

Gulfport Messenger

Newsletter of the Gulfport FL Merchants Association

January-February-March 2010

Member Highlight: Gulfport On The Rocks

Gulfport rocks! And Sherrye Doucette is one of the people that keep it rocking. Sherrye owns and operates Gulfport On The Rocks, one of Tampa Bay's best little venues for live music that ranges from blues to rock to alternative to jazz to R&B to country and more. The crowd at On The Rocks is as diverse as the kinds of music they present. According to Sherrye, "We pride ourselves on being an everybody kind of bar. Everyone's welcome and everyone gets along." And since Gulfport is a diverse little town itself, On The Rocks is a favorite hangout for young and old, men and women, bikers and bankers, gays and straights, hippies, NASCAR lovers, parents, singles, tourists and many others.

Located at 5413 Shore Blvd., the popular waterfront tavern has been in business for decades and has been a part of downtown Gulfport through its roughest patches several years ago and its resurgence in recent years. Perched across from Williams Pier, On The Rocks offers a beautiful view of Boca Ciega Bay. It is also one of the best spots in town to watch football, NASCAR, baseball and other major sports captured on the bar's ten TV's. On The Rocks is open seven days a week, 9AM to 2AM, except Sundays when it is open 9AM to 11PM.

On five nights a week, live music pulses from the stage by popular and up-and-coming local bands. The line-up changes every week, but often includes such recurring favorites as the Tampa Bay Blues Jam, local women's band Karmic Tattoo, acoustic music by Bob Keller and Dwayne Slayton, and blues/rock belted by Wendy and the Soul Shakers. Pull up a barstool or chair. Or make yourself comfortable on the sofa next to the dance floor in front of the stage, offering some of the best seats in the house. A schedule of performers and events is posted online at www.myspace.com/gulfportontherocks.

The atmosphere of On The Rocks is certainly laid-back and friendly. The long room features a main bar as well as a secondary bar at the front end. Pool tables and dart boards are two other pastimes. The evidence of years of parties,

Member Highlight (continued)

dancing and socializing is everywhere, with souvenirs and stickers plastering some walls, and an eclectic collection of biker, music or sports-themed accessories throughout. It is at once gritty and comfortable, affordable and accessible to everyone.

Sherrye took over On The Rocks nearly eight years ago. Originally from Gloucester, on the Massachusetts coast, she decided to leave the cold winters behind and took six months to scout for opportunities in many Florida locations in the summer of 2002. On the final week of her search, she found out about a little waterfront tavern for sale in Gulfport. She liked what she saw, bought the business and made the move. She has warm feelings for Gulfport, especially its "sense of community" and "small-town feel." With nearly 40 years of experience in the food and beverage industry, including many, many years of bartending, Sherrye is a good steward of On The Rocks and wears lots of different hats to keep the business running. She is helped by about six employees, many of whom are longtime and familiar Gulfport locals. She is also a good friend to many of her devoted customers. She is often one of the first business owners in town to pitch in when a local resident needs help, whether it's a fundraiser for someone fighting cancer or someone else who has fallen on hard times, or a collection of items to send to troops overseas.

For many locals, On The Rocks is a gathering place, or for some, maybe even a sanctuary. For others, it's a place to kick out the jams, playing music or listening and dancing to it. Or it's a place to catch the big game while sharing beers with your buddies. Put all of these things together, add beautiful views of the water just steps away, and it's obvious why Gulfport On The Rocks is a local institution.

Thanks and Farewell

Java Nirvana, a fixture in Gulfport's Art Village Courtyard for several years, will say goodbye on Saturday, January 16th after Art Walk. Owners Jim and P.J. have served up fresh-roasted gourmet coffee, savory sandwiches and paninis,

Thanks and Farewell (continued)

as well as delicious desserts throughout their tenure. They have also been very active and contributing members of the community and the Gulfport Merchants Association. The GMA extends its sincere thanks for their hard work and community spirit. Their presence will be greatly missed.

Tuesday Fresh Market Gears Up For Season

If you haven't been to Gulfport's Tuesday Fresh Market lately, you will be pleasantly surprised to see a growing contingent of vendors. The size of the Market has slowly grown in size over the past several weeks as "the season" approaches and Florida welcomes its "snowbirds" back into the fold. Lining more than a full block of Beach Blvd. below 29th Ave. South, there is something for nearly everyone at the Market this season. The Fresh Market is an event sponsored by the Gulfport Merchants Association.

So far, the ever-expanding line-up includes: an extensive variety of fresh fruits and veggies, fresh cheeses, fresh bread, bagels and scones, seafood, local honey, nuts, herbs and herbal teas, live plants, homemade candy, hot apple cider, homemade sauces, flavored olive oils, hand-made jewelry, hand-painted accessories and objects, hand-made pet accessories, tie-dyed clothing, and much more. Astrological readings are also offered periodically. Live music by and for "men (and women) of a certain age" is provided each week, courtesy of local singer/guitarist Frank Hewlett, aka "The Geezer." New vendors are appearing each week as the Market continues into its fourth year. This weekly gathering provides food for the body and community spirit for the soul.

The GMA is sponsoring a Gulfport information tent during each Market to offer information about Gulfport events sponsored by a variety of groups, including the GMA, Chamber of Commerce, the City of Gulfport, the Public Library, the Lion's Club and other organizations promoting activities in our City. Cooperating to publicize all of our events is seen as a way to benefit all non-profit organizations which are trying to make a positive difference in our community and attract visitors. The GMA is also offering Market-goers information about shops,

Tuesday Fresh Market (continued)

restaurants and other businesses that are GMA members. If your business would like to make cards or other small promotional materials available to the public during the Market, drop off your materials to Daniel Hodge at the Market on any Tuesday. Also at the Gulfport tent, donations of non-perishable food, toiletries and personal needs are accepted for the Gulfport Senior Center Pantry. Please consider dropping off these donations at the Market on any Tuesday.

Gulfport Goes Gladly... to the Dogs

Get Rescued...In Gulfport, the animal rescue festival and fundraiser, is preparing for its sixth annual event to take place on Saturday, February 27th from 10AM to 5PM. Animal rescue organizations, many appearing with adoptable pets, take over Beach Blvd. to raise money and awareness for their causes. Additionally, animal-related vendors, artists and crafters offer their wares to festival-goers. Each year, hundreds of attendees, many accompanied by their own canine companions, make their way to Gulfport to participate in what has become a beloved tradition. Participants are encouraged to bring donations of dog and cat food and cat litter to be distributed to the rescues. This popular event, which GMA helps to sponsor, has evolved from one block and a handful of animal rescue groups in its first year to a popular and beloved event representing over 60 animal rescue groups from throughout the region. It is one of the largest such events in the nation. All proceeds from vendor fees and sponsors benefit the non-profit rescue groups.

The event was conceived and has flourished under the supervision of two GMA members: Lynda Shehan of Auntie Lynda's Pet Care and Mary O'Malley of Reef Dog Gifts and Grooming. Over the years, Lynda and Mary have added additional fundraising events to tie in with the main Get Rescued event. One component which continues this year is a Get Rescued Celebration held later in the evening after the daytime event. This year, the Celebration will be held at the Gulfport Casino from 7 to 11PM. Festivities will include music and dancing, cash bar, hors d'oeuvres, opportunity drawings and silent auctions with a wide variety of items

Gulfport Goes Gladly (continued)

provided by Gulfport merchants and supporters of the individual rescues. \$20 tickets for the Celebration will be available in advance at Reef Dog or Domain Home Accessories, or tickets can be purchased at the door.

Leading up to Get Rescued, fundraising has been taking place since the Fall on the first Friday of each month at Ecco Bistro & Tapas in Gulfport. Coinciding with the first Friday Art Walk, Ecco is donating 20% of its receipts to Get Rescued. The monthly event, next occurring Friday February 5th, has attracted many diners who are anxious to contribute to the Get Rescued effort by simply enjoying dinner or a glass of wine. Media exposure from the Ecco event also prompted an offer from Savannah's Restaurant in St. Petersburg to offer a similar fundraising opportunity to Get Rescued on Sunday, January 17th from 4 to 8PM when all gratuities offered to bartenders and servers will be donated to the effort.

Gulfport merchants can become involved in Get Rescued by sponsoring an individual animal rescue group for \$50, which will include a prominent sign at that group's Beach Blvd. booth. Additionally, donations of merchandise or gift certificates for the silent auction and drawings will be appreciated. For more information, contact Lynda Shehan at 727-323-3892 or email no1ringmaster@aol.com.

SpringFest On the Horizon

The GMA's annual SpringFest will be held Saturday, March 27th from noon to 8PM. The event will include dozens of art and craft vendors on Beach Blvd. as well as live music stages, street performers and kid-friendly activities. SpringFest is a popular festival which will draw several hundred visitors into the Village. Promotion of the event will be highly visible. Watch for more details about this year's event as they become available. Sponsorships for SpringFest are available now. For more information, contact Lori Rosso at 727-343-4445 or email rsvp@seabreezemanor.com.

Coming Up Soon

The following activities and events are reported as known at publication time. Changes may occur, so verify dates, times and locations as necessary.

- Fri. Jan. 1: New Year's Day
- Fri. Jan. 1: Art Walk 6-10PM
- Tue. Jan. 5: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Sat. Jan. 9: Lions Club spaghetti dinner 4PM
- Sat. Jan. 9: (through Sun. Jan. 24) Gulfport: The Musical @ Catherine Hickman Theater; Thu.-Sat. 8PM; Sun. 2PM
- Tue. Jan 12: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Tue. Jan. 12: GMA General Meeting @ Peg's Cantina 5:30PM
- Fri. Jan. 15: Theater on the Bay 6PM
- Sat. Jan. 16: Art Walk 6-10PM
- Mon. Jan. 18: M.L. King Day (observed)
- Tue. Jan. 19: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Tue. Jan. 19: (through Fri. Jan. 22) Health & Beauty Fair @ Senior Ctr. 9AM
- Fri. Jan. 22: Arbor Day Celebration @ Veterans' Park 2PM
- Tue. Jan. 26: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Sat. Jan. 30: Full Wolf Moon
- Sat. Jan 30: Floridiana Festival/Highwaymen Art Show @ Casino 10AM-5PM
- Tue. Feb. 2: Groundhog Day
- Tue. Feb. 2: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Fri. Feb 5: Art Walk 6-10PM
- Fri. Feb. 5: Get Rescued Fundraiser @ Ecco 6-10PM
- Tue. Feb. 9: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Tue. Feb. 9: GMA General Meeting @ Sea Breeze Manor B&B 5:30PM
- Wed. Feb. 10: Chinese New Year (Tiger)
- Fri. Feb. 12: Mardi Gras Ball @ Casino 7PM
- Sat. Feb. 13: Valentine Dance @ Casino 8PM
- Sun. Feb. 14: Valentine's Day
- Mon. Feb. 15: Presidents' Day
- Tue. Feb. 16: Mardi Gras
- Tue. Feb. 16: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Wed. Feb. 17: St. Patrick's Day
- Fri. Feb. 19: Theater on the Bay 6PM
- Sat. Feb. 20: Art Walk 6-10PM
- Tue. Feb. 23: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Fri. Feb. 26: Gulfport Historical Society Centennial Celebration Dance/Show @ Casino 7-11PM

Coming Up Soon (continued)

Sat. Feb. 27: Get Rescued 10AM-5PM
Sat. Feb. 27: Get Rescued Celebration @
Casino 7-11PM
Sun. Feb. 28: Full Snow Moon
Tue. Mar. 2: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Fri. Mar. 5: Art Walk 6-10PM
Tue. Mar. 9: City-wide Gulfport Elections
Tue. Mar. 9: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Tue. Mar. 9: GMA General Meeting @
Peninsula Inn & Spa 5:30PM
Sat. Mar. 13: Pink Flamingo Tour of Homes
Tue. Mar. 16: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Fri. Mar. 19: Theater on the Bay 7PM
Sat. Mar. 20: Spring Equinox
Sat. Mar. 20: City-Wide Yard Sale
Sat. Mar. 20: Gulfport Elementary Yard Sale
Sat. Mar. 20: Art Walk 6-10PM
Tue. Mar. 23: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Sat. Mar. 27: Spring Fest 12-8PM
Mon. Mar. 29: Full Worm Moon
Tue. Mar. 30: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM

Something to Think About

**“I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”**

Robert Frost