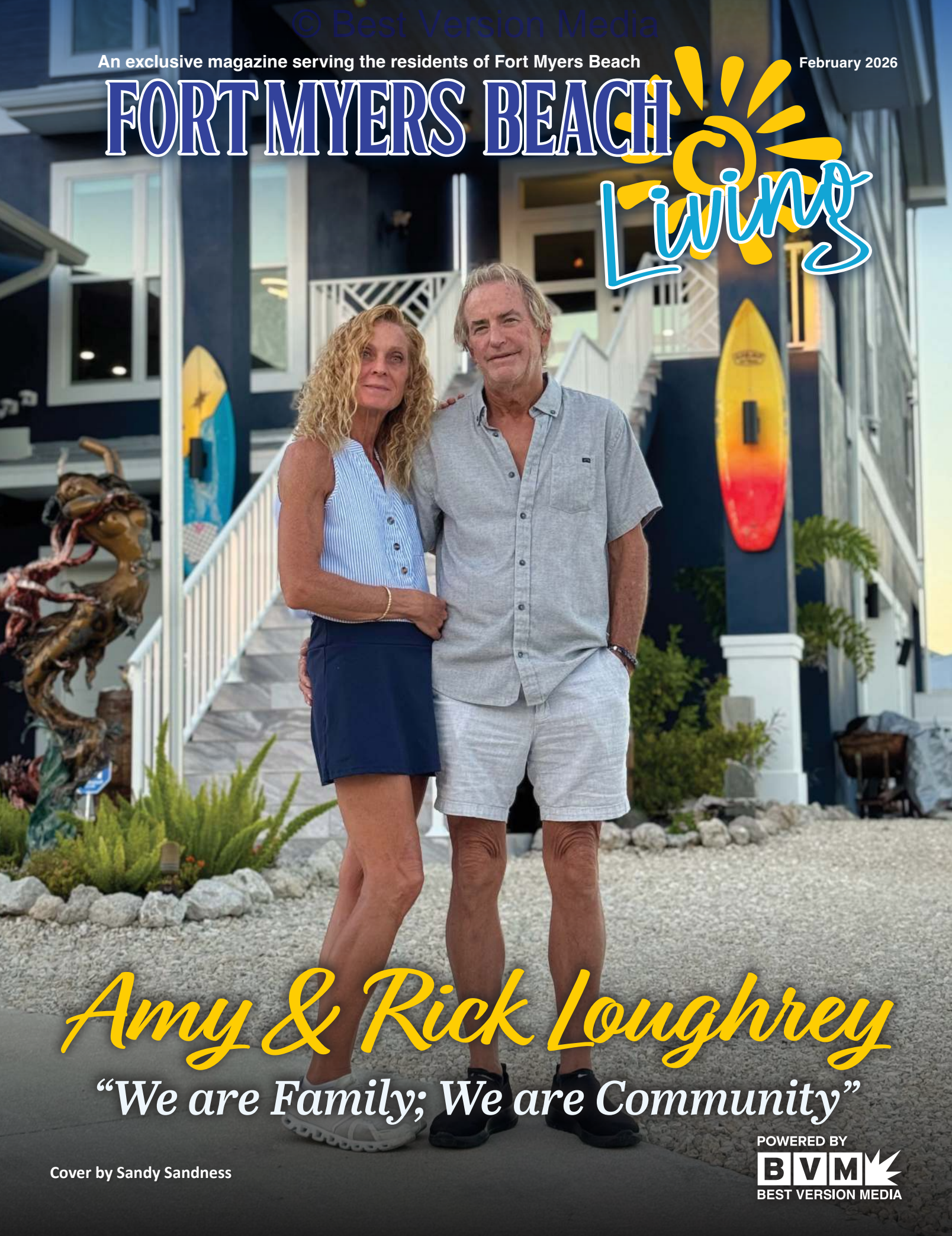


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# **MORE OPTIONS, LESS RISK — Gardner Orthopedics**

# FORT MYERS BEACH

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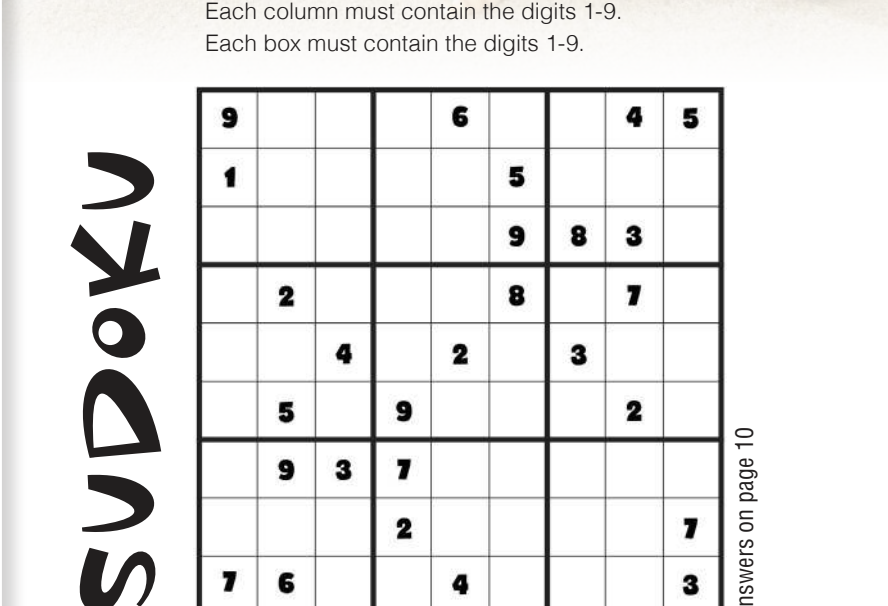
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- CenturyLink: 239-335-3111
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- FMB Chamber of Commerce: 239-454-7500

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- By Gary Mooney -

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- Each row must contain the digits 1-9.
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# SUDOKU

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| <b>7</b> | <b>6</b> |          |          | <b>4</b> |          |          |          | <b>3</b> |

Answers on page 10



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# Hello Friends & Neighbors!

Happy Valentine's Day!

When I think of Valentine's Day, one word conjures to mind – LOVE! When I consider everything that FMB has endured over the past decade – the Water Quality Crisis of 2018, the COVID Pandemic of 2020, Hurricane Ian in 2022 and Hurricanes Helene and Milton in 2024 – I can think of only one reason why we are still living and running our businesses on this 7-mile slice of sand in 2026: because we LOVE Fort Myers Beach!

With Valentine's Day on a Saturday this year, that is always a challenging time to find a great table at your favorite restaurant to "wine-&-dine" your sweetie. If you are one of those who did not make an early reservation, No Worries – there is absolutely nothing wrong with celebrating Valentine's Day with your loved one on the Thursday or Friday before or the Sunday after. Fortunately, FMB has a plethora of outstanding restaurants with scrumptious food and breathtakingly romantic views, so celebrate with your love at any point over the long weekend. Better yet, pick a few different places and pay homage to our national day of love several times!

Today, we know Valentine's Day as flowers and heart-shaped boxes of candy, romantic dinners and Cupid, but what is the story behind February 14? Its history includes the Catholic Church, pagan rituals – and what modern holiday doesn't trace itself back to pagan rituals – the Roman Empire, Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare! It's a long and complicated tale, full of twists and turns, but endlessly interesting, so when you have a few free moments, Google it and learn the backstory for yourself.

I hope you kept your February Saturdays free because FMB is about to fill them with fabulous

fundraisers! February 7 is the wacky and totally fun "Mrs. Roper's Back to The Beach Caftan Crawl" to benefit "FMB Strong." Saturday, February 14 is the FMB Community Foundation's elegant and totally fun "Fashion Show," and February 21 brings us the extravagant and totally fun "Beauty & The Beach: Havana Nights" at Lovers Key State Park, hosted by "The Friends of Lovers Key." Most of us cannot make all three, but they range in price from \$20 per person up to \$500 so pick the one that best fits your budget and passion, because no matter which of these three outstanding fundraisers you attend, you will have a totally fun time! If you need help in making your selection, there are articles on each of these beloved island traditions in this edition of *FMB LIVING Magazine*.

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 do visit, please let them know that you saw their ad in our magazine so we can continue to provide you with this community-oriented original entertainment each month.

Happy Valentine's Day & Have An Awesome Beach Day!!



*Sandy Sandness*

**Publisher**

*Fort Myers Beach LIVING*

239-222-0129

ssandness@bestversionmedia.com



## Chamber Chatter!

*FMB Hustling & Bustling in Season!* - Jacki Liszak, President Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce! -

Welcome to Season! Now that February is here, it's time to dust off an old island adage – locals don't buy grocery store ice cream this time of year because by the time we make it home through seasonal traffic, it melts in the back seat!

I'm predicting that Fort Myers Beach in 2026 will enjoy a strong, steady season, and I base that on two things. First, vacation rentals booked earlier this year than we have been seeing – a reliable indicator of a healthy season ahead. Will it match pre-COVID or pre-Hurricane Ian levels? Probably not just yet, but we are absolutely on our way to enjoying a good, old-fashioned island season.

One likely trigger for those early bookings? Winter 2025-26 came in hot – and cold – for our northern friends, bringing record lows and major snowfalls across the Midwest and East Coast. Nothing fuels dreams of paradise quite like two feet of snow and subzero temperatures staring back at you through the window, especially when paradise includes seven miles of sugar-white sand.

My second indicator is far less scientific: “just a feeling.” 2026 simply feels different – in the best possible way.

Maybe it's because we were hurricane-free in 2025.

Maybe it's the early winter up north.

Maybe it's how far along we are on our comeback.

Maybe it's more condominiums reopening and Snowbirds returning earlier than they have in years.

Or maybe it's a new FMB vibe.

Late last year, it felt like the island reached a turning point. The energy and optimism of our residents and business owners surged, and that positivity is contagious. The hustle and bustle is already here – and it is so good to see locals, Snowbirds and visitors enjoying Fort Myers Beach once again. Welcome Back!

### Speaking of “Welcome Back” . . .

We are thrilled to welcome back two beloved island icons devastated by Hurricane Ian.

“The Whale” reopened around Thanksgiving and it's hard to put into words how much it means to have this legendary beach bar and restaurant back. Owners Dawn and Mike Miller did an extraordinary job rebuilding this cherished landmark. Each of its three levels offers its own unique vibe – so make a point to visit them all and pick your favorite. And don't miss it at night – the illuminated Whale is absolutely stunning.

We're also delighted to welcome back The Flamingo Inn at the south end of the island. This charming boutique hotel has been missed, and we're thrilled to see it once again welcoming guests.

*continued on page 13*

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*Amy & Rick are more than just "Beach People!"*

It was Rick who first discovered FMB in 2001. "I actually took a trip down the East Coast to look for a new place for us to live, basically stumbled upon FMB, and immediately loved it." He brought Amy for a look and she had the same reaction: "It was beautiful and I was ready to move!" They camped at "Gulf Waters RV Park" by Walmart and originally considered a duplex, where they could live in one half and rent out the other, but had no intention to immediately buy. "Our real estate agent however thought we would be happier with a single-family home that we could use as a vacation rental," says Amy, "so we unexpectedly purchased an Estero Boulevard home on our first trip here."

They fell in love with the house next door as well, so they bought that one, too! Eventually, Rick and Amy would own five FMB homes, leading to the founding of their former FMB business, "Distinctive Beach Rentals and Rent This and That," that they sold six months before Hurricane Ian.

For the first few years, they were seasonals, "and I would literally cry every time we left," exclaims Amy. "That last summer, the only time I saw Amy smile was when we were preparing to return to FMB," adds Rick. "We decided to sell our northern home and became fulltime islanders in 2003."

#### **"Little Did We Know"**

During the years they owned "Distinctive Beach Rentals," Amy and Rick would take a trip to the Keys, to relax for a few days before the insanity of FMB's high season. "We were there in September 2017 when Hurricane Irma, that was to devastate FMB with a 15-foot storm surge, suddenly deviated and ravaged the middle Keys instead," Amy recalls. "As I surveyed all the debris piled up on US1, I was in tears, saying 'this was supposed to be us!' That was our wake-up call that all of our homes as well as our business were on this 7-mile-long island, meaning we had all of our eggs in one basket, so we started to divest ourselves of our rentals and eventually sold the business. Little did we know what would happen to FMB five years later."

#### **Rick On The Roof**

People from near and far remember Rick's heroic 6 days on top of his garage, the one part of their home that Ian did not obliterate, and how his one-man crusade was successful in preserving the structure.

"We decided to ride out Ian in our home, and Isaac was once again with us, having returned home during the COVID Pandemic," Amy offers. "During the height of the storm, we told him how sorry we were that we

# *"We are Family; We are Community"*

**Amy & Rick Loughrey**

- By Gary Mooney -

Amy and Rick Loughrey are both from Niagara Falls, only she is from Niagara Falls, Canada and he from Niagara Falls, New York! They each worked at their family businesses that were only a few miles apart. "My father hired his father to do some work for us and that is how we met," recalls Amy. There was an immediate interest, with Rick remembering that "Amy was beautiful, no denying that."

Amy had a unique "first-impression" of Rick: "He came into our office straight from the coal plant, covered in black, with eyes that looked like Alice Cooper! Even under all that, you could tell he was really cute!" They eventually married on a boat in Niagara Falls and today are parents to their 27-year-old son Isaac and dote on Tiny, their Australian Sheppard / Poodle mix.



Everyone remembers Rick's heroic 6 days on his garage, the one part of their home that Ian did not obliterate.



The Loughreys "run together and compete in races, triathlons and marathons."



The 2024 Christmas Bike Parade: "Islanders are just super," says Rick. "They are so cool, funny and goofy, plus FMB has such a neat vibe."

all stayed, and if the worst happens and we had to swim, not to come back for us or the dog, but to save himself to live to tell his children and grandchildren. The best part is that, right after the storm, we went outside to check on neighbors and fellow islanders to see who we could help and Isaac jumped right in. A few hours later, he came back and stated, 'Now I see why we stay for hurricanes; it is for everybody else!' Isaac gets it! On FMB, we are family; we are community."

Today, their home is rebuilt, "like a tank," chuckles Rick! "Those days on the roof were worth it, and once we got everything going, the process was smooth. We had minimal flooding from Hurricane Milton in 2024 but nothing got in the house. As for our neighborhood, I'd grade it 'half-&-half;' either the homes are fine or the empty lots are still bare and for sale, but if you look out our backyard, everything seems normal again and quite beautiful. I would describe it as 'better every day.'" "When we are out-&-about, we will talk to tourists who say how devastated the island still looks," says Amy, "and we respond, 'if you saw it the day after Ian, like we did, you cannot believe how far FMB has already come.'"

### "We Would Rather Do Than Complain"

Rick was a youth coach for 34 years, including more than 20 on FMB, "but since Ian, there are sadly not many island kids left to coach." He recently rejoined the Bay Oaks Recreational Center Advisory Board. Amy loves to garden, bake, cook and socialize. They run together and compete in races, triathlons and marathons, are avid bicyclists and rock-climb in their garage! "If it is athletic, we love it," explains Amy. "We are wired people!"

Amy reminds that you do not need to be a member of an organized volunteer group to make a positive difference because "we are all already part of the biggest club on the island: the FMB community! I had a friend check in on me to see how I was doing and by the time we were done, she said, 'I started out to encourage you and you ended up encouraging me' and that is what we do on this island." Rick sweeps and shovels sand off the adjacent sidewalks "so people who need them can access them, plus it just looks better. People complain about stuff all the time but we would rather do than complain."

When they contemplate what FMB will look like in five years, "the usual – Paradise," exclaims Rick! "The buildings will look different and even some of the people will be different, but they will still be funny and eclectic and good neighbors, so basically we will back to the same as we always are." "It will be better," adds Amy. "Many of our homes and businesses are now fortified to withstand future storms. Sure, we miss the old beach cottages, but FMB will still be funky and eclectic and weird, but weird in the best sense of the word." ■

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|-------------------|--------------|-------|-------------|---------------------------|------------|-------|------------|
| 243 PEARL ST      | 2 BED/2(0)   | 1,140 | \$520,000   | 140 ESTERO BLVD #2304     | 1 BED/1(0) | 383   | \$175,000  |
| 7875 BUCCANEER DR | 3+DEN/2(0)   | 1,565 | \$679,000   | 21440 BAY VILLAGE DR #124 | 2 BED/2(0) | 881   | \$240,000  |
| 5356 PALMETTO ST  | 3 BED/2(0)   | 1,440 | \$748,650   | 4491 BAY BEACH LN #133    | 2 BED/2(0) | 998   | \$270,000  |
| 136 BAY MAR DR    | 4 BED/4(0)   | 2,507 | \$775,000   | 7307 ESTERO BLVD #3106    | 2 BED/2(1) | 1097  | \$345,000  |
| 420 DONORA BLVD   | 4 BED/2(1)   | 1,886 | \$867,500   | 4421 BAY BEACH LN #614    | 3 BED/2(0) | 1197  | \$370,000  |
| 2 AVENIDA CARITA  | 5 BED/4(0)   | 3,010 | \$1,300,000 | 6660 ESTERO BLVD #104     | 2 BED/2(0) | 1145  | \$377,000  |
| 276 ALBATROSS ST  | 3 BED/3(0)   | 2,099 | \$1,825,000 | 7317 ESTERO BLVD #108     | 2 BED/2(0) | 1076  | \$385,000  |
| 3420 ESTERO BLVD  | 5 BED/5(1)   | 4,409 | \$6,900,000 | 7330 ESTERO BLVD #902     | 1 BED/1(0) | 517   | \$405,000  |
|                   |              |       |             | 100 ESTERO BLVD #434      | 1 BED/1(0) | 647   | \$476,000  |
|                   |              |       |             | 6500 ESTERO BLVD #F218    | 2 BED/2(0) | 1055  | \$499,950  |
|                   |              |       |             | 8771 ESTERO BLVD #1106    | 1 BED/1(0) | 586   | \$525,000  |
|                   |              |       |             | 4182 BAY BEACH LN #746    | 3 BED/2(0) | 1,848 | \$675,000  |
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|                   |              |       |             | 2810 ESTERO BLVD #312     | 2 BED/2(0) | 1,196 | \$870,000  |
|                   |              |       |             | 4137 BAY BEACH LN #532    | 3+DEN/3(0) | 2,103 | \$950,000  |

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| 264 ALBATROSS ST          | 0.281 | \$409,999  |
| 71 PEARL ST               | 0.108 | \$875,000  |

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# Fort Myers Beach Community Foundation



– By Gary Mooney,

## Annual Event is Saturday, February 14

A beloved island social tradition returns for its 16th year, when the Fort Myers Beach Community Foundation hosts its annual Fashion Show at Santini Marina Plaza on Saturday, February 14, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The King Family Foundation sponsors the Community Foundation Fashion Show.

“All of the fashions this year are provided by ‘The Islander’ – owned by Community Foundation member and former FMB Mayor Anita Cereceda – or by the neighboring ‘Leani’s,’” explains Susan Krajewski, the Fashion Show Chair. “It’s one of the best annual events on the beach. It’s a wonderful way to bring the women of this island – and the few men who attend – together to celebrate our beach fashion vibe. It is even more special this year, with the show falling on Valentine’s Day. In addition to all the fun fashions, the show includes light finger foods from Smokin’ Oyster Brewery and a Cash Bar.”

Fashion Show tickets are available for advance sale only and sell out quickly. Due to space limitations, only 165 will be sold. Each purchaser receives a Swag Bag, not a paper ticket, filled with various goodies and small gifts. Tickets are just \$50 per person and can be purchased online via PayPal at [www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com](http://www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com).

During the week of February 9 through 13, any remaining tickets can be purchased on the third floor of the FMB Public Library. Also at the Library, there will be at least 25 gift baskets on display. “The FMB Community Foundation members assemble the baskets with themes such as Italian Dinner or Martini Love, and there are other marvelous items like a Lottery Ticket Tree and elegant wood carvings,” Susan explains. Raffle tickets cost \$10 for seven tickets. Raffle ticket purchasers do not need to be present at the Fashion Show to win. Additionally, 50/50 tickets will also be available for sale.

### Fun Beach & Casualwear

“We primarily focus on fun beach and casualwear, and not just for the ladies but men and children as well,” Susan says. “We introduced men’s and children’s fashions last year and they were a tremendous success, particularly for the kids, as we have a lot of grandmothers on this island.” Susan recruits the Fashion Show models from the Community Foundation membership, and member Jan Fleming and her husband Ron volunteered their two grandchildren to model the kids’ clothes.

### About the FMB Community Foundation

Susan has been a FMB Community Foundation member since 2014 and encourages others to join. “We are a great group who does good work to help our island, with a monthly membership meeting, a monthly social, and fun fundraising events like the Fashion Show and an upcoming Casino Night. Recently, we began accepting men as members, and our group is now open to everyone. You will not only make a positive difference for our beach community but will have a fun time doing it.”

Through programs like the Fashion Show, the FMB Community Foundation contributed over \$100,000 to those in need on the beach in 2025. They awarded ten scholarships of \$1,500 each, added to an endowed scholarship fund at Florida SouthWestern State College, and made a positive difference to those who live and work on the island. For more information on how to become an FMB Community Foundation member, inquire at the Fashion Show, speak with any current member or visit their webpage at [www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com](http://www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com). ■

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*Visit my BLOG for updated info for 2026*

# February

**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 through April 2026. The Tram runs approximately every 35 minutes, from 8:20 a.m. to 10:55 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 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. FMB residents \$7 with all others \$10 and memberships available. For information see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

**Monday Through Friday  
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 for games, snacks and homework from after-school through 6 p.m. \$125 for FMB residents & \$175 for non-residents per semester! For information see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

**Sunday, February 1  
"Giant Book Sale"**

@FMB Public Library  
Browse through thousands of books, then walk away with a bagful for just \$10! The "Giant Book Sale" begins at 9 a.m.; for information see [www.fmb.lib.fl.us](http://www.fmb.lib.fl.us).

**Sunday, February 1  
AND EVERY SUNDAY**

**Bayside Park Concert Series**

@Bayside Park  
Relax while listening to fantastic tunes from local musicians at these FREE weekly outdoor concerts from 4 to 7 p.m. February 1: School of Rock; February 8: "Riverside"; February 15: School of Rock; February 22: "Limited Edition." See [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

**Sunday, February 1  
AND EVERY SUNDAY**

**Reggae Party**

@Lighthouse Island Resort Tiki Bar  
After you enjoy Sunday's "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! See [www.lighthouseislandresort.com](http://www.lighthouseislandresort.com).

**Monday, February 2  
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).

**Monday, February 2  
FMB Art Association  
Spring Judged Show "Soaring"**

@FMBAA Gallery  
The FMBAA's Spring Judged Show, "Soaring," runs through Friday, February 27, at its 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).

**Mondays, February 2 & 16  
Caribbean Cruise-In Car Show**

@Parrot Key Caribbean Grill  
The largest FMB Car Show returns on the 1st & 3rd Monday of each month through April 20. 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, February 3  
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 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; see [www.41markets.com](http://www.41markets.com).

**Wednesday, February 4  
AND 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. 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](http://www.moundhouse.org).

**Wednesday, February 4  
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 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; see [www.41markets.com](http://www.41markets.com).

**Wednesday, February 4  
FMB Woman's Club Monthly Meeting**

@Lovers Key State Park  
Join the best club on the entire island, as all are welcome at 6:30 p.m.; see [www.fmb-wc.org](http://www.fmb-wc.org).

**Thursday, February 5  
FMB Chamber  
"Coffee Connection"**

@The FMB Public Library  
Start your day with your FMB Chamber friends for networking with complimentary coffee and tasty breakfast items. The FREE "Coffee Connection" is from 8 to 9:30 a.m.; see [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

**Thursday, February 5  
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,  
February 6 & 7 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, February 6  
AND EVERY FRIDAY**

**Bayside Park Concert Series**

@Bayside Veterans Park  
The "Bayside Park Concert Series" each Sunday 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.! February 6: "Soapy Tuna"; February 13: "Kevin Fox & The Rock Ramblers"; February 20: "Wayward Souls"; and February 27: "Jacob's Ladder." See [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

**Saturday, February 7  
"American Boating Course"**

@San Carlos Bay Squadron Classroom  
This 8-hour basic boating class includes Florida navigation rules and how to deal with water emergencies at 8:15 a.m. \$65-per-person & \$20 each additional person; see [www.scbps.com](http://www.scbps.com).

SUDOKU

Answers from page 3

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**Saturday, February 7**  
**3rd Annual "Mrs. Roper's Back to The Beach Caftan Crawl"**

@Margaritaville Beach Resort FMB

A curly red wig, a caftan, and some chunky accessories are all one needs to conjure up the surprisingly beloved Helen Roper! Join us for the 3rd Annual "Caftan Crawl," a groovy celebration to benefit FMB Strong. Visit eight FMB bars & restaurants, making them your own "Regal Beagle," from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Purchase your \$20-per-person tickets at [www.fmbstrong.org](http://www.fmbstrong.org).

**Saturday, February 7**  
**St. Raphael's Church "Shrimp Dinners"**

@St. Raphael's Comfort Hall

St. Raphael's Legendary "Shrimp Dinners" return on the second Saturday evening of each month through April 11! Savor scrumptious "Pink Gold" shrimp, baked beans, slaw, cornbread, dessert and a beverage. St. Raphael's Comfort Hall is at 5601 Williams Drive. Dine in or carryout; for \$25 per person from 5 to 7 p.m. See [www.straphaelschurch.org](http://www.straphaelschurch.org)

**Monday, February 9**  
**& 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. 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](mailto:reservations@crowclinic.org).

**Monday, February 9**  
**"Deep Ditches & Bright Lights"**

@FMB Public Library

Robert Macomber presents "Deep Ditches & Bright Lights": The story of how SW Florida acquired the channels and lighthouses upon which we rely, from 1 to 2 p.m. FREE with donations appreciated. See [www.esteroislandhistoricsociety.org](http://www.esteroislandhistoricsociety.org).

**Tuesday, February 10**  
**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 9 a.m.; see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

**Wednesday, February 11**  
**& EVERY WEDNESDAY & SATURDAY**

**"Archaeology & Archives Tours"**

@The Historic Mound House

Discover the science of archaeology and the tools of the trade while exploring the ancient Calusa shell midden. Then step inside the Artifact Preservation Center to see the artifacts unearthed during those excavations EVERY Wednesday & Saturday from 11 a.m. to Noon. \$5 per person plus MH admission; see [www.moundhouse.org](http://www.moundhouse.org).

**Thursday, February 12**

**& EVERY THURSDAY & 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 Thursday & Saturday from 9 to 11 a.m. \$50 per person including MH admission; reservations necessary at [www.moundhouse.org](http://www.moundhouse.org).

**Thursday, February 12**  
**FMB Chamber**



**Membership Luncheon**

@On The Bay at Matanzas Inn

Join your FMB Chamber friends to savor a scrumptious luncheon from On The Bay at Matanzas Inn as well as enjoying a presentation from Alison Hussey of CROW from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Stevens Construction sponsors the February Luncheon. \$32 members & \$42 prospective members; see [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

**Saturday, February 14**  
**HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!**

**Saturday, February 14**  
**FMB Community Foundation "Fashion Show"**

@Santini Marina Plaza Breezeway

The beloved FMB Community Foundation Fashion Show returns for the 16th year at the Santini Marina Plaza Breezeway from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Beach and casualwear for ladies, men and kids from "The Islander" and "Leani's," with light finger foods from Smokin' Oyster Brewery and a Cash Bar. \$50 per person, with advance purchase necessary online via PayPal at [www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com](http://www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com).

**Tuesday, February 17**  
**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. Note the change in day due to the Presidents' Day Holiday; see [www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov](http://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov).

**Wednesday, February 18**  
**FMB Community Foundation Monthly Meeting**

@The Island Pancake House

The FMB Community Foundation is the island's leading philanthropic organization, so join in on the fun from 5 to 7 p.m.; see [www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com](http://www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com)

**Thursday, February 19**  
**2026 FOLKS Speaker Series**

"Botanical Birds & Butterflies Walking Tour"

@Lovers Key State Park

Put on your walking shoes for the "Botanical Birds & Butterflies Walking Tour" at the Lovers Key State Park Speaker Series at 10 a.m. To register or for information, contact Carmen at [carmen@friendsofloverskey.org](mailto:carmen@friendsofloverskey.org).

**Thursday, February 19**  
**FMB Chamber "Business After Hours"**

@Kava Culture on Summerlin Road

Join your FMB Chamber friends for a fun time while enjoying savory appetizers and a cash bar at Kava Culture at 16230 Summerlin Road, #209, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Members FREE & \$15 for perspective members; see [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

**Saturday, February 21**  
**"Murder on Estero Bay: Fern Moringgiello Vanishes"**

@The Historic Cottage

Join us at this FMB Murder Mystery presentation at The Historic Cottage at 161 Bay Road from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. FREE with donations appreciated. See [www.esteroislandhistoricsociety.org](http://www.esteroislandhistoricsociety.org).

**Saturday, February 21**  
**"Beauty & The Beach Gala: Havana Nights"**

@Lovers Key State Park

If you are looking for a fun and eclectic night at one of Florida's most natural paradises, with fantastic outfits, scrumptious food, an amazing live auction, and hot music, then "Havana Nights" is for you! Cocktail Hour, four-course "Black Salt Culinary" dinner with wine, live auction, and music & dancing. Tickets for the 5:30 p.m. to Midnight fundraiser are \$500 per person, including all drinks, online at [www.friendsofloverskey.org](http://www.friendsofloverskey.org).

**Thursday, February 26**  
**FMB Community Foundation Social Hour**

@To Be Determined

The FMB Community Foundation is the island's leading philanthropic organization, so join in on the fun from 5 to 7 p.m.; for the location, see [www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com](http://www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com)

**Saturday, February 28**  
**"Rat Pack Tribute Show"**

@St. Raphael's Comfort Hall

Travel back to the 1960s with the coolest act around, as Frank, Dean & Sammy sing timeless classics! St. Raphael's Comfort Hall is at 5601 Williams Drive. For show time, cost and details, see [www.straphaelschurch.org](http://www.straphaelschurch.org).

**Thursday through Saturday, March 5 to 7**  
**89th Annual "Sanibel Shell Festival"**

@The Sanibel Community House

See magnificent shells, shell art, crafts and local vendors, along with live mollusk tanks. Display your beautiful shell creations at the Artistic Show. Thursday & Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. FREE parking; \$5-per-person admission. For information, see [www.sanibelsshellclub.com](http://www.sanibelsshellclub.com).



# 2026 “Friends of Lovers Key” Gala

- By Sandy Sandness, Photos by Karen Woodson & The Friends of Lovers Key -

## “Havana Nights” is Saturday, February 21

If you are searching for a truly unforgettable evening set in one of Florida’s most beautiful natural treasures, look no further than the annual Friends of Lovers Key “Beauty & The Beach” Gala at Lovers Key State Park (LKSP). Known for its vibrant atmosphere, stylish guests, exceptional cuisine, exciting live auction, and high-energy music, this event is a highlight of the social season and a vital fundraiser supporting one of the region’s most cherished parks.

“This year’s theme is Havana Nights,” says Karen Woodson, Vice President of Operations for the Friends of Lovers Key and Chair of the Gala. “Every year we select a fresh and exciting theme that influences everything—from the menu and music to the décor and attire. ‘Havana Nights’ allows guests to immerse themselves in a colorful, festive experience, and we’re confident it will be a night to remember.”

The Havana Nights Gala will take place on Saturday evening, February 21, at the Welcome & Discover Center at Lovers Key State Park, located at 8700 Estero Boulevard. Tickets are \$500 per person and are available online at [www.friendsofloversonkey.org](http://www.friendsofloversonkey.org). Attendance is limited to just 200 guests, and tickets are selling quickly. “We encourage people to act now so they don’t miss out,” Woodson advises. For additional information, guests may email [Jan@friendsofloversonkey.org](mailto:Jan@friendsofloversonkey.org).

The dress code for the evening is described as “Havana-style attire suggested; dress to impress,” which offers guests plenty

of room for creativity. “Think bright colors, floral cocktail dresses, elegant evening gowns, white linen suits, and Panama hats,” Woodson explains. “We see everything from flamingo-themed tuxedos to classic elegance. What it does not mean is beach-wear or casual clothing. This is your chance to have fun, dress boldly, and truly step up your fashion game.”

### An Amazing Evening Awaits

The festivities begin with a cocktail hour from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m., featuring handcrafted drinks and delectable hors d’oeuvres. A four-course gourmet dinner and live auction follow at 7:00 p.m., with dancing and live music starting at 9:00 p.m. and continuing until midnight.

Each ticket includes the cocktail hour, an elegant sit-down dinner with wine pairings, open bar service throughout the evening, and live entertainment by the Sudamerica Latin Groove Band. “From start to finish, it’s a spectacular evening,” Woodson says.

The dinner is catered by Black Salt Culinary, delivering a refined four-course experience with impeccable service. The meal begins with appetizers and a fresh salad course, followed by Cuban-inspired entrées, and concludes with an indulgent dessert. As guests dine, the live auction adds excitement to the evening.

Auction items are as impressive as they are diverse. Highlights include four tickets to a Green Bay Packers game at historic



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*continued from page 5*

Lambeau Field with a condominium stay, a private dinner party for eight catered by Black Salt Culinary with wine pairings, and a luxury yacht cruise for ten complete with wine and cheese. Travel packages feature four-day stays in stunning homes in Georgia, Michigan, and Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, as well as a Lake Michigan getaway with a \$1,500 adventure credit. More affordable experiences—such as a hibachi dinner on the Lovers Key beach—and beautifully curated gift baskets ensure there is something for every bidder.

Once the auction concludes, the energy rises as guests hit the dance floor. “The music is Cuban-inspired, lively, and irresistible,” Woodson says. “By the end of the night, everyone is dancing.”

### Supporting a Local Treasure

Perhaps most importantly, every dollar raised during the Gala directly benefits Lovers Key State Park. “Many people assume that state parks are fully funded, but that simply isn’t the case,” Woodson explains. “The Friends of Lovers Key help bridge the gap—funding educational programs, trail improvements, visitor enhancements, and conservation efforts that protect wildlife and preserve this extraordinary environment.”

The Friends’ mission is to protect, preserve, and support the park through education, sustainability, and conservation, ensuring that its 1,600 acres remain accessible and pristine for generations to come.

Woodson encourages community members to get involved beyond the Gala. “Lovers Key is a paradise in our own backyard, offering hiking, kayaking, biking, and a glimpse of what Old Florida once was,” she says. “Membership comes with valuable benefits, including discounted or free admission. We invite everyone to join us at [\\*\\*www.friendsofloversonkey.org\\*\\*](http://www.friendsofloversonkey.org).”

As for Woodson, her favorite moments are many—from the dazzling outfits at the start of the night to the excitement of the auction, expertly led by husband-and-wife auctioneers, and the energy brought by Master of Ceremonies Matt Devitt of WINK News. “Our Beauty & The Beach Galas are truly first-class events,” she says. “From beginning to end, they’re unforgettable.” ■

### FMB’s February Social Scene

Tourism season isn’t the only thing in full swing – it’s also social season on Fort Myers Beach!

#### **Mrs. Roper’s Back to The Beach Caftan Crawl**

is Saturday, February 7

#### **The FMB Community Foundation Fashion Show**

is Saturday, February 14

#### **Valentine’s Day Vow Renewal at Lovers Key State Park**

is Saturday, February 14

#### **Captains for Clean Water 10th Anniversary Gala**

is Friday, February 20, at the Edison/Ford Winter Estates

#### **Friends of Lovers Key State Park Gala: “Beauty & The Beach: Havana Nights”**

is Saturday, February 21

#### **St. Raphael’s Episcopal Church “Rat Pack Tribute Show”**

is Saturday, February 28

And that’s just a snapshot! For a full list, check the February Events Calendar in this issue of *FMB LIVING Magazine* or visit the FMB Chamber “Events Page” at [www.fortmyersbeach.org](http://www.fortmyersbeach.org).

### Getting Around the Island

With more visitors and more events, remember that the FREE LeeTran Hop-On, Hop-Off Tram runs daily through April. The route spans from the FMB Public Library to Bowditch Point Park, offering a convenient car-free way to enjoy the island’s main commercial corridor.

And before cursing seasonal traffic, take a moment to remember what island life looked like during the Blue-Green Algae and Red Tide crisis of 2018, the COVID spring of 2020, or the long months after Hurricane Ian, when you could practically fire a cannon down Estero Boulevard without hitting a single car.

The only thing worse than traffic on Fort Myers Beach is NO TRAFFIC AT ALL! Season will be over before we know it – so pack your patience, skip the grocery store ice cream for now, and enjoy the happy sound of cash registers ringing across the island!

### Happy Valentine’s Day

In the spirit of Valentine’s Day, let’s be kind to one another. Dial down the negativity rhetoric, raise the standard, and keep moving our island forward – together. We don’t always have to agree, but we do share 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. Our “Roxie” satellite office 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, Happy Valentine’s Day – and remember:

### **Island Life; It’s Our Business! ■**

*Jacki Lyszak, President*

*Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce!*



*The "Caftan Crawl" begins & ends at the "License to Chill Bar & Grill" at the Margaritaville Beach Resort FMB.*

From 11:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., the "Helens" will make their way to eight popular Fort Myers Beach bars and restaurants, enjoying themed drinks, laughter, and camaraderie along the way. The crawl concludes back at License to Chill with a closing ceremony at 4:30 p.m.

This year's participating establishments include La Ola Surfside Restaurant, Lah De Dah Beach Bar & Grill, Mr. Waves Island Bar, Nervous Nellie's Crazy Waterfront Eatery, Petey's Upper Deck, Smokin' Oyster Brewery, Wahoo Willie's, and The Whale. The event's title sponsor is Alex King Premier Plus Realty, along with The King Family Foundation, with additional sponsorship from Beach Talk Radio and Suncoast Beverage.

Tickets for the Caftan Crawl are just \$20 per person, but Jungwirth strongly encourages advance purchases. "We're preparing for about 800 Helens this year, and tickets are going fast," she says. "If there are any spots left, tickets may be available during Saturday morning registration, but we fully expect to sell out." Tickets can be purchased online at [www.fmbstrong.org](http://www.fmbstrong.org), via Facebook at [www.facebook.com/FMBStrong](http://www.facebook.com/FMBStrong), or through Donorbox. For those unable to attend this year, Jungwirth recommends marking calendars now: the Caftan Crawl is always held on the Saturday before the Super Bowl, which falls on February 6, 2027, next time around.

Outfitting hundreds of people as Helen Roper nearly 50 years after her television debut might seem daunting, but Jungwirth has the solution. "Amazon and Goodwill," she laughs. "Goodwill is the go-to spot for caftans and jewelry, and whatever you can't find there, you order online."

Participants who complete the entire crawl will receive a commemorative medallion during the closing ceremony. In addition, each stop will feature a specialty drink, and raffle tickets will be sold throughout the day for a variety of exciting prizes, with winners announced at the end of the event.

Beyond the fun, the Caftan Crawl delivers a significant economic boost to Fort Myers Beach. "After the first two crawls, we heard from bars and restaurants across the island that Helens were everywhere well into the evening," Jungwirth says. "No matter where you went, people were shouting, 'Hey, Helen!'"

As for the enduring appeal of Mrs. Roper, Jungwirth believes it lies in her spirit. "Helen is genuinely happy, a little salty, and full of life," she says. "That attitude perfectly reflects Fort Myers Beach as we continue recovering from hurricanes and facing everyday challenges. FMB Strong provides hope, and what better way to spread that than through joy, laughter, and community?"

To support that mission—and have an unforgettable day—slip on a caftan, grab a red wig, and join the fun at the 3rd Annual Mrs. Roper's Back to the Beach Caftan Crawl on February 7! ■

## "Come & Knock On Our Door!"

- By Gary Mooney,  
Photos provided by Heidi Jungwirth & FMB Strong -

If you find yourself strolling Fort Myers Beach on Saturday, February 7, you may feel as though you have stepped straight into the mid-to-late 1970s. Platform shoes, bell bottoms, hot pants, jumpsuits, oversized sunglasses, and a dazzling array of colorful caftans will take over the island. Curly red wigs will be everywhere, paying joyful homage to the iconic television character Helen Roper, made famous by the late Audra Lindley on Three's Company and its spinoff, The Ropers.

Nearly 1,000 "Helen Ropers" are expected to flood Fort Myers Beach for the 3rd Annual "Mrs. Roper's Back to the Beach Caftan Crawl," a spirited fundraiser benefiting FMB Strong, a local 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to helping residents with hurricane recovery and a wide range of community needs.

"Mrs. Roper's Back to the Beach Caftan Crawl is not only an incredible fundraiser for FMB Strong, but also a fantastic and fun way to experience Fort Myers Beach," says Heidi Jungwirth, Executive Director of FMB Strong and the event's self-proclaimed "Grand Poohbah." "There are few sights more entertaining than walking into one of the island's favorite bars or restaurants and being greeted by a sea of red wigs, outrageous sunglasses, and vibrant caftans."

The event has grown steadily since its debut, attracting both locals and visitors from far beyond Fort Myers Beach. "Island residents and seasonal visitors absolutely love it," Jungwirth explains. "This year, we're expecting two busloads of 'Helens' from Port Charlotte and Punta Gorda, along with several participants who fly into Southwest Florida just to be part of the Caftan Crawl."

The festivities kick off at the License to Chill Bar & Grill at the Margaritaville Beach Resort Fort Myers Beach, where registration will be held from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. Participants who have already purchased tickets can pick them up during designated early ticket distribution times the week prior, with locations on both the north and south ends of the island.

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**Contact Info**

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- ✉ cccswfl@gmail.com
- 📍 450 Harbor Court  
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931



Check our website for local activities held at Moss Marina  
[www.MossMarina.com](http://www.MossMarina.com)

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