

Upper Keys Century BPW Celebrates Fifty Years

On October 17th, the Upper Keys Century Business and Professional Women (BPW) hosted its 50th Anniversary Celebration Cocktail Party as part of the 2007 BPW/USA National Business Women's Week. The party was the culmination of the BPW's year-long anniversary celebration.

The official 50th anniversary date for the Upper Keys BPW is March, 1957. Anniversary celebrations activities included a brief history of BPW, the introduction of leading guests including Monroe County State Attorney Mark Kohl, Monroe County School

provided a wonderful venue and hors de vours and there was a BPW logo cake. Musician Jimmy Ray was the entertainment for the evening.

All past presidents were invited to attend and BPW was honored to have founding member Julia Pranschke join in the celebration. Ms. Pranschke was one of four founding members in 1957. Claire Johnson, the Upper Keys BPW president, had this to say about the event, "It was with great pride to stand with Past Presidents and award recipients of the Upper Keys BPW. It was with great honor to recognize,



Past BPW Presidents gather at the anniversary celebration.

Board Member Duncan Mathewson, incoming BPW/USA President-Elect Venita Garvin-Valdez, BPW/USA current President Rachel Sieg, and BPW/USA 2nd Vice President Sunny Booker. Several prominent awards were presented including Business of the Year going to Harriette Mattson of Harriette's Restaurant and Woman of the Year to realtor Patti Stanley of Island Villa Properties. Susan Ashmore of Realty World Freewheeler and Weddings in Paradise was honored with the distinguished Golden Hammer Award and Marilyn Beyer of Beyer's Funeral Home received the Community Supporter Award. Della Wheaton was honored for her years of BPW service and membership. Holiday Isle

Julia Pranschke, a founding member. Over the decades, many women have created amazing opportunities for us. It is important for us to never forget the obstacles they have overcome."

For 50 years, the Upper Keys BPW's efforts have made a tangible difference in the lives of workingwomen and their families in the Keys. The BPW achieves its mission, to empower workingwomen to achieve their full potential and partner with employers to build successful workplaces, by creating resources and programming for workingwomen and employers, and providing scholarships for education and career advancement.

For more information visit www.bpwupperkeys.org.

House Passes Property Tax Relief Plan

A bi-partisan coalition of Republican and Democratic lawmakers in the Florida House has passed a property tax relief plan (CS/SJR 2D) sponsored by Rep. Dean Cannon (R-Winter Park) and Rep. Ron Saunders (D-Key West). The measure is expected to provide over \$11 billion dollars in property tax relief during the next four years and passed by a 108-2 vote. If approved by the Senate, the proposed constitutional amendment will have to be approved by voters on January 29, 2008.

The plan preserves the current Save Our Homes (SOH) 3% cap on homestead assessment increases but provides a "Guaranteed SOH Benefit" equal to 40% of the median value of homesteads in each county. If a homeowner has a small SOH benefit (like most recent or new homestead buyers), they will receive the 40% exemption but longtime homeowners that have accumulated SOH savings that are greater than 40% of the median value keep the bigger break. The plan allows "portability" of accumulated SOH benefits so that they can transfer that benefit, up to \$1 million, to a new homestead anywhere in Florida.

The plan also includes a 5% assessment cap for all non-homestead and commercial properties, creates a new tangible personal property exemption of \$25,000, authorizes the Legislature to limit assessments for working waterfront properties, and provides for limitations on assessed values of properties used for affordable housing.

Pirates Keep the Birds Flying

Sultry September has always been the loneliest and worst month of the year at the Florida Keys Wild Bird Center. Hot and humid days devoid of visitors bring our thoughts to some impending seasonal disaster - a hurricane.

October 2005 fulfilled our worst anxieties, not with the destructive winds of a hurricane but with the overwhelming water pushed by Wilma. We were, of course, not alone.

However, two years later we were teetering on the edge of financial disaster. The many different costs of rebuilding the center, without losing a day of rehabilitating our birds and serving their rescuers, left us with debts that were sapping our vitality and threatening our survival. The rehabbers needed rescuing.

As we were financially foundering, two local rescuers sailed in to help. Skip Bradeen delivered some floatation by directing our way some of the generous gifts from the celebrants of his 65th birthday. Thank you to Skip and friends.

A fleet of rescuers arrived in the formation of the Pirates on the Water-Parrotheads of the Upper Keys. They selected the center as one of the local charities to be a beneficiary of

their righteous ribaldry. Amazingly, they combine the essence of the laid-back Keys lifestyle with an energetic focus on maximizing the fun of fundraising. The pirates are truly noble sea dwellers who have redefined piracy.

It started for us with a bayside sunset cruise June 22, then an oceanside snorkel trip on the Reef Roamer Aug. 5, and culminated Sept. 15 with a 1960s Bird Bash Revival.

The attendance of more than 200 pirates and local supporters of the center made the occasion a stupendous success. While having too much fun overall, the pirates have put more than 21,000 pieces of plunder into our near-empty treasure chest.

The unprecedented generosity of the pirates and their ilk have revived the center from the summer doldrums so we can continue sailing toward completion our overall financial restructuring to ensure continued years of rehabbing our birds to keep them flying. Without everyone's magnificent support, we might have sunk in a sea of red ink. **Laura Quinn, director Florida Keys Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center**



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