

# MICA *wave*

SPRING 2026

[www.marcocivic.com](http://www.marcocivic.com)



A Periodic Publication of the Marco Island Civic Association

# PRESIDENT'S LETTER

by Ron McClay, President, Marco Island Civic Association

Welcome back MICA members! It is a pleasure to see our seasonal members returning to fill our beautiful beach with life once again. As we kick off another season, don't forget to keep your membership card handy while on MICA properties and to enjoy exclusive discounts at various local restaurants and shops.

We take great pride in maintaining top-tier facilities for your comfort, including our sparkling restrooms and our reasonably priced snack bar, Paradise Grill. Whether you are hosting a cookout at the landside chickee huts with charcoal grills or seeking shade at our beachside chickee huts, there is a spot for everyone. Families can also take advantage of our children's life jackets and the beach toy station located at the start of the boardwalk.



## **A few updates and reminders for our members:**

**Playground Upgrades:** We have replenished the play-safe mulch at both playgrounds and are currently shopping for new equipment and finalizing repairs on existing pieces.

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All opinions expressed in this MICAwave are solely the opinions of the writers and do not reflect the opinions of MICA.

Cover Photo: by Nancy & Peter Cleary  
"Icebergs on Marco!"

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**Accessibility First:** New signage is being installed for handicap areas. We ask that all members respect these designations. Specifically, the platform at the end of the boardwalk and the first beachside chickee huts (to the left and right) are now reserved for handicap access.

**Beach Safety:** Following discussions with Marco Island City Councilor Deb Henry, we understand that she is standing firm against the rental and/or use of ATVs and motorized vehicles on our beaches from tip to tip. We thank her for her advocacy in keeping our sands peaceful.

**Community Gratitude:** A huge thank you to the Marco Island Academy Key Club and Our Daily Bread Food Pantry volunteers for their hard work, alongside MICA Club members, during our recent beach cleanup. We also want to thank you all for your continued politeness and respect toward our gate attendants.

I wish you all a safe, sun-drenched, and wonderful season!

# MICA BOARD OF DIRECTORS UPDATE

Thank you, members, for stepping forward and casting your votes for the individuals who ran for election to the Marco Island Civic Association Board of Directors.

Each year, four seats on the MICA Board of Directors come up for election. A term on the MICA board runs for three years and a board member can serve up to two terms.

At MICA's Annual Meeting on January 21, members unanimously approved a slate of nominees, which included Jane Hansen, Bradley Henson, Victoria Myers, David Rasmussen, Chuck Ruoff, Anita Sargese and Gregory Vilk. Quite the slate! We could not lose with any of these candidates.

Ballots were emailed to those with valid email addresses and mailed to those without email addresses. After all ballots were counted, the following four individuals were elected to the MICA Board of Directors: Anita Sargese, Brad Henson, David Rasmussen and Gregory Vilk.

Our newly elected board members join current members Margie Hapke, Kim McIntosh, Christine Nowak-Quinlan, Ron McClay, Nathaniel O'Donnell, Mike Stanczak, Glenn Walton and Gene Wordehoff.

MICA wishes to thank those who ran for the Board of Directors. We will be sure to put all candidates to work on committees!

MICA offers sincere thanks to out-going board member Laura Owen, who volunteered the last six years.



*It was an honor for MICA to support the Marco Island Fire Rescue Foundation.*

*From bottom middle, left around table:*

*Laura McLaughlin, David Rasmussen, Victoria Myers, Brad Henson, Police Chief Tracy Frazzano, Laura Owen, Kim McIntosh, Mike Stanczak, Liz Fitch, Gregg Vilc & Christine Nowak-Quinlan*

# BEACH-BIRD NESTING SEASON ON MARCO

by Erika Zambello, Communications Director for Audubon Florida



*Piping Plover.*

*Photo: John Troth/Audubon Photography Awards*

Winter is a wonderful time to look for wildlife on Marco Island. Florida hosts an amazing winter population of sea and shorebirds that feed and rest here until breeding season begins again in late spring/early summer.

*What can you see on the beaches right now?*

We'll tell you!

Piping Plovers – These cute shorebirds nest farther north and spend their winters here. They usually move near the water's edge looking for food, including beetles, worms, crustaceans, and more.

Snowy Plovers – Similar in size and shape to the Piping Plovers, Snowies have dark gray legs instead of yellow legs. They breed here in Florida, laying their eggs in scoop nests right on the sand.

Red Knots – Though they do have cinnamon stomach, chest, and face feathers in the summer, Red Knots are gray and white in the winter. They nest in the Arctic in the spring and summer, and they can live to be 18 years old!



*American White Pelican. Photo: Georgia Wilson/Audubon Photography Awards*

American White Pelicans – These seabirds are enormous, with a wingspan that can stretch to nearly 10 feet. They spend winters here before flying to the Midwest, West, or Canada to raise their families. Fish eaters, these pelicans work together to feed on small fish in shallow water.

*How can you help the birds?*

Sea and shorebirds need space. Every time a person or dog comes too close, they fly away, using precious energy that they need to survive and thrive.

Dispose of fishing line safely. Pelicans especially can be hooked or tangled in monofilament.

Volunteer with Audubon! We are looking for winter bird counters and summer educators to keep birds safe and healthy. Email Southwest Florida Shorebird Manager Megan Hatten at [megan.hatten@audubon.org](mailto:megan.hatten@audubon.org) to learn more. You are what hope looks like to a bird!

Learn more about Audubon's coastal work at [Audubon.org/florida](http://Audubon.org/florida).



*Snowy Plover. Photo: Evan Barrientos/Audubon Photography Awards*



*Red Knot. Photo: Jean Hall/Audubon Photography Awards*

# INVASIVE SPECIES AWARENESS WEEK HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING NATIVE ECOSYSTEMS

In recognition of National Invasive Species Awareness Week, the South Florida Water Management District (District) is highlighting our continued efforts to combat invasive species and protect South Florida's native ecosystems.

**DID YOU KNOW:** The District's staff works year-round to prevent, control and manage invasive species on public lands throughout the agency's 16-county region.

**COMBATING INVASIVE SPECIES:** More than 200 invasive plant and animal species are a priority for control in South Florida, more than any other area in the continental United States.



**PROTECTING NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS:** Burmese pythons, Melaleuca, Brazilian pepper trees, and other harmful invasive species can damage critical habitat, harm native wildlife and alter the ecology of our natural systems. Effective control of these invasive species is an important part of the District's mission and our continued ability to successfully restore and protect the region's natural resources.

**EFFECTIVE CONTROL EFFORTS:** The District uses a variety of methods to manage public lands:

- Prescribed Burns: Support the native ecology and reduce the risk of uncontrolled wildfires.



- Natural Resources Monitoring: Invasive plant mapping, wildlife surveys and ecosystem assessments.
- Invasive Plant Control: Stopping the spread of harmful invasive plants is important when it comes to protecting our native wildlife and plant species. Integrated Pest Management, a scientifically-based approach, is used to help control invasive plants.



**REMOVING INVASIVE PYTHONS:** Invasive pythons are one of the most destructive species in America's Everglades. These invasive snakes threaten our native ecosystem by preying upon the wildlife that lives there, including wading birds, mammals, and other reptiles. Their aggressive predation on native wildlife robs panthers, raptors, bobcats, and other native predators of their primary food sources.

The State of Florida has taken unprecedented action to protect the Everglades and eliminate invasive pythons from across the landscape. Over 19,000 pythons have been removed since the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the District teamed up to combat this invasive species.


**CONTROLLING INVASIVE PLANTS:** Invasive plants are also harmful to our natural ecosystems, resulting in loss of habitat, alteration of hydrology, changes in natural fire conditions and degradation of public use areas. Melaleuca and Brazilian pepper, as well as floating and submerged aquatic vegetation, can impact our restoration goals if they are not managed properly.

Invasive plants such as hydrilla, water lettuce and hyacinth can impede the District's ability to provide flood protection by clogging waterways and damaging infrastructure.




**LEARN MORE:** We encourage you to visit [SFWMD.gov/Vegetation](https://www.sfwmd.gov/Vegetation) to learn more about the importance of removing invasive species from South Florida's landscape.

*To learn more about National Invasive Species Awareness Week, go to <https://naisma.org/programs/nisaw/>*

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- Play a round of 18 holes of golf? **NOPE!** *Rates range from \$180 to \$500 per person*
- Dinner at a moderately priced restaurant on Marco? **MAYBE!**  
*Possibly dinner for four with no alcoholic drinks or dessert*
- Groceries for two for a week? **NOPE!** (not these days!!)  
*Average cost of groceries for two is \$220.82 per week*
- How about an Everglades Airboat Ride? **NOPE!**  
*Cost is approximately \$220 for two people for a 50-minute ride*

### - MARCO ISLAND CIVIC ASSOCIATION CLUB MEMBERSHIP? **YES!**

The \$200 annual membership fee allows you to go to the Club for 365 days, from 6 a.m. until sunset! It also offers umbrella chickees on the beach, sand rinse-off showers, picnic chickees, grills, playground, restrooms, Paradise Grill, concerts on the green, the Discount Program and the smiling faces of our friendly staff, to name a few amenities!



## BEACH CLEAN-UPS

SATURDAY, APRIL 11	8 AM	SOUTH BEACH
SATURDAY, MAY 9	8 AM	SOUTH BEACH
SATURDAY, JUNE 13	8 AM	SOUTH BEACH
SATURDAY, JULY 11	8 AM	QUARTERLY BEACH CLEAN-UP TIGERTAIL
SUNDAY, AUGUST TBD	8AM	SOUTH BEACH
SATURDAY, SEPT. 19		TIGERTAIL ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEAN-UP

For more information, please contact City Staff Liaison at 239.389.3949



MICA-SPONSORED BEACH CLEANUP, OCTOBER 2025  
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*Santa's arrival to MICA club, December 2025*

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Donate and help nonprofit NCH deliver healthcare to your neighbors: [nchmd.org/marco-fund](http://nchmd.org/marco-fund).

# LOOK UP FOR THE MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD

by Jeanene Jewett, Audubon Western Everglades

Have you ever looked up and watched a Magnificent Frigatebird effortlessly soar in the thermals, barely flapping its long, pterodactyl-like wings as it steers with a deeply forked tail? Its lightweight body and enormous wingspan allow it to glide for hours. Interestingly, Frigatebirds cannot land on water—their feathers lack waterproofing—so they must snatch fish or squid from the surface or steal food from other seabirds midair, a behavior known as kleptoparasitism.

They often pursue other birds until the victim drops or regurgitates its catch, which the Frigatebird then snatches before it hits the water. This tactic has earned them the moniker “pirates of the sky.” They are beautiful to watch as they soar, and until recently, I had never witnessed any behavior that truly supported that nickname.

As I stood near a large, mostly resting flock of Royal Terns gathered at the water’s edge on Residents’ Beach, an adult Royal Tern circled overhead, squawking to signal its juvenile that it had a fish. The juvenile—similar in size to its parent but hatched this past summer—flew to a spot a short distance away from the main flock. Just as the parent swooped down to deliver the meal, a male Magnificent Frigatebird suddenly dove in, hoping to steal the small baitfish.

The Frigatebird clearly underestimated the Royal Tern. Despite its impressive size and agility, it was outmaneuvered—the Tern deftly dodged the attempted theft and successfully delivered the fish to its waiting juvenile.

This is my third season as the winter shorebird anchor for Audubon of Western Everglades and I am on Residents’ Beach on Mondays and Thursdays mornings. Contact us for volunteer opportunities at [aweshorebirdstewardship@audubonwe.org](mailto:aweshorebirdstewardship@audubonwe.org).

*Audubon of Western Everglades,  
founded in 1961,  
is an independent, nonprofit organization  
dedicated to protecting and restoring  
Southwest Florida’s natural resources  
and biodiversity through science-based policy,  
habitat stewardship,  
and community engagement.  
Winter shorebird monitoring and education  
is one of its primary stewardship programs,  
along with Burrowing Owl and Gopher Tortoise  
conservation efforts.  
Get more information at  
[www.audubonwe.org](http://www.audubonwe.org).*



*The graceful Magnificent Frigatebird*

# LUNCH WITH FRIENDS MICA SPONSORED, OCTOBER 2025



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# MARCO ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY CELEBRATES OUR NATION'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY WITH CLYDE BUTCHER'S AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

To celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United States, Marco Island Historical Society (MIHS) is participating in the nation-wide America250 event with Clyde Butcher's America the Beautiful — a large-format photography exhibit of the magnificent landscapes found in the U.S. Neil and Vicki Bretthauer are presenting sponsors. The exhibit is at the Marco Island Historical Museum (MIHM) March 31 through July 11, 2026, and admission is free.

On Thursday, April 9, a special commemorative event and exhibit opening will be held in partnership with the Marco Island Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and MIHS Reenactors. The event will honor America's founding ideals through history, performance and art. Doors open at 3 p.m. at the Rose History Auditorium for a 3:30 p.m. joint performance by the DAR and MIHS Reenactors of the original play, Founding Mothers.



*Yosemite Valley 175 by Clyde Butcher, 2006, © Clyde Butcher Galleries*



*Moonrise by Clyde Butcher, 1986, © Clyde Butcher Galleries*

A reception for America the Beautiful will follow from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

America250 is a nonpartisan initiative to engage every American in commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the 250th anniversary of our country. This multi-year effort continues through July 4, 2026 to encourage nationwide programs that celebrate and commemorate the nation's Semiquincentennial.

Butcher's photography stretches from the Redwood forests of California to the Everglades swamps of Florida, capturing the essence of our national spaces and treasured landscapes. His images document the changing environment, record what is there today, and inspire us to appreciate and protect the beauty of the wilderness. Butcher raises awareness of our country's remote places and the species that thrive there, allowing us a serene adventure through his lens. "My hope is to educate...to let people know our land is a special place, and to inspire others to work together to save nature's places of spiritual sanctuary for future generations," notes Butcher.

*Historical, continued on page 16*



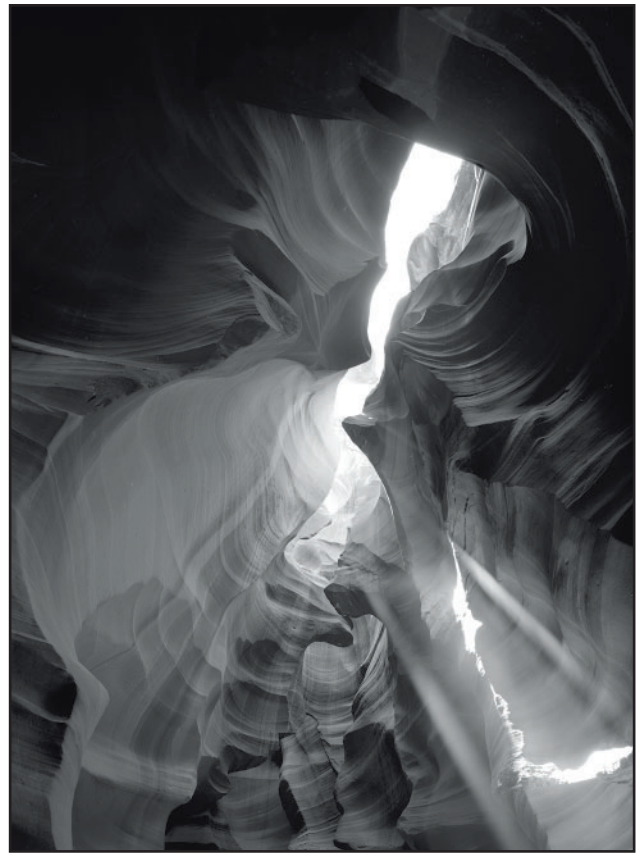
*Brandon Beach #3 by Clyde Butcher, 2013, © Clyde Butcher Galleries*

*Historical, continued from page 15*

Butcher has been called the next Ansel Adams by Popular Photography magazine. He has been recognized as a humanitarian for acting for the betterment of his community, and recognized as a conservationist for bringing issues to the forefront of people's minds through his artwork. The majestic beauty, boldness and depth of his photographs have earned him recognition as the foremost landscape photographic artist in America today.

"The Marco Island Historical Society and Museum present this exhibit of Clyde Butcher's brilliantly captured scenes from America's awe-inspiring wilderness as our participation in the America250 initiative," notes Marco Island Historical Society CEO Pat Rutledge. "What better way for us to celebrate and honor this momentous time in history than through the artistic and unforgettable photography of Clyde Butcher?"

*The Marco Island Historical Museum is located at 180 S. Heathwood Drive. The Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free and the site is fully ADA compliant and accessible to all visitors. For information call (239) 389-6447 or visit [www.themihs.org](http://www.themihs.org).*



*Antelope Canyon #1 by Clyde Butcher, 2006,  
© Clyde Butcher Galleries*



## **Key Marco Cat returns to Smithsonian April 2026**

After traveling through time and space to return to its birthplace on Marco Island in 2019, the world-famous Key Marco Cat continues its stay at MIHM. On loan to the museum from the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, the enigmatic feline will remain at MIHM until April 18, 2026.

The ancient artifact and others were discovered on Marco Island during a Smithsonian led archaeological dig in 1896. The mysterious half-cat, half-human Key Marco Cat is known as one of the finest pieces of pre-Columbian Native American art ever discovered in North America. You won't want to miss seeing it before it goes back to Washington, D.C.!

# OUR DAILY BREAD FOOD PANTRY 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

by Evelyn Rossetti-Ryan, EdD Executive Director, Our Daily Bread Food Pantry

As we reflect on 2025, we pause with grateful hearts to remember what is possible when committed people join together in service. We give thanks to the multiple investors, board members, volunteers, faith-based and community partners.

We are profoundly grateful to all of our partners who helped us this year in various ways: From our dedicated volunteers and investors who provided 52,728 carts of food through our Signature Saturday Pantry distribution alone - to generous supporters including NCH, Presenting Sponsor of our 2025 and 2026 Rhinestone Rodeo events and partner in our Pints & Pantries Project; Tamiami Ford, who Filled the Truck with nutritious food during Hunger Action and Awareness Month and continues to support us as an exclusive Rhinestone Rodeo Partner Sponsor; and Florida Blue Foundation, who selected Our Daily Bread Food Pantry as a recipient of its 3-year Food Security grant. This important investment makes our Nutrition Prescription Initiative possible, a collaboration with Healthcare Network that will serve Lipman Farm employees and their families and demonstrates our core belief that "Food is Medicine." These partnerships and acts of service demonstrate the strength of our caring community. Together, we filled shelves, lifted spirits, and moved into our improved and expanded headquarters. Thank you for making 2025 a year of growth and gratitude for everyone at OBFP and for the children and families we serve.



2025 saw the successful conclusion of our 2-year - \$8 Million Capital Campaign and the opening of our fully renovated new headquarters. We are deeply grateful to Pat and Scot Kaufman, Steve and Barb Slaggie and all the many investors who made this possible - and our dedicated board of directors, capital campaign committee members and contractor Build for their outstanding support. With your help, our fully renovated permanent home is a place where hope, dignity, nourishment and encouragement greet our neighbors in need.

Lunch With Friends was co-founded in 2017 by Allyson Richards and Nancy Kot with support from Our Daily Bread Food Pantry founders Liz Pecora, JoAnne Lundquist and Vicki Johnson in partnership with Al's Pals and the YMCA of Marco Island. All three organizations are still active partners, with Marco Lutheran Church joining us and currently serving as the host site for the luncheon. The lunch is provided by a variety of sponsors representing restaurants and community groups - and new meal sponsors are always welcome! MICA sponsored the lunch in October 2025.

"Our vision was to provide an opportunity for Marco Island residents over the age of 60 to gather, enjoy a tasty meal, and have an opportunity to socialize with new friends," shared Nancy Kot, co-founder. Initially, the Lunch drew approximately 30 guests. Today, this event attracts over 200 guests during season.

Lunch With Friends is held on the third Wednesday of the month from 11 am - 1 pm at the Marco Lutheran Church, 525 N. Collier Blvd. It is free to attend. To RSVP for an upcoming Lunch With Friends, email [LunchWithFriends@gmail.com](mailto:LunchWithFriends@gmail.com).

*Our Daily Bread Food Pantry can be reached at  
239-259-5188 and <https://ourdailybreadfoodpantry.org/>*

# AUDUBON'S CORKSCREW SWAMP SANCTUARY OPENS NEW SPURLINO FOUNDATION DISCOVERY CENTER

*With hands-on exhibits, educational signage, dioramas, and more, the newly renovated space offers something for everyone.*

Something exciting has been brewing at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary: The new Spurlino Foundation Discovery Center, which opened on February 4, 2026, immerses students and visitors of all ages in swampy goodness. With exhibits like “The Secret Lives of Plants,” “Life Beneath the Surface,” and “Amphibians and Reptiles,” the new space shines a spotlight on the Sanctuary’s work and plants and animals like never before.

“We are deeply grateful for the Spurlino Foundation’s support,” said Sanctuary Director Keith Laakkonen. “This investment has modernized and enhanced the visitor experience in the Discovery Center, enabling each person to see how important the Sanctuary is for water and wildlife in the landscape of Southwest Florida, before or after they experience it for themselves on the boardwalk.”

The Blair Visitor Center at Audubon’s Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary welcomes 80,000+ annual visitors to this remarkable 13,000-acre wildlife sanctuary – a gateway to the Western Everglades. Thanks to a generous gift from the Spurlino Foundation, Audubon has renovated the original 1,600 square-foot discovery center space with new exhibits that illustrate the history and ecology of the Sanctuary while inspiring a conservation ethos in all visitors.

The space, which had been closed since 2020, was completely made over with eye-pleasing signs, bright colors, video, and engaging activities that enhance learning. For nearly three years, Audubon staff worked with the Michigan-based design firm Flutter & Wow, as well as local taxidermists and wildlife sculptors, to design exhibits that immerse visitors in the swamp’s cultural and natural history. With mounted artifacts to touch and bird calls and other sounds to hear, and a chance for kids to dress up



*Visitors exploring the new Spurlino Foundation Discovery Center. Photo: Jeff Boyle.*



*Sanctuary Director Keith Laakkonen and Joanne Spurlino cutting the ribbon.  
Photo: Jeff Boyle.*

like a prescribed fire professional, this multi-sensory learning experience is the perfect complement to a walk along the renowned 2.25-mile boardwalk.

Learn more about the new exhibits here: <https://www.audubon.org/corkscrew/about-us/news/spurlino-foundation-discovery-center-engages-all-ages-swampy-goodness>

Visitors can explore the new Spurlino Foundation Discovery Center with general admission to the Blair Visitor Center and boardwalk, which remains \$17 for adults, \$6 for kids 6 to 14, and free for members and children under 6. The Sanctuary is open daily at 8 a.m. with the last admission at 3 p.m. during the winter/spring season. Online tickets are recommended at [audubon.org/corkscrew/visit](http://audubon.org/corkscrew/visit).

The opening of the Spurlino Foundation Discovery Center marks the completion of the first phase of construction for a visionary Capital Campaign campus transformation. This phase included other visitor experience enhancements, such as new navigational signage for the parking lot,

a new campus entrance, and 95 new wayfinding, interpretive, and educational signs along the boardwalk. Learn more about the campus refresh at [Audubon.org/corkscrew/vision](http://Audubon.org/corkscrew/vision).

*About Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary: Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, established in 1954, is recognized as one of the world's most valuable wetland ecosystems and has been protected by Audubon for more than 100 years. The Sanctuary spans more than 13,000 acres, including the largest remaining old-growth bald cypress forest. An estimated 80,000 visitors annually explore the Sanctuary's 2.25 miles of boardwalk through ancient forest, marsh, and upland habitats. Memberships and donations provide crucial support for conservation work at the Sanctuary. Learn more at [Audubon.org/corkscrew](http://Audubon.org/corkscrew).*

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MICA's Holiday Celebration -  
December 29th, 2025 Featuring The Shane Duncan Band





# YMCA SEEKING COMMUNITY FUNDING TO FINISH STRONG FOR HEALTHY LIVING

This year marks the culmination of a long-standing dream for our community.

As YMCA President and CEO Cindy Love-Abounader looks over the construction site at the corner of San Marco and Sand Hill Streets, the 2026 Marco Island Citizen of the Year reflects on her thirty-two years at “the Y” and what it means to lead the final phase of campus construction, which is scheduled for completion later this year.

“I can’t help but think of the community leaders who dreamed up and built the foundation for where we are today.”

The YMCA has been at the heart of our island for almost 50 years. In that time, the Y has expanded from a couple of trailers and dusty fields on land donated by the Deltona Corporation to the vibrant campus that now hosts an early learning center, a youth development center, a competition lap pool, indoor and outdoor gymnasiums, clay tennis courts, a pickleball complex, a 24-hour fitness

center, a spin room, and over 85 group exercise classes per week. While the number of activities available seems encyclopedic, the demand is increasing, and the Y is simply out of space.

So, just over two years ago, the Y board voted to move forward with an ambitious capital campaign to build a new 17,000-square-foot Healthy Living Center that will offer our community the programming space to expand important services for decades to come.

Here are some highlights of the plan:

- A new, larger fitness center
- A group exercise studio
- A healthy cafe’
- A community meeting room
- A library nook and reflection room
- Lots of indoor and outdoor social space
- A catering kitchen for group meals
- A flexible social and wellness center, focused on programming for older adults
- Improved parking, drop-off, and facility access



*Construction of YMCA's brand new 17,000-square-foot Healthy Living Center*

According to Love-Abounader, “Our vision is to create a consistent hub of activity and connection, a place to belong, to stay mentally, physically, and socially engaged throughout every stage of life. This includes the ability to grow up, raise a family, and age in place on our island with the highest quality of life possible.”

After a record-setting Golden Gala in January, the YMCA crossed the crucial 80% fundraising threshold to construct the new center on the final buildable spot on campus. “We’re now in the home stretch and need our community’s support to cross the finish line in the best position possible,” says Paul Tateo, who has seen three generations of his family stay healthy and active through the Y.

Along with Ashley Lupo, Tateo co-chairs the Active Life Campaign. “So far,” he shares, “we have raised over \$6.8 million. With less than \$2 million to go, gifts and pledges of all amounts will

help us to finish strong! Your generous investment builds more than just walls—it builds a home for wellness and connection for everyone in our community.”

*The YMCA of Collier County is a 501(c)3 nonprofit charitable organization. For project details, giving instructions, naming opportunities, or to request a hard hat tour, email [ceo@ymcacollier.org](mailto:ceo@ymcacollier.org), visit [ymcacollier.org](http://ymcacollier.org), or scan the QR code below.*



*Renderings of the Healthy Living Center*

# MARCO ISLAND'S FIRST TEEN OF IMPACT

by Julia Berger

Hi, my name is Julia Berger, and I am a senior at Marco Island Academy. I am honored to be the first-ever Teen of Impact from Marco Island representing the American Heart Association. I've set a bold goal to raise funds and awareness to fight heart disease and stroke, conditions that affect millions of families, including my own.

Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States. Nearly half of all U.S. adults live with some form of cardiovascular disease. On average, one person in the United States dies from cardiovascular disease every 34 seconds. These statistics represent real people and real families in our communities.

Heart disease has personally affected my family. Both of my grandfathers suffered from heart disease. Tobacco use contributed to my maternal grandfather's heart attack, which led to quadruple bypass surgery. Seeing the impact of heart disease firsthand is one of the reasons I am so passionate about raising awareness and educating others. I plan to pursue a nursing degree this upcoming fall, so I can continue advocating for prevention, education, and heart health.

Heart disease is not just a men's issue; the AHA finds that it is the number one cause of death for women in the United States. Women often experience symptoms that are different than the classic signs seen in men, which makes education and awareness especially important, something the AHA is hard at work on. Increasing awareness among women is essential to saving lives.

Heart disease affects young people, too. The AHA reports that sudden cardiac arrest is a leading cause of death in young athletes. Many of these athletes are unaware they have an underlying heart condition until a cardiac emergency occurs. This is why access to AEDs is critical. Right here in our Southwest Florida community, the AHA is funding and providing AEDs in schools, helping save lives when every second counts.



Another major focus of the American Heart Association is improving access to healthy food. Through a program called Food as Medicine, the AHA works to provide nutritious foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, for under served families. The AHA emphasizes that healthy eating plays a key role in reducing risk factors.

Heart disease affects nearly every family in some way, but there are real steps we can take to reduce its impact. Consider donating to my campaign today to help our local community fight against heart disease and stroke. Visit [http://www2.heart.org/goto/Julia\\_Berger](http://www2.heart.org/goto/Julia_Berger) or scan the QR on the image above to donate today.

# FRIENDS OF TIGERTAIL REPORT

## - MARCH 2026

*by Allie Delventhal, Friends of Tigertail*

Friends of Tigertail continue their popular “Breakfast and Birds” presentations at the lagoon beach. Fran Huxley reviews information about resident and migrating birds before taking the group to the beach to practice identification techniques. The final presentation for 2026 will be March 21, 9:00-11:00 am

Quarterly beach clean-ups remain well attended and effective in keeping the area clear of debris. Yielding 30 pounds of trash, the December event found fewer items than usual, a hopeful sign that beach users are more careful with their garbage. The first Tigertail event for 2026 is the Great American Clean-up/Bay Days on March 28, 8:00-11:00 am, when many participating beach and canal locations collaborate with Collier County and Keep Collier Beautiful to clean coastal areas county wide.

During a six-week period early January through mid-February a beach re-nourishment project brought heavy equipment to Sand Dollar Island for planned berm maintenance and rejuvenation. The rebuilding of the ranger office/ restroom structure has been on hold since Hurricane Ian damaged the building, but the county hopes to complete the project this year.



*Fran Huxley leading January 2026 Breakfast and Birds presentation. Photo by Allie Delventhal*



*FOTT board members at 12/6/25 beach clean-up. Photo by Allie Delventhal*



*Reddish Egret, photo by Lori Gaspar: seen at January B & B presentation*

# HURRICANE SHELLING

by Cindy Konney, Marco Island Shell Club Member

We were fortunate this past year not to have a hurricane, but for future summers, I'd like to share some information about shelling after a hurricane! Hurricane season brings both challenges and unique opportunities. While it's crucial to stay safe and prepared for the intense weather conditions, it's fascinating how hurricanes can also impact the natural environment in unexpected ways. For those who enjoy shelling, hurricanes can indeed be a treasure trove. The powerful waves churn up the ocean floor, dislodging shells from deeper waters and depositing them on the shore. This natural process can lead to some incredible finds for beachcombers. The shells, carried by the waves, undergo a journey of wobbling, twisting, and turning before they are left on the beach, waiting to be discovered. Remember to always prioritize safety during hurricane season but also take a moment to appreciate the unique gifts that nature can bring.

Shelling after a hurricane can be incredibly productive due to the natural processes that occur during and after such storms. One of the fascinating aspects is the change in the variety of shells you can find. Storms can bring in shells from deeper waters or different areas, increasing the diversity of shells found on the beach. Collectors often find unique or rare shells that are not typically visible. Additionally, after a hurricane, beaches may be less crowded, providing a quieter environment for shelling and an increase in shelling opportunities.

Preparing for shelling after a storm can be an exciting and rewarding experience. Here are some tips to help you get ready:

- **Check Local Regulations:** Before heading out, make sure you are aware of any local regulations regarding shell collection. Some areas may have restrictions to protect the environment.
- **Safety First:** Ensure that the storm has completely passed and that it is safe to be on the beach. Check weather forecasts and local advisories.
- **Timing:** The best time for shelling is usually during low tide when more shells are exposed. Check tide charts to plan your visit.



*Top left and bottom: Junonia shells found after Hurricane Milton. Top right: True tulip and a sand dollar found on Marco beaches.*

- **Gear Up:** Bring a sturdy bag or bucket to collect your shells. A small shovel or scoop can be helpful for digging in the sand. Don't forget sunscreen, a hat, and plenty of water to stay hydrated.
- **Explore Different Areas:** After a storm, shells can be found in various locations, including the high tide line, shallow waters, and areas where the sand has been disturbed. Be prepared to explore different parts of the beach.
- **Be Respectful:** While collecting shells, be mindful of the natural environment. Avoid disturbing wildlife and leave the beach as you found it. Know that the taking of live mollusks is NOT ALLOWED.

- Identify Your Finds: Bring a shell identification guide or use a mobile app to help you identify the different types of shells you find. This can add to the enjoyment of your shelling adventure.
- Share Your Experience: If you find interesting or rare shells, consider sharing your discoveries with local shelling communities such as the Marco Island Shell Club or online groups. It's a great way to connect with fellow enthusiasts.

Hurricanes can also clean shells, removing debris and making them more visually appealing. Freshly exposed shells may also be less damaged compared to those found in calmer conditions. The best shelling often occurs in the days following a storm when tides and weather conditions stabilize. Observing local tide charts can help identify optimal times for shelling. While shelling can be fruitful after a hurricane, safety should always be a priority. Be cautious of debris, unstable sand, and changing weather conditions. Shelling after a hurricane can indeed be a thrilling experience, with the potential to discover a variety of unique and beautiful shells. I was able to go shelling after Florida's most recent storm of 2024, Hurricane Milton, and I can certainly appreciate the excitement and joy it brings to beachcombers.

Sharing your finds with the Marco Island Shell Club is a wonderful way to connect with fellow shelling enthusiasts and contribute to the community. If you find interesting and unusual shells, you can share your discoveries on their Facebook page ([MarcoIsland\\_ShellClub](https://www.facebook.com/MarcoIsland_ShellClub)), Instagram page ([@MarcoIsland\\_ShellClub](https://www.instagram.com/MarcoIsland_ShellClub)), or send them a message on their website (<http://www.marcoislandshellclub.com>). They'd love to check out your rare findings post-storm.

The Marco Island Shell Club is a friendly and dedicated 501(c)(3) non-profit organization for shell enthusiasts of all levels and interest and experience. Our mission is to promote the study, conservation, biology, and science of seashells and mollusks, and to encourage shell-related interests such as shell collecting, crafting, and shell art. The weekly workshops that our members attend are a great opportunity for members to hone their skills and create beautiful shell art and gifts. Our main event is listed below and our proceeds from this sale supports our Scholarship and Educational Programs and showcases the talent and creativity of our members.

## Marco Island Shell Club Spring Expo & Shell Art Sale – March 13-14, 2026 – 10:00-4:00

Many of the crafts are made by shell club members from shells collected in the 10,000 islands.

This will be held at the  
NEW LIFE COMMUNITY CHURCH  
489 Elkcam Circle, Marco Island, FL

*Check us out on our website  
([www.marcoislandshellclub.com](http://www.marcoislandshellclub.com)),  
Facebook ([MarcoIsland\\_ShellClub](https://www.facebook.com/MarcoIsland_ShellClub))  
or Instagram ([@marcoislandshellclub](https://www.instagram.com/marcoislandshellclub)).*

## THE FRIENDS OF MARCO ISLAND LIBRARY ENCOURAGES YOU TO BECOME A MEMBER!

Becoming a Friend gives you access to the Libraries of Collier County members-only Signature Series programs as well as the Friends Member Appreciation Event, discounts to the Nick Linn and Non-Fiction Lecture Series and more. In addition to members only benefits, The Friends of Marco Island Library hosts a Books & Brews event every Spring, which is open to both members and non-members. Our annual Books & Brews event traditionally features local authors, such as Pauline Hayton (2024), Betsy Perdichizzi (2025), and Craig Woodward (2026). Look for information about The Friends of Marco Island Library 2027 Books & Brews event in the Fall edition of MICAWave. For additional information about becoming a Friend go to [www.collier-friends.org](http://www.collier-friends.org)

# MARCO ISLAND WOMAN'S CLUB KICKS OFF 2026 WITH LOVE

by Maureen Chodaba, MIWC Publicity Chair

The Marco Island Woman's Club (MIWC) is a network of women committed to improving, supporting, and nurturing this community. Why do we do this? Because we love this community! We love the very land beneath our feet that we call "home." We love our pristine sand and precious water. But most of all, we love the people of our community, and we love learning about our community!

In January, Marco Island Woman's Club (MIWC) President Sue Purvis was dressed in purple, the color of domestic violence awareness as she welcomed a crowd of ninety ladies to Naples Lakes Country Club for our first luncheon meeting



*MIWC VP Tammy Barstow presents a check to Kim Butrico of The Shelter*

of 2026. We were moved by an outstanding presentation by Kim Butrico, Volunteer and Community Resource Manager from The Shelter for Abused Women and Children.

The Marco Island Woman's Club Charitable Foundation has generously supported The Shelter for Abused Women and Children for many years. The Shelter is a 501(c)3 nonprofit/charitable organization that works to prevent domestic violence before it begins, protect victims of domestic abuse, and prevail over violence in our homes and community. Did you know that right here in Collier County, the crimes of domestic violence and human trafficking shatter thousands of lives, reaching far beyond the victims, costing us tens of millions of dollars in medical care, social services, lost wages, and productivity each year? We all realize the devastating cost to the victims, but the financial cost to our community is also substantial. The Shelter has been a beacon of hope and light in this crisis. The Shelter's core services provide over thirty-five programs including a 24-hour crisis line, two 60-bed emergency shelters (Naples and Immokalee), legal support, healing arts, transitional living cottages, community education, an in-vest program, and human trafficking services. The transitional living program creates a bridge from crisis to independence, providing up to two years of housing, life skills development, advocacy, and parenting support, along with financial literacy and education.

The Marco Island Woman's Club proudly presented Kim with a donation to support this most worthy cause.

Love was in the air at Naples Lakes Country Club as the Marco Island Woman's Club (MIWC) celebrated the month of February. One hundred and two MIWC members and guests were blessed with an eye-opening, heart-rending presentation

Photos by Maureen Chodaba



*MIWC VP Tammy Barstow presents a check to Evelyn Rosetti-Ryan of Our Daily Bread*

by Evelyn Rosetti-Ryan, EdD., Executive Director of Our Daily Bread Food Pantry. Did you know that 48% of Collier County children qualify for free or reduced-price meals at school and that 16% of children in Collier County live in poverty? In 2023, 33% of Collier County households were designated as ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed). In other words, they are working, but their income is not enough to support all their needs, leaving them in a situation of “food insecurity.” That’s where Our Daily Bread Food Pantry steps in to nourish our community one bag at a time, distributing two million pounds of food annually to those in need. Our Daily Bread is a powerful force driven by more than 250 dedicated volunteers, thriving with the generosity of this community. Ninety-four percent of every dollar raised to support the pantry goes directly to feeding hungry children, families, and seniors.

MIWC proudly supports Our Daily Bread Food Pantry. Luncheon attendees brought an abundance of food items for donation. The club presented Evelyn Rosetti-Ryan with a check to support this most needed mission.

The Marco Island Woman’s Club believes in nourishing the mind as well as the body. Our Charitable Foundation recently donated \$250 to Tommie Barfield Elementary School for the purchase of books for grades 3, 4, and 5. This donation will support the TBE literacy program.

*Marco Island Woman’s Club, continued on page 30*



*MIWC Education Chair Anne Marchetti and Ro Enners present a check to TBE Principal Amanda Kubin and Media Specialist Mary Beth Schneller for the school’s literacy program.*



*MIWC President Sue Purvis and Susie Walsh with food donations to Our Daily Bread*

*Marco Island Woman's Club, continued from page 29*

We celebrate the joy of giving all throughout the year. MIWC gives back to our community in so many ways through our Charitable Foundation. Our members work diligently throughout the year to raise funds. As I write this article, the ladies of MIWC are busy preparing for our annual Fashion Show fundraiser. "An Affair to Remember," will be held February 23, 2026, at Naples Lakes Country Club. We know that this sold-out blockbuster event will be a showcase of style and glamour to rival the red carpet of the Oscars. All funds raised will be given back to our community with scholarships for students living on Marco Island and in support of other charitable organizations and causes in our community.

After that, March 12 will be a time of fun and games as we get ready to shuffle the deck and roll the dice at our annual Cards and Games Luncheon at CJs on the Bay in the Esplanade.

Membership to MIWC is available to all women who live on Marco Island, full-time or seasonal, whether you own or rent. Our special interest groups include book clubs, a stitching group, a theater group, cards & games, and even a travel club. We thrive with opportunities to donate our time as helpers at community events like Meals of Hope, our annual Beach Cleanup, the American Cancer Society Imagination Ball, Camp Able, Little Pink Houses of Hope, and more. Please join us in friendship and fun as we learn about



*Maureen Chodaba,  
"MIWC Kicks Off 2026 with Love!"*

our community and give back our support. For more information, including membership and sponsorship opportunities, please visit [www.marcowomansclub.com](http://www.marcowomansclub.com).



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# PURPLE MARTINS IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

by Kamila Perez,

Residential Horticulture Agent / Master Gardener Coordinator, University of Florida/IFAS Extension Collier County

Purple Martins are members of the swallow family native to North and South America. Three species found across both continents, and the eastern most subspecies – *Progne subis subis*—migrates from Canada to Brazil each year. The males are a beautiful bluish-black, while the females and juveniles are more subdued gray.



The Purple Martin's flying, swooping turns, and characteristic chortle calls with down-slurred whistles herald their return to Florida by early February. To welcome them, wooden houses or gourds should be cleaned and lined lightly with pine straw and predator guards should be secured about 4 to 5 feet above the ground.

Historically, Purple Martins nested in cavities of dead trees, but habitat loss has driven them almost entirely to artificial sites. Indigenous peoples once hung gourds in trees to encourage colonies; today, wooden houses function the same.

As aerial insectivores they consume flies, bees, wasps, moths, dragonflies and some invasive insects; mosquitoes are only a minor part of their diet (DNA studies show <10% of stomach contents). Possible explanation for this is that Martins primarily feed in morning hours, while mosquitoes are most often out at dusk and later. Their preference for houses or



Photos by Lisa Foreman (MGV)

gourds near water -about 15 feet above the ground- and open fields below maximize their access to insects.

The pair typically mates for the season. Both partners will add a few leaves to the nest just before the female lays the first egg. She will lay one egg each day, usually five, but up to nine in exceptional cases. Once the clutch is complete, “mom” begins incubation, and both parents will feed the chicks, making about 100 trips/day until fledging.

When hatchlings are flight-ready, the colony uses their internal compass to head to Brazil to roost. They will fly mostly at night at speeds averaging 75mph, covering 180-250 miles a day. Aggregations in Brazil are so vast that they can be seen on radar. The young spend their time molting rather than breeding. First-year mortality rate can reach 70% and Purple Martins do not reach sexual maturity until about two years old. Even with such loss, there is roughly 50% chance that a given bird will return to the same colony site, although spring and fall migratory paths vary.

If you are interested in seeing these charismatic birds in action or attracting Purple Martins, come visit our large and charming colony at the UF IFAS Collier County Extension, 14700 Immokalee Rd, Naples, FL 34120. For more information call (239) 252-4800.

## THE COLLIER COUNTY TAX COLLECTOR HAS OPENED A TEMPORARY MARCO ISLAND OFFICE LOCATION AT 650 E. ELKCAM CIRCLE (OPERATING IN A PORTION OF FIFTH THIRD BANK BUILDING)

This temporary office space will allow Marco Island residents to access Tax Collector services directly on the island. Office hours are Monday thru Friday, 8 am to 5 pm. Services offered include:

- Florida Identification Cards
- Partial Florida Driver License Service (no testing)
- Property Tax
- Vessel title and registration
- Motor Vehicle title and registration
- Hunting & Fishing licensing
- Florida Birth Certificate



The Collier County Tax Collector's office located on Winterberry Drive was severely damaged during Hurricane Ian. The Marco Island office is in the process of being Rebuilt.

For more information, visit [colliertaxcollector.com](http://colliertaxcollector.com).

# Residential Curbside Collection

## Service include:

- Twice-a-week Household Waste curbside collection.
- Once-a-week Recycling, Yard Waste, and Bulky Items collection.

Call (239) 252-2380 to schedule collection of appliances, electronics, standard vehicle tires, or vehicle batteries.



### Cart Out By 6 a.m.

on collection day & removed by 6 a.m. the following day. Pick-up can occur any time from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.



### Space Carts & Materials

3ft apart from each other, mailboxes, and other obstacles.



### Cart Repairs/Replacement

call (239) 252-2380 and follow prompts.

There will be **no curbside services** on Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day, or Christmas Day.

There are **no make-up days**. If your collection falls on one of these holidays, your trash, recycling, bulky items and yard waste will be collected on your next scheduled day.



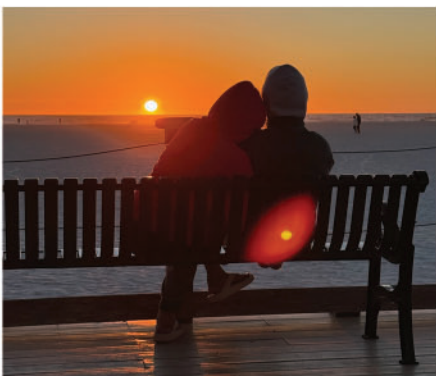
Bring batteries, polystyrene foam, paint, and other household hazardous waste to a County drop-off center for proper disposal.



Visit [colliercountyfl.gov/collection](http://colliercountyfl.gov/collection) for more information

# MARCO BEACH PHOTOS .

*A variety of things you can see on a walk on Marco's beautiful beach*



# AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY – IMAGINE A WORLD WITHOUT CANCER

by Maureen Chodaba, ACS Publicity Volunteer

The Palms Ballroom of the JW Marriott Marco Island was aglow with hope the evening of February 6 as supporters of the American Cancer Society gathered for “Timeless Elegance, Lifesaving Impact”, the 2026 Imagination Ball, presented by Robert Flugger. An elegant meal, music by the Stacey Allison Band, and both live and silent auctions set the mood for an evening that brought us closer to the vision of ending cancer, as we know it, for everyone. That means every cancer, every life.



Event Chair Debra Shanahan (standing) with ACS supporters and friends

Chaired by Debra Shanahan and Co-Chairs Rick and Lisa Popoff, this black-tie optional gala raised funds for lifesaving research, patient and caregiver support, and the most precious gift of all – the gift of time to be lived and shared with families and friends. The impact will be felt in every life touched, and every future changed for the better.

Almost all of us have been personally affected by this deadly disease, whether we have faced the diagnosis ourselves or that of someone we love. Event emcee Gracie Fusco of WINK News shared her personal story of sadness when her beloved grandmother died of pancreatic cancer just two weeks after her diagnosis. Her story empowers us to keep fighting until cancer has been eliminated from our world.



Magen McRoberts auctioneer

Fundraising Host Magen McRoberts energetically worked the room with the live auction that included an enchanting stay at the exclusive Paradise by Sirene at the JW Marriott Marco Island, including a Chef’s tasting menu at Ario and fun at 10K Alley, donated by JW Marriott; an escape to the St. James Club, a private 100-acre peninsula on the southeast coast of Antigua, donated by Elite Island Resorts; a luxury ranch getaway to the Ranches at Belt Creek in Montana, donated by Siegel Dental/Dr. Rick Siegel;



Event Co-Chairs Lisa and Rick Popoff

PHOTOS BY CLEARLY CAPTIVATED PHOTOGRAPHY

an exclusive private party at Verdi's, donated by Vince and Mary Rodriguez in memory of Kim Rose; and a diamond link and rope bracelet donated by Kathein Jewelers.

The most poignant occasion of the evening was undeniably the Mission Moment, presented by Rick's Island Salon and Day Spa. A video presentation featured the stories of cancer survivors Vicki Williams, a stage 3 colon cancer survivor and sister of event Co-Chair Rick Popoff, and Michelle Rossi, a young mom and breast cancer survivor. Their stories exposed the raw horror of cancer yet filled us with hope at the same time. These two amazing women inspired us with their strength and courage.

That inspiration led to the paddle raise of the Finish the Fight round. It was hands in the air with deep generosity to deliver a one-two punch to this monster of a disease, once and for all.

The American Cancer Society is here for all of us. Unfortunately, cancer continues to stalk individuals and families. This year, more than 2.1 million people in the United States will receive a cancer diagnosis, including more than 183,000 right here in Florida. But there is hope. The five year survival rate for all cancers has reached 70%.



*Gracie Fusco of WINK*

Please join us in the fight! Imagine a world without cancer! For more information, please visit [cancer.org](http://cancer.org) or contact the Marco Island office of ACS at [sue.olszak@cancer.org](mailto:sue.olszak@cancer.org) or 239.610.3032.

*Mark your calendars now for  
Making Strides Against Breast Cancer of SW Florida,  
presented by STOCK Development,  
Saturday, October 24, 2026!*



*Siegel Dental Patron table*



MICA Members Only Concert Series -  
February 7th, 2026 Featuring Back Country Boys





# BILL HULBIG IS NO STRANGER TO GENEROSITY

by Jessica Grybek, Habitat for Humanity of Collier County

Marco Islander Bill Hulbig has spent a lifetime giving generously of his time, talent, and treasure. From leadership at his church to countless miles walking Marco Island picking up litter along medians and sidewalks, to launching medical initiatives that have changed lives, Bill has long been committed to strengthening the community he calls home.

In February, he took that commitment even further by kicking off Habitat for Humanity of Collier County's annual \$2 million Matching Challenge, Give to the Max, with an extraordinary \$300,000 gift.

His contribution will fully fund the construction of a Habitat home in Collier County—covering not only the vertical build, but also the land and essential infrastructure that form the foundation of the home. In a time when land and development costs continue to rise, this type of comprehensive support is transformational.

Soon, a hard-working local family—selected through Habitat Collier's rigorous application process and having completed required volunteer "sweat equity" hours and pre-purchase education

—will sit down to sign the mortgage documents that mark a life-changing milestone: homeownership. Over time, that family will repay an affordable mortgage, allowing Habitat Collier to reinvest those funds into purchasing additional land and building more homes for local families.

But Bill's generosity didn't stop there.

Recognizing Habitat's proven vetting process and its track record of preparing families for long-term success, Bill also launched a scholarship program to support adult learners and high school graduates in Habitat homes who are pursuing vocational training and certification programs. These opportunities will increase earning potential and help families climb the economic ladder toward lasting stability.

His commitment extends even beyond his lifetime. As a member of Habitat Collier's Legacy Society, Bill has included the organization in his estate plans—ensuring that future generations of local families will continue to benefit from his generosity.

Habitat for Humanity of Collier County has served the community for nearly 50 years, helping local families achieve the stability and opportunity that homeownership provides. Partner families purchase their homes with affordable mortgages and invest hundreds of hours in sweat equity, working alongside volunteers and staff. To date, Habitat Collier has built more than 2,750 homes, creating safe, stable neighborhoods where families can thrive.

At a time when housing costs continue to rise and affordability is top of mind for so many in our community, Habitat's work has never been more important. Those who feel inspired by Bill's example and want to help local families build brighter futures are warmly invited to make a gift in support of Habitat Collier's mission.

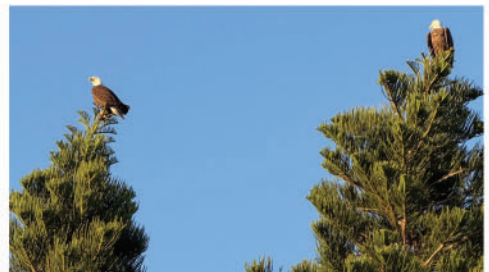
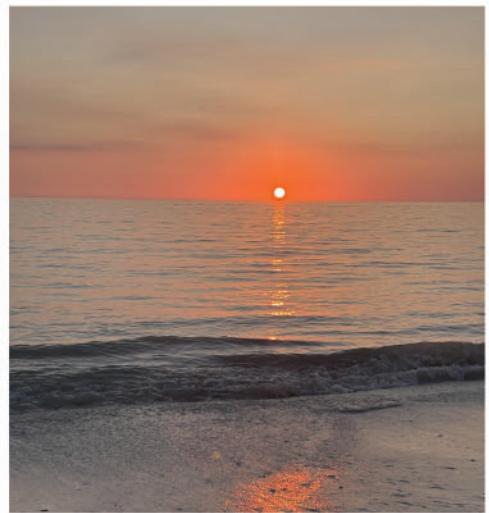
Bill Hulbig's leadership is a powerful reminder of what's possible when individuals choose to invest in their community.

*To donate, volunteer or learn more about Habitat for Humanity of Collier County, visit [www.HabitatCollier.org](http://www.HabitatCollier.org) or call 239-775-0036*

WHO CAN USE MY  
MICA CLUB ID?  
**YOU  
AND  
ONLY YOU**  
NO ONE OTHER THAN  
YOURSELF CAN USE  
YOUR MICA CLUB ID,  
NO EXCEPTIONS.

# MICA CLUB PHOTOS - Member submitted photos

To be featured in the next edition of MICAwave, send your favorite photo by email to [info@marcocivic.com](mailto:info@marcocivic.com)



Top row left and middle: Lucille Corva captured a windy day on the beach and a skimmer with their catch  
Top row right: Starfish pushed to the shoreline after strong February tides, by Gail Gillespie  
Second row left and middle: A conch shell with a few barnacles washed up to the shore and a osprey with their catch, by Lucille Corva  
Third row, left: Laura McLaughlin shared this sunset photo from the MICA Club parking lot  
Third row, right: Sunset looking west, by Marion Scarengelli  
Bottom row left: Storm clouds rolling in at the beach, by Ruth McCann  
Bottom row right: Two Bald Eagles, by Ruth McCann

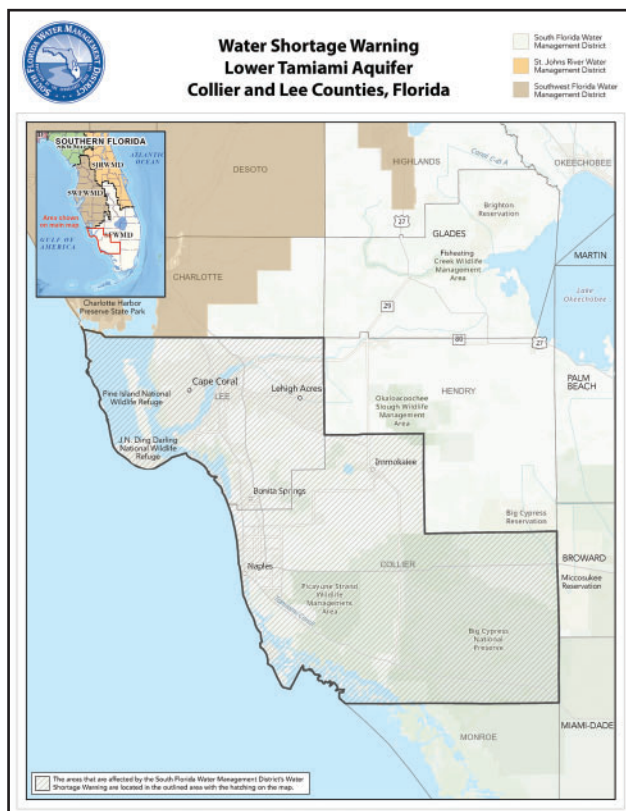
# MAKING TREMENDOUS PROGRESS ON EVERGLADES RESTORATION AND IMPORTANT WATER SHORTAGE INFORMATION

by Charlette Roman, Chair of the Big Cypress Basin Board and Governing Board Member of the South Florida Water Management District

To all of my fellow MICA members, the South Florida Water Management District (District) issued a Water Shortage Warning for Collier, Glades, Highlands, Lee, Miami-Dade and Monroe counties amid continuing dry conditions and increasing water supply concerns. Drought conditions and water use have resulted in water levels of the underground Biscayne Aquifer in Miami-Dade County and the underground Lower Tamiami Aquifer in Collier and Lee counties to decline, increasing saltwater intrusion risks. In addition, the shortage is causing water levels in canals and lakes within the Indian Prairie Basin to decline. Without significant rainfall, further decline in groundwater and surface water levels is anticipated over the remainder of the dry season, which typically lasts until May.



*Charlette Roman, Chair of the Big Cypress Basin Board and Governing Board Member of the South Florida Water Management District*



The District is encouraging residents, visitors, and businesses to conserve water and limit irrigation. Residents can use these simple tips to save water both inside and outside their home:

- All landscape irrigation should comply with the allowed days and times established in your local government's year-round landscape irrigation ordinance. During the cooler winter months, lawns do not need to be irrigated as frequently as summer months. Most of the time, one day of irrigation per week is sufficient to maintain a healthy landscape.
- Check irrigation timers to ensure settings are correct and rain sensors are working properly. Check irrigation systems to ensure they are working properly and test and repair broken pipes and damaged sprinkler heads.
- Fix leaks. Finding and fixing water leaks conserves water, saves money and protects your home from damage.
- Avoid washing or cleaning streets, sidewalks, driveways, or other impervious areas with water.
- Landscape the Florida-Friendly Way by planting low maintenance plants using environmentally sustainable practices.

District staff will continue to monitor water usage and water levels to assess the effectiveness of voluntary water conservation measures and will keep the public informed if water shortage conditions worsen.

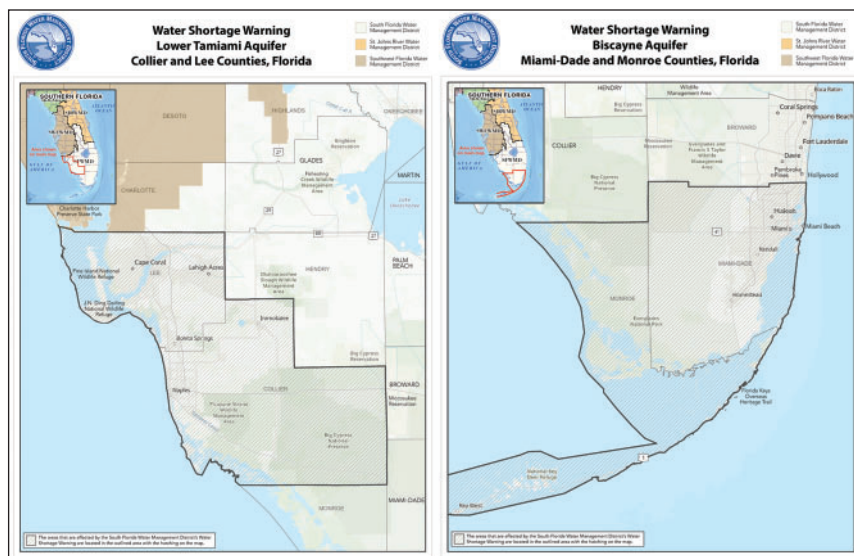
If the voluntary conservation efforts are not enough, the District may declare a water shortage and invoke mandatory water use restrictions in critical areas. Water use restrictions would be implemented to protect the public water supply and prevent serious harm to water resources.

Conserving water year-round is an integral part of managing and protecting South Florida's water supplies today and for future generations. For more information, visit [SFWMD.gov/WaterShortage](https://www.sfwmd.gov/WaterShortage).

In December 2025, the District celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). The conditions we are experiencing this dry season highlight the reason for continuing to develop the storage components of CERP. The completion of storage features, like the C-43 and C-44 reservoirs and acceleration of the EAA Reservoir to 2029, provide the ability to store water in the wet season and hold it for times like these, when the rains don't come. These storage areas make water available for beneficial use longer into the dry season and provide insurance against drier conditions like those we are experiencing now.

To that end, the District remains laser focused on Everglades restoration, and I wanted to share some exciting project updates. In July 2025, Governor Ron DeSantis announced that the State of Florida and the U.S. Department of the Army reached a landmark agreement that allows Florida to accelerate the restoration of America's Everglades and expedite the completion of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir. This announcement took place right here in Marco Island.

The EAA Reservoir, located south of Lake Okeechobee, will store over 78 billion gallons of water—larger than Manhattan—and deliver up to 470 billion gallons of clean water annually to the Everglades and Florida Bay. It also supports the



Biscayne Aquifer, the primary source of drinking water for South Florida.

For decades, Florida's water system was altered to prevent flooding, but at the cost of cutting off the natural flow of water to the Everglades. This project is designed to correct that—redirecting water south, restoring ecosystems, and significantly reducing harmful discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries.

Since the announcement in July 2025, tremendous progress has been made:

- State of Florida groundbreaking of the Blue Shanty Flow Way, a crucial component of Everglades restoration in September 2025.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) ribbon cutting to celebrate the completion of the inflow/outflow canal and the seepage canal at the EAA Reservoir Project in September 2025.
- State of Florida groundbreaking of the new inflow pump station at the EAA Reservoir Project in November 2025.
- CERP Framework - Implemented the agreement between the Department of the Army, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and South Florida Water Management District in July 2025 ([https://www.sfwmd.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CERP\\_Framework.pdf](https://www.sfwmd.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CERP_Framework.pdf)).

In addition, two major Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Projects (CERP) are now complete!

The District, the USACE and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, along with

*Everglades Restoration, continued on page 42*

*Everglades Restoration, continued from page 41*

many other federal, state and local officials, partners and stakeholders celebrated the completion of the Picayune Strand Restoration Project in Collier County.

Spanning 55,000 acres between Alligator Alley and Tamiami Trail in Southwest Florida, this restoration project is the result of years of collaboration among USACE and the District, as well as many local, state, and federal partners. Through the removal of 260 miles of roads and plugging 48 miles of canals, the project has successfully restored the natural flow of water to the region, revitalizing wetlands and improving overall water quality.

This restoration project will improve flows of water into Collier Seminole State Park, Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge and the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

The project has numerous environmental benefits including:

- Restoration of wetlands that are already making a significant contribution to the landscape of Southwest Florida
- Restored and enhanced habitat for fish and wildlife including the Florida Panther
- Reduced drainage of adjacent sensitive ecosystems
- Improved aquifer recharge to protect underground water supplies and prevent saltwater intrusions



*Signing of the landmark agreement to accelerate Everglades restoration on July 18, 2025, in Marco Island.*



*Groundbreaking for the Blue Shanty Flow Way on September 15, 2025, in Miami-Dade County.*

Photos by the South Florida Water Management District.

- Reduced freshwater releases/improved health of downstream estuaries

These long-term benefits will ensure that the region’s natural resources are safeguarded for generations to come.

The Picayune Strand Restoration Project is a partnership between the USACE and District. In 2009, it was the first Project Partnership Agreement that the USACE executed with the District as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

The other major CERP project is the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project.

The District and the USACE, along with many federal, state and local officials, celebrated the completion of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands (BBCW) Project. This project will improve the health of Biscayne Bay and aid in wetland

rehydration — building coastal resiliency and improving water quality in this area of Miami-Dade County.

The BBCW Project includes three components: Deering Estate, L-31E Flow Way and Cutler Wetlands. All components of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project are now finished.

This project restores freshwater flows to southern Biscayne Bay and Biscayne National Park while improving salinity distribution near the shore. It also restores historical freshwater wetland habitat adjacent to the Bay, which acts like a sponge, soaking up water in the wet season and slowly releasing it in a more natural pattern. Re-establishing productive

*Everglades Restoration, continued on page 44*



*Completion of the Inflow/Outflow Canal and Seepage Canal at the EAA Reservoir Project on September 23, 2025, in Palm Beach County.*



*Groundbreaking for the Inflow Pump Station at the EAA Reservoir Project on November 6, 2025, in Palm Beach County.*

*Everglades, continued from page 43*

nearshore habitat also supports nursery habitat for key marine wildlife including shrimp, mollusks and fish. The project will also deliver freshwater from the C-1 Canal to slowly rehydrate coastal wetlands instead of harmfully discharging it directly into the bay.

Supporting the health of Biscayne Bay remains a priority for the District. In partnership with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the SFWMD also works to reduce litter and debris from reaching the bay through the regional canal system. Additional restoration efforts are being planned within the CERP and the BBSEER Project in partnership with the USACE.

The District has local partners, state partners, federal partners, tribal nations, stakeholders, members of the public, contractors and more all working together. We are continuing to see both

small and incredible large-scale projects come on-line and the beauty of it is...Everglades restoration is working!

The State of Florida and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have completed, broken ground or reached a major milestone on more than 80 Everglades restoration projects since 2019.

I am honored to be a South Florida Water Management District Governing Board Member as we work on the largest ecosystem restoration effort on Earth. This is truly the “Golden Age of Everglades Restoration,” and with your help and support, we can keep this momentum moving forward for generations to come.

*If you want to get engaged, make sure you visit our website at [SFWMD.gov](http://SFWMD.gov) to learn more about the work of the South Florida Water Management District.*



*Completion of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project on December 9, 2025, in Miami-Dade County.*



*Completion of the Picayune Strand Restoration Project on January 28, 2026, in Collier County.*



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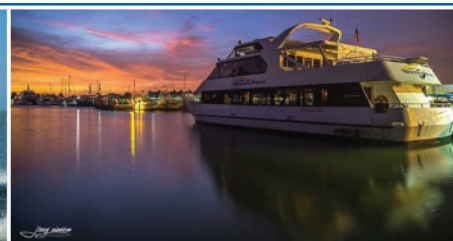


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