid on."

The "Christmas Tree Festival" & Auction continues on Saturday, from 1 to 8 p.m. "Once again, admission is FREE, with a full schedule," continues Megan. "The 'Vendor's Market' and 'Christmas Treats & Bake Sale' opens at 1 p.m. The 'Market' will feature jewelry, arts-&-crafts, gardening materials and more, so you will find plenty of nice Christmas gifts! As for the 'Bake Sale,' it is jammed with all kinds of tasty Holiday treats!"

A "Christmas Tree Festival" highlight is the "Chili Cookoff & Tasting" at 4 p.m. "For just \$10, you get tasting cups for every chili," Megan details. "You help to select the winner through the 'People's Choice Awards' and the 'Best Decorated Table.' The winner receives \$750 and 2nd Place gets \$500, with the 'Best Decorated Table' a \$200 Margaritaville gift card. To enter, contact me at [zelenak@hotmail.com](mailto:zelenak@hotmail.com)."

Another main "Christmas Tree Festival" component is the Grand Prize Drawings. "The FMB Woman's Club began selling Grand Prize Raffle tickets months ago, with drawings on the first of the month for the past few months, where the winner receives \$200; the last one is Monday, December 1. Tickets are \$20 each or 6 for \$100 and you purchase them directly from the FMB Woman's Club website at [www.fmb-wc.org](http://www.fmb-wc.org). The drawings for \$500 and ten \$100 drawings happen throughout the event, with the grand prize drawing at the end of Saturday for the three major Grand Prizes: A San

Diego, California, 'Whale Watching Experience'; a Las Vegas Experience; and a Churchill Downs Experience! We will announce as well the winners of the auctioned Christmas Trees and the 'Chili Cookoff.'"

Megan reminds everyone to visit the "Gift Wall." "The 'Gift Wall' is there on Friday and Saturday. It features gift boxes for \$20, \$50 & \$100, with Kids Boxes for \$10 and \$20. Our elves went overboard in stocking the 'Gift Wall' with all kinds of neat items and nice surprises."

### Truly A Win-Win

"It always amazes me how creative our Non-Profits are when they decorate their unique Christmas Trees" marvels Megan. "We challenge them each year to go above and beyond and they always do! Since each Non-Profit keeps every penny from their decorated trees, they know that this can be a big chunk of change so they go all out. A new trend over the past few years is for a Non-Profit to partner with a community business, to increase their profile and maximize their auction profit. These partnerships are upping everybody's game."

For those yet to attend a "Christmas Tree Festival," "You are missing out on an incredible Holiday celebration," raves Megan! "The trees are marvelous, the 'Vendor's Market' and 'Bake Sale' get you into the Spirit of the Holidays, you ring in the season with family and neighbors and – most importantly – you make a valuable and much appreciated contribution to our FMB and local Non-Profits. The 'Christmas Tree Festival' is truly a Win-Win for the entire community." ■

*continued from page 9*

For the biking portion, be at Bayside Veterans Park by 6 p.m. "We will head out down Old San Carlos Boulevard to Times Square," Mayor Dan explains. "From there, we pedal down Estero Boulevard to 'Sandy Bottom's Bar & Grill' that some may remember as the former 'Tuckaway Café.' We will stop in for a few minutes of mingling and perhaps to share a drop of Christmas cheer! From 'Sandy Bottom's,' it's back on Estero Boulevard to the 'Margaritaville Beach Resort' terrace where the incredibly talented Ben Allen Band plays from 7:30 to 10 p.m. Ben was a finalist on 'The Voice' so don't miss him. We host the 'Christmas Bike Parade' and accompanying activities rain-or-shine, so dress appropriately."

What's the cost for this wonderful community Holiday activity? "That's the best part," exclaims the Mayor! "It's all FREE and open to the public, though we do request that everyone brings one new unwrapped toy so local children will have a joyful Holiday. We work with several local partners, like the 'Beach Kids Foundation' and 'Toys for Tots' to ensure that the toys get into the right hands."

### Transportation Modes

The title, "Christmas Bike Parade," is a bit of a misnomer, the Mayor explains. "These days, folks use everything from bikes to golf carts to skateboards to scooters, to anything else you can imagine with wheels. Then there are the Holiday decorations, not only on the transportation but the participants! On the vehicles, you will see garland and lights as well as inflatables like the Grinch and snowmen. You can count on at least one Santa & Mrs. Claus, along with every character from 'A Christmas Story!' People let their decorating imaginations run wild and they always amaze. This is however a family event for all ages so the decorations are 'G-rated.'" As for the "Christmas Bike Parade" dress code, "the uglier the Christmas sweater, the better," chuckles the Mayor!

Mayor Allers expresses his appreciation to the 2025 "Christmas Bike Parade" sponsors: Beach Talk Radio; Ben Allen Band; Big Boy Toyz Productions; Cart Shack; Island Carts FMB; Margaritaville Beach Resort FMB; Nervous Nellie's; Snug Harbor Waterfront Restaurant; Studio Architectural Design; Sun Resorts & Residences; Techtronics; The Whale / Sandy Bottoms' Bar & Grill; and Wahoo Willie's.

*continued on page 14*



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*continued from page 13*

The Mayor is already looking forward to 2026 when the “Christmas Bike Parade” celebrates its 10th anniversary. “I would like to see us top 250 people next year,” he muses. “We have been so fortunate that we have yet to cancel, even during COVID and after Ian. If you have yet to join us, please do as it is such a good time and the perfect way to get outside, spread Holiday cheer, sing carols, get some exercise, enjoy two terrific bands, and ring in Christmas Week with your family, friends and neighbors, all while contributing an unwrapped toy to ensure that all island kids have a Merry Christmas! It is so much fun that we actually have people fly in from as far away as Tennessee. For more information, see us on Facebook at ‘Annual Pedals and Presents Christmas Bike Parade.’”

For Mayor Dan, the best part of the “Christmas Bike Parade” is that “at least for this one evening, everyone forgets everything on their minds and just enjoys the Spirit of Christmas. There are no politics and no anger; just a wonderful family Holiday evening full of good old-fashioned FMB fun. The ‘Christmas Bike Parade’ is a great way to celebrate not only the Holidays but to get ready for a terrific New Year!” ■

*continued from page 5*



### Getting Around the Island

A reminder that the LeeTran Free Hop-On, Hop-Off Tram service now runs through April 2026. The route operates from the Fort Myers Beach Public Library to Bowditch Point Park – a convenient car-free way to reach the parade and other events this season.

### Meet the New “Roxie” & Merry Christmas

The FMB Chamber is putting the finishing touches on the new Roxie, our satellite office in Times Square. Styled after a classic beach cottage, Roxie will officially open soon – stay tuned for information on our ribbon-cutting celebration!

And finally, in the spirit of Christmas, healing and new beginnings – let’s be kind to one another. It’s time to ease the tension, raise our standards, and keep moving our island forward together. We can disagree respectfully and still work toward the same goal: a thriving, welcoming Fort Myers Beach.

The FMB Chamber Office is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., on the 3rd floor of 100 Lovers Lane. Roxie in Times Square, next to the Trolley Stop, is open daily, weather permitting, from 10 a.m. to sunset. Interested in volunteering? Email [info@fmbchamber.com](mailto:info@fmbchamber.com) or call 239-454-7500.

On behalf of our 400+ Chamber members, we wish you a bright and sandy Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year!

Remember: **Island Life; It’s Our Business!** ■

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

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**Contact Info**

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- 📍 450 Harbor Court  
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