

APRIL 2026

FISH LINES



NEWSLETTER

Easter Drive Brings Community Together

Our Easter Bunny Basket and Holiday Meal Drive once again brought the community together in a meaningful way, helping local families celebrate the holiday with a little extra joy. Thanks to the generosity of neighbors, volunteers, and local partners, a total of **390** Easter baskets for children and **252** holiday food baskets were distributed this season.

From donated toys and treats to the ingredients for a holiday meal, each contribution played a part in making Easter feel special for families who may have otherwise gone without. The support from collection sites and community partners made it easy for so many to get involved, showing just how strong this island community continues to be. We are grateful to everyone who donated, volunteered, and helped spread the word. It's a simple reminder of what "neighbors helping neighbors" looks like in action—especially during times when a little extra support can make all the difference.



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

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





FISH Easter programs make everyone hoppy



390
Bunny Baskets
&
252
Meal Kits
distributed!

Once again, our generous partners, island neighbors and volunteers have made the FISH Holiday Program a success this Easter. **Families struggling with financial circumstances have been given a brighter spring holiday because of your donations, help and support. Thank you!**

Special thanks to these participating businesses for serving as drop off locations:

**Bank of the Islands
SanCap Pak-N-Ship
Little Adventure**

**Jerry's Foods
Toys Ahoy
AIP Outfitters**



*"I love seeing the joy on children's faces when they receive their Kids' bunny baskets, and the true relief in the eyes of adults for the help of an Easter meal to feed their families! It just brings the hope of spring to life!"
—a FISH volunteer*



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Food Pantry Supports Local Mom

At FISH of SanCap, the food pantry is one of the many ways neighbors help neighbors when extra support is needed. For one local mother raising three children, that support has helped her continue providing for her family while navigating the everyday costs of work, school, and raising kids.

The mother recently shared her story with FISH staff. She is supporting three children—one in college, one still in K-12 school, and another adult child who helps financially when possible. Her college-aged son volunteered with FISH during his high school years.

Like many families, she says the rising cost of everyday necessities can make it difficult to stretch a household budget. Through the FISH food pantry and other community events offered throughout the year, she has been able to access additional support when it is needed most.

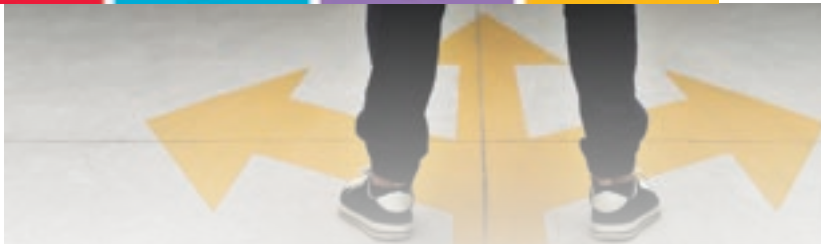
“My children were extremely grateful for the everyday food, the backpack supplies and holiday extras,” she shared. “The additional support has made me feel that I can keep going forward and support my children for a better future.”

Merari Puente, who works closely with families accessing the FISH food pantry, says stories like this are common. “Families come to us because they’re doing everything they can to keep things together for their children,” Puente said. “For a single parent with two children in Florida, the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) survival budget is roughly \$75,000 a year just to cover basic necessities. When we meet a parent earning \$37,000, they’re earning about half of what it actually takes to get by. That’s the gap many hardworking families on our islands are navigating.”

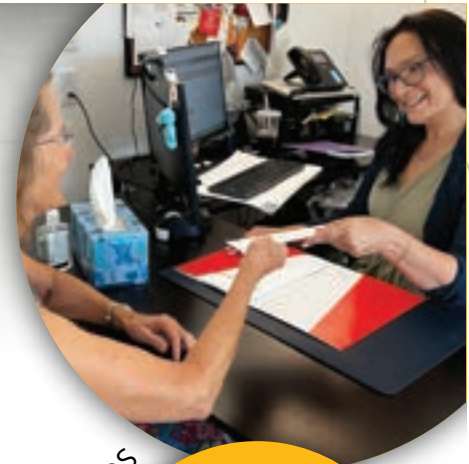
The FISH food pantry provides staples and personal household items to neighbors living or working on Sanibel and Captiva. The program is part of FISH’s broader mission of neighbors helping neighbors—offering practical support that helps families stay steady while they continue working toward their goals.

FISH also extends its thanks to the many partners and community members who help keep the pantry stocked. Support from organizations including the *Sanctuary Golf Club Foundation*, *Harry Chapin Food Bank*, *Midwest Food Bank*, *Jerry’s Foods*, and *A Bit of Bailey’s* helps make the program possible. In addition, service groups, religious organizations, and individuals regularly hold food drives and collections on behalf of FISH, helping ensure neighbors have access to the food and household items they need.





- An urgent surgery leaves you **short on rent and facing eviction**
- A car repair shatters your savings and **keeps you from getting to work**
- A family member needs **at-home care that costs two weeks of much-needed wages** for food and housing



turning impossible choices into possibilities



*ALICE = Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. Households below the ALICE Threshold are either below the Federal Poverty Level or above poverty but not able to afford basic needs. Source: 2025 ALICE Report (2023 data), United for ALICE.



People right here in our island communities face impossible choices like these every day.

But there's good news—

FISH of SanCap turns impossible choices into possibilities.

Whether it's **aiding 5,304 people in need...** or **feeding 6,824 food pantry visitors...** or **making 1,138 assurance calls** to the homebound... and so much more, FISH enriches lives by *neighbors helping neighbors*. We strive for a community where all people in Sanibel and Captiva have the support they need to thrive.

You can help FISH make the impossible possible. Please consider a gift today. Scan here!



"My ultimate goal is to be financially stable so that I can spend more time with my children. I am truly thankful for FISH's generosity and assistance."

—a FISH client

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Equipment for Loan Program Supports Mobility and Independence



Our Equipment for Loan program provides mobility and small, non-electrical medical equipment to neighbors who may need support during recovery, illness, or while caring for a loved one.

The program, part of FISH Senior Services but available to anyone in the island community, provides short-term access to wheelchairs, walkers, shower chairs, commodes, and pieces. These items can make a real difference for someone healing after surgery, adjusting to a new diagnosis, or helping a family member remain safe and comfortable at home.

For many, equipment like this is needed quickly and often only for a short time. Purchasing these items can be costly, and waiting for insurance approval can take time. The Equipment for Loan program helps bridge that gap so people can stay mobile and maintain their independence.

“Mobility plays a big role in someone’s quality of life,” said Erika Arnowitz, Senior Services Director at FISH. “When a neighbor suddenly needs a walker or wheelchair, it can change how they move through their day and how safe they feel in their own home. Having equipment available through FISH means they don’t have to face that challenge alone.”

The program recently received a boost thanks to a volunteer group from Cape Christian Church, who spent part of their community Day of Service at FISH. Volunteers helped sort, clean, and organize the equipment inventory so items are ready when neighbors need them. Their efforts ensured that equipment is in good condition and easy for the FISH team to access when requests come in. “The Cape Christian volunteers gave their time to make sure these resources are ready for the next neighbor who needs them,” Arnowitz added.

While many requests come from seniors, the Equipment for Loan program serves neighbors of all ages. FISH recently partnered with the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge by donating wheelchairs for use by visitors who may need mobility support. The equipment helps ensure that guests who may have difficulty walking longer distances can still experience the refuge’s trails, exhibits, and natural spaces. “Ding Darling is such a special place for our community and for visitors who come to experience the islands,” said Arnowitz. “Being able to provide wheelchairs there means more people can enjoy the refuge. It’s a simple way neighbors can support one another and help make the island experience more accessible.”

Whether someone is recovering from an injury, supporting a family member after a hospital stay, or navigating a temporary health challenge, the FISH of SanCap Equipment for Loan program helps remove barriers. Neighbors who need equipment or would like to donate gently used items are encouraged to contact FISH.



Building Your Financial Plan: Free Budgeting Workshop

FISH of SanCap will host a free, financial education workshop, Building Your Financial Plan (Create a Budget), on Thurs., Apr. 30, 2026, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. The workshop will take place at St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church, Library, 2304 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel and is open to community members looking to learn tools to better manage their finances. Light refreshments will be provided.

The workshop will be facilitated by Carol Kayes, an experienced accountant who specializes in working with nonprofit organizations and the individuals and families they support. The session is focused on helping participants better understand their own financial picture and set achievable goals. Topics will include:

- Reviewing current financial situations, including income, expenses, savings, and debt
- Identifying financial goals for the year ahead, the next five years, and long-term
- Understanding how current finances connect to future goals
- Creating a practical plan to reach those goals
- Putting that plan into action through a realistic budgeting process



Participants will not be asked to share any personal financial information during the workshop. Once registered, attendees will receive a short list of simple figures to have ready beforehand to help them get the most out of the session.

“This workshop is about giving people tools they can actually use,” said Simon Robson, Community Outreach and Resiliency Director at FISH. “Financial stress affects so many parts of daily life. By offering clear guidance, we’re helping neighbors feel more confident, informed, and in control of their finances.”

A follow-up workshop will be planned for a future date to check in on progress and provide continued support. The date will be announced at a later time.

St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church continues to be a valued partner, generously providing space for community education programs.

The workshop is open to everyone. RSVPs are required by April 28th. Please visit <https://budget26.rsvpify.com> to reserve a spot. For more information, contact Simon Robson at FISH at 239-472-4775 or simon@fishofsanacap.org.



FISH events to catch

building your financial plan

open to all Island Employees
and Island residents!



DATE **Thursday, April 30**
TIME **6:00p-8:00p**
VENUE **Saint Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church, Library**
2304 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel | *RSVPs are required by April 28th*



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Please use the QR Code to reserve a spot. For more information, contact Simon Robson at FISH at 239-472-4775 or simon@fishofsancap.org.

FREE



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Recognizing Volunteers During National Volunteer Month

In recognition of National Volunteer Month (April), we are extending our appreciation to the **over 200 volunteers** who give their time throughout the year to support neighbors across the islands.

From stocking shelves in the food pantry and delivering meals, to delivering equipment, assisting with programs, and helping at community events, volunteers are part of nearly every aspect of FISH's work. Their time and willingness to step in where needed help ensure that services continue to reach those who rely on them.

"Volunteers are truly at the heart of everything we do," said MJ Hays. "They show up, they are eager to help, they lend a hand, and they care. It's not just the hours they give—it's the way they give them. That makes all the difference for the people we serve."

FISH offers a range of volunteer opportunities throughout the year, including support for the food pantry, senior services, transportation, educational workshops, and seasonal initiatives such as the Community Thanksgiving meal and holiday gift wrapping. Whether someone has a few hours a week or is looking for a more regular schedule, there are many ways to get involved.

One volunteer shared, "I started helping a few mornings a week and quickly realized how much this place means to people. You see neighbors helping neighbors in a very real way. It's simple, but it matters."

As the season winds down, FISH typically sees a shift in volunteer availability, with many seasonal residents heading north for the summer months. While this is a natural part of island life, it also creates a gap in volunteer support during a time when services remain steady. In fact, the summer months are often the most challenging when it comes to maintaining consistent volunteer coverage, leaving many of the day-to-day tasks—like pantry support, deliveries, and program assistance—to be absorbed by staff. Even so, the need doesn't slow down, and FISH continues to rely on a small but dedicated group of year-round volunteers to help keep services running.

Additional volunteer opportunities are being explored, and those interested in connecting are encouraged to follow FISH on social media for the latest updates and ways to participate. During National Volunteer Month and beyond, FISH recognizes all individuals who continue to give what is often the most meaningful gift—their time.





FISH LINES

THANK YOU!



THANK YOU!



FISH LINES

THANK YOU!



THANK YOU!

neighbors helping neighbors



FISH of SanCap Friendly Faces Luncheon Brings Record Crowd



The March Friendly Faces Luncheon hosted by FISH of SanCap welcomed its largest gathering to date, with **125 guests** filling the Sanibel Community House for a morning of connection, conversation, and learning.

Held on the second Tuesday of every month beginning at 11:00 a.m., the Friendly Faces Luncheon has become a welcoming gathering for island neighbors. The next Friendly Faces Luncheon will take place on **April 14th, 11:00 a.m. at the Sanibel Community House** and will feature guest speakers from Community Housing & Resources (CHR), who will present “Who is Community Housing (affordable housing) and why should it matter to the older adults of our community.”

Friendly Faces helps address isolation among seniors while offering a space where people can gather and spend time together. While many attendees are older adults, the luncheon is open to anyone in the community who enjoys good conversation and learning something new.

“Programs like Friendly Faces remind us how important it is to simply spend time together,” said Erika Arnowitz of FISH Senior Services. “Many neighbors live alone or have family and friends off island. Having a place where people can come together for conversation, a meal, and learning makes a real difference.”

For some guests, the experience has been a pleasant surprise. “Thank you for inviting me to the Friendly Faces Luncheon,” says a long-time resident. “I had such a wonderful time. I don’t do any socializing as my friends all still work full-time in Fort Myers, and I have no ‘fun money’ to spend. This Friendly Faces Luncheon was an answer to my prayers. I got to socialize with some wonderful fellow seniors, enjoyed the delicious lunch, the give-away prizes, and the informative presentation.”

FISH encourages anyone looking for connection, conversation, or simply a friendly place to spend a late morning to attend a future luncheon. The Friendly Faces Luncheon takes place the second Tuesday of each month at 11:00 a.m. at the Sanibel Community House. RSVPs are required and can be made at <https://friendlyfacesapril26.rsvpify.com>.

For additional information, contact Erika Arnowitz, Senior Services Director at 239-472-4775 or erika@fishofsancap.org.





FISH volunteerism

friendly faces volunteers

*volunteers needed to assist
with serving guest meals*



DATE 2nd Tuesday of each month
TIME 10:30a-1:30p approx.
VENUE Sanibel Community House—2173 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel
TRAINING Online ServSafe Food Handler course required

We're looking for one or two volunteers to help serve the main meal to guests as they come through the buffet line and to help keep things moving so everyone can settle in and enjoy. You might also jump in where needed—helping with set up, keeping guests engaged, or clean up at the end.

Because this role involves food service, volunteers will need to complete the ServSafe Food Handler course and receive certification

- FISH will cover the cost of the course
- Online, self-paced, 1.5 to 2-hour course
- Present certification prior to becoming a Friendly Faces volunteer
- Valid for three years

Questions prior to signing up? Please contact:

Erika Arnowitz, Senior Services Director (erika@fishofsancap.org) or

MJ Hays, Volunteer & Office Coordinator (mj@fishofsancap.org)



*Once ServSafe Certification is complete, you may sign up
as a Friendly Faces Volunteer through Point*

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Zonta Foundation Supports Women's Continuing Education



Thank you Zonta Foundation of Southwest Florida for your continued support of women working to further their education through the our Adult Scholarship Program. The program helps women who live or work on Sanibel and Captiva take the next step toward more stable, sustainable careers by covering costs such as tuition, certification and licensing fees, books, uniforms, and other required materials.

Many of the women served are balancing work, family, and the high cost of living—often underemployed or working in industries that don't offer long-term stability. Others are pursuing an opportunity they once thought wasn't possible. Access to education gives them a real chance to move forward.

On behalf of the Zonta Foundation of Southwest Florida, Grants Co-Chair Joanne Marriott shared, "We are very pleased to inform you that FISH is being awarded a grant toward helping women in the Adult Scholarship Program continue their educations and pursue new career paths. Everyone in Zonta supports all programs and activities that FISH offers, but we are especially proud right now to help cover tuition, certification and licensing fees, books, uniforms, and other costs that can stand in the way of women moving toward independence."

FISH's Adult Scholarship Program focuses on removing the practical barriers that often keep women from continuing their education with the goal of giving women the opportunity to move forward, support their families, and build something more secure for the future.

"This support helps make something possible that might otherwise feel out of reach," said Nitza Lopez, FISH Social Services Director. "We see women every day who are working hard, taking care of their families, and still trying to better themselves. When the financial piece is covered, they can focus on school and actually move forward."

One program participant shared how that support made a difference for her family. "We were trying to get by on one income and keep up with rent," she said. "When I had the chance to enroll in a certificate program, I didn't know how we would afford it. FISH helped cover part of the cost, and that changed everything. Now I can focus on finishing the program and building something more stable for my family."

FISH notes that the need for this kind of support continues to grow. In recent years, more women have applied for assistance than funding allows, many of them working multiple jobs or recovering from setbacks tied to storms or shifts in the local economy.

Through partnerships like this one with Zonta, FISH is able to say yes more often—helping women take meaningful steps toward independence, stronger career paths, and long-term stability.

For more information about FISH of SanCap's Adult Scholarship Program or how to support it, visit fishofsanap.org or contact the organization at (239) 472-4775.



AngelFISH Kitchen Senior and Family Cooking Classes Focused on Healthy Meals at Home

The AngelFISH Society recently kicked off the AngelFISH Kitchen project with its first senior cooking class, followed by a family class, launching a new effort centered on healthy, simple meals at home.

The AngelFISH Kitchen is a project of the AngelFISH Society, a philanthropic group of women who combine friendship, education, and collective giving to support meaningful work in the community. Guided by the AngelFISH Committee and chaired by Linda Uhler, the group pools its annual contributions to fund a project that addresses urgent local needs while also strengthening the FISH Foundation.



This year's focus is on healthy eating and accomplished by providing air fryer ovens to local seniors and families, along with nutrition classes that teach participants how to use the appliance. The goal is to help neighbors prepare healthy, budget-friendly meals at home without feeling overwhelmed.

Classes are led by Maggie Hurd, a dietician with Lee Health, and are designed to be welcoming and easy to follow. Participants learn tips for healthy eating, watch live cooking demonstrations using the air fryer/convection oven, discover simple recipes that help stretch a grocery budget, and receive ingredients to recreate the meals at home. Ingredients are provided in a custom-designed AngelFISH Kitchen canvas tote.

"The response was overwhelmingly positive," said Linda Uhler, AngelFISH Committee Chair. "There were lots of good questions and interaction with Salli Kirkland, who demonstrated use of the appliance, and Maggie Hurd about food and the air fryer/oven. I think we helped to open the door for more healthy cooking at home."

Beyond the recipes, the classes are about building confidence. Many seniors are cooking for one. Many families are juggling work, school, and rising grocery costs. The air fryer oven offers a simple way to prepare fresh meals without multiple pots and pans or complicated steps.





Neighbors in Readiness

Your Monthly Guide to Staying Safe and Prepared



Neighbors in Readiness, a new monthly preparedness series, is designed to help residents take practical, manageable steps to stay safe, informed, and resilient throughout the year. Each month, Neighbors in Readiness will share short, easy-to-follow tips, reminders, and resources.

From putting together a simple emergency kit to checking in with neighbors, every suggestion is meant to be practical, affordable, and doable—no matter your budget or experience level. Whether you live in a single-family home, condo, or rental, these small steps can make a big difference.

April — Prepare Your Property Before Hurricane Season | April is the perfect month to get your property storm-ready — a little effort now can prevent bigger problems later. These steps work for everyone, whether you handle them yourself, with family, or with neighbors.

Quick Actions:

1. Inspect your home. Walk around and check doors, windows, shutters, and screens for any obvious damage or loose parts.
2. Trim and tidy. Cut back weak tree branches, clear leaves, and remove loose items from yards, patios, and balconies that could fly around in high winds.
3. Secure outdoor items. Bring in or tie down patio furniture, trash cans, potted plants, and other items that could become hazards in a storm.
4. Check drainage. As much as possible, make sure water can flow away from your home by clearing ditches, drains, and low areas in your yard.
5. Plan with neighbors. If you need help with yard work or moving heavy items, team up — storm preparation is safer and easier when done together.

Island Insight | Simple, hands-on prep can make a big difference. By checking your property and organizing your space now, you help protect your home and make our islands stronger and safer for everyone.

[Kids Monthly Readiness Activity](#)



This work is led by FISH of SanCap and made possible through grant funding from the American Red Cross. This support provides critical resources that allow the FISH team to research, collaborate, and deliver ongoing disaster preparedness information and monthly resources to the community.



JOG N JAM Registration & Tickets Available Now!

We are thrilled to announce our 2026 JOG N JAM event, bringing back the energy of last year's event with even more in store for runners, concertgoers, and the businesses that help make it happen.

After a record-breaking year, JOG N JAM returns and continues to grow. What began as a community race and beach concert has become one of the most anticipated events on the islands, bringing neighbors, visitors, and supporters together for two signature experiences:

Saturday, November 7, 2026 – The 10K, 5K, and Kids Fun Run return to the Sanibel Community House, 2173 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel, FL 33957, offering a scenic course for runners and walkers of all levels. Whether racing for a personal best, joining a team, or simply enjoying the morning with friends, participants can expect a well-organized event that reflects the spirit of the islands. The race will be timed by LinMark Sports, a full-service sports company.

Saturday, December 5, 2026 – The celebration continues at Tween Waters Island Resort, 15951 Captiva Dr, Captiva, FL 33924, with the JOG N JAM beach concert, featuring the **Ben Allen Band**. The evening includes two sets, with a fireworks display at intermission before the band returns to close out the night. With food, drinks, and the beach atmosphere, it's a chance to relax, reconnect, and enjoy the season.

"Last year set the bar high," said Leah Winkler, FISH Board Member and JOG N JAM Committee Chair. "The turnout, the energy, the community support—it was something special. We're excited to bring that same feeling back this year, with a few additions that make the experience even better."

JOG N JAM is one of two annual fundraisers supporting FISH's work across the islands. Proceeds fund programs that help neighbors navigate everyday challenges—from food access and financial assistance to senior services, education, and ongoing recovery efforts.

Registration and concert tickets are now available. Race registration is offered at tiered pricing, with fees increasing as race day approaches. Concertgoers can take advantage of a limited-time 4-pack ticket offer—four tickets for \$200, a \$100 savings, **ending on May 25, 2026 at 11:59pm**.

- Race registration through [Run Sign Up](#)
- Concert tickets through [RSVPify](#)





JOG N JAM continued

JOG N JAM also continues to provide a meaningful way for local and regional businesses to connect with the community. Sanibel and Captiva come alive each year in support of FISH and the neighbors who rely on food programs, emergency financial assistance, and other essential services. Sponsorship offers a chance to be part of that effort while joining in the energy of the event. Businesses are featured across JOG N JAM marketing, aligning their name with a cause the community cares about. It's an opportunity to celebrate, give back, and stand alongside island neighbors while helping ensure FISH's mission continues. Depending on level, sponsorship opportunities may include:

- Brand visibility across race and concert audiences
- Inclusion in participant communications
- On-site engagement opportunities
- Recognition alongside a trusted community organization

"Sponsors play a big role in making this event what it is," Winkler added. "They help extend our reach and show up for the community in a real way." Those interested in sponsoring can view the sponsorship packet on the FISH website or contact Maggie Goldsmith at maggiegoldsmith@fishofsancap.org.

From the starting line to the final song on the beach, JOG N JAM brings people together in a way that feels true to the islands—welcoming, connected, and fun. FISH invites everyone to be part of it. Lace up, grab a ticket, and join in.





VOLUNTEERS, PARTNERS, COMMUNITY | THANK YOU!



THthank you!**YOU!**



VOLUNTEERS, PARTNERS, COMMUNITY | THANK YOU!

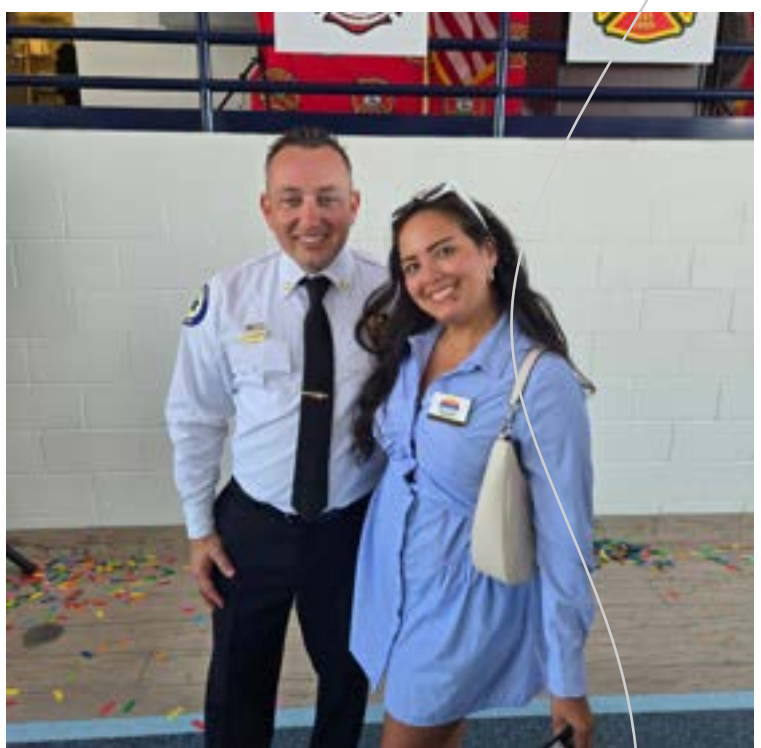


THthank you!**YOU!**



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THthank you!**YOU!**



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