

FORT MYERS BEACH

Living



This Special Slice of Paradise!
Ruby & Caio Pessotti Have Deep FMB Roots

PAIN Keeping you from doing the things you enjoy?



Gardner Orthopedics focuses on providing patients with all medical options in a caring office environment, offering regenerative medicine, imaging services, physical medicine, rehabilitation, and orthopedic surgical services.

So you can get back to doing the things you love!

Ronald Gardner, MDI ABOS

Specializing in Orthopedic Surgeries and Sports Medicine

Brad Castellano, DPM ABFAS

Specializing in Foot and Ankle Trauma Sports Medicine and Reconstruction

Andrew Hodge, MD ABOS

Specializing in Knee and Hip Surgery

Aileen Padilla, DO

Specializing in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

Robert Martinez, MD ABOS

Specializing in Shoulder, Hip, and Knee Arthroscopy; Joint Replacement, and Sports Medicine

www.gardnerorthopedics.com
Prompt appointments available for urgent care.

239-277-7070

3033 Winkler Ave., Suite 100
Ft. Myers, FL 33916

Restorative & Anti-Aging Clinic

Are you struggling with the middle age blues?

Do you feel you are just not yourself or not meeting the expected potential of the "younger" you? Are you feeling run down, low energy, or experiencing muscle loss? Are you starting to see fine wrinkles or loss of skin elasticity?

- Thyroid / Hormone Testing & Management
- Bio-Identical Hormone Replacement
- Food Sensitivity & Micro-Nutrient Testing
- B-12 Injection Packages
- I.V. Vitamin & Chelation Infusions
- OBAGI Skincare Products • Blue Peel Packages
- Botox • Xeomin • Belotero • Radiesse • Volbella
- Voluma • Juvederm • Kybella

Give us a call today to discuss how we can help you be the best you!

Sherry Valverde, APRN-C

NOW OFFERING!

The *Myers' Cocktail* IV Nutrition Therapy

Invented by physician John Myers, as an intravenous nutrient mixture which combines Magnesium, Calcium, B12, B-Complex, Vitamin C and Electrolytes to address a wide range of clinical conditions. Treatment for conditions including but not limited to: inflammation, acute sinusitis, muscle spasm, fatigue, stress and upper respiratory infections to chronic conditions like migraines and allergies. Studies show it can aid in detoxification, increases energy levels and even help cure the side effects of a hangover.

Schedule your drip today!

MORE OPTIONS, LESS RISK — Gardner Orthopedics

FORT MYERS BEACH

A Best Version Media Magazine
An independently owned community magazine.

PUBLISHER..... **Sandy Sandness**
239-222-0129 • ssandness@bestversionmedia.com

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER **Sandy Sandness**

DESIGNER..... **Joe Kelly**

For Sponsorship Information

CONTACT | **Sandy Sandness**
Email | ssandness@bestversionmedia.com
Phone | **239-222-0129**

FEEDBACK / IDEAS / SUBMISSIONS

Have feedback, ideas or submissions? We are always happy to hear from you! Deadlines for submissions are the 20th of each month, 6 weeks in advance of publication. Email your thoughts, ideas and photographs to ssandness@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.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS:

- 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

Any content, resident submissions, guest columns, advertisements and editorials are not necessarily endorsed by or represent the views of Best Version Media (BVM) or any municipality, homeowners associations, businesses or organizations that this publication serves. BVM is not responsible for the reliability, suitability or timeliness of any content submitted, inclusive of materials generated or composed through artificial intelligence (AI). All content submitted is done so at the sole discretion of the submitting party. © 2026 Best Version Media. All rights reserved.



- By Gary Mooney -

SUDOKU RULES:

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

SUDOKU

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

Answers on page 10



*We've weathered the storms with you.
We will be building back on the beach soon.
Until then, we are here to service you from our
Gladiolous office below*



Wendy Matura
wendy@trustrti.com
D (239)314-1307
O (239)463-5200



**SERVING FORT MYERS BEACH FROM THE SAME
LOCATION ON ESTERO BLVD SINCE 1997!**

HOME • FLOOD • AUTO • CONDO • BOAT

9681 Gladiolus Drive Suite 111, Fort Myers, FL 33908 • www.trustrti.com

Hello Friends & Neighbors!

FMB Independence Day Parade & Fireworks

FMB may be just one of 16,000 communities hosting an Independence Day celebration, but ours is all island! The Fourth begins with the “Independence Day Parade” at 10 a.m. FMB residents and visitors line Estero Boulevard in their Red, White & Blue Patriotic finery, with the Parade route from the Bay Oaks Recreational Center down Estero Boulevard to Times Square, necessitating the closure of the Matanzas Pass Bridge from 9 a.m. to approximately Noon.

That evening, the Town in conjunction with “What’s Up FMB,” hosts the “Fourth of July Fireworks Extravaganza!” The display launches from a barge off the coast just south of Times Square, so bring a beach chair and enjoy the show. Fireworks start shortly after dark so roughly 9 p.m., causing the Matanzas Pass Bridge to close from 8:30 to roughly 11 p.m. For additional details, see www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov. In between the Parade and Fireworks, visit our many bars and restaurants, patronize our fabulous stores and boutiques, and savor the Holiday on our 7-mile sugar sand beach!

While the Fourth of July is full of fun and entertaining events, and a significant historical milestone, please remember that, at heart, it is a day to honor and commemorate the freedom of living in the United States, from 1776 through today.

On a bittersweet note, this will be the last issue to feature contributions from Gary Mooney. Gary will officially retire on June 1, 2026, and after the being the sole wordsmith of this publication he is looking forward to

spending more time enjoying the things he loves most—golf and sports.

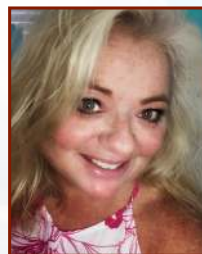
We are certain that his retirement will also include trips back to Ohio to reconnect with family and friends. While we will miss his presence and contributions dearly, we are excited for him as he begins this new chapter of life.

Please join us in wishing Gary all the best in his retirement and the many adventures that lie ahead!

If you would like to send Gary a note you may do so at thewritestuff25@gmail.com.

Speaking of significant historical milestones, please support our advertisers because we cannot bring *Fort Myers Beach LIVING* Magazine to you free of charge without them. When you do visit, let them know that you saw their ad in our magazine so we can continue to provide you with this community-oriented original entertainment each month.

Happy 4th of July & Have An Awesome Beach Day!



Sandy Sandness

Publisher

Fort Myers Beach LIVING

239-222-0129

ssandness@bestversionmedia.com



CONTACT:

Sandy Sandness

ssandness@bestversionmedia.com

239-222-0129

Visit www.bestversionmedia.com to learn more about our advertising solutions.



GROW YOUR BUSINESS

Maximize your reach with **local customers** by sponsoring this magazine and exploring our **digital advertising** opportunities on **Google, Facebook and Instagram.**



“Red, White & Beach!”

FMB Celebrates America’s 250th Birthday on July 4th

- By Gary Mooney -

“There will be fireworks on FMB to ring in the 250th anniversary of the birth of the United States,” beams Karen Woodson, Vice President of “What’s Up FMB.” “The fireworks extravaganza is Saturday, The Fourth of July, at Dusk, as the culmination of a terrific national holiday. The day begins with the traditional Fourth of July Parade down Estero Boulevard at 10 a.m., followed by ‘Freedom by the Bay’ from 4:15 to 8 p.m., then the Fireworks, so the Holiday offers three tremendous family events from morning through night.”

Karen explains that The Fourth of July activities are a partnership between the Town of Fort Myers Beach and the new community 501c3 organization, “What’s Up FMB,” along with a significant contribution from the Miller Family. “The Town manages all the logistics, like permitting, security and crowd control, as well as the Parade. ‘What’s Up FMB’ is doing the fireworks fundraising through a coordinated effort with businesses and individuals.”

The Town previously launched fire-

works from the old FMB Pier “but Hurricane Ian obviously ruined that,” Karen continues. “We now require a barge for fireworks. FMB fireworks are traditionally at Times Square, but we will position the barge slightly further to the south, where the beach is much wider and can accommodate more people. With fireworks to go off between Dusk and 9 p.m., make sure you are already on the island, as authorities will close the Matanzas Pass Bridge from 8 until roughly 11 p.m.”

Fourth of July Parade

Before fireworks light up the night, The Fourth of July Parade kicks off at 10 a.m., taking the traditional route from the Bay Oaks Recreational Center down Estero Boulevard to the base of the Matanzas Pass Bridge, necessitating the Town to close the Matanzas Pass Bridge from 9 a.m. until roughly Noon.

“Freedom by the Bay”

“Freedom by the Bay” brings residents and visitors together for live music, reflection and waterfront activities at Bayside Veterans Park from 4:15 to 8 p.m. The event honors the service and

sacrifice of Veterans and active-duty military members while creating a family-friendly atmosphere. Guests should bring their own lawn chairs while enjoying a program dedicated to patriotism and freedom. Ceremonies begin at 4:15 p.m., with live musical performances at 5 p.m.

The Town of FMB expresses its appreciation to The Whale, Wahoo Willie’s, Snug Harbor Waterfront Restaurant, the Alex King Group, Nervous Nellie’s Crazy Waterfront Eatery and Mainstage Entertainment for their generous support for “Freedom by the Bay.” For more details, see www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov.

“There is no better place to spend your Fourth of July Holiday than on FMB,” raves Karen! “When you see families and children lining the parade route in the morning, through honoring Veterans and America at Bayside Park, straight through everyone ‘Oohing-&-Aahing’ at the magnificent fireworks, that is true Norman Rockwell Americana, so get here early and stay late. After all, FMB is all about family; family; family – young and old alike!” ■



Ruby & Caio are parents to their 2-1/2-year-old son Luca, as well as expecting a second child in August.



Caio & Ruby with Luca, on a recent trip to Mexico.

This Special Slice of Paradise!

Ruby & Caio Pessotti Have Deep FMB Roots

- By Gary Mooney -

Ruby Pessotti considers Fort Myers Beach home, including being a 4th and 5th grader at the Beach Elementary School, but she is originally from England, while her husband Caio hails from Brazil. So how do two people with such cosmopolitan pedigrees end up on FMB?

"I am the middle of three sisters," explains Ruby, "and our parents moved us here from England in 2004, on the heels of Hurricane Charley. We vacationed here, so our parents decided to move to FMB, to get away from England's cold

and wet climate. For a 9-year-old, moving across the Atlantic Ocean was earth-shattering, but I soon discovered it was the best thing that ever happened to me."

"I ended up on FMB because I fell in love with a girl from England," chuckles Caio! "Actually, my original plan was to settle on Florida's east coast, as I have an uncle in the Miami / Fort Lauderdale area, but I visited FMB in 2011, immediately fell in love and never left."

When Ruby and Caio "met," it was love at first sight – sort-of! "We were co-workers at a granite company in Fort Myers," Ruby relates, "so we knew one-another but no sparks flew at the office. One evening, however, the staff went out for a night on the town, and Caio and I really spoke for the first time. I thought, 'Hey – this guy is something special' so that was the moment for me!" "I never had a girlfriend before," Caio offers, "but I immediately knew that Ruby was someone special."

Within weeks of that 2015 evening, Ruby and Caio moved in together. They dated for a year-and-a-half before becoming engaged, then married in Fort Myers on April 27, 2018. Today, they are parents to their 2-1/2-year-old son Luca, as well as expecting a second child in August: "I am heavily pregnant right now," sighs Ruby! Their cats, Cleo and Max, round out the family.

Interiors Unlimited

Ruby's parents purchased "Interiors Unlimited," FMB's leading design, building and remodeling firm located then in the Santini Marina Plaza, shortly after moving from England.



Their new showroom building, for which they recently hosted the ribbon cutting, is not only their business but will be home as well. "We constructed our home on the second floor," Caio relates, "as that will make it so much easier to care for Luca and the new baby."

Ruby and Caio eventually worked with them for roughly five years before buying the company in 2019.

"Not long after we purchased 'Interiors Unlimited,' word got out that Santini Marina Plaza was for sale, so we knew that location was no longer a long-term situation," Caio says. "We wanted to stay at the south end of FMB, so we looked for a new location in that area. We found the old medi-

cal center at 6875 Estero Boulevard in January 2022, nine months prior to Ian, but were still in Santini when the hurricane struck. Ian decimated Santini, including our showroom and nine of our personal and work vehicles. It was actually fortuitous that we already owned our new location."

Though they had to live off-island for the next two years, they established their new 500-square-foot trailer

showroom on their Estero Boulevard parcel and "Interiors Unlimited" was up and running almost before any other FMB business. "We installed our modular trailer on December 1, so just two months after Ian," Ruby explains. "That was my birthday; that felt like the greatest present ever and a positive leap forward. We ran the business from there until moving into our new building just a few months ago."

Their new showroom building, for which they recently hosted the ribbon cutting, is not only their business but will be home as well. "As we were getting ready to build the new showroom, we thought, 'why not do that on the ground floor and construct ourselves a home on the second floor,'" Caio relates, "as that would make it so much easier to care for Luca." The second story is still under construction and Ruby and Caio hope to move in prior to welcoming their new baby this August.

"We Have Deep Roots"

The Pessottis have few trepidations about having their home and business on FMB. "I lived here for almost 20 years before Ian and we never had a hurricane like that," reasons Ruby.

continued on page 11

BANKING IS BACK on Fort Myers Beach!



Fort Myers Beach, we're here!

Our new office is on the way ... in the meantime, our temporary office is open and we're ready to serve you.

Stop in, grab a cookie and experience the SanCap Bank difference today.

Fort Myers Beach Temporary Office

Open Wednesdays, 9:30 am to 3 pm
100 Lovers Lane, Fort Myers Beach
(we're on the third floor of the Access Title Agency building)



239-274-6240 | sancapbank.com/fmb

NMLS #411904 Member FDIC

July

**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
Through July
Lovers Key Summer Camps 2026**

@Lovers Key State Park
Experience the "Real Florida" as you explore the beach and mangrove estuaries of Lovers Key, while learning about the local ecology and environmental stewardship along the way! \$300-per-session, register in advance at <http://LoversKey.Eventbrite.Com>.

**Monday through Friday
Through August 7
Bay Oaks Summer Camps 2026**

@Bay Oaks Recreational Center
Kids age 5 through 12 enjoy the beach, pool, fishing, field trips, crafts, games, movies & more Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.! Registration is per week and not daily; \$125-per-week for "Beach Kids" and \$175 for all others. To register go to www.FMBGOV.com/Youth-Programs.

**Daily Through October
"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 businesses, adding a new piece at each stop. Those who complete the "Crawl" earn a final charm. "Crawl Kits": \$30; to register or for more details, see www.whatsupfmb.com.

Town of Fort Myers Beach

There are NO Town Council Meetings, Management & Planning Session, or Local Planning Agency Meetings in July; all will return in August. See www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov.

**Wednesday, July 1
& 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. CLOSED on The 4th of July; Adults \$15, Students \$8, Kids 6 to 12 \$5, & 5 & under free; Grounds free. See www.moundhouse.org.

**Thursday, July 2
FMB Chamber "Coffee Connection"**

Due to the upcoming 4th of July Holiday, there will not be a July "Coffee Connection." The FREE "Coffee Connection" returns on Thursday, August 6, from 8 to 9:30 a.m.; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

**Thursday, July 2
FMB Art Association Early
Summer Exhibit "Beach Bliss"**

@FMBAA Gallery
The FMBAA's early Summer Show, "Beach Bliss," runs through Saturday, July 18, at its new Gallery at 13451 McGregor Boulevard, Unit #1, in Cypress Square in Fort Myers, near the Prawnbroker Restaurant & Fish Market. FREE admission from Thursday through Saturday from Noon to 6 p.m.; CLOSED on The 4th of July. See www.fortmyersbeachart.com.

**Friday, July 3
& EVERY WEDNESDAY
THROUGH SATURDAY
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.; CLOSED on The 4th of July. The W&DC is FREE with the Park entry fee; see www.friendsoflovesskey.org.

**Saturday, July 4
HAPPY 250th BIRTHDAY, AMERICA!**

FMB restaurants & bars, shops and stores are open up-&-down the island to celebrate the 250th Birthday of The United States of America!

**Saturday, July 4
Independence Day Parade**

The Town of FMB hosts its Independence Day Parade at 10 a.m. FMB residents and visitors line Estero Boulevard in their Red, White & Blue Patriotic finery, with the Parade route from the Bay Oaks Recreation Center down Estero Boulevard to Times Square, necessitating the closure of the Matanzas Pass Bridge from 9 a.m. to approximately Noon. For details, see www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov.

**Saturday, July 4
"Freedom by the Bay"**

@Bayside Veterans Park
"Freedom by the Bay" brings residents and visitors together for live music, reflection and waterfront activities at Bayside Veterans Park from 4:15 to 8 p.m. The event honors the service and sacrifice of Veterans and active-duty military members while creating a family-friendly atmosphere. Guests should bring their own lawn chairs. Ceremonies begin at 4:15 p.m., with live musical performances at 5 p.m. For details, see www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov.

**Saturday, July 4
Fourth of July Fireworks**

The Town of FMB and "What's Up FMB" hosts a fireworks extravaganza to commemorate the 250th Birthday of The United States of America! The display will launch from a barge off the coast just south of Times Square, so bring a beach chair and enjoy the show. Fireworks begin shortly after dusk, so roughly 9 p.m., causing the Matanzas Pass Bridge to close from 8:30 to roughly 11 p.m. For the exact time, see www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov.

**Sunday, July 5
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. For the list of performers, see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

**Sunday, July 5
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.

**Monday, July 6
& 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.

**Wednesday, July 8
& 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

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



Thursday, July 9

FMB Chamber Membership Luncheon

@Nervous Nellie's Crazy Waterfront Eatery
Join your FMB Chamber friends at Nervous Nellie's Crazy Waterfront Eatery to savor a scrumptious luncheon as well as enjoying a presentation from Epilepsy Services of Southwest Florida from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. \$32 members & \$42 prospective members; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Monday to Friday, July 13 to 17

Ostego Bay Summer Camp

@161 Bay Road
Attention future scientists & marine biologists! The Ostego Bay Foundation Marine Science Center is offering a Summer Camp for grades K through Senior Year. Campers explore barrier islands and the Estero Bay while working with seagrass communities, plankton populations, mangrove tangles & bird-nesting areas. \$300-per-camper; Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. To register or for more information, see www.ostegobay.org.

Thursday, July 16

FMB Chamber "Business After Hours"

The FMB Chamber does not host "Business After Hours" in July; look for its return on Thursday, August 20, where you can join your FMB Chamber friends for a fun time with savory appetizers and a cash bar from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Members FREE and \$16 for perspective members; see www.fortmyersbeach.org.

Saturday, July 18

"Coastal Cars & Coffee"

@Santini Marina Plaza
Classic cars gather at Santini Marina Plaza from 9 to 11 a.m. Coffee and breakfast is available onsite, with an optional cruise to lunch after the show. There are additional "Coastal Cars & Coffee" shows on Saturdays, August 15 & September 19. For more information, see www.whatsupfmb.com.

Thursday, July 23

FMB Art Association Late Summer Exhibit "Essence of Water"

@FMBAA Gallery
The FMBAA's late Summer Show, "Essence of Water," runs through Saturday, September 5, at its new Gallery at 13451 McGregor Boulevard, Unit #1, in Cypress Square in Fort Myers, near the Prawnbroker Restaurant & Fish Market. FREE admission from Thursday through Saturday from Noon to 6 p.m.; see www.fortmyersbeachart.com.

Saturday, July 25

"Mullet Madness"

@The Whale & Associated FMB Businesses
"What's Up FMB" hosts the 2nd annual "Mullet Madness," where "Redneck Riviera Meets Coastal Cool!" Live music, themed contests, games and island-style fun across various FMB venues, including the popular "Joe Dirt Lookalike Contests" for kids and adults. Celebrate local flavor, community pride, and all the fun that makes FMB one-of-a-kind! For details, see www.whatsupfmb.com.

continued from page 7

"Forecasters say that Ian was a one-in-one-hundred year event and I do not plan to live another 100 years! When hurricane season approaches, I get nervous but this special slice of Paradise is home so you balance off the bad and good."

"There is no reason to leave," agrees Caio. "We have deep roots here. While we haven't owned 'Interiors Unlimited' the entire time, it goes back to 1972. Our family is here. Our home is here. Our business is here. We are not leaving FMB anytime soon."

Even though they were back in business quickly, Ruby and Caio do not fondly remember those early days after Ian. "Everybody always came in full of mud and water, with horrific stories," she says. "I would go to job sites at the homes of my friends' parents, and recall being at their breakfast nook as a child that no longer existed, and it was heartbreaking; it was a tough situation."

Caio notices a recent change in their customers' projects. "It is no longer major rebuilds but people updating kitchens and bathrooms again. It is like folks are now mentally confident again in FMB that they are reinvesting once more. I sense much more enthusiasm for FMB."

Ruby believes that there are more young families on FMB than most think. "We recently attended the 'Easter Egg Hunt' at the Bay Oaks Recreational Center and were happy to discover how many other young families live here. The Town stresses that we need more young families, and I hope a charter school is in our future, but they must do more. I recently saw a proposal to renovate Newton Beach Park, but while it had nice trees and paths, there was nothing for families, like a splashpad. We live on an island where it is 100 degrees for six straight months and we don't have a splashpad?"

"Such An Interesting Combination"

When they contemplate what FMB will look like in the five years, "to be honest, not very different than today," envisions Caio. "Many of our homes are now rebuilt and we have several new businesses, but it will take these large-scale projects 10 years or more to develop." "I agree with Caio," adds Ruby. "I hope the Town prioritizes children and families in its overall plan. Re-opening the Beach Elementary School would be an excellent first step. We have challenges but so does every community. We have a huge advantage, however: ours is a little piece of Paradise!"

Ruby loves "the slow, easy-living lifestyle of FMB; we truly live on 'Island Time!' FMB radiates an overall nice, happy feeling and it is such a pleasant place to live, work and raise a family." For Caio, "FMB has a little bit of everything. It is more touristy at the north end, with the south end quite the opposite. There are people who live on and visit FMB who are from all over the world and that makes us a melting pot. That is the best thing about FMB – that together, we are all such an interesting combination." ■



Pastor John Gauntt leads the Mangrove Community Church



Mangrove

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pastor John Gauntt Leads “Replanted” Congregation

- By Gary Mooney, Photo by Sandy Sandness -

“Mangrove Community Church is a replant of Beach Baptist Church at 130 Connecticut Street, continuing the faithful ministry and legacy Beach Baptist has carried on for decades,” explains Pastor John Gauntt, who now heads the congregation.

Pastor John explains that “Beach Baptist faithfully served the FMB community for over 60 years, with Pastor Shawn Critzer leading it for the past 20, and with his full support, he is passing the baton to me, with the church members overwhelmingly voting in support, so we are basically an old established island church with a new name!”

Mangrove Community Church “will focus on clear Bible teachings based on Bible readings,” adds John. “We want to be approachable and welcoming to everyone. We welcome all who seek God’s love and wisdom while establishing and strengthening human friendships. We want local families to have a spiritual foundation in which they can call Mangrove Community Church home, as well as being a respite for our seasonal guests and a place where those in crisis can reach out. We are not somewhere where you feel you must be close to perfect to walk through the door.”

Shelter From the Storms

Like many FMB structures, Hurricane Ian on September 28, 2022, devastated the former Beach Baptist campus, with nothing remaining from that church building. “Our property was 3.1-acres but Pastor Shawn reached an agreement with a development company to use the front two for 12 residential homes in return for their constructing us a new \$4-million church on the back property,” John offers. “We are obtaining permits from the Town and hope to break ground by the end of this Summer. If everything goes smoothly, we could host our

first service in the new church in time for Christmas 2027; that would literally be a dream come true!”

Since the building will be new and John is new, the congregation deemed this the time to rename the church. “Several concepts ran through our minds,” he recalls, “but we reminded ourselves to keep it simple, with a relatively short name. We pride ourselves on being a congregation that appreciates the environmental beauty of our island, and the mangrove is a symbol of Southwest Florida. It offers shelter from the storms, provides an environment that keeps young animals safe and allows them to grow strong, and its interconnected root system is an incredible foundation during the most perilous times. The mangrove has so many parallels to FMB that we thought it the perfect new name.”

The Mangrove Community Church is already part of the FMB community. “We meet on the 3rd floor of the FMB Public Library every Sunday at 10:30 a.m.,” John relates. “The FMB Public Library is gorgeous so we welcome everyone to join us there each Sunday until we have our new home. With everything this community has undergone since Ian, waiting another year-and-a-half was not an option.”

Assisting John is Hiram Joseph. “Hiram and I are from the same ministry, and when I told him about this opportunity, he and his wife Monica immediately moved here. Not only is Hiram a wonderful ministry partner but an incredible handyman, so he will keep the new church well-maintained!”

All are Welcome

“Mangrove Community Church does not serve one denomination but many ones,” emphasizes Pastor John. “Obviously, our main connection is from Beach Baptist but we serve many interdenominational religious networks, so all are welcome. Rich

or poor, married or widowed, an orphan, a single person, those with large families, senior citizens and seasonals. No Shoes – No Problem!”

Pastor John encourages the island community to reach out to the Mangrove Community Church. “Email me at www.john@mangrovecc.church or Hiram at www.hiram@mangrovecc.church. Mangrove Community Church is on Instagram, with a Facebook page, but there is another one in the Miami area so make sure you are looking at ours! The best way to get to know us is to attend one of our services at the FMB Public Library every Sunday at 10:30 a.m.”

John emphasizes that he is an Islander! “I grew up on FMB so this is not just any old community to me! I live with my wife Kate and our nine children in the house we bought from my parents on Bay Mar Drive. My charter boat business, ‘Day 5 Charters,’ is here. FMB nurtured me growing up and I want that nurturing attitude to remain strong as we rebuild. Just like my family, Mangrove Community Church is here for the long haul. Just like FMB, we are not flashy but offer a welcoming atmosphere based on worship, prayer, the Bible, love and service to our Town, community and the environment. We want Mangrove Community Church to be your community church and we are excited to serve you and our neighbors.” ■



Collect Unique FMB Charms All Summer

- By Gary Mooney -

“Sometimes my brain just goes off on a tangent,” laughs Dawn Miller, Founder & President of “What’s Up FMB” and co-owner of “The Whale” with husband Mike, when reminiscing about the origin of the “Island Charm Crawl,” the “What’s Up FMB” summer-long program. The “Island Charm Crawl” turns FMB into a playful island-wide scavenger hunt, where folks collect unique charms from participating bars, shops and businesses.

“I was walking the beach last October,” Dawn recalls, “when
continued on page 14

DIVERSIFIED YACHT SERVICES, INC.

751 Fishermans Wharf - Ft. Myers Beach
239.765.8700 • DYSinc.com

SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Outboard Service Center
- Factory Trained Technicians
- Services, repowers, diagnostics, electronics installation
- Accessory installation i.e. power pole and trolling motor
- All major OEM parts for gas and diesel engines

VISIT DICK'S FOR ALL YOUR SHIPBOARD GOODS:

- FUEL ■ BAIT & TACKLE ■ BOATING ACCESSORIES
- REFRESHMENTS ■ APPAREL & MORE

703 FISHERMANS WHARF - FT. MYERS BEACH 33931

Dick's BAIT & TACKLE
SINCE 1947

TUNASKIN

1300 ESTERO BLVD | FORT MYERS BEACH
OPEN DAILY 9:30AM - 7PM
SHOP LOCAL OR ONLINE AT TUNASKIN.CO

LIVE A CRAZY GOOD DAY

Your Neighborhood Market Update

ADDRESS	BEDS / BATHS	SQ FT	SOLD PRICE	CONDOS	BEDS BATHS	SQ FT	SOLD PRICE
123 FALKIRK ST	3 BED/2(0)	1,664	\$467,500	21490 BAY VILLAGE DR #261	2 BED/2(0)	909	\$215,000
191 MID ISLAND DR	3 BED/2(0)	1,232	\$510,000	8701 ESTERO BLVD NW #1204	1 BED/1(0)	518	\$335,000
12 BAYVIEW BLVD	2 BED/2(0)	1,386	\$560,000	8401 ESTERO BLVD #204	2 BED/2(0)	1,370	\$335,000
331 WASHINGTON CT	3 BED/2(0)	1,300	\$650,000	4571 BAY BEACH LN #PH471	2 BED/2(0)	1,226	\$343,000
7850 BUCCANEER DR	2 BED/2(0)	1,822	\$669,000	7400 ESTERO BLVD #214	2 BED/2(0)	930	\$380,000
17 PALMVIEW BLVD	4 BED/2(0)	1,504	\$885,000	4411 BAY BEACH LN #744	3 BED/2(0)	1,197	\$385,000
52 FAIRVIEW BLVD	4 BED/3(0)	2,052	\$1,050,000	4203 BAY BEACH LN #4D	2 BED/2(0)	1,024	\$389,000
319 NATURE VIEW CT	3+DEN/2(0)	2,412	\$1,060,000	6900 ESTERO BLVD #609	2 BED/2(0)	1,224	\$390,000
109 GULFVIEW AVE	3 BED/2(0)	1,602	\$1,100,000	400 LENELL #110	2 BED/2(0)	1,000	\$390,000
231 STERLING AVE	3 BED/3(0)	1,820	\$1,525,000	4203 BAY BEACH LN #3E	2 BED/2(0)	1,024	\$390,000
8425 LAGOON RD	4 BED/3(0)	2,422	\$1,995,000	7330 ESTERO BLVD #303	1 BED/1(0)	517	\$395,000
553 ESTERO BLVD	5 BED/4(0)	2,252	\$2,300,000	8350 ESTERO BLVD #135	2 BED/2(0)	933	\$415,000
280 PRIMO DR	3 BED/2(1)	1,911	\$2,450,000	894 BUTTWOOD DR #221	2 BED/2(1)	1,134	\$425,000
LOTS	ACRE	SOLD PRICE		7330 ESTERO BLVD #1104	1 BED/1(0)	517	\$470,000
11 HELEN LN	0.048	\$40,000		7000 ESTERO BLVD #403	2 BED/2(0)	1,261	\$480,000
1603 MAIN ST	0.068	\$180,000		8771 ESTERO BLVD #604	1 BED/1(0)	780	\$502,500
116 BAYVIEW AVE	0.142	\$357,500		4183 BAY BEACH LN #362	2 BED/2(0)	1,445	\$540,000
5865 ESTERO BLVD	0.177	\$600,000		4753 ESTERO BLVD #805	2 BED/2(0)	1,430	\$574,000
137 PEARL ST	0.09	\$600,000		6610 ESTERO BLVD #521	2 BED/2(0)	1,331	\$599,000
291 OHIO AVE	0.135	\$630,000		6620 ESTERO BLVD #504	2 BED/2(0)	1,450	\$688,750
914 3RD ST	0.115	\$1,000,000		6672 ESTERO BLVD #A207	2 BED/2(0)	1,145	\$690,000
581 CARLOS CIR	0.239	\$1,250,000		6230 ESTERO BLVD #401	4+DEN/4(1)	4,000	\$5,200,000

*Sales information from Alex King Group | Premiere Plus Realty I Top Fort Myers Beach Realtors from 04/26/2026 - 05/25/2026. Best Version Media does not guarantee the accuracy of the statistical data on this page. The data does not represent the listings of any one agent or agency but represents the activity of the entire real estate community in the area. Any real estate agent's ad appearing in the magazine is separate from the statistical data provided which is in no way a part of their advertisement.



ALEX KING GROUP

PREMIERE PLUS REALTY

LUXURY INTERNATIONAL

LUXURY MEETS WORLD-CLASS SERVICE



CALL TODAY FOR HOME VALUATION OR MARKET ANALYSIS!

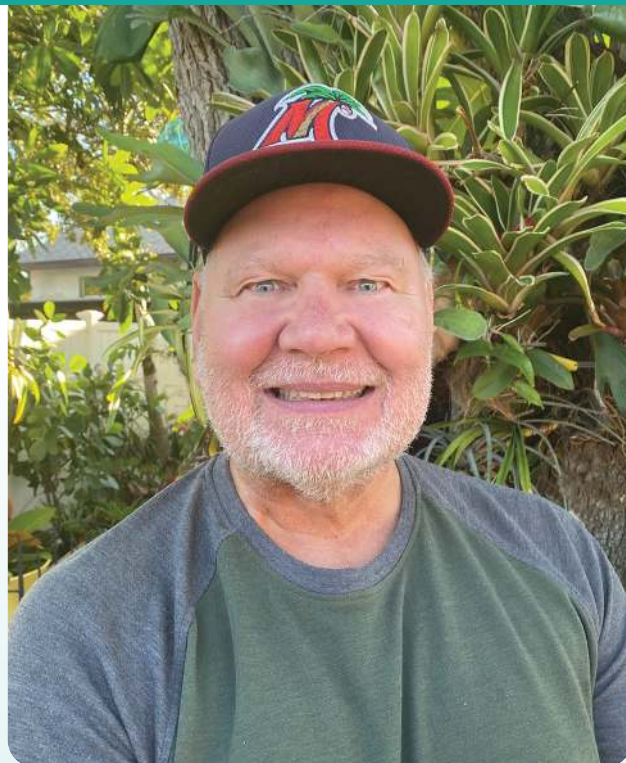
239-232-6465 | ALEXKINGGROUP.COM



DREAMS CREATED | LIFESTYLES ELEVATED

Adios; Au Revoir; Auf Wiedersehen!

Gary Mooney Retires



- By Gary Mooney -

This is my final edition of “FMB LIVING Magazine,” as I now officially step into retirement. I am one issue shy of being with “FMB LIVING” through its first 50 editions, so get ready to celebrate and wish Sandy Sandness all the best when you receive that milestone August magazine next month!

Sandy debuted “FMB LIVING” in January 2022, with the dynamic Jan & Ron Fleming as our first cover feature! Like everyone else on the island, we had to suspend “FMB LIVING” later that year, when Hurricane Ian pulverized our island on September 28, 2022. Sandy rallied faster than I ever thought she could, both personally and professionally, and she had “FMB LIVING” back up and running roughly 6 months later, in a Herculean effort.

Before Sandy began “FMB LIVING,” she and I worked with the amazing Bob and Missy Layfield on the Late, Great “Island Sand Paper” weekly newspaper, with me a part of that team from 2015 through its COVID-19 closure in July 2020. In my 5-1/2 years with “The Island Sand Paper,” it was my privilege to cover some wacky Town Council meetings as well as fun and informative events at the Beach Elementary School, The Historic Mound House, the FMB Art Association, the FMB Chamber of Commerce, the FMB Community Foundation, the FMB Woman’s Club, and at natural wonders like Lovers Key State Park, Matanzas Pass Preserve, Bowditch Point Park and Newton Beach Park.

It is however the people I will remember most fondly. Every single person and family we profiled in “FMB LIVING” was FASCINATING! Almost every introduction conversation began the same way, with people saying, “I don’t know why you chose us – we are not that interesting and don’t have much to say,” but

when the interviews begin, they all have compelling life stories, including how they ended up on FMB and what makes our community unique and tremendous!

While it is always dangerous to begin to mention names, I must thank FMB Chamber President Jacki Liszak for all her amazing help and kindness. Thanks as well to all the FMB Community Foundation and FMB Woman’s Club officers and fundraising event chairpersons who always cheerfully made time for me. You ALL were always terrific and I appreciate each of you very much.

Of course, my deepest thanks goes to Sandy, my “partner-in-crime” for over a decade with “The Island Sand Paper” and “FMB LIVING” – you made my ten-plus years on FMB a special and magical experience, but then what else would you expect from such a special and magical person! GOD BLESS YOU, SANDY!

Speaking of special and magical people, Sandy always concludes her “Friends & Neighbors” column by imploring you to please support our advertisers because we cannot bring Fort Myers Beach LIVING Magazine to you free of charge without them. When you visit, please tell them that you saw their ad in our magazine so Sandy can continue to provide you with this community-oriented original entertainment each month. Since “The Island Sand Paper” closed six years ago, islanders told me time and again how much they miss it, so please support “FMB LIVING Magazine” and its advertisers so that this publication enjoys a long and happy life.

As for me, I now march off into one of those beautiful FMB sunsets! Thank you for your kindness and friendship, and Take the Greatest Good Care of Yourselves! ■

continued from page 11

I noticed someone with a beach bag full of charms. I thought that was so cool and began to imagine one for FMB, where our bags would feature charms of FMB business logos. I went to several FMB businesses to gauge their interest and all were positive, so we organized the 'Island Charm Crawl' for Summer 2026."

Dawn ordered 500 "Island Charm Crawl" bags and the corresponding number of charms, and already sold those out. "It is up to each individual business as to the promotion they offer for you to earn your charm," Dawn relates. "If it is a bar, they may offer a signature cocktail or mocktail and you receive your charm with that order. If it is a restaurant, you may get your charm with a specific food or appetizer selection. A shop might award you their charm if your purchase exceeds a certain amount. What is really great is that each business offers its own unique charm, so no two are alike."

A "Charmed" Life

The "Island Charm Crawl" debuted on May 1 and continues through at least the end of October. The cost is \$30-per-person. "To register, go to www.whatsupfmb.com, scroll down the Events Page until you reach 'Island Charm Crawl,' click on that and it will take you through the payment process as well as selecting your 'Island Charm Crawl' bag that comes in blue, green, pink or purple," Dawn explains. "Acquire charms and get your 'Island Charm Crawl' passport stamped at 23 FMB businesses as well as at three special events. While we currently advertise that the 'Island Charm Crawl' ends in October, we may extend it, so that Seasonals can join in when they return. When you collect all the charms, turn

in your completed passport to receive the final one that declares: 'I Love FMB,' with a heart symbol in place of 'Love.'"

Each charm is unique, Dawn stresses. "The 'JobuFest' charm is completely different from the 'Mullet Madness' one, and that is different from the 'Illuminations Parade' charm. Each business gave us their logo for the charms, so the Lighthouse Island Resort Tiki Bar charm features their distinctive 'monkey,' while the DiamondHead Beach Resort charm has its 'Cabanas Beach Bar & Grille' logo. When you stop by an Open House with the Alex King Group, their agent will give you a charm. For 'Beach Talk Radio,' just attend one of their live broadcasts to receive theirs. The charms cover a broad spectrum, illustrating all we offer on FMB."

"What's Up FMB" Upcoming Events

In July 2025, Dawn started the "What's Up FMB" business alliance. "Several island businesses collaborated with the FMB Chamber of Commerce to bring tourism back to FMB, especially during the off-season, so we formed this 501c3 organization. Our first event was 2025's 'Mullet Madness' and that was a such a tremendous success that we sponsored even more creative programs, like the innovative 'Illuminations Parade' last Winter and the 'Glow By The Gulf' health fair this past Spring."

"What's Up FMB" membership is open to any FMB business, Non-Profit, resident or island supporter for a small annual fee. "Go to www.whatsupfmb.com and see everything we offer," Dawn says. "Soon, our Events Calendar will become totally and rapidly interactive, so if you want to know

where you can hear music that night or the ideal place to view our spectacular sunsets, it will direct you to the best location. The possibilities are endless."

In addition to the "Island Charm Crawl," "What's Up FMB" is sponsoring several other events this summer and fall, such as "Coastal Cars & Coffee" on Saturdays, July 18, August 15 & September 19, at the Santini Marina Plaza from 9 to 11 a.m.

Something for The Entire Family

In cooperation with the Town of FMB, "What's Up FMB" hosts "July 4th Fireworks" to celebrate our nation's 250th birthday. The 2nd Annual 'Mullet Madness' returns on Saturday, July 25, at "The Whale" and participating locations from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The "VIP for a Week" raffles continue through November, where each winner and three friends pick the week of their choosing for island businesses to pamper you with extra-loving care. Tickets are \$20 each or six for \$100. "And everyone is already stoked for the return of the 'Illuminations Parade' on Saturday, November 7," Dawn raves! "It will be at least twice as big as last year's mindboggling event."

Dawn encourages everyone to frequently check the "What's Up FMB" Events Calendar. "We constantly update it, not only with fun 'What's Up FMB' events but those from other island Non-Profits, like the FMB Community Foundation's 'Haunted Carnival Pub Crawl' in October and the FMB Woman's Club's annual 'Christmas Tree Festival' each December. Once you discover 'What's Up FMB,' you will learn that there is always something going on for the entire family on Fort Myers Beach!" ■



ENJOY FOOD & DRINK
Full Menu Available

at our Patio or Swing Bar
Open Daily 11am • LIVE MUSIC 2-5pm



239.333.4386

YucatanBeachStand.com
250 Old San Carlos Blvd, FMB



NOW ON FORT MYERS BEACH!!!!

SANTINI PLAZA MON – SAT 8-7, SUN 9-4 • 239-401-7641



Gavin's



Your Island Grilling Center!



Gavin's ACE \$25 OFF

ANY PURCHASE OF \$100 OR MORE

Coupon

Expires July 31, 2026

Not valid on Weber, Traeger or Big Green Egg Grills. \$25 Off On Purchase Of Regularly Priced Items. See Store For Complete Details

Gavin's ACE \$13 OFF

ANY PURCHASE OF \$50 OR MORE

Coupon

Expires July 31, 2026

Not Valid on Weber, Traeger or Big Green Egg Grills. \$13 Off On Purchase Of Regularly Priced Items. See Store For Complete Details.

South Fort Myers gavinsacehardware.com North Cape Coral



**FUEL DOCKS ⚓ WET SLIPS
DRY STORAGE ⚓ SERVICE
SHIP STORE**

Mercury, Suzuki & MINN KOTA
Sales & Service

A Marina that fits all your needs!

- Conveniently located in the heart of downtown Fort Myers Beach, surrounded by the rich history of Estero Island & some of the world's best waterways
- Walking distance to the beach, shopping & the famous Times Square.
- Local restaurants & bars a stroll away

MOSS MARINA
It's a lifestyle. Stay a while.

www.MossMarina.com
Open Daily 8AM - 5PM

450 Harbor Court, FMB
239.765.6677



CRUISIN TIKIS
Private Charters
(239) 365-9900
cruisintikis.com



GALAXY ADVENTURES FMB
Fishing Charters
(308) 991-1806
galaxyadventuresfl.com



PELICAN BAY CHARTERS
Tours & Sunset Cruises
(239)994-1238
pelicanbaycharters.com



REEL TALES FMB
Fishing & Charters
(239) 898-0333
reeltalesfmb.com