

GUEST COMMENTARY

Stay In May comes to Marco Island

KEITH DAMERON

Rose Auditorium at the Marco Island Historical Society – why should you be there? Because this is the first event for the StayInMay Festival on Marco Island.

For those of us that live here all year – the concept of stay in May might seem like a strange phrase. But this festival is unique in several ways and I am thrilled to let everyone know that this year they are bringing the festival to Marco Island.

Why Stay In May – because the Festival has expanded our cultural season. During the past five years over 60,000 people have attended the many events that are a part of the festival. Most of the year if you go to a play, concert or lecture you go to the same place, same theatre location, same concert hall, same lecture facility. But the festival does not have a theatre, concert hall or lecture facility – instead it partners with many other organizations across our region and brings the entertainment to their venue.

This partnership provides a unique opportunity to introduce new audiences to an event and for the venue to welcome new audiences to their location. Over the years it has been very interesting to hear people come to a venue that has been in Collier County for many years – and look around with amazement as this is the first time they have been there.

So not only is this Islander's opportunity for many more cultural activities at a time of the year when many of our organizations are not presenting programming; but it is our opportunity to learn about new venues and meet new people in the community.

This year the StayinMay Festival brings a wonderful program to Marco. On May 11 our own Malenda Trick painting an original piece in the style of her favorite artist – Toulouse Lautrec – while enjoying two amazing artists perform while she creates a visual dream. Accompanying the painting with song will be Gulfshore Opera's founder – Steffanie Pearce accompa-



Daniela Navarro of Costa Rica is one of the performers for the Stay in May Festival.

SUBMITTED

nied by Dr. James Cochran, founder of Artis-Naples Choruses. Three amazing artists in one room at the Rose Auditorium.

The StayinMay Festival provides many cultural events from April 25 to May 12, 2017. We will have only one opportunity to see an exhibit by renowned Chinese artist – Deena Gu. This extraordinary exhibit was on display at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and now we can see it at the Naples Art Association. In addition to the first event on Marco, this year is the first Health and Wellness series; culinary programs with the featured artist Deena Gu at Sur La Table; a culinary program featuring all of the five Collier County high school culinary programs; a short film festival featuring award-

winning shorts; Dixieland celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Norris Gardens; The Tokens at the Zoo presenting their award-winning "The Lion Sleeps Tonight."

Not only does the Festival provide unique cultural events in unexpected venues, many of the artists that come to the festival also go to the schools to work with our area students providing master classes for music students, continuing education opportunities for teachers and introducing new concepts to students and teachers in our area. Over the years many studies have been done that demonstrate the advantages music studies have for our young people. Encouraging those studies and providing these opportunities that students would not have if the artists were

not here and available to come to their classroom, is a cornerstone of the festival.

I personally want to encourage everyone to learn more about the StayinMay Festival which is produced locally and benefits not only the audience but the many partner organizations. Explore the fantastic world of the Stay In May Festival at their website – StayInMay.com. The events will begin on April 25 and conclude on May 12 – events are at unique venues and provide reasonably priced tickets. This festival is designed to provide a variety of opportunities to explore the wonderful world of the arts in different settings across our region. I personally look forward to seeing you on May 11 at the Rose Auditorium.

EDITORIAL & OPINION

Don't miss Pickleball Championships!

COASTAL
COMMENTS

Donna Fiala

A while back I had asked for anyone who might know how to sew cancer caps for children, and I received a few very beautiful replies. I just wanted to thank those ladies

who were so kind and caring to offer their assistance. I know our Marco Island Kiwanis Club was thrilled to receive their help! I'm sure many angels have sent kisses to those ladies for their loving kindness. Also, on the other side of the bridge, Annie Riffle and lady friends sewed for the East Naples Kiwanis Club. Annie and Skip Riffle even brought their sewing machines to Stan's and to the club meeting to show how to make the hats. It's a very special procedure.

• It's been so very busy this year for all of us. As we see the traffic thinning, we thank all who stayed with us during the winter months, and wish them well when they get back to their northern homes.

• This past week I was in Tallahassee for a Florida Association of Counties conference. While up there I met with the person who is second in command for the FDOT. We spoke about a number of things that are of importance to the people in this part of the county. One of them was the entrance signs for communities along State Road 951/Collier Boulevard and U.S. 41 E, east of Collier Boulevard. Although I'd spoken to the Bartow office before, and they said the "street" signs (meaning not community names but entrance street names) are acceptable, they never told us how to apply for them, who pays for them, who installs them (although the State wants them installed to a certain standard) and who we could speak with to order them. So, I asked the questions once again, but this time in Tallahassee. They said I would get the answers in writing. When I do, I will let the communities most interested in these signs know who to correspond with. Then we talked about one of the most important safety issues: street lights! I have inquired, and received answers, but nothing in writing – and that is SO important! The FDOT said they would contact the right people to get the answers back for us "in writing". When I get those answers, I'll let everyone know when the lights will be installed. Then we spoke of the speed limit on U.S.41E, which increases to 60 mph right before the developments! I've talked to everyone I know and even those who would not listen, to try to get that speed reduced to 50 mph through those communities,

but always received a NO answer. Not sure where it will end up after my little visit, but I'm waiting for a reply, and will still keep trying until the door is slammed in my face. With marvelous communities like Reflection Lakes, Naples Reserve, Imperial Wilderness, Paradise Pointe, etc., the Habitat communities, and the churches along that route, that speed is just not safe...especially with no street lights! Keep your fingers crossed that we prevail. And lastly, we talked about the "washboard" effect we have on SR 951/Collier Boulevard between Fiddler's Creek and Mainsail Drive. I mentioned it to the FDOT a couple years ago, and actually took them for a ride to experience it for themselves, and they were surprised at the road condition. I know it takes a while to get plans in place, money appropriated, designs approved, bids taken, and construction plans approved and awarded, but I thought it was about time we discussed it again. I was very encouraged by their response.

• Very shyly I want to tell you that recently I was honored to receive an award for accomplishments from Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart, who read the information into the Congressional Record in the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C., and then presented me with a plaque that memorialized the reading at a surprise announcement in the commission chamber. Would you believe I was flabbergasted and couldn't find words to say? I heard the clapping, so I'm guessing it was because I was speechless!

• Have you noticed how beautiful the fountain is now in the little pond next to the Fuller Funeral Home? It's so peaceful and graceful. I love it.

• You've probably heard about my complaints regarding self-storage units and the preponderance of them looking for permits to build along U.S. 41E. I'll never understand why they want main street front and center locations when they are not an impulse purchase like a Culver's or Dairy Queen or even a dress shop. Does anyone ever drive by a self-storage unit and wonder if they have something in the car that needs a storage unit immediately? They take the best land, and then the places that

are truly needed in this area, such as restaurants and retail stores, are left to locate in other areas. Who wants to be located close to a storage unit? They are not good for employment because they have very few employees and little overhead. People can't shop there. They don't create an atmosphere of a neighborhood community. These self-storage units are not a draw for shoppers, yet there are now over seven of them prepared to come to U.S. 41 East with three story buildings to store stuff! They've taken up the best lands, in most cases, which leaves bits and pieces of land to try to create a shopping plaza or something else to draw our community together; to have an ice cream, eat a nice meal, shop for shoes, buy kids school clothes, etc. One man who wanted to build another self-storage facility actually found out how many were seeking permits and decided the market was already overcrowded and withdrew his offer.

• Coming up quickly is the 2nd U.S. Open Pickleball Championship games, starting on April 21st as the introductory day, and then "let the games begin" on April 22nd. There are 41 states participating this year, and 16 countries! Over 1,300 players are registered to play. There is already excitement in the air as the huge Shade Structure is being erected. Did you know that this "Pickleball Park," with 44 pickleball courts now has more pickleball courts than any other park in the world? Right here in Collier County! That's a thrill. You don't want to miss the excitement. The newspaper reporters and TV stations will be there, including CBS Sports. There will be food available when you get hungry and music to listen to while eating. Last year people were even dancing to the great entertainment. Do you know where East Naples Community Park is located? It is off U.S. 41E, down Thomasson Road (which is across from Rattlesnake Hammock Rd), and then about one mile to the park. By the way...if you would like to volunteer a little time, there are always car parkers needed. If you'd like to participate, just call my office at 239-252-8601 and we'll get your name to the right person in charge of car-parkers. See you soon!



VOLUME VIII - ISSUE 8

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A special thank you to the following contributors:

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We appreciate sharing your special expertise with our readers!

Editor's Note: The opinions expressed in Coastal Breeze News columns are those of our contributors. We realize that there are many points of view and we invite you to write to us and share your opinions.

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Explore the Arts With
StayInMay Festival

Guest Commentary By Keith Dameron

It has been my pleasure to get to know the StayInMay Festival and all of the wonderful cultural activities it brings to our County. For the past five years this Festival has brought talent from around the world to Southwest Florida; and it is with great pride that I tell you that this year's Festival will bring an exciting event to Marco Island.

Several months ago several of us met with the Festival founder and explored ideas for what would be a great program for Marco. The answer was to feature one of the Island's treasured artists – Malenda Trick and pair her visual art talent with music. We all know how fantastic it would be to see Malenda paint live; and to paint in her favorite artist's style – Toulouse Lautrec. But the question then became what music – naturally we went to cabaret to stay with the French theme. The result is that this program will feature three artists that are proud to call



The DePue Brothers

Submitted Photo

LETTERS from A/9

come taxation on Social Security.

U.S. President Harry S. Truman sent the House a bill that would offer health insurance to those aged sixty-five and older, but was blocked. President John F. Kennedy tried unsuccessfully too.

President Ronald Reagan in 1983 was the first to sign a law allowing up to 50 percent of social security income to be taxed. In 1993, under President Bill Clinton, the taxable amount increased to 85 percent. Which is amusing because anyone who works pays FICA taxes (Federal Insurance Contribution Act) to save toward Social Security income. Subsequently, we now pay federal income tax on our social security income, which is paid for by a tax on our work income. In emoji language, that would be the yellow face, with one eye closed and the tongue hanging out.

Since 1935, health care costs have escalated (hmmm. Nothing new there), and the federal government believed that Social Security needed improvement to protect the aged against rising health care costs.

Finally, on July 30, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) signed into law Medicare and Medicaid as amendments to the Social Security program. Research shows that as health costs increase in old age, income usually declines. At that time in the mid-60s, it was found that slightly over half the 65+ year-olds had any type of hospital insurance; private health insurers discontinued policies for the elderly, especially in the high-risk category. Medicare accomplished two things: First, a hospital insurance plan, and secondly, a medical insurance plan that covered physicians' services and other areas not covered by hospital insurance. LBJ signed the law in Independence, MO where former President Truman and his wife watched. Johnson later said, "I wanted him (Truman) to

know that America remembered."

Medicaid aimed to help the low or modest income elderly, who were living at or below the poverty level, as determined by the federal government. For 2017, the federal poverty level for one person is an annual minimum income of \$12,060 to qualify for the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and up to \$16,643 to qualify for 2017 Medicaid.

At an annual salary or income of \$12,060, a person has \$232 a week to live on. I have had grocery bills higher than that. I have not seen a doctor's invoice for less than \$300-\$400 for a simple office visit. "Thank you, Medicare." The current controversy over health care in the United States takes us back to which form of "entitlement" we are talking about, and who's getting what.

There's no denying that Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid entitlements are a vital support for millions of Americans who need health coverage and income in retirement.

Currently, approximately 50 million Americans receive Social Security, another 11 million collect disability benefits, and about 55 million get Medicare. According to the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College, "If people continue to work and pay taxes, Social Security will not run out of money." Still naysayers predict an end date in 2035.

The so-called dwindling Social Security Trust Fund has been borrowed against often. LBJ first borrowed from social security to pay for the Vietnam War. Next was Reagan for the military buildup in the 1980s. President George W. Bush borrowed \$1.37 trillion to pay for the tax cuts to the rich and the war in Iraq. If we borrow money, we must return the money. Not so with presidents. Besides, that's money we only think we have a right to.

Judy Brenna
Marco Island

StayInMay from A/8

Collier County home.

Thursday, May 11 in the Rose Auditorium at the Marco Island Historical Society, we all will have the opportunity to enjoy the first StayInMay Festival event on our Island. Malenda will be painting an original work that you will have the opportunity to bid on at the end of the evening. The music for the evening is guaranteed to accompany Malenda perfectly - soprano Steffanie Pearce, founder of Gulfshore Opera and accompanied by Dr. James Cochran, founding director of the Artis-Naples Chorus.

The StayInMay Festival is our own and is only produced in Southwest Florida and was born out of a desire to extend our cultural season. For many of us, during "season" we are so busy we don't have time to enjoy the many cultural activities that are available - but when our season is over and we have the time for the cultural activities there are very few available. StayInMay has attracted over 60,000 participants to its many events proving that we want opportunities off-season.

It is a unique Festival in more ways than one - having no permanent home - the Festival brings its events to other organizations around our area. Spending time getting to know StayInMay's partner organizations makes it possible to bring events to them that work not only for the Festival but the partner organizations. It is important to have entertainment opportunities that are accessible to everyone - which means in locations around our area with ticket pricing

that is reasonable. With so many organizations competing for your donations to support not only the programs but buildings - this Festival uses the revenue to invest in future festivals and the education programs that the Festival sponsors.

Education is a big part of the Festival's mission - bringing programs to the young people in our community is an integral part of the Festival. Having the opportunity to work with a professional musician or hear a live concert, or experience a new visual art form is an education that cannot be duplicated in most classrooms. Investing in the arts in our community means investing in our children - the arts provide an expansion of knowledge that is not available on most days in our schools. Enhancing the lives of our children through the arts is important for all of us to treasure; and is a cornerstone of the Festival.

I urge everyone to learn more about the Festival at StayInMay.com - the events begin on April 25 with an incredible visual arts exhibit - From Shanghai to Naples at the Naples Art Association. During the course of the Festival there are programs that target - Health and Wellness, Film Festival, Bluegrass/Rock and Classics with the DePue Brothers; Dick Hyman; Culinary Program featuring the culinary programs of Collier County Schools; Dixieland at the Naples Historical Society; Tokens at the Naples Zoo; and many more. So I encourage you to begin a new tradition and explore the world of the arts at unique venues - and make sure you begin with the wonderful program that will be featured on Marco Island.

Gerry Rosenblum

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