

FORT MYERS BEACH



FMB's Secret Recipe

Steve & Deb Nelson Love the Island Vibe

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FORT MYERS BEACH

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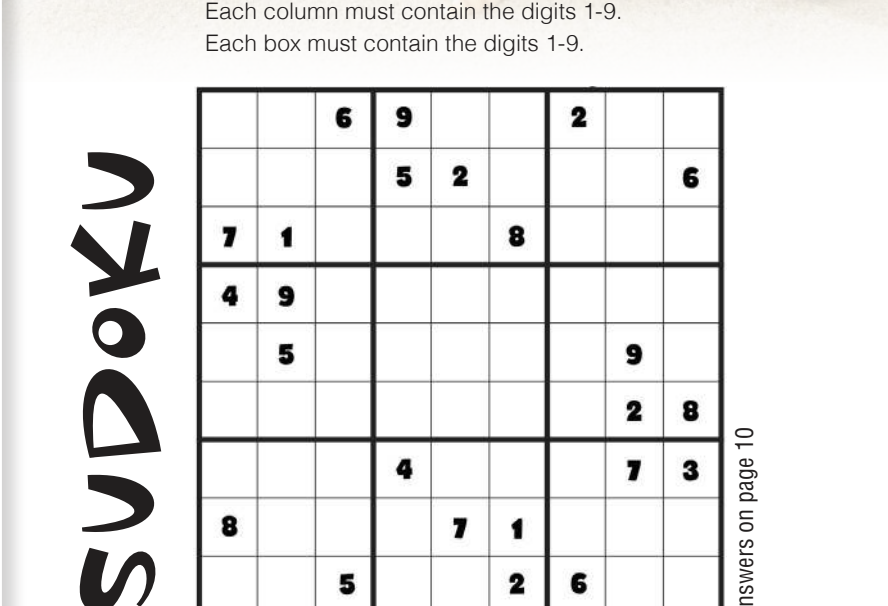
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Have feedback, ideas or submissions? We are always happy to hear from you! Deadlines for submissions are the 20th of each month, 6 weeks in advance of publication. Email your thoughts, ideas and photographs to gmooney@bestversionmedia.com. Submissions 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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- Emergency: 911
- Lee County Sheriff's Office: 239-477-1000
- FMB Fire Department: 239-590-4200
- FMB Town Hall: 239-765-0202
- FMB Public Library: 239-765-8162
- Lee County Parks & Recreation: 239-533-7275
- Beach Elementary School: 239-463-6356
- FMB Water Department: 239-463-9914
- Trash Collection: 239-334-1224
- Florida Power & Light (FPL): 1-800-226-5885
- CenturyLink: 239-335-3111
- Comcast Cable Company: 239-432-9277
- FMB Chamber of Commerce: 239-454-7500

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- By Gary Mooney -

SUDOKU RULES:

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

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Answers on page 10



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Hello Friends & Neighbors!

Ice Cream Lovers – REJOICE!!

Now that we are through another Season, islanders can once again buy ice cream at our local stores, without worrying about it melting in our back seats while we fight our way through seasonal traffic!

While we love our Seasonal friends who are so essential to our island economy, it sure is nice again to drive on and off FMB in just a few minutes, as well as having our favorite restaurant table or bar stool ready and waiting for us. People save all year to spend one week on our island Paradise, so now that the vast majority of visitors are back up north, plan your own one- or two-day “Stay-cation” with beach chairs, dining out, savoring a magnificent sunset or sipping a tall cold one! Too often, us islanders, after a few years, forget to take full advantage of our Paradise!

In this edition of *FMB LIVING Magazine*, check out the feature on the Capital Campaign to rebuild the legendary FMB Woman’s Club Clubhouse that was obliterated by Hurricane Ian. The 220-plus-members-&-growing FMB Woman’s Club is one of the bedrocks of our island community, and they are the first to rally around us at our most devastating times, like during COVID-19 and after hurricanes. Deb Nelson in this month’s Feature Article is totally correct when she says that the Woman’s Club is FMB’s own “Red Cross!” Now, this incredible organization needs our help to rebuild their Clubhouse, but the truth is that the new FMB Woman’s Club headquarters will quickly become the island’s Clubhouse too. In a way, by investing in the new FMB Women’s Clubhouse, you are investing in our community.

May brings two Holidays, from each end of the emotional spectrum. Mother’s Day, on Sunday, May 10, is a joyous occasion for so many, to honor the anchor of our families. Memorial Day is Monday, May 25, and while we all head to the beach, join our friends for neighborhood cookouts, and revel in the three-day Holiday Weekend, please remember the solemn aspect of Memorial Day – those brave men and women who throughout the decades gave their all so that we may enjoy our freedom. Their gift to us is truly priceless.

Remember that on Mother’s Day and during the Memorial Day weekend, restaurants and bars, shops and stores are open up-&-down FMB, for you to celebrate and commemorate. After all, there is no better place to make new lifetime memories than on Fort Myers Beach.

Speaking of making new lifetime memories, please support our advertisers because we cannot bring *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 Mother’s Day & Have An Awesome Beach Day!



Sandy Sandness

Publisher

Fort Myers Beach LIVING

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FMB Woman's Club Clubhouse Capital Campaign

- By Gary Mooney, Photos provided by Fort Myers Beach Women's Club -

The Grateful Dead famously sang, "What a Long Strange Trip It's Been"! Well, the Dead has nothing on the FMB Woman's Club and its Capital Campaign to rebuild its beloved 1938 Clubhouse that Hurricane Ian destroyed on September 28, 2022. Today, the FMB Woman's Club is well on its way to a successful Capital Campaign, overcoming one hurdle after another.

The FMB Woman's Clubhouse was the island's first schoolhouse, a teenage dance club and a community meeting place as well as an outstanding example of island architecture. Constructed in 1938, it was the FMB schoolhouse until 1948, when the number of island schoolchildren outgrew its capacity. The building then became the long-time FMB Woman's Club Clubhouse through Hurricane Ian.

"Shortly before COVID-19 shut down the world in March 2020, the FMB Woman's Club launched our initial Capital Campaign," recalls Dawn Thomas, FMB Woman's Club Past President & Capital Campaign Co-Chair with Mari Torgerson. "The Clubhouse then was 84 years old and showing its age. We wanted to remodel the building, update the kitchen, and add additional improvements while retaining its historic aspects, and actually did a Capital Campaign 'soft launch,' but then COVID broke out."

Woman's Club Rebrands Itself

The FMB Woman's Club quickly shifted its fundraising to taking care of islanders in need, particularly its hospitality workforce from our resorts, hotels, bars and restaurants. As the Woman's Club was rallying to support the FMB community, they took a long deep look at its mission and membership. "Woman's Club membership

dwindled down to roughly 15 people," Dawn explains. "We canvassed the FMB community and found out to our surprise that even after roughly 75 years, no one knew what the Woman's Club stood for, so we rebranded our mission. We decided that all of the island non-profits were competing for the same contribution dollars, so why not create something that enables us to work together. Our mission now is to support educational and recreational activities for Non-Profits, charitable and community organizations within the greater FMB community."

To increase its profile, the FMB Woman's Club became a 501c3 organization, launched new community events like the "Christmas Tree Festival," took over and improved beloved island traditions like the "Putt-&Pub Crawl," and made these available as fundraisers to all FMB Non-Profits. "Our rebrand was tremendously successful," states Dawn. "Membership was rapidly increasing, our community profile was growing, and COVID was in the rearview mirror, so we were just about to relaunch the Capital Campaign when Ian struck and wiped away the Clubhouse along with much of the island. This caused the Woman's Club to pivot again.

"The Woman's Club partnered with the FMB Community Foundation to establish the '33931 Fund,' which brought together available beach charities in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian. Rather than a traditional fundraising effort, the fund consisted of contributions from around the world, all intended to support the residents of Fort Myers Beach during those first devastating weeks. The Capital Campaign was naturally once again placed on the back burner."

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FMB's Secret Power

Deb & Steve Nelson Love the Island Vibe

- By Gary Mooney -

Deb and Steve Nelson are Hawkeyes! "I hail from Clinton," Steve offers, "while Deb comes from a little town called Marengo with a population of 1,500 residents." As Hawkeyes, however, they did not know each other. "Prior to our meeting, I had been divorced and moved to Chain O'Lakes, where I had a home as I love the water and boating," Steve continues. "In the late 1990s, a buddy and I went to a bar. I walked Deb and – for me – it was Love at First Sight! I turned to my buddy and said, 'That is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen.'"

Deb on the other hand was recently divorced, "so I had absolutely no interest in anything 'MAN!' I immediately

liked Steve, though, and he soon became my best friend, confidant and support system, and our relationship remained that way for the next decade – my kids grew up calling him 'Uncle Steve.' I did not want to risk losing our friendship, so when he asked me out, I agreed, as long as it was a 'Field Trip' rather than a date. The 'field trip' was progressively fantastic, and we were having a blast, then Steve said, 'Girl, someday I'm going to ask you to marry me.' I laughed so hard that my Mimosa shot out my nose."

Steve proposed exactly one year later. "He set it up so we were at the same restaurant and table as our initial 'Field Trip,'" recalls Deb. "I said 'Yes' and suddenly out from the back room came our kids to celebrate with us." They married at the Pink Shell Beach Resort on December 4, 2009. "Steve is still my best friend," raves Deb, "and now my daughter Stephanie calls him her 'Bonus Dad!'"

This is the second marriage for both, so they have three combined children. "Steve and I each have a son named Ryan," explains Deb, "and they are only a month apart in age. Steve's Ryan is married to Chrisele and they have 13-year-old twin sons, Beckham and Weston. My Ryan's spouse is Lindsay, and they have an 18-month-old daughter, Marina Marlene. Our daughter Stephanie is married to Dylan Quint, and they are expecting a child on June 13. It is a boy, but until his parents announce a name, we call him 'Little Peanut!'"

FMB Felt Like Home

Steve discovered FMB first and again it was Love at First Sight. "Years before meeting Deb, I already loved boating, so in 1991 I had a boat at a Naples marina. I often brought it to FMB and found the island fantastic. By 1999, I was single, sold several of my businesses and had more time for boating, so I purchased a place on FMB at the Ocean Harbor Condominiums. Before long, many of my northern friends began to visit."

That included Deb. "Stephanie was still young so we came to FMB for vacations, staying at either The Neptune Inn or the Edison Beach House, as I absolutely loved FMB. Not only were the Gulf and island gorgeous, but so many people were from the Midwest, like us, with that same Midwestern kindness and love, that being on FMB felt like home."

They moved to the Waterside Condominiums in 2006 and became fulltime FMB residents in 2010, but return to Illinois for the Summer. "The kids and grandkids all live within 30 minutes of each other in the Naperville area," says Steve. "The grandkids in particular grow so fast that we want to be a part of their lives. The twins love to RV and fish, so we bought an RV and go on fishing trips with them, as 'Nana' loves fishing as well. As for 'The Little Angel' and the soon-to-be 'Peanut,' we look forward to creating more memories in the RV and here in Florida!"



Deb & Steve have three combined children. They each have a son named Ryan, along with daughter Stephanie.



"Steve is still my best friend," raves Deb!



"The grandkids grow so fast that we want to be a part of their lives. . . . We look forward to creating more memories."

The Nelsons are "mostly retired." "I received my 'last paycheck' on January 1, 2000," recalls Steve. "By then, I sold my two primary businesses, though I remain active investing in and serving on the Boards of various companies. I am quite active at our Waterside Condominium. I am proud that we were proactive when Ian struck, ensuring that we would be the first property serviced by many of our vendors after the hurricane, and that allowed us to reopen all 56 units by December 5." "I am so proud of Steve," adds Deb. "What he and our Condominium President accomplished to get us back up so fast is truly amazing; they worked nonstop 24/7."

Deb started her career at Amana Refrigerators and worked in Accounting, Service and Sales for 14 years. She moved into Global Events Management with Motorola for the next 14 years. "I took care of everything from sales meetings to sales incentive trips, customer visits, product launches to trade shows, and everything in-between. I basically lived out of a suitcase 80% of the time. When Steve and I got engaged, he asked me to retire. I soon found out I had too much time on my hands, so I began my own Global Event Management consulting business. However, the urge to travel with Steve and spend more time with our family eventually won out so I retired for real in 2020."

"VolunTold": The FMB Woman's Club

The main beneficiary of Deb's "for real" retirement is the FMB Woman's Club! "I still wanted a means to stay active and I discovered the FMB Woman's Club," she relates. "We are a fascinating group of great ladies – and now some men – that is always available when the FMB community needs us most, like how we immediately raised funds to provide island residents with \$500 gift cards right after Ian – we are like FMB's own personal 'Red Cross.' Once I became a member, I jumped in with both feet, including serving on the Board and being Co-Chair to the

return of FMB's beloved St. Patrick's Day Parade & After Party. Town Council just approved our rebuilding plans so with luck, we might have shovels-in-dirt by late 2026, to give our 220+ members a place we can call home again! The FMB Woman's Club is the glue that holds our island community together."

Steve is an FMB Woman's Club member, too. "I reasoned that I might of as well join because I was already a 'Volun-Told Member,' like many other Woman's Club husbands! Actually, our current fundraising mode appeals to my entrepreneurial side."

FMB Full of Love & Compassion

As they contemplate what FMB will look like in five years, "different," says Deb. "The lesson we all learned from Ian is you can't beat Mother Nature, so we must rebuild higher and stronger. I understand that no one likes change, but sometimes there are reasons for change. Even if the buildings look different, I genuinely believe the hearts of those who live on FMB will always remain full of love and compassion."

"I concur wholeheartedly," agrees Steve. "It will look different, but at the end of the day, FMB will remain a great place to live because it has its own unique vibe. That's why we retired here, and why we choose to remain after water quality issues, COVID-19 and hurricanes. You simply cannot keep FMB down."

To Deb, her favorite aspects of FMB are "its people, our sunsets, and my husband. FMB just speaks to me!" Steve loves the laid-back atmosphere, "where shorts and a t-shirt are perfectly acceptable 98% of the time. I also love FMB's uniqueness, as there is nowhere else like it. We have that dynamic vibe, a wonderful hometown atmosphere, and truly caring neighbors. That recipe is FMB's secret power!" ■

Your Neighborhood Market Update

ADDRESS	BEDS / BATHS	SQ FT	SOLD PRICE	CONDOS	BEDS BATHS	SQ FT	SOLD PRICE
123 CORTEZ WAY	2 (2 0)	920	\$225,000	21470 BAY VILLAGE DR #245	2 (2 0)	881	\$255,000
193 HIBISCUS DR	2 (2 0)	1241	\$417,075	6893 ESTERO BLVD #456	2 (2 0)	832	\$300,000
5 CLEARVIEW BLVD	2 (2 0)	1281	\$651,000	4263 BAY BEACH LN #413	2 (2 0)	1090	\$312,500
150 PEARL ST	3 (3 0)	1438	\$700,000	8701 ESTERO BLVD #403	1 (1 0)	518	\$335,000
201 MIRAMAR ST	3 (3 0)	1165	\$870,000	7300 ESTERO BLVD #101	1 (1 0)	517	\$348,000
309 MADISON CT	2 (2 0)	1258	\$880,000	7307 ESTERO BLVD #3206	3 (2 1)	1127	\$385,000
107 ALBATROSS ST	2 (2 0)	1735	\$955,000	4411 BAY BEACH LN #734	2 (2 0)	1197	\$385,000
351 JEFFERSON CT	3 (2 1)	1848	\$1,050,000	4411 BAY BEACH LN #762	2 (2 0)	997	\$395,000
140 PEARL ST	2 (2 0)	1226	\$1,125,000	6895 ESTERO BLVD #551	2 (2 0)	832	\$400,000
71 MIRAMAR ST	5 (5 0)	2418	\$1,265,000	7300 ESTERO BLVD #404	1 (1 0)	517	\$426,000
270 DELMAR AVE	3 (3 0)	2389	\$1,448,500	8771 ESTERO BLVD #1107	1 (1 0)	586	\$435,000
730 MATANZAS CT	5 (4 1)	2560	\$3,200,000	4431 BAY BEACH LN #554	2 (2 0)	1197	\$440,000
673 ESTERO BLVD	5 (5 0)	4226	\$3,375,000	5480 ESTERO BLVD #401	1 (1 0)	625	\$480,000
8088 ESTERO BLVD	5 (4 1)	8088	\$5,750,000	4182 BAY BEACH LN #753	2 (2 0)	1390	\$484,000
LOTS		ACRE	SOLD PRICE	7650 ESTERO BLVD #202	2 (2 0)	889	\$540,000
140 GARCIA WAY		0.09	\$75,000	4341 BAY BEACH LN #644	2 (2 0)	1244	\$542,000
142 BARBADOS WAY		0.08	\$75,000	7148 ESTERO BLVD #820	2 (2 0)	1318	\$550,000
19281 #36 SAN CARLOS BLVD		0.05	\$75,000	170 LENELL RD #501	2 (2 0)	1717	\$550,000
19281 #30 SAN CARLOS BLVD		0.04	\$91,000	4253 BAY BEACH LN #E7	2 (2 0)	1024	\$560,000
19281 #28 SAN CARLOS BLVD		0.07	\$110,000	6660 ESTERO BLVD #102	2 (2 0)	1244	\$640,000
19281 #57 SAN CARLOS BLVD		0.04	\$110,000	4253 BAY BEACH LN #A7	2 (2 0)	1499	\$650,000
19281 #45 SAN CARLOS BLVD		0.04	\$120,000	7150 ESTERO BLVD #506	2 (2 0)	1545	\$655,000
103 BLACKBEARD WAY		0.07	\$146,000	6612 ESTERO BLVD #PH2	2 (2 0)	1331	\$695,000
84 BLACKBEARD WAY		0.07	\$210,000	4198 BAY BEACH LN #1H1	2 (2 0)	1224	\$780,000
68 EMILY LN		0.07	\$245,000	4753 ESTERO BLVD #1602	2 (2 0)	1318	\$825,000
548 CARLOS CIR		0.2	\$550,000	250 ESTERO BLVD #402	2 (2 0)	992	\$895,000
5840 ESTERO BLVD		0.34	\$2,342,000				

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Chamber Chatter!

FMB Wraps Up a Strong Tourism Season!

- by Jacki Lyszak, President Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce! -

Now that we are in May, this is the perfect time to look back on our 2025-26 "Season." Numbers as well as word-of-mouth indicate that this is our strongest tourism year since 2019, with the exception of 2021-22 when people flocked to Florida to escape COVID-19 restrictions. Since that year was an anomaly on the high side, it is looking like 2025-26 was our first "Normal Season" since 2019.

The reasons for our success over the past 7 months are many and varied. It took a few years after Ian, but now the word is out that FMB is back open and better than ever! Accommodations, including many of our condominiums, are open again and look spectacular. The global political situation and still higher-than-normal interest rates are encouraging many Americans to travel in the United States rather than overseas. In late 2025, winter up north arrived early and with a vengeance. It stayed cold and snowy straight through March, encouraging many to travel to FMB for our weather, sunshine, warm beach and cold drinks!

Finally, I firmly believe that 2025, being a hurricane-free year, really contributed to the return of many long-time FMB visitors. Our generational guests, who perhaps visited other vacation destinations since Ian, felt safe again and returned to Southwest Florida, and found their way back to FMB. We first noticed this shift in October and it picked up steam all season long. I have no doubt that much of it is attributable to the fact that our hurricane-free Summer eased the minds of tens of thousands who once again returned to their beloved FMB "Winter Home."

Generational Guests

One aspect that we found particularly gratifying is the significant return of who we call our "Generational Guests." These are the folks who first came here 50 or more years ago, to visit their grandparents, and returned year-after-year, decade-after-decade, eventually bringing their own children and grandchildren with them, creating generational memories. After Ian, we noticed a significant drop in our "Generational Guests" and had the real fear that they might never return. As part of our recovery, we have been working hard to entice them back to our island. In 2025-26, we noticed a significant increase in our "Generational Guests" and it warmed our hearts to welcome them back! They may have found some other place to visit over the past

few years but we've learned that their hearts still belong to FMB . . . they missed us as much as we missed them!

FMB "Stay-Cations"

Now that the long lines of traffic have shortened, the next few months are the ideal time to take your own FMB "Stay-cation!" The island is gorgeous, the beach and water beautiful, resort and hotel rates tend to drop, and restaurants and bars begin to offer deals to get you in the door! Our bars and restaurants, shops and stores are all open and eager to serve you, so come down to FMB, grab that beach chair, sip that cold drink, and get on "Island Time" to relax and unwind. I've spoken

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LIVE
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May

**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, with memberships available.
For information see 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.

**Everyday May Through August
"Island Charm Crawl"**

@FMB Businesses
Hosted by "What's Up FMB," the "Island Charm Crawl" turns FMB into a playful islandwide scavenger hunt! Participants collect unique charms from participating bars, shops and restaurants, adding a new piece at each stop. Those who complete the "Crawl" earn a final charm and "Island Bragging Rights" at the closing celebration! "Crawl Kits" \$30; to register or for more information, see www.whatsupfmb.com.

**Sunday, May 3
AND EVERY SUNDAY
Bayside Park Concert Series**

@Bayside Veterans Park
Relax while listening to fantastic tunes from local musicians at these FREE weekly outdoor concerts, weather permitting, from 4 to 7 p.m. May 3: "TBD"; May 10: "TBD"; May 17: "Simply-Fy"; May 24: "TBD" & May 31: "The Echo."
See www.fortmyersbeach.org.

**Sunday, May 3
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.

**Mondays, May 4 & 18
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.

**Tuesday, May 5
FMB Community Foundation Annual Awards**

@Island Pancake House
The FMB Community Foundation is the island's leading philanthropic organization. The Community Foundation hosts its General Membership Meeting, where it distributes its Annual Monetary Awards and announces its Scholarship Recipients from 6 to 8 p.m. For details, see www.fmbcommunityfoundation.com.

**Wednesday, May 6
& 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.

**Thursday, May 7
FMB Chamber "Coffee Connection"**

@Edison Business Advisors
Start your day with your FMB Chamber friends for networking with complimentary coffee and tasty breakfast items at 8891 Brighton Lane, Suite #105, in Bonita Springs. The FREE "Coffee Connection" is from 8 to 9:30 a.m.; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

**Thursday, May 7
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.

**Thursday, May 7
FMB Art Association
May Exhibit "Anything Goes"**

@FMBAA Gallery
The FMBAA's May Show, "Anything Goes," runs through Saturday, May 30, at its new Gallery at 13451 McGregor Boulevard, Unit #1, in Cypress Square in Fort Myers, near the Prawnbroker Restaurant & Fish Market. This is an incredibly special exhibit that allows for non-traditional items, including photography and jewelry. FREE admission from Thursday through Saturday from Noon to 6 p.m.
See www.fortmyersbeachart.com.

**Friday, May 8
FMB Chamber Annual
Meeting & "Garden Party"**

@The Historic Mound House
Join your FMB Chamber friends for a candle-lit spring evening at the Historic Mound House from 5 to 8 p.m. Expect

playful garden games, spring chic attire, signature cocktails, prizes and surprises! The FMB Chamber will recognize outstanding FMB individuals, organizations and businesses with Community Awards. For tickets, see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

**Friday, May 8
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, stay for the spectacular fireworks display that the Mussels host after every Friday home game. The Mussels & Tarpons play Tuesday through Friday at 7:05 p.m.; Saturday at 6:05 p.m.; and Sunday at 12:05 p.m. Tickets are \$12 to \$17; for details see www.mightymussels.com.

**Sunday, May 10
HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY! FMB
restaurants & bars, shops and stores
are open up-&-down the island to
celebrate Mom's Big Day!**



**Monday, May 11
& 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.

**Tuesday, May 12
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.

**Wednesday, May 13
& EVERY WEDNESDAY
& SATURDAY
"Archaeology & Archives Tour"**

@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.

SUDOKU

Answers from page 3

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

Thursday, May 14**FMB Chamber Membership Luncheon**

@Margaritaville Beach Resort FMB

Join your FMB Chamber friends at the Margaritaville Beach Resort FMB to savor a scrumptious luncheon as well as enjoying a presentation from Moore Hallmark from The United States Chamber of Commerce from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Access Title Agency sponsors the May Luncheon. \$32 members & \$42 prospective members; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Friday, May 15**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.friendsofloversonkey.org.

Saturday, May 16**"American Boating Course"**

@San Carlos Bay Squadron Classroom

This 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.

Thursday, May 21**FMB Chamber "Business After Hours"**

@Pelican Bay Charters

Join your FMB Chamber friends for a fun time at Pelican Bay Charters, while enjoying savory appetizers and a cash bar from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Members FREE & \$16 for perspective members; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

**Monday, May 25****HAPPY MEMORIAL DAY!****GOD BLESS OUR VETERANS! FMB**

restaurants & bars, shops and stores are open up-&-down the island for your Holiday enjoyment.

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Flash forward to August 2024, and hurricane recovery efforts reached the point where the Woman's Club felt it could once again revive the Capital Campaign, "and the response was amazing," marvels Dawn! "In ten days, we raised \$800,000 and were on a roll! Then Hurricanes Helene and Milton hit and those storms literally took the wind out of our sails."

Lunch for 46

As the 2024 hurricanes made fundraising difficult, the FMB Woman's Club "again pivoted our fundraising strategy," offers Dawn. "Rather than raising funds to reach our estimated \$4.2-million rebuilding cost, we explored lowering the construction price. We began working with 'Beach Kid' Cole Stinson, who builds quality homes with Vesselcraft Home Partners. On Tuesday, March 10, we co-hosted a lunch with Cole for 46 subcontractors and tradesmen, to see if they can provide any aspect of the project at a reduced cost or perhaps free, because every dollar you can reduce from the building cost is one less dollar we must raise."

Six days after the subcontractor luncheon, FMB Town Council gave its final approval for the new FMB Woman's Club Clubhouse! "If everything falls into place and the subcontractors can help out," Dawn says, "we can have 'shovels-in-ground' in the next 6 to 8 months."

Dawn explains that the new FMB Woman's Club Clubhouse "will have a 125-seat community room, a full catering kitchen, outdoor balcony, Board Room and Educational Hall. It will be perfect to rent for weddings, retirement parties, fundraisers, baby showers, corporate events and all other functions. If you work from home and require an office space, we can be that for you as that is almost impossible to find on FMB. We will have three lockout rooms that Non-Profits can rent, and our Board Room will be ideal for other Non-Profit meetings. We are not just constructing a Clubhouse exclusively for the FMB Woman's Club but an islandwide community center. Plus, we will have plenty of parking and that is always a premium on FMB!"

Untapped Resource

The Woman's Club is roughly halfway to its \$4.2-million goal. "There are multiple ways to contribute and no amount is too large or too small," Dawn relates. "Since we are a 501c3, anything you give is tax deductible. We have several levels of giving, from \$50 up to \$2 million, with naming rights available, including for the building itself. There are many opportunities at the lower levels, like an engraved commemorative disc with your name placed right into the bar. If your family, group or business wants more details, Mari and I are happy to provide you a personal presentation. To contribute or request a meeting, go to www.fmb-wc.org. No matter your contribution, we can find an appropriate way to recognize you."

Dawn sees a large, untapped resource right here on FMB. "Our community has so many new residents who may not yet be familiar with the Woman's Club, and many of these folks have significant financial resources. If you have a friend or neighbor who is new to FMB and they want to make a positive contribution to their new home, please contact us to arrange to make an introduction." ■

New FMB Fire Station #31



Lifesaving Building Welcome Island Addition

- By Gary Mooney, Photos provided by Sandy Sandness -

The FMB Fire Control District dedicated its new Fire Station #31 at 2545 Estero Boulevard on Thursday, April 2, reports FMB Fire Control District Chief Scott Wirth. The new station cost roughly \$15 million, including the land, but – believe it or not – that figure will actually decrease. “The building costs approximately \$11 million,” offers Chief Wirth, “with an additional \$4 million for the property. The Fire Control District will however eventually sell the remaining one-acre of land, lowering the overall cost of the project. Following Hurricane Ian, the District received \$9 million from the State of Florida to expedite the rebuilding of the fire station, with the remaining funds coming from the accrual of ad valorem taxes over the prior six years.”

“Level E” Building Construction

The recent string of hurricanes that pulverized FMB led to several design aspects for the new station. “The greatest risk is the potential for another extreme storm surge,” says the Chief. “We made this building to be resilient and as close to flood-proof as possible. In fact, we designed parts of the station to let flood water flow through while other critical elements below flood level are floodproofed and protected from storm surge.”

The Chief points out that “you will notice decorative glass doors on the front of the station; they are not hurricane-rated doors that cost up to \$80,000 per door. Instead, the District invested much less into “E” impact-rated down screens capable of withstanding 200-mile-per-hour winds. The screens are the hurricane protection, not the glass doors. This allows the overhead garage doors, that experience daily use, to cost much less than a hurricane impact-rated decorative door.”

Chief Wirth explains that the District kept flood elevation standards in mind when designing the station. “All the electrical rooms and high-value equipment, such as the breathing air compressor and the fire gear washer, are at least 14 feet above sea level. The garage spaces that are designed to flood are still 8 feet above sea level and 3 to 4 feet above the adjacent roadways. As far as hurricane impact protection goes, we built the fire station to ‘Level E’ impact standards.”

There are three impact-rated levels, the Chief explains. “They are Level A, Level D, and Level E. Level E is the highest level of impact protection and usually reserved for critical-infrastructure facilities like fire stations, hospitals, and emergency operations centers. In Level D impact testing, a 9-pound 2x4 piece of lumber is projected at items being

tested at a speed of 50-feet-per-second. With Level E, the same piece of lumber is propelled at 80-feet-per-second, significantly increasing the impact resistance required for the object to pass testing. What the public will see in the new fire station appears to be a very basic building; however what we constructed is a fire station built on a massive foundation deep underground with an enormous amount of steel and concrete to make it resilient to the most extreme forces of nature. Station #31 is not glamorous but it is resilient and ready to serve our community.”

Unique Public Safety Pieces of Equipment

The new fire station has three full-depth bays and one half-depth bay, Chief Wirth offers. “The station will house some unique public safety pieces of equipment. First is the UTV response vehicle that is a side-by-side UTV with the capability of carrying a patient on a backboard off the beach or some other remote location to an ambulance for transport. The District had a vehicle like this but lost it to Hurricane Ian. The District has ordered a high-water vehicle to rescue trapped victims during rising flood waters. This high-water vehicle will also have limited firefighting capabilities in case a fire breaks out during flooding events.”

Also new to the District is an inflatable “RIB” boat with a motor and trailer. This configuration is a carbon-copy of the setup used by the regional Urban Search & Rescue team (USAR). The trailered boat is pulled by a raised pickup truck. Once responders get into flooded waters too deep for the truck, they switch to the RIB and proceed by boat to the emergency. Both of these units will be housed at and respond from the new fire station.

Fire Station #31 can house up to eight firefighters in dormitory-style rooms, “but in emergency situations, we can set

up cots to double that,” the Chief says. “This will be crucial during tropical storms or lower category hurricanes, where we can maintain firefighters on the island rather than totally evacuating. That will allow us to respond faster when those storms dissipate.”

The old Fire Station was at 3043 Estero Boulevard. “Based on the District’s response data, the 2000 block of Estero Boulevard was the ideal location for this new fire station,” Chief Wirth states. “However, due to FEMA Flood Regulations, the station’s new location at 2545 Estero Boulevard was the closest location to the 2000 block that the District could use for a public safety facility and still be behind FEMA’s wave-action flooding lines. This new location will reduce response times to the west end of the island.”

FMB Better Than Ever!

What Chief Wirth likes best about the new Station #31 is that “the FMB Fire Control District built a functional facili-

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NMLS #411904 Member FDIC

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ty that is durable and resilient but not ‘Gold Plated!’ We were conservative wherever possible, always remembering that we were building this using taxpayer dollars.”

As for what the average person may find most surprising about the new station, “it is the amount of steel and concrete that you do not see, including 1-1/2-inch-thick glass windows and doors,” he explains. “These exterior elements make it a virtual fortress! Another element is that the facility is fully compliant with the wildlife and turtle lighting standards present across the island. In fact, at night, as traffic moves by the station, they will see the garage bays also lit with the same wildlife-compliant lighting! We take immense pride in that.”

Chief Wirth, on behalf of the entire Fire Control District, expresses his appreciation to the FMB community. “Your support means everything and, in return, we are always here for you. We feel that the new Fire Station #31 is one more crucial component to return a sense of normalcy to the island, reinforcing that not only is FMB back but that it is better than ever!” ■

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to many FMB businessowners and employees who almost forgot how exhausting a “Busy Season” is, so “off-season” is now our time to enjoy all that we offer on FMB. Take a deep breath, unwind, and celebrate an outstanding Season by having some fun of your own on our 7 miles of pure Paradise!

May provides two ideal “Stay-Cation” opportunities: Mother’s Day on Sunday, May 10, and the Memorial Day Holiday Weekend from May 23 through 25. Pamper Mom with a day on the beach, take her on a dolphin cruise, go for a parasail, kayak through the mangroves, visit a beach spa, savor a scrumptious dinner at one of our tasty restaurants, and marvel at a gorgeous sunset! Better yet, book a room at one of our fabulous hotels, resorts or vacation rentals and turn Mom’s Big Day into a “Mother’s Day Weekend.”

Don’t forget about the Memorial Day Holiday Weekend – an FMB fan favorite! Memorial Day generally offers “Three Bears Weather” – not too hot and not too cold but just right -- and that includes the Gulf water temperature. With most of us off work for Memorial Day, the Holiday Weekend is the perfect three-day “Stay-Cation.”

The “H-Word”

With summer rapidly approaching, we all need to get out our four-leaf clover, magic amulet, rabbit’s foot, sage stick, Saint Joseph statue, Jobu wreath, wishbone, dream catcher, lucky dice, crystals and whatever else you use to ward off evil spirits to ensure that 2026 for FMB is just as “H”-free as 2025. If we can enjoy back-to-back years without the dreaded “H”-word, then the sky is the limit for our 2026-27 Season.

In the spirit of Mother’s Day and in memory of those who gave their all for us on Memorial 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 paradise on 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 or call 239-454-7500.

On behalf of our 400+ Chamber members, Happy Mother’s Day – and remember: ■

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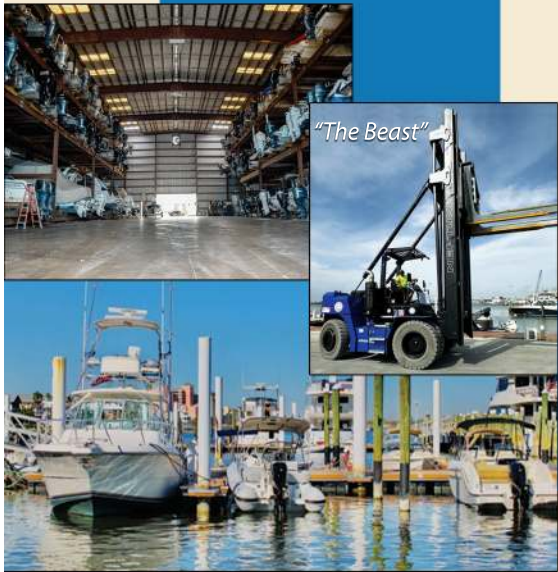
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