

JANUARY 2024

# FISH LINES NEWSLETTER

onward and upward

## Long-Term Recovery Continues with Help from FISH



As the New Year begins, many are hopeful 2024 will bring new beginnings for Hurricane Ian survivors continuing their recovery journey. We have spent 2023 working with residents and the islands' workforce who continue to struggle with the after effects of the devastating storm. While much progress has been made, many in the community still have not returned. And nothing seems 'back to normal', yet.



The islands' workforce and residents report ongoing struggles with repairs to their homes. From peeling paint to cracks in the floor to missing drywall, roofs and more, homeowners and tenants are finding it difficult to move forward. "The emotional, physical and financial stress on our community is huge," says Manuela Martinez, Disaster Administrative Director. "Many don't know when repairs will be complete; some have emptied their savings while trying to bring their home back to pre-Ian condition. There are still many challenges facing survivors today."

We are working around the clock to identify Ian survivors' still needing assistance in hopes of ascertaining repairs, obtaining bids and expediting the rebuilding process. On Fri., Jan. 19th a team of volunteers from FGCU will be available to assess the needs of those living or working on Sanibel and Captiva islands. Between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., student volunteers will be distributing FISH Long-Term Recovery program applications at Jerrys Foods, 1700 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel; Periwinkle Park, 1119 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel and the Sanibel Public Library, 770 Dunlop Road, Sanibel. "The goal of our Long-Term Recovery program is to identify and assist those still struggling with the financial burden from Hurricane Ian," continues Martinez. "While we cannot reimburse individuals for monies spent, we might be able to provide financial assistance for projects moving forward." The program, in part, is made available through the organization's partnership with The Sanctuary Golf Club Foundation and the American National Red Cross.

Martinez notes the Long-Term Recovery program is available to those that live -- homeowners and/or tenants -- or work full-time on the islands only. The amount of financial assistance is limited and may only cover partial payments toward the cost of repairs. Payments are made to vendors who are providing services or recovery efforts due to Hurricane Ian and not to individuals. These may include but are not limited to housing repairs, permitting costs, temporary housing, loss of goods and furnishings, and any other hurricane related needs. for primary homes only.

2430-B Periwinkle Way, Sanibel FL 33957

**Temporary Mailing Address:** 15550 McGregor Boulevard, Suite 204, Fort Myers, FL 33908

239.472.4775 ~ [fishofsancap.org](http://fishofsancap.org) ~ email: [info@fishofsancap.org](mailto:info@fishofsancap.org)





## Long-Term Recovery, continued

To apply for the FISH Long-Term Recovery program, an application must be completed. Interested individuals may pick up an application from volunteer teams on Jan. 19 at the locations noted above, can download the application from the FISH website or can visit the organization at their Sanibel location, 2422 Periwinkle Way. Certain documentation is required as well as an initial intake session with their Disaster Case Manager, Nitza Lopez.

Completed applications and documentation may be delivered to FISH at 2422 Periwinkle Way between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday-Friday, or scanned and emailed to [nitza@fishofsancap.org](mailto:nitza@fishofsancap.org). Community members are encouraged to visit with the FISH team and refer the program to other residents and workforce, even if they don't think they are eligible, as FISH may be able to provide additional resources for assistance including legal aid and opportunities to fast track the recovery process. For those unable to visit FISH on Sanibel, please contact Nitza Lopez at 239-472-4775 -- se habla español.

In addition to the Long-Term Recovery program, we are continuing the POD furniture distribution, in partnership with United Way Gifts In-Kind. Beginning Jan. 5th and continuing every other Friday, we distribute household furnishings and items to residents and the island workforce. Items are limited to three per household. Items may be picked up at 2430 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Individuals first check in with a FISH team member to provide proof of island residency or employment and then may view available items once their number is called. They have approximately 10 minutes to load selected items. Please bring assistance to help with heavy loading and a large vehicle.

We also continue to offer traditional programs focused on our four major pillars – Food, Island Based Education, Social and Senior Services, and Helping Hands to ensure no need goes unmet. If you or someone you know needs assistance, contact FISH at 239.472.4775. For questions or services specific to Long-Term Recovery program and the application process, please contact Nitza Lopez, 239.472.4775 or [nitza@fishofsancap.org](mailto:nitza@fishofsancap.org).





## Welcome 2024 Board of Directors

We are pleased to announce John Morse, Esq. as Board Chair and Susan Ryckman, MSN, RN, CPNP as Board Vice Chair. Welcome returning director Sheridan Snell and new directors Bill Hayles and Leah Winkler to the FISH OF SANCAP 2024 Board.



John Morse is currently serving on the Board of Directors of FISH and is past Board Chair of the FISH Foundation. Morse was originally appointed to the FISH Board of Directors in February 2011 and served until December 2021. He was Board Chair of FISH in calendar years 2013 and 2014, and was elected Board Emeritus January 2022. Morse is a retired corporate attorney and now also serves as General Counsel for FISH. He also serves on the Boards of the Charitable Foundation of the Islands and the Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation.

Susan Ryckman joined Lee Health in 2012, and served as the VP of Operations and Chief Nurse Executive for Golisano Children’s Hospital of SW Florida until retiring in September of 2020. A Chicago area native, Ryckman is a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner who held a variety of clinical and leadership roles since completion of her undergraduate work in 1977 at Northern Illinois University. She serves on the RMHC Board of Directors, currently as President, and on the local March of Dimes Board of Directors, as well as actively supporting several other organizations focused on the care and nurture of children and families.



Bill Hayles has extensive leadership and operation management skills having worked in the hospitality industry for more than 30 years. Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Hayles graduated from the University of Manitoba with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology, and went on to complete an Advanced Management Program for the Hospitality Industry at the University of Guelph (Ontario). Throughout his career, he was repeatedly recognized for excellent customer service, developing teams with high employee engagement and service ratings, and receiving numerous service awards, including the ITT Ring of Quality Award.

Sheridan Snell, returning as a director, was elected to the FISH Board for her first term beginning Jan. 1, 2016 thru Dec. 31, 2018 and for her second term Jan. 1, 2019 thru Dec. 31, 2021. She was elected Board Emeritus Jan. 2023 and is a member of the FISH Donor Development and Building Committees. She is also very involved with raising donor awareness to the operational needs of FISH as well as other FISH essentials to meet client needs all year long, especially in times of island disasters. Sheridan and her family made Sanibel their permanent home over 3 years ago after visiting and falling in love with the island and its people.





## 2024 Board continued



Leah Winkler has Master's degree in Occupational Therapy from Towson University. Her passion for making a positive impact on the lives of others led her to a career in the field of therapy. As a dedicated mother of two grown boys and a devoted wife of 32 years, Leah has not only prioritized her family but has also managed to contribute significantly to various non-profit organizations. In 2020, she made the decision to establish a more permanent presence on the islands by purchasing a Sanibel home, marking the beginning of her involvement with FISH.

In 2021, Leah began volunteering in the FISH food pantry. Her commitment to making a difference was further exemplified when she co-chaired the FISH 5K/10K and music festival committee in 2023. Leah's professional journey includes a noteworthy position as the Vice President of Operations at Genesis Health Ventures. In this role, she demonstrated exemplary leadership skills, overseeing the Profit and Loss responsibilities for a substantial team of 1,500 therapists. Her ability to navigate complex operational challenges and lead with vision and efficiency contributed significantly to the success of the organization. Overall, Leah's life story is a testament to her unwavering commitment to family, community service, and professional excellence. Her journey reflects a harmonious blend of compassion, leadership, and a relentless drive to create positive change in the lives of those around her.

"Jim and Ellen have been outstanding FISH Officers, and I am grateful for the leadership and direction they have provided to our organization. We're thankful for their support and continued service to FISH as Past Board Chair (Jim) and Director (Ellen). We are also looking forward to working with John Morse as Chair and Susan Ryckman as Vice Chair as they lead the FISH organization through our recovery journey," states Maggi Feiner, President & CEO, FISH. "They both bring a wide range of business and professional expertise, as well as in-depth knowledge of our community, to our organization. Feiner notes the organization's enthusiasm to work with returning member Snell and new members Hayles and Winkler. "Their life experiences and passion for our neighbors helping neighbors organization will enhance our mission as we continue to assist Hurricane Ian survivors and those in need."

Additional FISH Board Officers include Jim Metzler, Ph.D., Past Board Chair; Maggi Feiner, President & CEO; Greg Blurton, Treasurer; Nicole McHale, Secretary. FISH Directors also include Jim Brady; Melissa Congress; Jane Majeski; Lisa Ann Miller, MD; Kathy Samson; and Ellen Sloan, Ph.D. Please join us in thanking our former Board Chairs and welcoming our 2024 Board Officers and Directors.

welcome



## Wrap Around Services provided by FISH



FISH OF SANCAP is Sanibel and Captiva Islands complete wrap around social service organization. We continue to grow to meet the demands of the community, offering programs ranging from long-term disaster recovery and emergency financial assistance to a food pantry; educational workshops, senior programs and more. If there is not a service in place for unmet needs of community members, we work to meet it through existing and new partnerships.

Those receiving services from us can be single individuals or families with a single request, while others need care and assistance for a longer period of time.

John Holiday, whose name has been changed for privacy purposes, was a Vietnam veteran and a long time island resident. Holiday lived alone in a small apartment, was unable to work due to his many medical conditions and struggled to make ends meet because of the high cost of treatment, medication and care. He had few friends and very little contact with his sister or children, his only remaining family members.

Holiday became known to us several years ago, when a neighbor realized she hadn't seen him for a while. The neighbor reached out to the landlord and FISH, and a team member and volunteer nurse conducted a home visit where they discovered the high level of assistance Holiday required. When talking with him, we noticed Holiday was lethargic and disengaged in conversation. His apartment was untidy and cluttered with old newspapers and clothing, and Holiday mentioned he didn't have the energy to clean or entertain guests.

Holiday struggled with multiple medical conditions, was barely able to walk, dress or feed himself, and had very little food in his apartment. According to Holiday, he didn't want to answer the door or leave his house and he hadn't been outside for nearly a month. Holiday was weak, hungry, confused and angry, and he needed immediate assistance.

Working with medical professionals and the VA Hospital, we assisted with transportation and helped offset the cost of a complete physical, medications, an inhaler and a walker. We provided a list of home health providers and helped interview caregivers until they found a gentleman who would provide homebound care services to ensure Holiday's health and well-being. We also provided a weekly cleaning service and worked with the Area Agency on Aging, Lee County Veterans Services and other agencies for additional services and referrals that may help Holiday.



## Wrap Around Services continued

We offered the food pantry for groceries and hygiene items, set Holiday up on the Meals-by-FISH plan and scheduled daily morning check-in calls. Knowing Holiday had little savings and was on a fixed income with little money to pay for living expenses, FISH assisted from time to time with the bills Holiday was unable to afford. On occasion, Holiday and his caregiver would attend the Friendly Faces luncheon where they made a few friends who would look in on Holiday when his caregiver needed respite. We connected with Holiday's sister and adult children and was able to reunite the family through occasional FaceTime phone calls.

FISH assisted Holiday for several years with many different services; he and his caregiver became well-known to staff and volunteers. Weekly home visits were established, and our volunteers noted while the visits were initially welcomed, over time it became obvious that Holiday did not want visitors.

Holiday's health began to deteriorate and he was diagnosed with cancer. He had several hospital and rehabilitation stays and his out of state family became more involved as he declined. Although several attempts were made to move him closer to his children, Holiday refused to leave his island home. As he became more ill, he cut off communications with his children, began to refuse services from us and others, and didn't eat the majority of his home delivered meals. Unfortunately, Holiday's health would never improve, and he was moved into an assisted living facility where he later passed.

"Not all are happy endings," said Holiday's sister. "Please know, I remain grateful for all the help and support my brother received from FISH during his last years on Sanibel. Given his medical challenges, he wasn't always easy to deal with but FISH never stopped trying. I'll always be grateful for your service." Holiday's children, also grateful, noted, "The level of service from FISH was second to none. It was a long roller coaster ride for us and Dad, but he is now at peace. We strongly believe that FISH played a large role in prolonging his life on Sanibel, his special sanctuary, and never gave up on him even when he gave up on himself [and us]. Nitza, Maggi, Maria, the FISH volunteers and others are angels. Thank you for caring, for your never-ending assistance, and for your service to all."

Our team is able to provide care to community members like Holiday through their network of individual donors, grants, and partnerships with organizations and the local business community that provide goods and services on an in-kind basis or at a reduced cost. If you, or someone you know, is in need of service, please contact FISH at (239) 472-4775. Our target population is anyone who lives or works on Sanibel and Captiva Islands, including the most vulnerable senior population. We are answering all requests for assistance that include slight asks, such as providing a bicycle to someone who has no transportation, to more significant requests including emergency financial assistance, providing rebuilding supplies and assisting with medical and mental health referrals and resources.





# JOIN FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS FISH OF SANCAP FRIENDLY FACES LUNCHEON

*neighbors helping neighbors*  
FRIENDLY FACES LUNCHEON  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 11:00 a.m.



The FISH OF SANCAP community-wide Friendly Faces Luncheon is offered at the Sanibel Recreation Center and virtually by Zoom. The cost of the luncheon, provided by community partner Sanibel Deli, is complimentary to guests.

Dr. Peter Blaze Corcoran, Professor Emeritus of Environmental Studies & Environmental Education, Florida Gulf Coast University, is the guest speaker.

In this illustrated talk, Dr. Corcoran will share Frances Perkins' life story, her faith-based activist journey, and her continuing legacy. Inspired by her Mount Holyoke College education and her Episcopal faith, Frances Perkins envisioned and fought for social justice, fair and safe conditions of labor, and the alleviation of poverty. She was the first woman in American history to serve as a Cabinet Secretary. In 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt appointed her to serve as Secretary of Labor and she held that post through his entire presidency. She was the architect of the New Deal and was the force behind the minimum wage, the forty-hour work week, workers compensation, unemployment insurance, workplace safety regulation, child labor protection, and Social Security.

*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. Future Friendly Faces luncheons will be held on the second Tuesday of each month throughout 2024.*



DATE:  
Tuesday, Feb. 13

TIME:  
Beginning at 11:00 am

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

RSVP:  
To Erika Broyles, FISH  
By Feb. 9239-472-4775  
erika@fishofsancap.org

FISH continues to help neighbors in meeting their physical, mental and emotional needs. As always, we are committed to being a safety net for all. At the end of the day, our message is simple -- FISH is for everyone.



food programs

island based education

social & senior services

helping hands & financial assistance

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





## Senior Programs Bring Joy, Thanks

Although the holidays have come and gone, the spirit of giving and heartfelt appreciation continue with FISH OF SANCAP's programs and services.

Heidi Cutler, whose name has been changed for privacy purposes, is a senior woman living on Sanibel for many years. She no longer works and lives modestly with social security being her only source of income. "I'm in pretty good health, given my age," says Cutler. "I'm grateful to have a roof over my head and for the support I receive from friends, particularly those at FISH."



Cutler is a participant in the Meals-by-FISH program, a service offered by the organization that provides one hot, nutritious meal per day, up to 5 days/week, including extras for the weekend to island neighbors. Meals, prepared by Jerry's Foods, consist of a protein, starch and vegetable and are provided to anyone currently living on Sanibel or Captiva who request the service. "FISH helps me with the cost, since I am on a fixed income. For that, I am truly grateful," continues Cutler.

The FISH meals program is not the only service Cutler enjoys. She received furnishings and household items to replace what was lost from Ian, uses the food pantry and enjoys weekly visits from volunteers who bring her water and supplemental snacks.

Cutler reports she regularly attends the Friendly Faces luncheon and receives an occasional smile box, which 'brightens her day'.

For the 2023 winter holiday, Cutler was added to the Sponsor a Senior gift program. The program, specifically for the islands' senior population, was designed to bring merriment and cheer to island elders. FISH provided personalized holiday gifts specifically requested by the participant for the holiday.

"I cannot praise FISH enough for everything they do for me and others. The gifts I received for the holiday were perfect and it made me feel seen and heard. Erika at FISH really cares about us older people."

Erika Broyles, FISH OF SANCAP's Senior Services Director, works daily overseeing programs and services as they relate to the community's senior population. At FISH, these include social and educational offerings, food programs, financial assistance and support and healthcare related programs including equipment for loan and mental health counseling.







# Holiday Highlights





## Announcements

It is with great sadness that we announce the loss of Garry Whalen, FISH volunteer, advocate and friend. Garry passed away Wednesday, December 13, 2023. Garry graduated from City College of New York and then earned his master's degree from the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations. He had a long and well-regarded career as a negotiator in the state of New Jersey. Garry enjoyed running for most of his life and would go out for long runs with the family dog Sandy in the area around the home in New Jersey. He loved beaches and found a wonderful home and community on Sanibel Island. While he lived on Sanibel Garry was a consistent volunteer at FISH. Garry is survived by his wife Eileen, his brother Thomas, his sons Sean (wife, Hathaway) and Michael (wife Michelle), and three grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in memory of Garry Michael Whalen are suggested to FISH of Sanibel-Captiva.



### Where can you find us?

**2422 Periwinkle Way**

**The Food Pantry Hours**

Mon, Wed, Fri 10am - 3pm

Tues, Thurs 10am - 7:30pm

**Staff Office Hours**

Monday - Friday 8am - 4pm

**Mental Health Wednesdays**

**St. Michael Church,  
2304 Periwinkle Way**

**Mental Health Wednesdays with SalusCare,**  
every week. Please schedule with  
[erika@fishofsancap.org](mailto:erika@fishofsancap.org) for individual sessions.

We are now meeting in the library of  
St. Michael Church, located in their main building.

**Furniture Distributions**

**2430 Periwinkle Way**

Every other Friday from 9am-11am.

[merari@fishofsancap.org](mailto:merari@fishofsancap.org)

**[info@fishofsancap.org](mailto:info@fishofsancap.org) | 239-472-0404**



## We Need Great People Like You!

We're always in need of additional volunteers to assist with our programs and events. 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. - 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**
- **Long-Term Recovery**
- **Food Pantry**
- **Mental Health Services**
- **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)**



## Our Volunteers, Partners & Team in Action



THANK YOU