

Keep Our Birds Flying: Have Your Donation Matched

Recently, Ocean Reef resident Robert Gintel, also Chairman and President of the Florida Keys Wild Bird Center in Tavernier, challenged the Ocean Reef Foundation to help finance a long term solution to the financial and operating problems of one of the most popular and widely supported institutions in the Florida Keys, namely the FWBC.

The Ocean Reef Foundation picked up the gauntlet and "Phoenix Project," aptly named after the mythological bird reborn from its own ashes, was launched. With the Gintel Family Foundation putting up \$750,000, the Ocean Reef Foundation agreed to seek matching donations from both its own donors and from all other community minded citizens in the Keys and beyond to provide a total \$1.5 million to achieve virtually overnight the completion of the first two phases of the bird center's three phase long term building and development program.

Foundation President John Taylor said, "We strongly encourage all concerned fellow citizens, not just Ocean Reef Members, to join us and participate in this extraordinary matching opportunity to give back to our community and to this common cause, which impacts anyone and everyone who lives or vacations here."

"We are a part of the Upper Keys Community and committed to giving to worthy causes that improve the

quality of life in Key Largo," Taylor says. While people may

populations and the area's ecology, but for the benefit



Robert Gintel Chairman and President of the Florida Keys Wild Bird Center.

be aware of Ocean Reef residents' integral involvement in the Jacobs Aquatic Center, Florida Keys Children's Shelter and Take Stock in Children, for example, he notes that few are aware of the Foundation's continual support since the mid-90s including about half a million dollars distributed from its Community Grants program to dozens of Upper Keys charities beyond

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their gates in the last three years alone.

According to Gintel, "This latest project also shows how importantly we at Ocean Reef view the Florida Keys Wild Bird Center, not for just the survival of our wild bird

and support of our tourism and many other small businesses that form the very backbone of our cherished and very special way of life down here in the Florida Keys. Nothing has embedded that more strongly into our conscious awareness than the current oil spill crisis."

The genesis of Project Phoenix came six months ago when the bird center was faced with large operating losses, a privately owned and heavily mortgaged property, an inability to retain qualified staffing and maintain facilities and no budget for needed capital expenditures. The Florida Keys Wild Bird Center faced the prospects of becoming an endangered species itself. Fortunately,

the public's response at the time to newspaper publicity and other appeals resulted in a significant influx of ongoing donations while, at the same time, several motivated individuals took on the responsibility of restructuring the Board, and strengthening its management.

In the six months since the community came to its rescue, the Center has risen from the proverbial ashes in the tradition of the fabled Phoenix with a new leadership team, a new veterinary team and a clean, modern medical facility at mile marker 94. The gift shop, educational exhibit and daily 3:30 pm feeding remain at mile marker 93.6 bayside, and continue to draw some 17,000 eco-tourists and locals to enjoy, observe and photograph the resident flock each year.

The Bird Center's new management has developed a three-phase program, which envisions the long-term transformation of the Florida Keys Wild Bird Hospital and Sanctuary into an attractive and rewarding experience and seeks the financial wherewithal to accomplish its goals and objectives.

"If the Phoenix Fund meets its objectives," Gintel elaborates, referring to plans already in the works, "We'll raise \$1.5 million, purchase and preserve the property and be well on our way to renovating and staffing a wild bird rehabilitation facility that is second to none."

For more information, please call 305-367-4707.



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Annual Key Largo Food & Wine Festival

This August Key Largo transforms into a food and wine lover's paradise as Key Largo's culinary and the wine experts from Premier Beverage step up to the 'palate' to present 26 tasty food, wine and spirits events Friday, July 30, through Sunday, Aug. 8.

A festival kickoff is set for Friday, July 30, with refreshment-filled TGIF events. Featured are a happy hour and wine extravaganza, a four-course prix fixe meal paired with wines and a cooking class spotlighting seafood favorites such as grilled oysters, scallops and Keys hogfish.

Highlights of the 10-day free-pour festival include uniquely themed "how-to" and wine pairing events, the back-by-popular-demand "whodunit" murder mystery night, a "Mimosa Madness" champagne brunch, a "battle of the big reds" blind tasting, a New Orleans-style Cajun dinner with French wines, an oriental experience with saki, sushi and Thai food, a five-course progressive gourmet dinner, cooking demonstrations and pairings with tropical seafood feasts and much more.

Capping off the event is the traditional festival finale Sunday, Aug. 8, complete with music, brunch and bubbly.

For a comprehensive schedule of event times, venues, and costs go to www.keylargofoodandwinefestival.com or call 305-394-3736.

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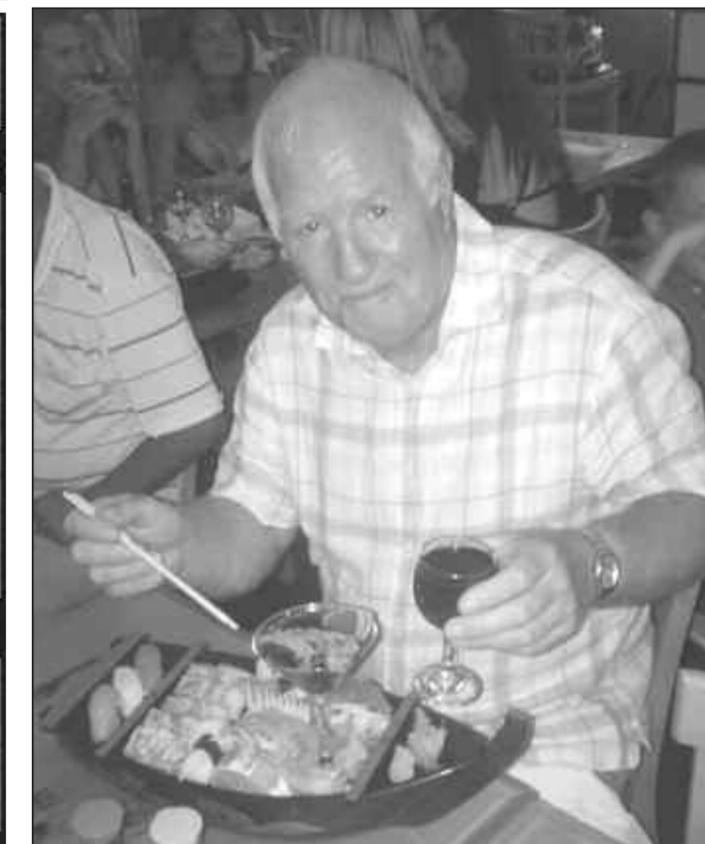
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305-453-4844



Colin from the UK enjoying his first ever Sushi experience at last year's Food and Wine Festival.

To make a donation and have it matched note "Phoenix Fund" in the memo line of your check sent to the Ocean Reef Foundation at 200 Anchor Drive, Key Largo, FL, 33037