

MAY 2025

# FISH LINES NEWSLETTER



## 2025 Hurricane Preparedness Seminar and Resource Packet



With hurricane season officially underway next month, we are stepping up to help island residents and workers get stormready. FISH is inviting the community to a ***Hurricane Preparedness Seminar from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wed., June 4, 2025 at the Sanibel Community House, 2173 Periwinkle Way.***

Lunch will be provided, and attendees will receive FISH's updated and invaluable Hurricane Preparedness Packet. The June 4 seminar is free in partnership with the Community House, and everyone is encouraged to attend. Two powerful speakers will join us at our seminar:

- Daniela Rambhajan, MSW, RCSWI, Community Readiness Coordinator at Lee County Emergency Management, will present the agency's All Hazards Preparedness overview, offering practical guidance for keeping your household safe before, during and after a storm.
- Tiffannie Nalley, Clinician III with SalusCare, will speak about managing anxiety and PTSD related to storms and how to cope with the emotional toll of disasters, which many are still facing post-Ian and Milton.

The updated FISH Hurricane Preparedness Packet includes essential tips on:

- How to prepare your home ahead of a storm
- Evacuation planning and routes and emergency supply checklists
- Local shelter info and hotel contacts with generator access
- Guidance for vulnerable populations and seniors

The packet is full of information people truly need. It's one of the most valuable resources we offer each year. We've added new content this year based on what we learned from our recovery work post-Ian and Milton — real lessons from our response and from people trying to get back on their feet.

We are continuing to work one-on-one with vulnerable residents, helping develop evacuation plans and serving as a vital point of contact for out-of-town family members during storm events. Our Hurricane Committee — a volunteer team assisting before, during and after hurricanes — remains a critical component to the program, as do essential partners such as the American Red Cross, World Central Kitchen, United Way of Lee, Hendry and Glades counties, Lee County Emergency Management, the City of Sanibel and more.

For more information or to receive a Hurricane Packet by mail or email, contact FISH at 239-472-4775 or visit [www.fishofsancap.org](http://www.fishofsancap.org).



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

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





FISH LINES

FREE!

FISH & The Community House invite you to get storm-ready by attending our

## HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS SEMINAR

**Wednesday, June 4—11a-2p** (lunch provided)

**at the Sanibel Community House** (2173 Periwinkle Way)

This program featuring two powerful speakers will equip neighbors with the tools and practical guidance to be informed, stay safe, manage storm-related anxiety, and more!

In partnership with—



Lee County  
Southwest Florida



SalusCare



The Community House  
SANIBEL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

another way FISH is here to help—

# before & after THE STORM

NEW!

## UPDATED HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS PACKETS

Our annual **FISH Hurricane Preparedness Packet** is full of essential information people truly need, and available FREE to anyone who requests one. This year's resource is more valuable than ever, with *updated content based on recent Ian/Helene/Milton experiences and recovery work* including:

- **How to prepare your home ahead of a storm**
- **Evacuation planning & routes**
- **Emergency supply checklists**
- **Local shelter info & pet-friendly options**
- **Hotel contacts with generator access**
- **Guidance for vulnerable populations & seniors**
- **Special Medical Needs Application**

If you or someone you know could benefit from this vital program, packets may be obtained in the following ways:

- **PICKED UP** at FISH—2422 Periwinkle Way
- **DOWNLOADED** at [fishofsancap.org](https://fishofsancap.org)
- **MAILED TO YOU** upon request by calling 239.472.4775 or email [erika@fishofsancap.org](mailto:erika@fishofsancap.org)

## HURRICANE RECOVERY

In the event a storm makes landfall, please contact FISH after the storm for information and assistance at **239.472.0404 (24-hour hotline)** or email [info@fishofsancap.org](mailto:info@fishofsancap.org)

In 2024, FISH helped neighbors through the storms with:



586

HURRICANE PACKETS DISTRIBUTED &

5,680

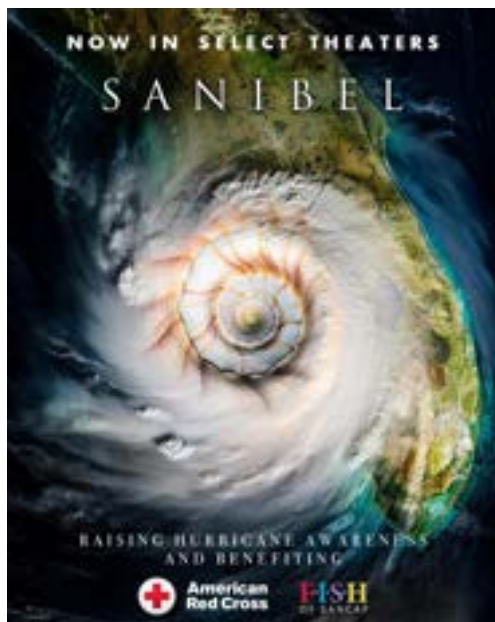
EMERGENCY MEALS DISTRIBUTED

2422 Periwinkle Way  
Sanibel FL 33957  
239.472.4775  
[fishofsancap.org](https://fishofsancap.org)





## 'SANIBEL' MOVIE COMING TO BIG ARTS



The award-winning documentary film "Sanibel" is coming home.

One month after starting a statewide run at theaters across Florida, "Sanibel" will be shown at BIG ARTS on Thursday, May 15. The local screening, part of the 14th annual Fort Myers Film Festival, will include a reception with producers before the show.

"The people of Sanibel make this community the strong, resilient, hope-filled place that moviegoers experience so powerfully in this film," said Producer Kevan Rayden. "We're honored to bring this story back to where it happened."

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

Rayden 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 OF SANICAP and to the American Red Cross, which played vital roles in supporting the people of Sanibel.

"The generosity of Swipemarket, Dirty Robber and The Unreasonable, the production partners behind 'Sanibel,' makes it possible for FISH to keep bringing help and hope to our island communities," said FISH Executive Director Maria Espinoza.

"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 Unreasonable's Mickey Meyer, Travon Free and Martin Desmond Roe. Editors are Nick Bradford and John Conway.

Details about the film can be found at [sanibelmovie.com](http://sanibelmovie.com). You can learn more about the Fort Myers Film Festival, which runs May 14-18, at [fortmyersfilmfestival.com](http://fortmyersfilmfestival.com).

BIG ARTS Opening Reception and showing of "Sanibel" on Thursday, May 15, at 5:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. respectively, followed by Q&A with members of the production team. A public reception before the show starts at 5:30 p.m. Tickets are available at the box office, 900 Dunlop Road, Sanibel; by calling (239) 395-0900; or go online to [bigarts.org/programs/film-series](http://bigarts.org/programs/film-series).





## 'SANIBEL' MOVIE *continued*



**Nancy Black** | As a former volunteer for FISH, she knows the power of getting the details right. "I was a meal coordinator for the Meals-By-FISH program," she said. "If someone called FISH and said they were interested in the meal program, I would interview them and find out their situation. Then I would fill out the paperwork and call and order the meals." Nancy recalled that during one month in her volunteer role, the program delivered over 100 meals. While she didn't need hurricane relief services after Ian, she knew plenty of people who did. "Everybody was grateful," she said "So many people had never gone to FISH

before. But of course, after a disaster like that, they were checking out everything to find help. People shouldn't hesitate to call FISH if they need help or know somebody who needs help." That's one detail that gave Nancy great comfort in the wake of the storm. "I knew they were there. I knew I could call them if I needed them," she said.

**Emily Miller** | A shell collector and a longtime worker on Sanibel, Emily turns up often in the movie. Recovery after the storm has been tough at times, especially since Ian swept away many job options. Emily had to cash in her godly golden treasure, selling her seashell collection to get by. Fortunately, since Emily was among island workers affected by the storm, FISH was there to help. "Here is an island that's very well-to-do, and there's also people that need help. No matter where you're at in life, this is the way it is, and everybody helps everybody.

She points to FISH as a prime example of that caring reality. "FISH is the backbone of Sanibel," Emily said. "I was able to use the food pantry, which is huge when you're not working," she said. "But the bigger thing was FISH just being there. When you went there, everybody was concerned. They'd ask, 'How are you? I just felt like a different person. Like the healing was happening. They're there for support no matter what," she said. "I think that's amazing in itself."



**Judy Beerman** | In the film, Judy describes the individual and collective strengths of the Sanibel community that made recovery possible. She includes FISH as one of those strengths. "FISH is one heck of a wonderful operation," she said, citing the cleaning kits, cases of water and other vital supplies FISH provided after the storm. They were all open arms, like 'Come in, come in, get whatever you need.' It was just so nice because they were there. I mean, they did everything but go home with you and cook dinner!" Judy chuckled. For Judy, the support of FISH was part of the healing process. After a couple of years of makeshift shops

outdoors, Judy returned to the Island Gifts facility and is still rebuilding it. A recent donation of new shelves reminded her of the supportive spirit of Sanibel that's reflected in the movie.



## 2025 JOG N JAM: Run, Rock, and Reunite with FISH



We are thrilled to announce JOG N JAM 2025, in support of FISH's programs and services. The event features two can't-miss experiences:

**Saturday, November 1** – the 10K, 5K, and Kids Fun Run will take place at the Sanibel Community House.

**Saturday, December 6** – a concert on the beach at Tween Waters, Captiva, featuring The Ben Allen Band and a spectacular fireworks display.

After welcoming a record 570 runners and hundreds of concertgoers in 2024, this year's JOG N JAM is gearing up to be even bigger. "We're hoping to top last year's numbers, and with the Ben Allen Band headlining the beach concert, we're expecting a huge crowd and an unforgettable celebration of island spirit and community," says Maria Espinoza, Executive Director.

Net proceeds from JOG N JAM directly support FISH's four service pillars—Food, Island-Based Education, Social and Senior Services, and Helping Hands—as well as the organization's long-term disaster recovery efforts following Hurricanes Ian, Helene, and Milton. These services are a lifeline for the island's most vulnerable residents, seniors, and the workforce still facing economic hardship.

Concert tickets and runner registrations are on sale now, with special early pricing available. Runners and concertgoers are encouraged to sign up early to take advantage of lower runner registration fees and special concert pricing. Each runner receives a finisher medal, T-shirt, and the chance to place in their age group to receive a special island-focused award. The Kids Fun Run is free with registration and includes a finisher's ribbon and treat. In December, the concert will offer food and drinks for purchase, and shuttle services for easy access, making it a festive and family-friendly experience.

- Race registration: [Run Sign Up](#)
- Concert tickets: [JAM with FISH](#)

FISH also invites local businesses and supporters to join the effort by becoming event sponsors. "Sponsorships are vital," continues Espinoza. "They help us meet growing needs for food, financial assistance, and disaster recovery while giving businesses a meaningful way to show up for this community."

FISH invites the entire community—and visitors from near and far—to lace up, jam out, and help neighbors thrive. For race and concert details, volunteer or sponsorship inquiries, email [events@fishofsancap.org](mailto:events@fishofsancap.org)





FISH LINES



SANIBEL'S  
ONLY  
**5/10K**  
RACE

**570**  
RUNNERS  
IN 2024

**JAM**  
DECEMBER 6  
5:30p

**COME**  
walk, run OR jog

our 18th annual  
road race

SATURDAY  
NOVEMBER 1, 2025

BEGINS & ENDS AT THE SANIBEL COMMUNITY HOUSE

**RACING BEGINS 7:30a—registration from 6:30-7:15a**

Visit [RunSignUp.com](https://RunSignUp.com) for details & to register. *The earlier you register, the less you pay—scan here!*

Sign up for the Kids Fun Run following the awards ceremony—FREE under age 10.

Sponsorship opportunities are available. For additional information, email: [events@fishofsancap.org](mailto:events@fishofsancap.org)







FISH LINES

• FISH 2025  
**jog<sup>N</sup>JAM**  
CELEBRATION  
**CONCERT** ON THE *beach*



LIVE MUSIC featuring the **BEN ALLEN BAND**

*a dynamic modern country rock act in Southwest Florida celebrated for its energetic performances, perfect mix of talent and personalism, and amazing blend of country dance songs and heartfelt country truth*

**FIREWORKS** after concert

**FOOD & DRINKS** for purchase

**GENERAL SEATING** bring a beach chair or blanket



**ADULTS** (ages 19+)—\$75 ea  
**STUDENTS** (ages 7-18)—\$50 ea  
**CHILDREN** (ages 0-6)—FREE!

OR take advantage of **LIMITED GROUP PRICING**  
**ADULT "4-PACK"—JUST \$200** (only 50 available)

AT  
**'Tween Waters**

**SATURDAY**  
**DEC 6**  
AT  
**5:30 P**



## Thank You to The Sanctuary Golf Club Foundation



With heartfelt gratitude, thank you to The Sanctuary Golf Club Foundation (TSGCF) for their generous \$200,000 grant to support island families in need.

In recent years, islanders have faced a harsh series of hardships—from the widespread destruction of Hurricane Ian to the compounding impacts of Hurricanes Helene and Milton in 2024. These events, combined with rising housing costs, reduced work hours, job losses, and unexpected medical expenses, have left many struggling to stay afloat.

*From L to R: Lisa Schmidlin, President; Dan Stegmann, Board Member; Maria Espinoza, FISH Executive Director; Jim Pouliot, Vice President*

FISH has witnessed a growing demand for financial assistance, as individuals and families are forced to make difficult choices between paying for rent, groceries, or vital prescriptions. “Many of our clients come to us when they’re one or two months behind on rent and simply can’t catch up,” says Nitza Lopez, Social Services Director at FISH. “Thanks to The Sanctuary Foundation, we’re able to offer a lifeline—financial support that stabilizes their housing and helps them avoid the threat of eviction.” The Helping Hands Financial Assistance Program is available to island residents and workforce members with a connection to Sanibel or Captiva.

This year, The Sanctuary Golf Club Foundation also chose to support the FISH Food Pantry, recognizing the growing need for access to nutritious food across the islands. “Our pantry isn’t just about food—it’s about dignity, health, and hope,” says Maria Espinoza, Executive Director of FISH. “We’ve heard from families who skip meals so their children can eat, and from seniors who ration medication to afford groceries. With The Sanctuary’s support, we’re ensuring no one has to make those impossible choices alone.”

“Thanks to the generosity of our Sanctuary members we are happy to be the proud sponsors of the Helping Hands Financial Assistance and Food Pantry Programs,” said Lisa Schmidlin, President of the TSGCF. This grant is making an immediate difference in the lives of families, seniors and individuals across Sanibel and Captiva who are facing financial hardship.

Both the Helping Hands and Food Pantry programs reflect FISH’s purpose, to lend a hand to neighbors in need, helping them move from crisis to stability. With continued community support, FISH is meeting growing needs with compassion, commitment, and care.

The mission of The Sanctuary Golf Club Foundation is to support nonprofits that positively impact the lives of people in need living or working on Sanibel or Captiva and to provide education scholarship grants and emergency grants to Sanctuary employees and their families.





## Youth Summer Scholarships and Camp Noah

With the last day of school in Lee County fast approaching on June 4, many families are facing the annual challenge of summer childcare. In today's economic climate—with rising costs on everything from groceries to rent—that challenge is even greater. We are stepping up once again this year with its Youth Summer Scholarship Program, providing financial assistance to help families send their children to enriching summer camps both on and off island.



"Summer should be a time for kids to play, learn, and just be kids—but for working parents, especially those living paycheck to paycheck, it can be a stressful time," says Nitza Lopez, FISH Social Services Director. "We're here to help bridge that gap with scholarships that make camp more affordable and give parents peace of mind knowing their children are in a safe, enriching environment."

FISH scholarships are available for families with a connection to Sanibel and Captiva through either residency or employment. The scholarships are need-based and evaluated case-by-case, offering partial support based on income, expenses, and camp costs. Options include trusted programs like Sanibel Rec Center,

Sanibel Sea School, CECI, and several off-island camps as well.

This year, FISH is also excited to announce the return of Camp Noah, a no-cost weeklong camp for children ages 5–12, held June 9–13. Designed for communities impacted by disaster, Camp Noah uses creative play and resiliency-building activities to help children cope, heal, and thrive after trauma. The 2024 camp was a huge success, and FISH is excited to bring it back with generous venue support from Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church. Details on Camp Noah registration, times and before/after care are forthcoming.

Special thanks go out to the local community members and first responders who helped make Camp Noah unforgettable. "Last year, the Sanibel Fire Department brought out the fire truck, and the kids had a blast spraying the hose and wearing the gear—it was one of the highlights of the week," recalls a camp counselor.

"After Hurricane Ian and everything we've gone through since, I was so worried about how to give my daughter a normal summer," says Lynda, a local mom. "FISH helped with a camp scholarship last year, and this year we're looking forward to Camp Noah for some fun, some healing, and normalcy." Another parent shared, "With hours at work being cut and costs going up, there's just no way we could afford full-time summer care without help. FISH truly made a difference for our family."

To learn more about youth scholarships or Camp Noah, contact Nitza Lopez at 239-472-4775 or email [nitza@fishofsancap.org](mailto:nitza@fishofsancap.org).



FISH LINES

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS—

# SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE for summer youth programming

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR SUMMER CAMPS

FISH scholarships are available for families with a connection to Sanibel and Captiva through either residency or employment. The scholarships are need-based and evaluated case-by-case, offering partial support based on income, expenses, and camp costs. Options include trusted programs like Sanibel Rec Center, Sanibel Sea School, CECI, and several off-island camps as well.

## CAMP NOAH RETURNS

This year, FISH is also excited to announce the return of Camp Noah, a no-cost weeklong camp for children ages 5–12, held June 9–13. Designed for communities impacted by disaster, Camp Noah uses creative play and resiliency-building activities to help children cope, heal, and thrive after trauma. The 2024 camp was a huge success, and FISH is excited to bring it back with generous venue support from Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church.



*A special Thank You to Sanibel-Captiva  
Kiwanis Foundation and Captiva Chapel by the Sea  
who have supported our youth programs.*



For more information on how to apply for a scholarship, **contact Nitza Lopez, FISH Social Services Director at 239.472.4775**



2422 Periwinkle Way, PO Box 58, Sanibel FL 33957 • 239.472.4775 • [fishofsancap.org](http://fishofsancap.org)



## SUMMER IS ALMOST HERE!

FISH understands the challenges of finding the right programs and managing the costs of summer childcare. That's why we continue to provide financial assistance in the form of youth scholarships for summer programs.

**Give your child the chance to explore, play, and thrive this summer—APPLY NOW!**







## Hurricane Recovery with Support from Convoy of Hope



FISH's partnership with Convoy of Hope has resulted in a generous donation of 10 washers and dryers to help families whose homes and appliances were damaged or destroyed by the hurricanes. These appliances were distributed to clients of FISH still facing setbacks and challenges related to storm recovery.

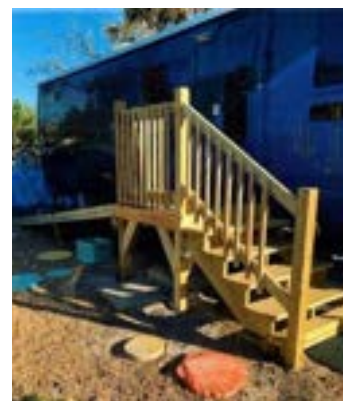
"Something as simple as doing laundry can become a significant burden for those who have lost so much," said Maria Espinoza, Executive Director of FISH. "This generous donation from Convoy of Hope helped families restore a basic need and continue healing from the effects of the storms."

[Continue reading](#)

## Helping Neighbors Rebuild and Recover, One Step at a Time

FISH of Sanibel and Captiva (FISH) has been a dedicated resource, offering long-term recovery support and financial assistance to those in need. Social Services Director Nitza Lopez takes the lead in helping individuals rebuild their lives and regain a sense of security.

For one local resident, the journey has been both physically and emotionally exhausting. "Hurricane Ian did more than just kick us from behind, it redefined us as a community," he shared. "I found strength and solace in the recovery, especially working with the kind and competent volunteers and leaders at FISH. It was pretty uplifting!" But the challenges didn't stop there. After navigating the rebuild once, he found himself in a new struggle—this time without work and with unexpected health concerns. "Something changed, however—we had lost our jobs, and we now need a set of steps and a ramp for our replacement RV. I found I had pretty severe osteoporosis, and it's better that I don't fall!" [Continue reading](#)



## Partnership with Sanibel Island Farmers Market



Each Sunday throughout the season, something meaningful takes place at the Sanibel Island Farmers Market. As vendors pack up for the day, many set aside fresh fruits, vegetables, breads, and other items to donate to FISH OF SANCAP. These generous contributions go directly to the FISH Food Pantry, helping neighbors in need access nutritious, locally sourced food. The collaboration between FISH and the Farmers Market has been going strong for years, and the impact is felt deeply in the community. "We are beyond grateful to Betsy Ventura and Jean Baer of Local Roots, and to every vendor who chooses to donate each week," said Maria Espinoza, Executive Director of FISH. "Our clients really look forward to these items. Knowing they're grown or baked right here in Southwest Florida adds a special touch."

[Continue reading](#)



FISH LINES

## JOIN FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS FISH OF SANCAP FRIENDLY FACES LUNCHEON

*neighbors helping neighbors*  
FRIENDLY FACES LUNCHEON  
Tuesday, May 13 @11:00 a.m.

Islanders, friends and family are invited to the community-wide FISH OF SANCAP Friendly Faces Luncheon! This month's featured guest is Dianna Ryan, Community and Business Outreach Coordinator at Captains For Clean Water, who will lead an informative discussion focused on protecting Florida's waterways.

As a team member at Captains For Clean Water, Dianna uses her background in operations, planning, and community outreach to connect others to the mission of restoring and protecting Florida's fragile water ecosystems. Her presentation will include:

- A look back at the history of Florida's water challenges
- How today's water management systems affect our estuaries
- The power of public engagement in driving long-term change
- How different industries and advocacy groups are working together
- Easy ways for individuals and communities to get involved



Lunch, prepared by Sanibel Deli, is provided by FISH at no cost to guests. Meal selections will be provided upon RSVP. **Space is limited, please RSVP early**

*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

SANIBEL  
**FIT 4 LIFE**



**DATE:**

Tuesday, May 13

**TIME:**

Beginning at 11:00 am

**LOCATION:**

Community House  
2173 Periwinkle Way

**RSVP:**

To Erika Arnowitz, FISH

**By May 9**

239-472-4775

erika@fishofsancap.org



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





FISH LINES



## 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](mailto:erika@fishofsancap.org) | 239-472-4775**



FISH LINES

## Our Volunteers, Partners & Team in Action



THANK YOU!





FISH LINES

## Our Volunteers, Partners & Team in Action



THANK YOU!

neighbors helping neighbors





FISH LINES

## Our Volunteers, Partners & Team in Action



THANK YOU!