

APRIL 2025

FISH LINES NEWSLETTER



CELEBRATING VOLUNTEER MONTH

April is Global Volunteer Month, a time to celebrate the individuals who dedicate their time and energy to strengthening communities and making the world a better place. This year's theme is "Volunteers Make Waves," emphasizing the collective impact of volunteerism and the ripple effect of service, encouraging individuals to take action and make a difference.



Volunteers are the heartbeat of nonprofit organizations, and at FISH of Sanibel-Captiva, they are an essential force in fulfilling their mission to serve island residents, workers and visitors. This month, FISH proudly recognizes all its volunteers, with a special spotlight on longtime leader and dedicated volunteer, Maggi Feiner, President & CEO.

For nearly two decades, she has worked without compensation, driven solely by her passion for helping others. Maggi's commitment to "neighbors helping neighbors" has led FISH through some of its most challenging moments, from natural to the COVID-19 pandemic. But beyond her leadership role, Maggi is a true volunteer at heart – her dedication serves as an inspiration to all who give their time to make a difference.

Global Volunteer Month is not only a time to celebrate those who give back but also a call to action. FISH invites individuals, families, corporate groups, and organizations to get involved through a day of service or ongoing volunteer opportunities. Whether it's stocking the food pantry, delivering meals to homebound seniors, assisting with special events, or lending professional expertise, every act of service helps strengthen the community.

Businesses and community groups can also make an impact by organizing a Corporate Volunteer Day with FISH. These service opportunities not only support those in need but also build teamwork and connection among employees.

"There is no better way to give back to your community than through service," says Maria Espinoza, FISH Executive Director. "Our volunteers are truly the backbone of our mission, and we invite everyone to experience the joy of helping others. Whether you can give a few hours or make an ongoing commitment, your time and talents will make a difference."

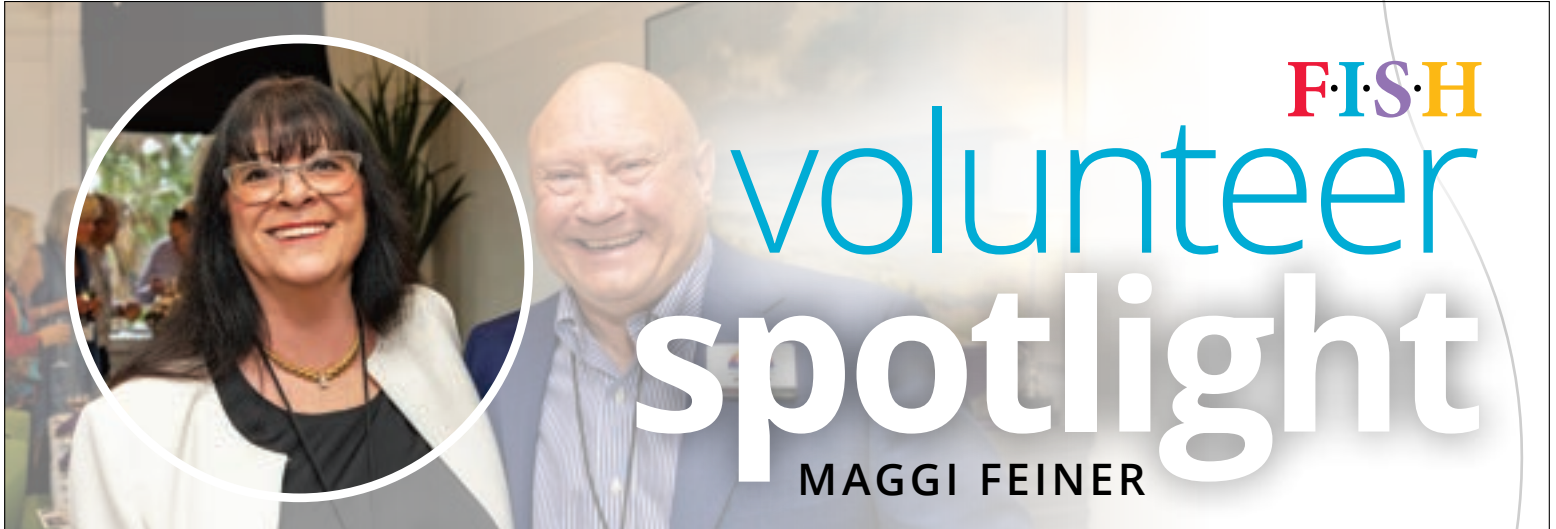
This April, celebrate Global Volunteer Month by taking action. Join FISH in creating a wave of kindness and service in the community. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, visit www.fishofsanicap.org or contact Claire Marquardt at 239-472-4775 or claire@fishofsanicap.org.



2422 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel FL 33957
Mailing Address: PO Box 58, Sanibel FL 33957

239.472.4775 | fishofsanicap.org | email: info@fishofsanicap.org





making a life by what she gives

It didn't take Maggi Feiner long to realize volunteerism flowed through her veins.

"In high school, I worked as a candy striper," which is a hospital volunteer, she recalled.

"Working with patients was rewarding, and I realized then I wanted a life working with people."

Today, Maggi brings that passion to her role at FISH—the comprehensive social services organization and resiliency hub for Sanibel and Captiva Islands. As president and chief executive officer, Maggi champions the positive impact of FISH while volunteering her time to make a difference.

"I started in 2003-2004. I had been retired for a few years and wanted to get involved with the community," said Maggi. *"At the time, FISH was a small organization that dealt with islanders who had unfulfilled needs. I have a background in nursing and elder law, which I felt could be an asset to the organization."*

Her first volunteer tasks involved delivering meals and helping with equipment donations. Soon Maggi racked up volunteer hours in every area in FISH. That made her a terrific addition to the FISH board of directors. As a director, board chair and eventually CEO, Maggi took part in incorporating FISH, establishing the food pantry, running its first office, and hiring FISH's first employee.

"Winston Churchill once said, 'We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.' I volunteer because I have been blessed in my life. I see our community as a whole and want to assist those with needs to improve and better their lives."

Maggi gave an example of a single mother struggling to work and take care of her child with health problems, plus care for two young family members. FISH was able to provide food, offer volunteer help for household tasks and childcare, and even deliver a donated vehicle. Eventually, the two children were placed with other relatives, the mom received an educational scholarship, and she is now able to provide for herself and her own child.

"That kind of life-changing impact happens when people volunteer," said Maggi. *"Volunteers are the lifeblood of all nonprofit organizations. Without our volunteers, we would never be able to complete our mission and make our community a beautiful and wonderful place to call home."*

During National Volunteer Month, FISH salutes Maggi Feiner for her many years of outstanding and selfless commitment to our work of *neighbors helping neighbors*. We appreciate Maggi and all our amazing volunteers!



OUR VOLUNTEERS & TEAM - SERVING THE COMMUNITY



THANK YOU!



FISH LINES

OUR VOLUNTEERS - SERVING FISH AND THE COMMUNITY



THANK YOU!



OUR VOLUNTEERS - SERVING FISH AND THE COMMUNITY



THANK YOU!



OUR VOLUNTEERS - SERVING FISH AND THE COMMUNITY



THANK YOU!



LOCAL BUSINESSES JOIN FISH TO SPREAD EASTER CHEER



Easter is just around the corner, and thanks to the incredible generosity of our community partners—Bank of the Islands, CVS, Chocolattes, Sanibel & Captiva Islands Association of REALTORS®, and The Sanibel Library—FISH OF SANCAP is ready to bring joy and nourishment to local families!

This year's Easter Bunny Basket and Food Drive is in full swing, ensuring that children wake up to surprises on Easter morning and families have everything they need for a festive holiday meal. Now through April 11, FISH is collecting unwrapped, new toys for kids ages 0-18 and traditional Easter meal essentials, thanks to the kindness of our local businesses and donors.

Suggested Easter basket gifts include: small toys, candy, coloring books, crayons, keychains, hair accessories, stress balls, mugs, and more! Easter meal needs include: fresh vegetables, side dishes, garnishes, rolls, and other traditional holiday fixings.

For many families in the community, the journey toward recovery from Hurricanes Ian, Helene and Milton is ongoing. Rising costs, inflation, and home repairs have left many struggling to afford even the basics. That's why initiatives like this mean so much. By giving a small gift or meal, families receive hope and the chance to celebrate without added stress.

This year, the organization hopes to provide more than 250 households with Easter cheer. "The heart of our community shines brightest in moments like these," says Maria Espinoza, FISH Executive Director. "Our generous partners and donors make it possible for every child to feel the magic of Easter morning and every family to share a special holiday meal together. We are so grateful for their kindness and unwavering support. Thank you for helping us make Easter extra special for our neighbors in need!"

FISH strives to make this Easter a time of joy, hope, and togetherness for all. If you or someone you know could use a helping hand this holiday season, reach out to FISH at 239-472-4775 or merari@fishofsancap.org. Distribution to community members will take place Apr. 15-17 from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at 2422 Periwinkle Way on a first come, first served basis.





MONTHLY FRESH MEAL BASKETS SUPPORT FOOD SECURITY

In response to the ongoing economic challenges following recent hurricanes, we have enhanced our food pantry efforts through the monthly distribution of Fresh Meal Baskets. The program, which is open to anyone, aims to support individuals and families facing rising grocery costs, while also promoting family time and the joy of preparing and sharing meals at home.

Each Fresh Meal Basket contains select fresh ingredients, along with simple, nutritious recipes to encourage home cooked meals—an effort that not only helps reduce food expenses, but also promotes family bonding and healthier eating habits.

FISH ran a soft launch of the Fresh Meal Basket program in March, centering the distribution around a colorful and health-focused theme called “Eat the Rainbow.” The March baskets highlighted the importance of incorporating a variety of fresh vegetables into daily meals, with ingredients designed to inspire vibrant, nutritious cooking at home. During the soft launch, FISH distributed 121 baskets to island residents and workforce members, and the response from the community was quite positive. Building on that success, the organization hopes to double the number of baskets distributed in April as the program continues to grow and meet critical needs.



The baskets are distributed once a month, generally mid-month, and April’s distribution will feature an Easter meal theme. Distribution to community members will take place Apr. 15-17 from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at 2422 Periwinkle Way on a first come, first served basis.

Funded in part by a CDBG micro grant, the Fresh Meal Basket initiative comes at a time when many residents and workers on Sanibel and Captiva Islands are struggling to recover from the devastating effects of back-to-back storms. With many businesses still shuttered and tourism-driven jobs slow to return, the cost of food has become a significant burden—particularly for the low-to-moderate income (LMI) population and the senior population, many of whom live on fixed incomes.

“The cost of groceries has skyrocketed, and we’re seeing more working families and seniors stretched beyond their limits,” says Maria Espinoza, Executive Director of FISH OF SANCAP. “Our Fresh Meal Baskets not only offer nourishment but also ease the pressure many are feeling as they try to make ends meet in the wake of disaster and economic uncertainty.”

Community members are encouraged to follow FISH’s Facebook and Instagram pages for updates on monthly distribution days, times, and monthly meal themes.



FISH ANNUAL MEETING AND VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION



FISH OF SANCAP welcomed nearly 100 volunteers, board members, and community supporters to its Annual Meeting and Volunteer Brunch held on April 2, 2025, at Sundial Beach Resort & Spa.

The annual event served as a heartfelt celebration of the dedicated individuals who give their time and energy to help FISH deliver essential services to the Sanibel and Captiva communities.

During the event, Executive Director Maria Espinoza shared an update on the organization’s financials, proudly noting that 88% of every dollar spent goes directly to FISH’s programs and services, reinforcing the organization’s commitment to mission-driven spending and high-impact work.

Espinoza also addressed the organization’s CDBG-DR reimbursement grant, which will support critical repairs and rebuilding of FISH’s facilities that were severely damaged by Hurricane Ian. She shared that the first phase of the long-term recovery process will involve the public release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for architectural services, which will help shape the design of a more functional, resilient space for service delivery. Following that, a public bid for construction will be announced. Espinoza emphasized that while the process will take time, it marks a significant step forward in building a stronger foundation for the future.

Espinoza also previewed a new partnership with the Santiva Islanders, which will bring expanded support and activities for the islands’ older adult population. More details on this collaboration will be shared soon.

The Annual Meeting placed special emphasis on the vital role that volunteers play in supporting FISH’s mission. From delivering meals and stocking pantry shelves to assisting with wellness checks, transportation, and events, volunteers are the heart of FISH. Their work makes it possible to reach hundreds of individuals and families each year. As the community continues to recover from devastating storms and adapt to rising costs, the need for services—and the requests for support—have increased dramatically. FISH is actively seeking volunteers to meet this growing demand and invites anyone with a passion for service to get involved.

Photo caption: FISH Board Members Jim Metzler, Past Board Chair (L); Lisa Ann Miller, Secretary (middle); Greg Blurton, Treasurer (R)



FISH ANNUAL MEETING AND VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

“We simply couldn’t do this without our volunteers,” said Espinoza. “They are the reason we’re able to reach those in crisis, feed families, check on isolated seniors, and help our community recover and rebuild. As need continues to grow, so does the importance of having compassionate, committed individuals by our side.”

FISH also extends their heartfelt gratitude to Sundial for their incredible hospitality and support in hosting the Annual Meeting and Volunteer Brunch. “From the seamless event facilitation to the delicious food and professional service, the Sundial team went above and beyond to create a welcoming atmosphere for our volunteers, board members, and guests,” noted Espinoza. “We are especially thrilled to welcome Sundial back to the Sanibel community following their recent reopening. Their return is a sign of continued progress and resilience on our islands, and we’re grateful to partner with such a dedicated and community-minded team.”

To learn more about volunteer opportunities, upcoming initiatives, or FISH’s rebuilding efforts, please visit www.fishofsancap.org or follow the organization on Facebook and Instagram.





SANCAP PINK PROJECT PAYS IT FORWARD

We are deeply grateful to the San Cap Pink Project for their generous \$3,000 donation, which will directly assist local community members facing cancer-related challenges. This heartfelt gift will help individuals struggling with medical and other essential expenses during their cancer journey.

This donation is even more meaningful because it was inspired by a previous recipient of the San Cap Pink Project's support, who asked that the funds be "paid forward" so others in need could receive assistance. In response, the San Cap Pink Project turned to FISH, ensuring that these funds will continue to make an impact by helping others in the community who are facing cancer-related hardships.

"We're truly grateful for this generous donation and the chance to continue the 'pay it forward' spirit," says Maria Espinoza, Executive Director of FISH. "Cancer is tough enough without the added stress of financial worries. Thanks to the San Cap Pink Project, we can step in and help—whether it's covering medical bills, transportation to treatments, or other essential needs. This gift will make a real difference for those in our community who need it most."

Founded by Mary Bondurant, a breast cancer survivor herself, the San Cap Pink Project, Inc., also known as Let's Pink Out Sanibel & Captiva Islands, started in 2012 as a small initiative to provide free mammograms to uninsured island residents. Over the years, it has grown into a multifaceted organization, raising significant funds to support both uninsured and underinsured individuals.

What began as a mission focused on breast cancer screenings has expanded to address a wide range of cancer-related needs, bringing hope, awareness, and support to those affected by cancer in our community. Mary's personal journey has fueled her passion for giving back, and through the San Cap Pink Project, she continues to make an impact on the lives of many.





RESILIENCY HUB services

FOR DISASTER RESPONSE

Living in an island community provides unique blessings, as well as unique challenges. **While we enjoy blue skies most of the time, gray skies—including natural or human-caused disasters—are a very real threat and can have a devastating and isolating impact on our islands.** FISH has long been a leader in providing help and resources, including our Hurricane Preparedness program. But in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, FISH has raised the bar on what “neighbors helping neighbors” looks like, while navigating and leading the ongoing and complex process of long term recovery. As the clouds continue to part, FISH has proudly emerged a recognized disaster recovery agent—a *Resiliency Hub*.



disaster recovery agent—an extension of our helping hands pillar

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, including our 4 pillar programs.

When disasters strike, Hubs can quickly pivot to provide emergency items including food, water, tarps and other vital resources.

Island neighbors can call FISH and access assistance directly and through the larger network.

FISH

disaster recovery

is about rebuilding, restoring, and returning to everyday life through:

whether
blue skies
or gray,
FISH is here
to help

- Response/relief for immediate needs
- Collaborating with city/county
- Assisting with Government programs
- Volunteer coordination
- Donation management & distribution of emergency supplies
- Tool Shed Partnership
- Furniture distribution
- Emotional Support services
- Register for resources; food stamps, unemployment, short term disability
- Long Term Recovery Application/Grant Process





CONTINUING DISASTER RECOVERY EFFORTS

We have been at the forefront of disaster response and recovery for the Sanibel and Captiva communities, stepping up to help neighbors rebuild their lives after a relentless series of storms over a two-year period. Thanks to last year's funding from SBP (St. Bernard Project), we can continue providing critical assistance, helping survivors of Hurricane Ian navigate the long road to recovery.



Since Hurricane Ian, we have remained committed to supporting local families, seniors, and workers facing ongoing challenges. "It's been an ongoing struggle for many neighbors," said Nitza Lopez, Social Services Director at FISH. "Families living in unrepaired homes from Ian found themselves in need of food, water, and clean-up supplies from Helene and Milton. The reality is that recovery isn't a straight path—sometimes we have to adjust our plans to make sure people have what they need in the moment."

One of the many success stories is that of a resident whose sidewalk and entry way into her home were completely washed away during Ian. Without a safe way to enter or exit her home, daily life became incredibly difficult. "I can't even begin to

explain what a difference FISH has made in my life," she shared. "After the storm, I was terrified to leave my house because I was afraid of falling. But thanks to FISH, I now have a safe, sturdy walkway again. They helped with everything—finding a contractor, dealing with permitting, and making sure the work was done right. Knowing they were in my corner gave me a sense of security I hadn't felt in a long time."

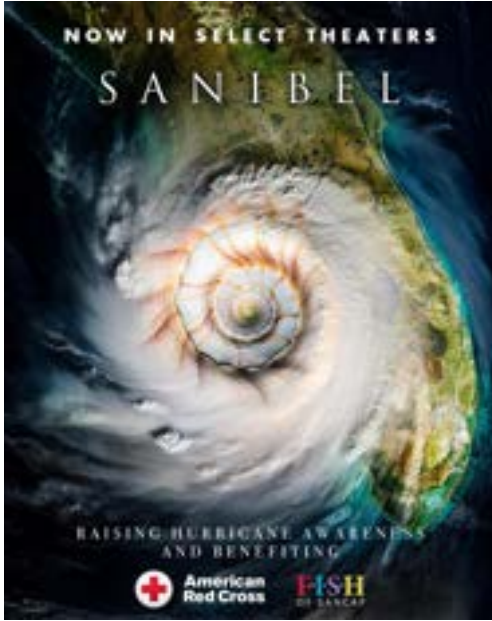
Challenges remain, particularly for those whose homes have been hit three times—by Ian, Helene, and Milton. Many of these households have exhausted their savings on previous repairs, evacuations, or temporary lodging, leaving them without resources to rebuild yet again. Additionally, volunteer groups that often assist with rebuilding efforts were redirected to areas deemed more critically impacted, making it even harder for FISH to secure support for the community.

Despite these obstacles, FISH remains dedicated to helping neighbors recover, rebuild, and regain stability. Funding like that from SBP has played a crucial role in these efforts, and FISH continues to seek additional resources to meet the growing needs of residents and workers on the islands. "Recovery takes time, but we're in it for the long haul," said Lopez. "We will keep pushing forward, finding ways to get people the help they need, whether it's repairing a home, restocking a refrigerator with food, or simply being a source of hope when it's needed most."

For more information about FISH of SANCAP's disaster recovery programs or to learn how to support their efforts, visit www.fishofsancap.org or call 239-472-4775.



AWARD-WINNING 'SANIBEL' FILM HITS FL SCREENS



The award-winning documentary film, “Sanibel,” starts its run in Florida theaters with screenings in Sarasota on April 11-18, offering audiences a powerful look at the impact of Hurricane Ian on Southwest Florida’s beloved coastal communities. The screenings will also raise funds for FISH OF SANICAP.

Winner of the Naples International Film Festival’s Best Florida Film Award, “Sanibel” began as a film about seashell collectors and the island community’s vibrant shelling culture. When Hurricane Ian struck during filming in 2022, the story quickly transformed into one of survival, resilience and community.

Kevin Rayden, one of the producers of “Sanibel,” said the filmmakers felt inspired to give back to the community. During the theater run from April through May, 10% of all ticket proceeds will go to FISH and to the American Red Cross, which played vital roles in supporting the people of Sanibel, Rayden said.

The campaign will also spotlight hurricane preparedness and evacuation awareness through digital outreach and in-theater resources, he added.

“FISH is deeply grateful for this generous gesture by Swipemarket, Dirty Robber and The Unreasnble, the production partners behind ‘Sanibel,’” said FISH Executive Director Maria Espinoza. “Their support means as much to our community as the incredible story they tell in the film.”

Espinoza noted the many ways FISH stepped in following Hurricane Ian—from hot meals and emergency food boxes to cleaning supplies, fuel, gift cards, case management, stocking the food pantry and helping small businesses reopen.

“FISH delivered hope when it was needed most,” she said.

“Sanibel” is directed, written and produced by Herbert James Winterstern. Additional producers include Kevan Rayden and Adam Ganser. Executive producers include Dirty Robber’s Matt Roe and The Unreasnble’s Mickey Meyer, Travon Free and Martin Desmond Roe. Editors are Nick Bradford and John Conway. Many residents appear in “Sanibel,” including three who will be spotlighted in a series of upcoming articles.

Screenings of “Sanibel” begin April 11-18 in Sarasota. Additional showings will take place in Davie, Naples and Tampa, with more dates to be announced. Find out more at sanibelmovie.com.



SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAMMING SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

neighbors helping neighbors

SUMMER'S ALMOST HERE!

FISH understands the challenges of finding appropriate programs and the costs associated with summer childcare. We provide financial assistance through youth scholarships for summer programs.

APPLY NOW FOR A SCHOLARSHIP

Financial assistance for area camps -- Sanibel, Captiva, Fort Myers, other areas -- is available. Scholarship amounts vary depending upon the length and cost of the program and the family's financial status.



CONTACT FISH OF SANCAP

Nitza Lopez | 239-472-4775

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.



neighbors helping neighbors



2422 Periwinkle Way, PO Box 58, Sanibel FL 33957 | 239.472.4775 | fishofsancap.org

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



FISH LINES



neighbors helping neighbors

MENTAL HEALTH WEDNESDAYS

Talk to a Mental Healthcare Clinician

30 minute sessions

free of charge



with **Tiffannie Nalley**, Clinician III
in partnership with SalusCare

At St. Michael's in the Library Room

2304 Periwinkle Way

Book an appointment:

erika@fishofsancap.org | 239-472-4775



Our Volunteers, Partners & Team in Action



THANK YOU!



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THANK YOU!



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