

# Gulfport Messenger

Newsletter of the Gulfport FL Merchants Association

August 2008

## New Newsletter

The Gulfport Merchants Association is happy to introduce the new *Gulfport Messenger*. The newsletter is intended to inform members and friends of GMA-sponsored events and activities as well as other news and features of interest to members. We welcome your feedback, contributions, tidbits, ideas and suggestions for improving or adding to the newsletter. Feel free to contact newsletter editor Daniel Hodge by email at [dan@igc.org](mailto:dan@igc.org).

## GeckoFest On The Way!

The 8<sup>th</sup> annual GeckoFest takes place Saturday August 30<sup>th</sup>, 12 to 10PM. Admission is free. This year's festival, sponsored by the Gulfport Merchants Association, promises to be larger and livelier than ever. GeckoFest can be described as a combination of a family-friendly Mardi Gras, Renaissance Faire and British Loony party gone Gecko in Gulfport.

Over 175 vendors will line Beach and Shore Blvds. with food, arts and crafts and assorted other wares. Three stages will showcase live music including Karmic Tattoo and Sterling McGee. "Street theater" will abound, including belly dancers, pirates, clowns, mimes, magicians, fire dancers, and a GeckoFest first: flogging demonstrations. Fun kid-friendly activities include a rock wall, moon walk, face painting, bungee jumping and sidewalk chalk art. Join in the Gecko Walking Parade at 6PM. Wear Gecko hats and costumes or other wacky paraphernalia and bring your drums, whistles and noisemakers. The day culminates with a lively street dance at 8PM. The festival has become one of the most anticipated events of the year in Gulfport and has been lauded as "best bet," "hot ticket," "hot road trip," and "planet pick" by various magazines and web sites. A percentage of proceeds from the event benefits AIDS Walk St. Petersburg.

Fundraisers leading up to GeckoFest have proven to be fun new traditions marking a whole "GeckoFest Season." 2008 fundraisers have taken place at Domain Food & Sprints, with live music, chance drawings and silent auctions, and

## GeckoFest (continued)

a Gecko Costume Ball was held at Bellini's Tapas Bar featuring a festive gecko costume contest, silent auctions and buffet.

The newest GeckoFest-inspired celebration will be a "pub crawl" to be held Friday, August 29<sup>th</sup> on the night before GeckoFest. Over 10 Gulfport bars and restaurants will offer libations all for one \$25 ticket. Advance tickets are available at Gulfport on the Rocks and Java Nirvana. More fun than a barrel of geckos!

For more information on GeckoFest, go to [www.geckofest.com](http://www.geckofest.com) or call Suzanne King at (727) 322-5217.

## Streetscaping Nearly Complete

The Gulfport Merchants Association and the City of Gulfport are almost finished with a new streetscape project along Beach Boulevard. Funding for the project comes from the Tax Increment Financing (T.I.F.) Fund. Volunteers from the Merchants Association are digging in and doing the planting themselves. Plants are selected for drought tolerance and some height restrictions. Existing planters are being redesigned to include plantings that are more permanent. The Merchants Association would like to thank Sail Away Realty, Gulfport Village Laundry, Reef Dog Gifts and Grooming, Peg's, Dominic's Pizzeria and The Art Village Courtyard for contributing water and help in this first phase. The project continues to move down the street and will finish with some winter-appropriate plants on the South end. Your help in nurturing new sod and plants and keeping planters free of debris and weeds will be greatly appreciated.

## Member Highlight: Reef Dog Gifts & Grooming

For nearly five years, **Reef Dog Gifts & Grooming** has been keeping Gulfport's canine companions looking sharp. Owner Mary O'Malley established Reef Dog in October 2003, motivated by her frustration as an employee of

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## Member Highlight (continued)

other dog grooming businesses that did not seem to develop trusting relationships with dog owners. At Reef Dog, nurturing a solid, comfortable relationship with dogs as well as their owners is a guiding principle.

Reef Dog is located at 2820 Beach Blvd. South. Mary employs a staff of two bathers and two groomers. Reef Dog also offers do-it-yourself dog-bathing and an assortment of doggie accessories, toys and all-natural food and treats. Hours are Tuesday to Saturday, 8AM to 4PM. Mary hopes to offer evening hours in the near future.

Reef Dog is a co-sponsor of the non-profit "Get Rescued in Gulfport," an annual event benefiting various canine rescue organizations.

Representatives and adoptable dogs from rescue groups, pet supply vendors, dog parades and costumes fill Beach Blvd. each year during this increasingly popular event. "Get Rescued" is also co-sponsored by Lynda Shehan, local auctioneer and owner of Auntie Lynda's Pet Care.

Reef Dog's delightfully colorful pick-up truck, sporting an oversized surf-riding pup in back, is a fun and familiar sight on the streets of Gulfport. Reef Dog is proud to be a part of the Gulfport Merchants Association and the Gulfport community. Mary loves her work and is looking forward to a new milestone: Reef Dog will bathe and groom its first-ever pot bellied pig this month! The pig's name? Obama.

## Coming Up Soon

Sat., Aug. 16: Art Walk 6-10PM  
Tue., Aug. 19: Fresh Market 8AM-3PM  
Tue., Aug. 26: Fresh Market 8AM-3PM  
Fri., Aug. 29: GeckoFest Pub Crawl 4PM-2AM  
Sat., Aug. 30: GeckoFest 12-10PM  
Tue., Sep. 2: Fresh Market 8AM-3PM  
Fri., Sep. 5: Art Walk 6-10PM  
Tue., Sep. 9: Fresh Market 8AM-3PM  
Tue., Sep. 9: GMA Monthly Meeting 5:30PM  
Tue., Sep. 16: Fresh Market 8AM-3PM

## GMA Makes a Difference

The Gulfport Merchants Association is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote Gulfport's Art Village as "a flourishing and ever-growing art, shopping and dining destination in Pinellas County."

The GMA sponsors, promotes and advertises Gulfport's popular first Friday and third Saturday Art Walks throughout the year, Tuesday morning Fresh Markets and annual events including GeckoFest and Get Rescued. GMA co-sponsored events include SpringFest and the July 4<sup>th</sup> Festival. Civic improvements including streetscaping and tree lighting are also GMA-sponsored activities. GMA, working closely with the City of Gulfport, has generated significantly increased tourism and business traffic benefiting all Gulfport merchants.

All Gulfport businesses in and near the waterfront district are encouraged to support GMA as it supports Gulfport. If your business is not a member, please join us. Add your voice to ours. Additional benefits to members include advertising space in the St. Petersburg Times, placement in promotional brochures, and a presence on its website. Dues are \$25 per month or \$300 per year. GMA meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 5:30 and are open to all. Please contact a GMA Board member for more information.

Mike McCue (Domain Home Accessories):  
President (302-9299)

Mike McKee (Art Village Courtyard): Vice  
President (459-1963)

Leslie Gilchrist (The Outpost): Treasurer  
(439-1485)

Lori Rosso (Sea Breeze Manor): Board Member  
(343-4445)

Mary O'Malley (Reef Dog Gifts & Grooming):  
Board Member (323-7007)

Suzanne King: Events Coordinator (322-5217)

## Something to Think About

**"Don't be afraid to go out on a limb.  
That's where the fruit is."**

**H. Jackson Brown**