

NOVEMBER 2024

FISH LINES



NEWSLETTER

the journey home

Hurricane Milton Response

FISH took proactive steps to provide essential services and support for the Sanibel and Captiva communities ahead of and after Hurricane Milton:

- The FISH food pantry opened before the storm hit to ensure all residents had access to food and other resources.
- FISH distributed Red Cross emergency bucket kits, which contain essential supplies for families in need.
- The Hurricane Committee, composed of dedicated volunteers and community members, contacted residents—particularly seniors—to assist them with their evacuation plans, including helping those who needed help to evacuate.

FISH took a lead role in keeping the community informed and prepared, providing daily updates and guidance as the storm approached.

Also, as a United Way Resiliency Hub, FISH provided essential services in the wake of Hurricane Milton. FISH mobilized to support the community by providing much-needed relief and resources. Despite ongoing recovery challenges FISH is committed to remaining a resource and lifeline for the community in this critical time.

Post Milton, FISH set up a Point of Distribution (POD) at the Sanibel Community House complete with an emergency food pantry pop-up, ice, water, Publix gift cards, cleaning supplies, tarps, and specialized disaster kits for seniors. "We know how crucial it is to get essential items into the hands of our community members as quickly as possible," said Maria Espinoza, Executive Director of FISH. "Our team worked tirelessly to ensure that everyone who needs help had access to it."



2430 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel FL 33957
Food Pantry Address: 2422 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel FL 33957
239.472.4775 | fishofsancap.org | email: info@fishofsancap.org





Hurricane Milton Response

FISH is grateful to have partnered with World Central Kitchen, who has generously provided hot meals for community members at the Sanibel Community House and Captiva Civic Association.

Additional Support & Services Provided:

- Fans for Drying: FISH offered portable fans available for community members to borrow for up to 8 hours to help dry out their homes and reduce the risk of mold.
- Internet Connectivity: WiFi access complete with computer and printing stations was available at the Community House to support residents needing to connect.
- Laundry Station: FISH established a laundry station at the Community House

"FISH hit the ground running to serve our neighbors well before Milton struck our islands, and we've stayed with them throughout the aftermath," said FISH Executive Director Maria Espinoza.

"It's vital to understand the devastating effect of yet another storm on our neighbors," she added. "We stand with them. That commitment began before the storm, and we'll keep on serving everyone who needs us as our community recovers and rebuilds."

To contact FISH, call (239) 472-4775 or the FISH 24-hour hotline, (239) 472-0404, or email info@fishofsancap.org. To make a financial gift for hurricane relief, go to fishofsancap.org and click on "Donate Now."





FISH LINES





Thank You To Our Disaster Response Partners

In this critical recovery period, we continue answering calls for assistance. None of this would have been possible without the support of our strategic partners, who have stepped up in incredible ways, for which we are deeply grateful.

- **American Red Cross** who has been invaluable in providing hurricane kits and offering on-the-ground assistance. Their unwavering partnership has been vital through multiple hurricane disasters, including the recent devastation of Hurricane Milton. Standing side by side, the Red Cross and FISH have provided critical supplies, support, and guidance to help residents rebuild and recover after each storm. From emergency supplies to disaster response expertise, the Red Cross has consistently ensured that our community's urgent needs are met, reinforcing hope in times of hardship.
- **Captiva Civic Association** for serving as central hubs for relief efforts and for their invaluable role in supporting our relief efforts for Captiva's residents and workforce. In a time of significant need, they provided a welcoming space for us to coordinate essential services and distribute vital resources, serving as a beacon of hope and stability for those affected. Their commitment to the wellbeing of Captiva has made a tremendous difference, ensuring that our displaced residents, as well as the hardworking individuals who serve our community, have a reliable and compassionate support network close at hand.
- **Sanibel-Captiva Rotary** who lent their hands to the recovery process, ensuring that vital services are extended across the islands. The partnership between FISH and Rotary has been a cornerstone of community support, marked by Rotary's readiness to step in and lend a hand, especially in times of crisis. Known for their willingness to do the heavy lifting, Rotary members bring energy, resources, and a sense of commitment that reinforces FISH's mission whenever disaster strikes. This partnership goes beyond practical assistance; it's built on a longstanding relationship built on shared community values and the common goal of helping our neighbors in need.
- **Sanibel Community House** who opened their doors and provided a haven when we needed it most. After our own facilities were inoperable due to Milton, the Community House generously stepped in to serve as a central hub for relief, support, and community connection. In the face of adversity, they became the heart of the island—welcoming our team, partners, and community members, ensuring we had a stable location to coordinate urgent services and essential aid. This partnership reflects the resilience and compassion that defines Sanibel; together, we are committed to bringing hope and assistance to those in need.





Thank You To Our Disaster Response Partners cont'd

- **World Central Kitchen (WCK)** who provided warm, nutritious meals to those affected. The new partnership with WCK was a source of strength and sustenance for our community. Beyond providing nourishing meals, they offered invaluable support and encouragement to those grappling with the emotional and physical toll of yet another disaster. Their dedicated team was there with friendly words and warm meals, addressing not only the basic needs of hunger but also uplifting the spirits of residents facing uncertain times.
- **United Way of Lee, Hendry, and Glades** who has played a key role in ensuring resources are allocated where they are most needed. As a lead agency, proud partner, and one of 17 Resiliency Hubs located across Lee, Hendry and Glades counties, FISH works with United Way and a network of agencies to offer crucial day-to-day services. When disasters strike, Hubs like FISH can quickly pivot to provide emergency items including food, water, tarps and other vital resources.



United Way of Lee,
Hendry, and Glades

We also want to extend our heartfelt thanks to many **donors** who have offered both financial contributions and critical supplies, helping to provide a lifeline to those in crisis. Your generosity and commitment to the community have been essential in making recovery possible.

We are immensely grateful to our amazing **FISH volunteers**, whose dedication and hard work have been the backbone of our relief efforts. Without their selfless service, we would not be able to provide the critical resources and support that are so desperately needed during this difficult time.

Finally, to the incredible **FISH team**, we offer our deepest gratitude. They have worked around the clock, leaving no stone unturned, bringing hope and relief to those in need. Their dedication is the heart of everything we do, and their efforts are transforming lives in this difficult time. Together, we will continue to rebuild and move forward as a community, stronger than ever.





How We Help Our Neighbors In Need

FISH Continues to Support Families Facing Struggles After Hurricane Milton



The ongoing recovery from Hurricane Milton has left many families facing unprecedented challenges, especially following back-to-back storms that have added to their struggles. For Chris Miller and her son, the situation is particularly heartbreaking. Despite extensive pre-storm preparations, including filling over 40 sandbags, they were unable to prevent water from severely damaging their home.

After spending a week at a local Marriott, the Miller family received the devastating news that they could not return to their house. "We did everything we could," Chris shared. "But the water still came in.

We didn't expect to be displaced like this." [Read more.](#)

FISH Reconnects with Residents and Workers Post-Hurricane Milton, Offering Wrap-Around Services to Meet Immediate Needs

Since Hurricane Milton, FISH of SANCAP has been reconnecting with local residents and workers, listening to their heartbreaking stories of water damage, wind damage, and ongoing struggles without power or water. What began as a few familiar faces from the food pantry quickly grew into a community-wide response, as even those who only occasionally visited FISH in times of 'blue skies' sought help after the storm.



Manuela, FISH Disaster Administrative Director, was surprised by a conversation with an employee from Tween Waters Island Resort & Spa. "Hearing his story reminded me how connected we are as a community. Residents and the workforce of our islands were deeply affected by this storm, and it brings us together through similar experiences. Whether working here or living here, we all share in the impact of these storms," she said. [Read more.](#)





FACING IMPOSSIBLE CHOICES

"FISH provides crucial supports that seniors need in the face of rising costs and fixed income. We're proud to serve them and grateful for our donors who make it possible."

—Maria Espinoza, FISH Executive Director



fixed income senior struggles

Not everyone gets to spend retirement playing golf or traveling. In fact, some retirees right here in our island communities are struggling to make ends meet. In Florida, the average senior citizen has \$2,513 in monthly income. **Yet the monthly minimum wage for household essentials for a single senior is \$3,056 — a shortfall of 18%. No wonder 11% of seniors in our region live in poverty, and 32% are above poverty but not financially stable** — a population known as ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed).

FISH's Senior Services provide relief through numerous programs including: Food Pantry, Meals-by-FISH, Friendly Faces Luncheons, Smile Boxes, free medical equipment loans, hurricane preparedness resources, and daily reassurance calls. The FISH transportation program makes sure seniors get to their doctor and other appointments.

Your support makes sure our seniors don't have to face impossible choices.

Please consider a gift today.

DONATE TODAY!



SENIOR SURVIVAL BUDGET	
costs of basic essentials	
housing	\$976
food	\$465
transportation	\$362
health care	\$541
technology	\$86
miscellaneous	\$243
taxes	\$383
MONTHLY	\$3,056
YEARLY	\$36,672

*sources—2023 ALICE Report, Lee County, United For ALICE, tinyurl.com/2hy22tpr; SmartAsset.com, analysis of U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2023, tinyurl.com/366736f7

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





Thanksgiving Food Baskets and Community Thanksgiving



This Thanksgiving season, FISH of SANCAP (FISH) is partnering with local businesses and community organizations to provide Thanksgiving food baskets and a community meal for island residents and the workforce. The annual program spreads holiday cheer and ensures no family goes without a warm, traditional meal during the holiday.

FISH is currently accepting non-perishable food donations through its holiday food drive, now through Nov. 15th. Individuals may drop off items at various locations across Sanibel including FISH, Magic Bus, Bank of the Islands, Sanibel Captiva Community Bank,

and the Sanibel Library. The organization hopes to distribute 250 Thanksgiving baskets this year, and St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church is generously donating pies to accompany each basket.

Volunteers will assemble the dry ingredients for the baskets on Nov. 22nd from 8 AM to 1 PM. Individuals and groups interested in volunteering are encouraged to check POINT, the volunteer opportunity platform offered by FISH. For additional information on POINT or volunteering, please contact Merari Salinas, Community Outreach Manager at FISH.

The FISH Thanksgiving Food Basket distribution will take place at the Food Pantry, 2422 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel, on Nov. 25th from 10 AM to 3 PM, Nov. 26th from 10 AM to 7:30 PM, and Nov. 27th from 10 AM to 12 PM. Community members in need, or who know of someone who might benefit from a Thanksgiving Food Basket, should contact Merari Salinis at FISH (239-472-4775 or merari@fishofsancap.org)

The FISH Community Thanksgiving Meal will be held at the Sanibel Community House on Tues., Nov. 26 from 3-7pm. FISH is working hard to make this year's meal, provided by Jerry's, the most joyous event ever and is excited to share Thanksgiving with the community. FISH encourages the community to check the FISH social media channels for updates and information.

"We are so grateful for the support we receive from our community partners and volunteers who help us bring the spirit of Thanksgiving to our neighbors," shared Maria Espinoza, Executive Director of FISH. "By working together, we can ensure that everyone has a joyful holiday, whether it's through our Thanksgiving baskets or at our community meal."

For more information about the FISH Thanksgiving Food Basket distribution or the Community Thanksgiving Meal, or to inquire about volunteer opportunities, please contact FISH of SANCAP at 239-472-4775 or visit www.fishofsancap.org.



FISH LINES

FISH invites you—our island neighbors to a

Thanksgiving CELEBRATION

In this, and in every season, FISH is truly thankful for the unique caring spirit of our wonderful island community. Come join friends, family and neighbors at the table for a traditional turkey dinner with all the fixings provided in partnership with Jerry's Foods.



Tuesday, November 26 from 3-7p at **The Community House**

SANIBEL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

2173 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel





Board Member Kathy Samson's is ENPY Award Finalist



We are thrilled to announce that Board Member Kathy Samson has been selected as a finalist for the annual Excellence in Nonprofit Performance Yearly Awards (ENPY), hosted by the Community Foundation.

Out of an impressive pool of over 300 nominees, Kathy stands among the 39 finalists honored for their exceptional service and dedication to community impact in Southwest Florida. Kathy's nomination for the Paul Sanborn "Service Above Self" Award highlights her solid commitment to advancing the mission of FISH and supporting the community with selfless dedication.

Kathy's involvement with FISH spans more than five years, during which she has consistently shared her professional expertise and time to benefit the organization's initiatives. As a seasoned marketing professional, Kathy has lent her skills to developing meaningful marketing campaigns that have heightened awareness of FISH's vital services, from food assistance and mental health support to disaster relief and senior programming. Her efforts have not only amplified FISH's visibility within the community but have also helped generate critical support.

During the challenging aftermath of Hurricane Ian, Kathy played an essential role in communicating FISH's relief efforts, connecting residents to essential resources while personally navigating the storm's impact on her own life. Her commitment to service has extended to hands-on volunteer work at various FISH events, where she consistently contributes in both public and behind-the-scenes roles.

Kathy exemplifies the "Service Above Self" spirit by inspiring others to get involved and make a difference. Her leadership and compassion encourage those around her to contribute to the betterment of Southwest Florida, creating a lasting impact that strengthens the community.

"Kathy's selfless dedication to FISH and our community is inspiring to us all. Her work ensures that FISH can continue to be a lifeline to so many. We are incredibly proud to see her commitment recognized by the Community Foundation," said Maria Espinoza, Executive Director of FISH.

The ENPY awards ceremony luncheon will take place on Dec. 3 at the Double Tree Hotel at Bell Tower, Fort Myers, where Kathy and her fellow finalists will be celebrated for their contributions to the nonprofit sector.



Join Us at JOG N JAM



FISH invites all to their December JOG N JAM event, a fun-filled day of fitness, music, and community celebration, taking place on Sat., Dec. 7th. This year, the event is held in cooperation with the Lee County Tourist Development Council and will also help celebrate the City of Sanibel's 50th anniversary. The 2024 JOG N JAM promises to be bigger and better than ever, featuring a 10K and 5K race, a kids' run, and a concert on the beach with fireworks. The JOG N JAM is in support of FISH's vital programs and services.

Runners (and joggers and walkers), and concertgoers are encouraged to make the most of the JOG N JAM event by staying on the beautiful islands of Sanibel and Captiva for the weekend or even longer! FISH has partnered with on and off island hotels to offer discounted rates for event participants and their families. For more information on these special accommodations and to secure your stay, please visit our [website](#). To learn more about our event, continue reading [here](#).

New Team Competition Option for 2024 JOG N JAM

We're excited to announce a new addition to this year's JOG N JAM event: the opportunity for teams to compete in the in-person 10K and 5K races! Participants can now join forces with friends, family, or colleagues to create a team with a chance to win a team competition award, making this year's race more exciting and engaging than ever before. To participate in the team competition, racers must sign up to be part of a team during the entry process. ***The deadline for team signups is Sat., Dec. 6th at 6 pm. After this cutoff, no additional team entries or modifications will be accepted.*** For those already registered but wishing to create or join a team, please contact FISH's timer and registrar, Mark at Lin-Mark Sports, via email at linmarksports@linmarksports.com. Be sure to include your name and the team you'd like to join or create.



To date, we're pleased to welcome the following registered teams: Captial Fitness, Doc Ford's Sanibel, Lexi's Legion, Lindsey, The Sanctuary Golf Club Foundation, The Sanibel Sisterhood and Tropical Sunrise. Join today to add your team to the list! [Continue reading for more details](#).

For more information on the team competition or to register, visit Run Sign Up (<https://runsignup.com/Race/10K5KRace4FISH/Page/10K5KRace4FISH>). For additional information on the race and/or sponsorship, email events@fishofsancap.org.



JOG N JAM Sponsorship



We are deeply grateful to all the generous sponsors who have stepped forward to support our annual JOG N JAM event thus far, and we're excited to announce that sponsorship opportunities are still available at a variety of levels, each offering distinct benefits to showcase support from businesses and individuals alike.

For those who wish to see their logo proudly displayed on our event t-shirts, banner, and thank you advertising, we kindly ask for commitments by November 5th Platinum-

level sponsors (\$2,000 and up) will also be featured in custom press releases to further highlight their incredible support. By partnering with us, sponsors not only gain visibility but also make a meaningful difference, as net proceeds directly support the FISH mission of helping neighbors through our main pillar programs and long-term recovery program. Join us to celebrate community and compassion, while making a lasting impact for those who need it most. For additional information, download our [sponsor kit](#) or email events@fishofsancap.org.

FISH OF SANCAP Announces the Sanctuary Golf Club

Foundation as a Sponsor for JOG N JAM Event | "We are thrilled to continue our support for FISH through the JOG N JAM event this year," said Kathryn Riggio, Chief Administrative Officer of The Sanctuary Golf Club Foundation. "Our Members are excited to come together and lace up for a great cause! Christie Bradley, Director of Court Sports and Wellness, has even created a training program for our Members who have registered to join the Foundation's team! The impact FISH has on our Island community does not go unnoticed!" [Read more.](#)



FISH OF SANCAP Welcomes Bank of the Islands as a JOG N

JAM Sponsor | "We're thrilled to sponsor the JOG N JAM event again this year," said Greg Blurton, Vice President at Bank of the Islands and a dedicated board member of FISH. "Supporting events that bring our community together to support critical programs aligns perfectly with our values. We believe in giving back to the community that has supported us for so many years." [Read more.](#)



WEEKEND LINEUP '24

Light up the holiday season with these fun events brought to you by FISH and our amazing neighbors!

ALL WEEKEND LONG
enjoy the beaches!

FRI & SAT, DECEMBER 6 & 7

lights & sights!

- Luminary Festival (FREE)
4-7p — Friday on Sanibel, Saturday on Captiva

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7

come walk, run, jog, jam, stroll, dance & gaze all day!

- FISH Jog N Jam 5K&10K race (\$) 
7a race begins (registration 6-6:45a) *scan to register*
at The Community House
- FISH Jog N Jam Kids Fun Run (FREE under 10) following 5&10Ks at The Community House
- FISH Jog N Jam Concert (\$) 
5:30p followed by fireworks!
on the beach at Tween Waters *scan for tickets*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8

discover amazing & tasteful items!

- Farmer's Market
9a-1p — at City Hall



FISH jog N JAM CELEBRATION
5&10Ks • beach concert • fireworks • fun





FUNK YOU is a "funky, rockin' good time..."
—Live for Live Music

• FISH 2024
jog N **JAM**
CELEBRATION
CONCERT
ON THE *beach*



AT
'Tween Waters

SATURDAY
DEC 7
AT
5:30 P

LIVE MUSIC featuring the band *Funk You*
FIREWORKS after concert
FOOD & DRINKS for purchase
GENERAL SEATING—bring a beach chair or blanket

**TAKE ADVANTAGE
OF EARLY BIRD
TICKET PRICING!**

\$75
NOW UNTIL OCT 1
ADMIT ONE
BEGINNING OCT 1—\$100
BEGINNING DEC 1—\$125





JOIN FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS FISH OF SANCAP FRIENDLY FACES LUNCHEON

neighbors helping neighbors
FRIENDLY FACES LUNCHEON
TUESDAY, NOV. 12 @11:00 a.m.

Islanders, friends and family are invited to the community-wide FISH OF SANCAP Friendly Faces Luncheon! Jennifer Dorning, a District One representative of Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)



Jennifer has 20 years of experience as public outreach consultant for transportation and infrastructure projects throughout southwest Florida, and is proud to represent FDOT on the Emergency Restoration of the Sanibel Causeway.

Jennifer will talk about critical infrastructure projects that impact our community—it's an opportunity to hear more about the future of our roads and why staying informed is so important

- The cost of the luncheon, provided by community partner Sanibel Deli, is complimentary to guests -- meal selections for in-person guests will be provided upon RSVP
- **Space is limited, please RSVP early**
- Future Friendly Faces luncheons are on the 2nd Tuesday of each month throughout 2024

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.



DATE:
Tuesday, Nov. 12
TIME:
Beginning at 11:00 am
LOCATION:
Sanibel Rec Center
3880 CanCap Road
also
Virtual Zoom Call

RSVP:
To Erika Arnowitz, FISH
By Nov. 8
239-472-4775
erika@fishofsancap.org



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

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



2024 Great Nonprofit Badge

We are thrilled to announce our recognition as a “2024 Top-Rated Nonprofit” by GreatNonprofits, the leading platform for community-sourced reviews of charities. This prestigious honor is awarded based on outstanding feedback from those FISH serves, as well as from community members, volunteers, and supporters.



“FISH has been a constant helping presence that I first experienced after Hurricane Ian, and they have a long-standing history of providing both material assistance and compassionate guidance to Sanibel,” shared one community member in a recent review. “As we rebuilt our home, FISH provided donated sinks and materials that helped us restore our place from its bare bones. They also provided groceries when traveling back to the mainland was difficult. Their staff are knowledgeable, friendly, and make it feel like more than just assistance—it’s a connection. FISH is truly an integral part of Sanibel, as essential as our beautiful natural surroundings. Thank you to the entire FISH team and volunteers!”

Another client shared a powerful story of the organization’s impact: “This is a group of people that exists to help others. The “helping” part has evolved since Hurricane Ian devastated our island. The lean but energetic FISH staff still provides the same social services (food pantry, caring for the elderly, counseling, etc.) as before Ian, but has dramatically augmented the basics with assistance in rebuilding, providing furniture and appliances and developing a more resilient service base and facilities for the future! Their clientele has changed dramatically but helping others is still the banner! Impressive staff!”

FISH has been a lifeline on Sanibel and Captiva for over 40 years, serving as a “neighbors helping neighbors” organization. Through hurricanes, red tide, COVID, and now the ongoing recovery from Hurricane Ian and Helene, FISH remains a constant support for residents facing unforeseen hardships. As the only wrap-around social service provider on the islands, FISH offers a comprehensive range of programs spanning their four key pillars: Food, Island-Based Education, Senior Services, and Helping Hands.

“This award, granted by community recognition of the work we do for our neighbors, is such an honor,” says Maria Espinoza, Executive Director of FISH. “It’s incredibly humbling to receive such heartfelt testimonials from those we serve. The tremendous support we receive from our donors, partners, volunteers, and our professional team makes it possible for us to continue our mission as a ‘neighbors helping neighbors’ organization.”

With a vision to create a community where all people have the support they need to thrive, FISH is helping residents and the community’s workforce rebuild, recover, and look forward with hope. Read additional reviews, and write one of your own, for the FISH organization on the [Great Nonprofit website](#),



Our Volunteers, Partners & Team in Action



THANK YOU!



Our Volunteers, Partners & Team in Action



THANK YOU!



Our Volunteers, Partners & Team in Action



THANK YOU!



Our Volunteers, Partners & Team in Action



THANK YOU!