

JUNE 2023

FISH LINES NEWSLETTER

onward and upward SUSAN'S STORY AFTER IAN



FISH OF SANCAP, Sanibel and Captiva Islands social service organization, assists the residents and workforce of Sanibel and Captiva islands by providing long-term disaster recovery services..

Residents, the islands workforce and businesses continue to navigate insurance settlements, repairs and rebuilding nine months post Ian. "We continue to evaluate the needs of our community and are expanding and enhancing our current programs, while developing new offerings, to meet those needs," said Maria Espinoza, Executive Director.

"Our goal is to reduce economic and emotional impact to our community, and our desire is to bring our community back to normal post Ian. To accomplish this, we are identifying individuals affected by Hurricane Ian and, once qualified, providing financial assistance for housing, utilities and/or medical purposes. Our team manages cases from start to finish, meeting throughout, to determine obstacles that prevent our neighbors from moving forward. If there is not a service in place for unmet needs of our community, we work to meet it through our expansive network. We are assisting survivors rebuild through collaboration with agencies and presenting cases to the unmet needs committee for additional assistance."



"In my wildest dreams, I never imagined this," says Susan Walsh, an island employee. "While I thought my home did okay through the storm, inspections revealed water behind my walls and under the floors. That's where the nightmare begins." The name of the individual in this release has been changed to protect the client's privacy.

Although she lost her rooftop AC unit, and fencing and landscaping was destroyed, Susan thought her property fared well during the storm. Once HOA inspections were ordered, however, water intrusion was detected, and all units were assessed a fairly significant amount. "My insurance company conducted an inspection early on. They didn't see any visible damage, so denied my claim. Later, equipment was brought in to help dry out my house. A month after the dry out, contractors took out 4' of drywall." Susan reports that by the time remediation was completed, her insurance company had closed her claim and issued a nonrenewal letter. "I still had work to be done and assessments to be paid," she continues. "All flooring needed to be removed due to mold under the upstairs carpet and soft spots under the downstairs flooring."

continued on next page

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Susan's story, continued

Although she didn't want to incur additional debt, she felt no other option but to apply for and accept an SBA loan. "I've worked really hard, at times managing over six jobs, to get myself and my daughter into our own home and begin a college savings account. Then came Hurricane Ian, and I feel like I've taken ten steps backward. In a matter of 12 hours, two of my jobs were gone and others were on hold. The out of pocket cost of repairs not covered by insurance is crippling me and draining my kids' college fund." Susan notes she is now on her tenth appeal with FEMA, having only received the amount to cover her AC repair. "Don't get me wrong, I am grateful for the \$2000 FEMA provided. At this point, though, I have out of pocket expenses due to Ian of nearly \$30,000, with more to come. Additionally, HOA monthly fees have increased, the cost of goods has increased, gas and food prices are still high – it's seems like everything is going up except my income."

FISH is providing resources and support as Susan continues to work on repairing her home. She has re-opened her insurance claim and plans on filing another appeal with FEMA. Susan, noting she was concerned about her emotional well-being, requested resources for support groups. "FISH has been very helpful during this stressful time. Some days, I'm just angry; other days, I'm overwhelmed. It's refreshing to know that I can call upon FISH for support of all kinds, and I'm grateful the organization is helping so many individuals, many of which have much larger problems than I do."

FISH continues to provide long-term recovery services for anyone who lives or works on Sanibel and Captiva Islands. Many of those requesting assistance for Hurricane Ian recovery have never had to ask for assistance before. Some are working household families, others are retired seniors – all have been affected by Hurricane Ian's destruction. FISH is answering all requests for assistance including smaller asks such a bicycle for transportation to more significant requests such as emergency financial assistance, providing rebuilding supplies and assisting with medical and mental health referrals and resources.

FISH HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS PACKET

As many continue to restore and rebuild, the Atlantic hurricane season has begun. We are encouraging everyone to plan and prepare ahead of time and are providing our resource packet, available now, to anyone who requests.



To receive a free Hurricane Resource Packet, please contact the FISH Walk-In Center at 239-472-4775 or email erika@fishofsancap.org. Packets may be downloaded at fishofsancap.org, on the [Hurricane Ian Resources](#) or [Social & Senior Services](#) page.

Appointments may be arranged for those who would like a more detailed discussion on how to prepare for hurricane season.



WITH FISH HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS PACKETS

FISH is committed to the safety and well-being of our island neighbors, and hurricane season is no exception. Hurricane hazards come in many forms, including storm surge, heavy rainfall, inland flooding, high winds, etc.

It is essential to be ready before a storm approaches. FISH can help.



WEATHERING THE STORM together



Our annual **FISH Hurricane Preparedness Packet** is a valuable island resource available to anyone who requests it. The packet provides detailed information on where to go, what to do, and how/when to begin preparing for hurricane season, including:

- Suggested Do's and Don'ts
- List of Hotels
- Check Lists
- Pet Information
- Evacuation Routes
- City of Sanibel Hurricane Pass Application
- Special Needs Application
- List of Shelters/Map
- Hotline Numbers

If you or someone you know could benefit from this packet or program, please contact us. Packets can be picked up at the FISH Walk-In Center at **2430-B Periwinkle Way, Sanibel** or at our temporary office at **15550 McGregor Blvd, Suite 204, Fort Myers** and are available for download at fishofsancap.org. For a packet by mail, contact FISH by calling **239.472.4775** or email clientservices@fishofsancap.org.




neighbors helping neighbors



OUR 2022 IMPACT REPORT IS AVAILABLE!














Our islands will be, in many ways, forever changed by this past year. Witnessing the kindness, compassion and commitment of our neighbors to each other proves that the spirit of community on which FISH is founded is stronger than ever. **We have stood with Sanibel and Captiva for more than 40 years and we will continue to serve as YOUR island social service organization long into the future.** There is only one way to go from here—onward and upward. [Please visit our website to review our Onward & Upward 2022 Impact Report](#)



IMPACT 2022

FACTS

• food programs • island based education • social & senior services • helping hands & financial assistance

 <p>FISH ANSWERED 75,995 SERVICE REQUESTS</p>	 <p>3,233 MEALS-BY-FISH WERE DISTRIBUTED</p>	 <p>1,632 REASSURANCE CALLS <small>MADE TO ISLAND SENIORS</small></p>
<p>518  SMILE BOXES <small>CHEERED SENIORS</small></p>	 <p>4,041 FOOD BACKPACKS <small>WERE DISTRIBUTED FOR KIDS</small></p>	 <p>5,722 FOOD PANTRY VISITS <small>UTILIZING</small></p>
 <p>9,500 EMERGENCY SUPPLIES</p>	 <p>1,085 HOLIDAY MEALS DISTRIBUTED</p>	<p>259,270 POUNDS OF FOOD</p>
<p>240  HURRICANE PACKETS DISTRIBUTED</p>	<p>1,080  BUCKETS OF CLEANING SUPPLIES DISTRIBUTED POST IAN</p>	<p>419  PRE & POST IAN HURRICANE CALLS</p>
 <p>442 BIKES DISTRIBUTED</p>	 <p>10,341 CASES OF WATER DISTRIBUTED POST IAN</p>	 <p>24,000 10 LB BAGS OF ICE DISTRIBUTED POST IAN</p>

CHANGING LIVES IN OUR COMMUNITIES SINCE 1982

Please consider FISH as your island nonprofit partner.

93% of every dollar spent goes directly to our over 30 programs and services. Together, we will continue to be there to remove obstacles, fill in the cracks, and meet individual needs—*neighbors helping neighbors.*

2430-B Periwinkle Way, Sanibel FL 33957 239.472.4775 • fishofsancap.org





FISH FRIENDLY FACES RETURNS - IN PERSON AT THE REC CENTER!

Islanders, friends and family are invited to the community-wide FISH OF SANCAP Friendly Faces Luncheon, scheduled for Tues., July 11 beginning at 11:00am. Lunch, prepared by The Sanibel Deli, consists of a cold entree, side and dessert. The cost of the luncheon is complimentary to participants.

JOIN FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS IN-PERSON FRIENDLY FACES RETURNS!

neighbors helping neighbors

FRIENDLY FACES LUNCHEON TUESDAY, JULY 11

FISH OF SANCAP is thrilled to reinstate our community-wide Friendly Faces Luncheon, offered in-person at the Rec Center and also virtually by Zoom. Scheduled for **Tues., July 11** beginning at 11:00am, the cost of the luncheon, provided by community partner Sanibel Deli, is complimentary to guests.



United Way of Lee,
Hendry, and Glades

Guest speaker Jenn Carolluzzi, Program Coordinator ReUnite United Way of Lee, Hendry and Glades, will discuss two programs -- **ReUnite** a free, potentially life-saving program designed to reduce search time of a missing individual; and **Beesleys**, a pet therapy program.

FISH provides the food, fun and friends -- all we need is you! Please consider joining us, learning from our community speakers, and enjoying conversation and games with residents and friends!

Note: Meal selections will be provided upon RSVP. Zoom instructions for those joining virtually will be provided with RSVP. Unfortunately, there will be no meal delivery for virtual participants

DATE:
Tuesday, July 11

TIME:
Beginning at 11:00 am

LOCATION:
Sanibel Rec Center
3880 SanCap Road
also
Virtual Zoom Call

RSVP:
By July 7 to FISH
239-472-4775

Future Friendly Faces luncheons will be held on the **second Tuesday of each month** throughout 2023.



JUNE FRIENDLY FACES HIGHLIGHTS

30 neighbors joined us yesterday at our June Friendly Faces luncheon! Our speaker last month was Chris Lechowicz from SCCF, talking about post hurricane impact on the islands' wildlife





JUNE FRIENDLY FACES HIGHLIGHTS





YOUTH BACKPACK PROGRAM RETURNS!



In partnership with Harry Chapin Food Bank, we are re-launching our youth food backpack program that has been on hold since Jan.

“We are enthusiastic to bring back this program just in time for summer, when kids are more likely to go without eating,” says Manuela Martinez, Program Coordinator.

Manuela worked closely with Harry Chapin Food Bank and specifically their Harry’s Helpings program to form the partnership that supplies the program. [Read more on our website](#)

SUMMER FOOD PANTRY HOURS

FISH
OF SANCAP

neighbors helping neighbors

welcome
SUMMER

FOOD PANTRY SUMMER HOURS ARE

MONDAY-FRIDAY
10:00AM - 2:00PM



ANNOUNCEMENTS

hello!!

SUMMER

Wishing our Lee County students a happy, safe and fun summer break!

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OF SANCAP
neighbors helping neighbors

June 23: Food Pantry Closed

The Food Pantry will be closed June 23rd all day. If anyone has a food emergency call 239-472-4775 for assistance.



FISH LINES



neighbors helping neighbors

HAPPY 4TH OF JULY



INDEPENDENCE DAY

OUR OFFICES WILL BE
CLOSED ON JULY 4TH



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

SEEKING VOLUNTEERS
WHO HAVE THE ABILITY TO
LIFT AND LOAD HEAVIER
ITEMS FOR OUR FRIDAY
FURNITURE & REBUILDING
DISTRIBUTION DAYS.



Please contact FISH for information.
239.472.4775

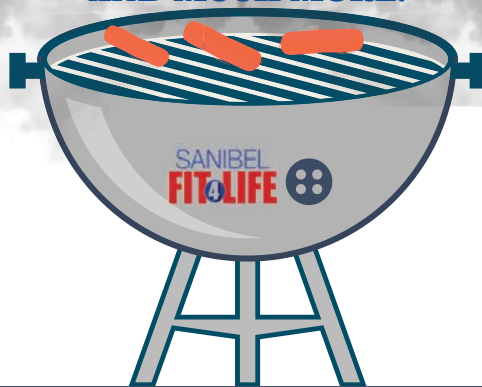


SANIBEL RECREATION CENTER

**4TH FAMILY FUN!
COMMUNITY COOKOUT
TUESDAY, JULY 4TH
11 A.M. - 2 P.M.**

FREE ENTRY

- GAMES
- MAGICIAN
- POOL PARTY
- LIVE MUSIC 11-1
- STILTWALKER
- FACE PAINTING
- INFLATABLE OBSTACLE COURSE
- HUBBARD FARM RESCUE ANIMALS
- FREE HOT DOGS, PIZZA, POPCORN & ICE CREAM AND MUCH MORE!



3880 SANIBEL CAPTIVA RD. SANIBEL, FL 33957

Thank You Sponsors





COMMUNITY SUPPORT - THANK YOU EILEEN

FISH could not provide the programs and services we do without the unwavering support of our volunteers! Our volunteers graciously provided over **7,400** hours of service and drove over **20,000** miles of behalf of FISH and our neighbors in 2022. Below is a testimonial from Eileen Fitzgerald-Spiehs about what it means to be *neighbors helping neighbors*.

I arrived at our home November 10th, once electricity and water were restored. Thankfully, our elevated home had some damage, but nothing like so many of our island residents along the Gulf or in ground-level homes. By Thanksgiving we had done all we could do...cleaning, raking, carting debris to the street...we were "on the list" for the remaining repairs. I was starting to feel lost without my list of daily chores; that's when I in knew I needed to find a purpose and FISH rescued me. Maria, Manuela, and Kim welcomed me and filled my days. I met many wonderful volunteers and found new friends.

The beginning days were a whirlwind. Shipments of cleaning supplies and food arrived almost daily. Between the tent and the FISH building, we worked together to unload trucks/cars, stock shelves, rake and clear piles of debris, all while offering a warm hug or a listening ear to an island resident who had lost far more than I had. Each day I returned home tired, dirty and feeling useful. By mid-January, we could see our little oasis returning to normal; gone was the tent and the bulk of the supplies were moved inside the FISH building thus freeing up the parking lot. Fresh produce started arriving Fridays from the farmers market at the outlets and on Mondays from the market at Jerry's. I cannot adequately describe the joy and thankfulness of our residents to this new source of nutrition. We heard of many community "pot luck" dinners created with these fresh goodies. Everyone was so grateful to our FISH leaders who made this possible.

As more residents returned to our island, past volunteers also returned to FISH to fill the open shifts. I've reduced my number of days from 3 a week to now mostly Fridays, unless a special need arises. Our Friday group is a well-oiled machine helping residents load building supplies, mattresses and bedding, vanities and donated furniture. Smiles are seen on every face and happy stories are abundant.

I've been asked why I continue to volunteer at FISH. My answer usually revolves around the things in life that feed my heart and soul...warm relationships, physical activity and feeling a sense of fulfillment by helping others in any way possible. Personal connections are very important in my life and my days at FISH satisfy those needs.

Eileen Fitzgerald-Spiehs





TEXAS YOUTH GROUP VOLUNTEERS FOR FISH

Earlier this month, a group of 16 high school aged youth visited the region for their Mission trip to help with Hurricane Ian relief service projects, and we were chosen as a nonprofit of interest since the islands sustained substantial damage from the storm.



Katie LaPenna, Youth Director at St. Laurence Church, Southlake, TX in her reach out to FISH notes, "After visiting the FISH Facebook page and website, we would love to serve alongside FISH in whatever your needs are. I can promise that we will work hard and will do it with smiles on our faces and gracious hearts!" The group absolutely delivered on their promise.

FISH Program Coordinator Manuela Martinez connected with the teens to softly launch the FISH Back to School drive. "It seemed fitting to select this project and support students helping students get ready for back to school," says Martinez. "So many of our students lost everything and had to repurchase supplies when schools reopened post Ian. Now, with school restarting is just six weeks, it seemed like the perfect project for this amazing youth group." The teens spent the day collecting, sorting and assembling back to school supplies for the upcoming distribution by FISH at the end of July. FISH's annual back to school drive will officially

launch next month however donations are currently being accepted. Information on the upcoming back to school drive and launch date will be released soon.

The Youth Group also helped sort and organize the Food Pantry, open Mon.-Fri. from 10:00a-2:00p to residents and the island workforce. "This was such a rewarding experience for our group," says LaPenna. "Coming and seeing the devastation here on Sanibel was a shock. But, having the opportunity to serve the residents on the islands, to hear their stories and to see their determination, was our favorite part. FISH offered us the opportunity to serve the residents, to offer a smile and a friendly hello every time they stepped foot into FISH's facility. Helping stock the shelves and make everything look welcoming and organized was great!"

If you, or your group, is interested in volunteering at FISH, information is located on our website or by phone, 239-472-4775.





CALLING ALL FRIENDS OF FISH!

Our annual Race 4 F.I.S.H. is one of our major annual fundraisers and we want to bring it back to our community in 2023 by planning something **grand!** We are looking for additional members to assist us in planning, coordinating and executing a great event for 2023! Currently we meet via Zoom on the last Friday of the month, beginning at 10:00am to discuss ideas, materials, coordination, and more! You don't need to be a runner to become a race committee member! For additional information, please contact [Diane](#) or [Nicole](#).



CAMEO SUPPORTS FISH SENIOR PROGRAMS

CAMEO of Lee County, a group of individuals who are dedicated to the betterment of the lives of seniors in SWFL, recently awarded us a grant to partially fund our Smile Box and Friendly Faces programs. CAMEO consists of members who represent many different private and public services and businesses that serve the senior community. For information, visit cameoofleecounty.com.



The FISH Smile Box program was inspired by the subscription box trend where participants receive boxes of products and goodies regularly. FISH realized its positive impact on the community and has incorporated the Smile Box program into a regular monthly offering to over 60 participants. Due to Hurricane Ian, Smile Box delivery was placed on hold but has since been re-launched.

Friendly Faces, a monthly luncheon gathering, is one of FISH's original and very popular offerings. Relaunched in this month, community members are embracing the opportunity to reconnect with friends and neighbors and learn about area activities as evidenced by the 30+ participants that attended.

Pictured, Amy McQuagge VP Director of Marketing for SanCap Community Bank (L); Erika Broyles, FISH Senior Services Director (R)

Hosted at the Sanibel Recreation Center with lunch provided by the Sanibel Deli, FISH recruits speakers to introduce programs and offerings in the area. Games and activities are incorporated for all participants to enjoy.

"We are so grateful for grant committee of CAMEO to recognize these very important programs and support us through their grant funding," says Erika Broyles, Senior Services Director, FISH. "It's been very difficult, particularly for our seniors, since the hurricane and the isolation, confusion and disruption that comes with being displaced for months. With assistance from CAMEO, other supporters and our volunteers, everyone is making a difference in the lives of our seniors."



WE NEED GREAT PEOPLE LIKE YOU!

As we move toward summer months and some of our volunteers return to their 'up north' homes, we are in need of additional volunteers to assist. Please contact us to sign-up as a FISH volunteer or to answer any volunteer questions you may have. It's a great way to connect and serve the community!

ABOUT FISH

FISH of SanCap is a nonprofit, staffed by more than 200 volunteers. Professionals staff our Sanibel site and our temporary Fort Myers location and are available Mon. through Fri. to assist islanders and visitors with an array of services and programs. FISH is Sanibel and Captiva's only *neighbors helping neighbors* organization offering a range of human services including:

- Temporary Emergency Financial Assistance
- Disaster Assistance
- Limited Food Pantry
- Medical Equipment Loan
- Hot Meals Program
- Friendly Faces Luncheon
- Kid's Food Backpack
- Youth Scholarships
- Referrals & Resources
- Furniture Distribution
- Tools For Loan Program
- VITA (Income Tax Preparation)

