

Gulfport Messenger

Newsletter of the Gulfport FL Merchants Association

October/November/December 2009

Member Highlight: Auntie Lynda's Pet Care

Gulfport has cultivated a reputation as a little town that loves its dogs. The City's dog park, the many pet-friendly restaurants and businesses, the annual Get Rescued festival, and a steady stream of dog-walkers down Beach Boulevard throughout the day all testify to our keen interest in canine companionship. This is one of the main reasons Lynda Shehan decided that Gulfport was the right place for Auntie Lynda's Pet Care and Sitting Services.

A Gulfport resident since 2000, Lynda previously worked as a real estate broker and auctioneer of automobiles, antiques and estates. Born and raised in North Carolina, her work and travels have taken her to Atlanta, Houston, and New Orleans and nearby St. Pete Beach. But Gulfport's mixture of doggie-love, friendly people and beautiful waterfront location lured her here to stay. After years of working at other careers, and at a stage in her life in which she could choose any path she wished, she has now chosen the work she calls "more fulfilling than anything else I could imagine."

Auntie Lynda's Pet Care started business just over two years ago in June 2007. Lynda operates her small business by visiting the homes and locations of her clients. With no "store front" and no other staff members, Lynda spends her days traveling in Gulfport and beyond as she visits pets whose owners are away or otherwise unable to care for their pets. Lynda customizes her services to suit the distinct needs of each client, including but not limited to, pet-sitting, dog-walking, litter cleaning, exercising and play time, feeding, medical necessities, transportation to vet appointments and training. Her web site, www.AuntieLyndasPetCare.com, includes detailed information about the services she offers, or call her at 323-3892.

Though dogs and pets of all ages receive her care, Auntie Lynda's Pet Care specializes in elderly or special needs pets. Lynda has many years of experience in seeing to the needs of pets that are advanced in age or that have special needs due to temporary or permanent

Member Highlight (continued)

medical conditions, loss of limbs or other disabilities. Her work in this specialty has also been a valuable asset to people who are experiencing the end stages of a pet's life. Lynda often finds herself in the position of a caregiver for both human and animal in these times of transition.

Though wanting to keep her business small and personal, she is considering taking on one or more "thoughtful, competent, trustworthy" associates soon. She is now working with visitors and tourists who may need to leave pets at their lodging during their stay. She recently began offering her services to guests of Gulfport's Sea Breeze Manor. She is also interested in doing some small-scale sales of pet care products which she trusts and uses herself. Sales would be online or on a one-on-one basis with her pet care clients.

Lynda is Co-Founder and Coordinator of the annual Get Rescued fundraising event in Gulfport, held in March of each year. The event, co-sponsored by the Gulfport Merchants Association, brings a large number of pet rescue organizations to town on one day during a street festival designed to generate support for the groups, foster awareness and find good homes for pets that need them. Get Rescued has grown in size and popularity over the years to the point that it is now one of the most important pet rescue fundraising events in the nation. Auntie Lynda also sponsors a fun annual doggie costume contest and parade, which has become quite popular among locals. This year's whimsical event will be held on Thursday, October 29th at Domain Food & Spirits, 6 to 8PM.

Personally, Lynda shares her home with five chihuahuas and one cat. Naturally, each animal was a rescue, including each of the dogs which were rescued "seniors." At any given time in her home, there is a "hospice-type situation" in which one of the animals is in a transition to end of life. In her empathy, Lynda knows not only how to teach an animal, she also knows they have much to teach us. They are thankful to her for being there when they need her. And she is grateful to always learn from them.

Location, Location, Location: Events, Events, Events

GeckoFest Success

Summer 2009 saw the best ever GeckoFest become perhaps the most successful festival in Gulfport history. Over 15,000 attendees turned out for the festival which may be remembered as the event that dialed up Gulfport's popularity to an all-time high. A percentage of proceeds from GeckoFest also went to benefit AIDS Service Association of Pinellas as well as after school programs at the Gulfport Recreation Center. Gulfport Merchants Association members have a right to be proud of these achievements: exposing our community to a record number of visitors, thousands of whom will remember us fondly and return next year if not sooner; and giving back to our neighbors in need.

Now as the dog days of summer die down, our season kicks in and heats up even more with a full slate of events and activities in Gulfport. In addition to our twice-monthly Art Walk and weekly Tuesday Fresh Market, the GMA is proud to sponsor or co-sponsor these upcoming events.

Free Concert Series On The Point

By popular demand, the music continues each second Friday of the month through December in the free concert series on the point. The event is held on the waterfront at the Gulfport Recreation Center at Shore Blvd. and 58th St. In cooperation with the City of Gulfport and the Gulfport Chamber of Commerce, we are proud to help continue this slate of concerts begun this summer encouraging hundreds of participants to visit, shop and dine in Gulfport before and after these live outdoor musical performances. Upcoming dates are October 9th, November 13th and December 11th. Each performance is approximately 7:30 to 9:30PM. October's performance is by local jam band Groove Altar, fusing rock, funk, reggae and more. Performers for November and December will be announced as known.

GECKOWEEN

Because one celebration of the Gecko is never enough, the GMA has crafted this new event to celebrate Geckhood and Halloween at the

GECKOWEEN (continued)

same time. On Friday, October 30th, join hundreds of friends and neighbors at the historic waterfront Gulfport Casino from 7:30 to 11:30PM. The event will benefit the non-profit Merchants Association and the Gulfport Senior Center. Advance tickets are \$10 and can be purchased at the GMA/Chamber of Commerce booth at Art Walks on Oct. 2nd and 17th, as well as Domain Home Accessories, The Outpost, Sail Away Realty and the Chamber of Commerce. Tickets at the door will be \$10 for those in costume or \$12 for non-costumed attendees. Donations of non-perishable food will be accepted at the door and \$12 admissions will be reduced to \$10 for any attendees who bring in donations. The food will be distributed to Gulfport families in need.

Needless to say, costumes (gecko-related or not) are greatly encouraged. A live DJ will provide music for dancing and entertainment. Light snacks and a cash bar will be available. Other activities will include a silent auction, a costume contest with prizes, opportunity drawings and a 50/50 chance contest.

Gulfport Merchants: Please consider donating items for the Geckoween silent auction. Donations of merchandise or gift certificates will be greatly appreciated and are tax-deductible. For more information, contact Mike Baggs at michaelbaggs@hotmail.com or 430-7148.

Shop Mom and Pop

Following the success of last year's inaugural event, the GMA is again sponsoring this unique opportunity for holiday shoppers to visit Gulfport's original shops and vendors as well as support our American troops. Shop Mom and Pop takes place on Saturday, November 28th from 10AM to 5PM on the busiest shopping weekend of the year. With a slogan of "No Chains! No Malls! No Meters!" the event is widely publicized as a chance to spend time and dollars with local merchants, artists and vendors who think, live and work "outside of the box." Expect a lively crowd of holiday shoppers looking for gifts and good food.

Shop Mom and Pop will also continue to support our American troops in two ways: 1.) Vendor fees will be used to ship personally needed items to the troops; and 2.) Collection boxes for these

Shop Mom and Pop (continued)

needed items will be located from now until the event at Domain Food & Spirits as well as Gulfport On The Rocks. Items accepted for donation include magazines, puzzles, books, DVD's, snacks, toiletries and phone cards. No cans or glass please. Contact Suzie King at gulfportevents@gmail.com for more information.

Art district businesses are encouraged to have holiday decorations in place for this event. A holiday decorations contest will be held in December. And besides, you will also want to be decorated in time for...

...Holiday Hoopla!

Yet another new spectacle on the GMA's list of festivities, our first annual Holiday Hoopla will be another event involving thousands of visitors to Gulfport, vendors up and down Beach Boulevard and the kind of uplifting feeling that Gulfport is uniquely qualified to provide. The event will of course encourage visitors to do their gift shopping and dining in a unique holiday-themed village incomparable to any other shopping experience. Beach Boulevard will be closed for the occasion from the Casino to the Library. Holiday Hoopla will be held Saturday, December 5th from 11AM to 8PM.

Over 150 vendors stretched over a half-mile will display and sell art, crafts, holiday decorations and more. A children's area will be arranged to assure fun and activities for all ages. Three stages will feature live music, including local musicians, local school bands and performing arts groups. Strolling street performers, holiday carolers and dancers will enchant visitors.

The beneficiary of this event will be the Gulfport Police Department's Operation Santa which delivers gifts to needy families in Gulfport. Additionally, non-perishable food will be collected at the GMA/Chamber of Commerce booth for Gulfport families in need. Contact Suzie King at gulfportevents@gmail.com for more information.

More More More

A remarkably full calendar of events will take place in Gulfport in the coming weeks. See listings for GMA as well as non-GMA events later in this newsletter.

Cooperating to Benefit All

As Gulfport's profile becomes higher all the time, cooperation between the City, civic groups, and private entities becomes more important to sustain and grow our successes. At the same time, we are happy to ensure that our success benefits all, including non-profit community groups and community members and families in need.

Over the years, the Gulfport Merchants Association has developed a strong and complementary relationship with the Gulfport Chamber of Commerce and the City of Gulfport. Each entity recognizes the importance of each others' work. The GMA recognizes and appreciates the assistance of the City and the Chamber in supporting or co-sponsoring many of its events. Likewise, the GMA is happy to help as much as possible to ensure the success of Chamber events, and as central to its mission, to broaden the prosperity of the City itself.

The visibility of this cooperation has been heightened recently, as the GMA has begun to cooperate with the Chamber on an information booth at Gulfport events. Brochures, event flyers and more are distributed to visitors to encourage patronage of the wide range of Gulfport attractions, regardless of which group is the sponsor. And recently, collecting non-perishable food at Art Walk booths and other events is becoming an ongoing pursuit for our groups as well. The Chamber initiated this activity long ago, and the GMA is glad to incorporate it into its own events as well. The food is distributed to needy families and individuals in Gulfport.

A t-shirt recently unveiled by Chamber President Lori Rosso has TEAM GULFPORT emblazoned on the back, suitable for all of us who are contributing to the same shared goals. TEAM GULFPORT shirts were presented to City Council members a few weeks ago and are often now proudly worn at events by members of the GMA, the Chamber and the City.

The shared vision of bringing residents, tourists and local visitors together to enjoy and patronize our businesses and artists, as well as giving back to the community, are foremost goals among all of us.

Gulfport Merchants Give Back

Over the course of the last several years, the Gulfport Merchants Association has built itself up from a handful of small businesses to a membership that now includes the majority of Art Village merchants. Its events have grown from Art Walks with a half-dozen vendors to a regionally-recognized event drawing thousands per year. GeckoFest has grown from a few hundred attendees to over 15,000. The ever-growing slate of events now offered through the year is a phenomenon unmatched in the Tampa Bay area. From this, the merchants of Gulfport have benefited tremendously and the City itself has gained recognition throughout Florida as a rising star.

As a non-profit organization itself, the GMA raises funds through member dues, vendor fees, silent auctions, event tickets, t-shirt sales and more. Recognizing a responsibility to share our success, the GMA has consistently included charitable donations as an integral aspect of its event planning process. In addition to co-sponsoring the collection of food for the needy and personal items for our troops, the GMA has made numerous donations to community groups to further their good work.

Recent recipients include:

Gulfport Senior Center
Gulfport Recreation Center
Gulfport Police Department's Operation Santa Get Rescued... in Gulfport (pet rescues)
AIDS Service Association of Pinellas/
Suncoast Hospice
Gulfport Chamber of Commerce

The GMA has also offered free space at events to numerous non-profit groups who have used the opportunity to publicize their work and solicit support. These groups have recently taken advantage of the free exposure offered:

Girl Scouts
SPCA
Bikers 4 Boobs
American Cancer Society
Rotary Club
Chihuahua Rescue
John Hopkins Middle School Drama Club
Boca Ciega High School Softball Team
Roots and Shoots
Most Holy Name

Gulfport Merchants Give Back (continued)

Florida All Retriever Rescue (FARR)
Pinellas Suncoast Parrot Sanctuary

The Gulfport Merchants Association is proud to offer assistance to these worthy organizations. Giving back to the community is an important component of our mission.

Reaching Across the Bay: GMA and Flamingo Resort Cooperate to Court Visitors

The recurring theme of cooperation in this issue of *Messenger* applies also to recent discussions with representatives of St. Petersburg's new **Flamingo Resort**. The Flamingo opened to great fanfare a few weeks ago on South 34th Street near St. Petersburg's Maximo Moorings neighborhood. The resort caters to gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered residents and tourists. Billed as the largest GLBT resort in the Southeast, it is expected to draw a clientele from throughout the East Coast and beyond. The owners are also happy to point out their ambition to be welcoming to all people and to promote to their visitors cultural and recreational opportunities throughout the area.

Gulfport, a ten-minute drive from the Flamingo or a short hop across Boca Ciega Bay, is a natural choice as an attraction for Flamingo patrons. Our town is already becoming well-known throughout and beyond Florida as a gay-friendly destination, and Flamingo representatives have met with GMA members to discuss ways to nurture cross-promotion and tourism to both places.

Owners of Studio Mares, an art gallery with a location at the new resort, will hold the first of a new series of art exhibits and receptions on October 17th at the Peninsula Inn & Spa, approximately 6 to 9PM. Works by Artist Karen Phillips, as well as Mexican folk art commemorating Dia de los Muertos, will be displayed and a reception will be held during this first event. Greg Powers and Jose Mares of Studio Mares Flamingo hope to present a new art event coinciding with Art Walks on a regular basis. Jose and Greg also hope to represent their gallery and the Flamingo Resort at Art Walk booths.

Reaching Across the Bay (continued)

The GMA has been offered an opportunity to advertise Gulfport, its shops, restaurants and events to resort visitors by placing brochures and event calendars in guest rooms and public areas. Preliminary discussions have included the possibility of a water taxi to transport visitors from the resort, located adjacent to Maximo Marina, to Gulfport and back during Art Walks. Other opportunities to promote visitation to both Gulfport and the Resort will be studied by Flamingo representatives and a GMA task force designated for this purpose.

FREE web pages for GMA Members

Gulfport Merchant Association members are encouraged to take advantage of having a web page designed exclusively for them to be featured on GulfportMA.com. Our talented GMA webmaster Rob Fowler is ready for any member to contact him with text and details to include in a web page designed for them. Photos can be provided by the business or you can arrange for Rob to take photos himself. Your web page will be professionally developed using keyword techniques based on your products or services, which will help the visibility of your business on search engines such as Google and Yahoo. If you already have a primary website, your page on the GMA site will also help direct users to your own site, including links to such pages as "services," "sales" or "menus." If you do not have your own website, this web page can become your most valuable presence on the ever-expanding web marketplace. Your web page can also be used to profile your business as a "Featured Member" on the GMA site.

These additional member pages support traffic to the GMA site and to your business, creating a win-win-win situation for your business, the GMA and the Gulfport community.

Free quality advertising on the web is a benefit of your GMA membership you should not hesitate to use. To get started, contact Rob Fowler of 007 Computer Services by email at rob@007computer.com or call 388-9442.

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. Oct. 2: Art Walk 6-10PM
- Sun. Oct. 4: Full Harvest Moon
- Sun. Oct. 4: Gulfport Art Center Opening
- Tue. Oct. 6: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Fri. Oct. 9: Bo-Tiki Grand Opening/Fashion Fundraiser 6-10PM
- Fri. Oct. 9: Free Concert on the Point (@ Rec. Center) 7:30-9:30PM
- Sat. Oct. 10: Gulfport 99th Birthday Bash (@ Gulfport Historical Museum) 4-9PM
- Mon. Oct. 12: Columbus Day/Indigenous People's Day
- Tue. Oct. 13: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Tue. Oct. 13: GMA Monthly Meeting (@ Sail Away Realty) 5:30-7PM
- Sat. Oct. 17: Clam Bayou Cleanup 9AM-noon
- Sat. Oct. 17: Art Walk 6-10PM
- Sat. Oct. 17: Studio Mares Flamingo Art Show (@ Peninsula Inn) 6-9PM
- Tue. Oct. 20: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Tue. Oct. 27: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Thu. Oct. 29: Doggie Costume Party & Parade (@ Domain Food & Spirits) 6-8PM
- Fri. Oct. 30: Geckoween 7:30-11:30PM
- Sat. Oct. 31: Halloween
- Sun. Nov. 1: Daylight Savings Time Ends
- Mon. Nov. 2: Full Beaver Moon
- Tue. Nov. 3: Election Day
- Tue. Nov. 3: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Fri. Nov. 6: Art Walk 6-10PM
- Sat. Nov. 7: Citywide Yard Sale
- Tue. Nov. 10: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Tue. Nov. 10: GMA Monthly Meeting (location to be announced) 5:30-7PM
- Wed. Nov. 11: Veterans Day
- Fri. Nov. 13: Free Concert on the Point (@ Rec. Center) 7:30-9:30PM
- Tue. Nov. 17: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
- Sat. Nov. 21: Art Walk 6-10PM
- Tue. Nov. 24: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM

Coming Up Soon (continued)

Thu. Nov. 26: Thanksgiving
Sat. Nov. 28: Shop Mom and Pop 10AM-5PM
Sat. Nov. 28: Retro Rama (@ Casino)
Mon. Nov. 30: Tree Lighting Ceremony
(@ Clymer Park) 7PM -
Tue. Dec. 1: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Wed. Dec. 2: Full Cold Moon
Thu. Dec. 3: Chamber of Commerce
Business Showcase (@ Casino)
Fri. Dec. 4: Art Walk 6-10PM
Sat. Dec. 5: Holiday Hoopla 11AM-8PM
Sat. Dec. 5: Holiday Lighted Boat Parade
Tue. Dec. 8: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Tue. Dec. 8: GMA Monthly Meeting
(location to be announced)
5:30-7PM
Thu. Dec. 10: City Trolley Holiday Lights Tour
Fri. Dec. 11: Free Concert on the Point
(@ Rec. Ctr.) 7:30-9:30PM
Fri. Dec. 11: Hanukkah begins (sunset)
Tue. Dec. 15: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Fri. Dec. 18: Holiday Decorations Contest
Sat. Dec. 19: Art Walk 6-9PM
Mon. Dec. 21: Winter Solstice
Tue. Dec. 22: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Fri. Dec. 25: Christmas Day
Tue. Dec. 29: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Thu. Dec. 31: New Years Eve
Thu. Dec. 31: Full Long Nights Moon
(also Blue Moon)

GMA Board Members

Elections for board members were held during the summer, resulting in both new and continuing faces on the Gulfport Merchants Association Board. The following are your Board Members for 2009/2010. Please feel free to contact any Board Member for information or with suggestions.

Leslie Gilchrist (The Outpost): President
(gilchristleslie@gmail.com or 439-1485)
Mike Baggs (Sail Away Realty): Vice President
(michaelbaggs@hotmail.com or 430-7148)
Michael Knettel (Domain Home Accessories):
Secretary/Treasurer
(mgkcoinc@tampabay.rr.com or 302-9299)
Lori Rosso (Sea Breeze Manor): Board Member
(rsvp@seabreezemanor.com or 343-4445)
Mary O'Malley (Reef Dog Gifts & Grooming):
Board Member (reefdogmary@yahoo.com or 323-7007)

Something To Think About

"Life engenders life. Energy creates energy. It is by spending oneself that one becomes rich."

Sarah Bernhardt