

# Gulfport Messenger

Newsletter of the Gulfport FL Merchants Association

June/July 2009

## Member Highlight: Sea Breeze Manor Bed & Breakfast Inn

Lori Rosso has a full plate. Innkeeper and Owner of Sea Breeze Manor, Lori is also President of the Gulfport Chamber of Commerce, Board Member of the Gulfport Merchants Association, Chairperson of Gulfport's Waterfront Redevelopment Board, member of Visit Florida, Women in Tourism... The list goes on, but you get the idea. Her inspiration for maintaining this brisk pace is her love for and pride in Gulfport. In 2002, after many years of life and work in Washington, DC in a long list of impressive positions, Lori began to feel like a "walking anonymous resume." As she explains, "I was ready for community."

Then she discovered Gulfport, its close-knit atmosphere, friendly and caring people, an individuality that seemed scarce elsewhere. She also discovered the Sea Breeze Manor Bed & Breakfast at 5701 Shore Blvd. overlooking Boca Ciega Bay. When she walked into the Inn, she felt at home. Previously a single-family residence, the Sea Breeze was purchased by Patty and Lawrence Burke in 1996. With Lawrence in charge of design and construction, and Patty in charge of interiors and landscape, the Burkes transformed the home into a beautiful seven-suite tropical-themed Inn. Lori began her new career as Innkeeper of the Sea Breeze after purchasing it from the Burkes in October 2002.

The Sea Breeze features two dog-friendly cottages (Key West and Key Largo) as well as four guest suites (Aruba, Barbados, Jamaica and Bermuda), each uniquely decorated. Lori calls the Belize suite home for herself. All spaces include private bath, separate sitting area and private outdoor patio or balcony. A full homemade breakfast prepared each morning by Lori is included. Antiques and tropical décor provide an old-Florida eclectic feel throughout. A spacious veranda looks out on the Bay, a lovely setting for coffee in the morning or a cordial at sunset. A tropical garden and courtyard provide a lush backdrop for the many weddings and events held there. The Sea Breeze, with Peninsula Inn & Spa, are presently the only two commercial lodging establishments in town.

## Member Highlight (continued)

Lori, born and raised in Long Island, New York, originally cut her career teeth in the high-powered world of Washington. Her employers there included various political and non-governmental agencies, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business, and the White House, where she worked in the West Wing as a scheduling assistant and trip coordinator during the last two years of the George H. W. Bush administration. With her extensive background in organizational and event planning, Lori hit the ground running after taking the reins of the Sea Breeze and put her skills to work not only in her new small business, but in the larger community.

She immediately began networking within and outside of Gulfport, becoming particularly active in the Gulfport Chamber of Commerce, the Gulfport Merchants Association and the City of Gulfport. Her goal was to see beyond the confines of her own day to day business (unlike other small businesses she had observed), recognizing that the health of the business climate around her affected the success of her own business directly. As Lori states, "No business is an island. I see the value of cooperating and contributing. I don't want to change Gulfport. I want to make it vital." During her involvement, she has seen communication and cooperation flourish between the City and non-governmental organizations, resulting in a much healthier business community and a recognized destination for tourists and visitors. She envisions the continuation of this growth and sees it in a positive light, all the while maintaining the old-Florida charm and integrity of the City that is its drawing card. For her diligence and effectiveness, Lori received the Spirit of Gulfport Award from the City in December 2008.

Needless to say, Lori is a busy woman. Fortunately, the Sea Breeze maintains a relaxed, "island-time" hospitality. So if Lori is away during the day or evening at one of many meetings and functions she must attend, guests let themselves in and out and make themselves at home. But Lori hastens to add, "You'll always see me in the morning for breakfast!"

## **GMA Website Gets Facelift**

Until recently, GulfportMA.com was little more than an online tool for event vendors to download forms. Since Spring, however, the website has blossomed into a vibrant, formidable informational and marketing tool. The GMA contracted with Gulfport's Rob Fowler of 007 Computer Services to create a site that is both visually appealing and loaded with content so that the GMA, its member businesses and its events and activities can be showcased to thousands of web users. For the website and for other marketing tools, Rob also designed a logo for the GMA, featuring a silhouette of the Casino and palm trees, which will help boost public perception of the GMA "brand."

In addition to forms and information for Art Walk and other vendors, the site now includes color photos of Gulfport, its businesses and events, an events calendar, an archive of past issues of the *Gulfport Messenger* newsletter, GMA membership information, GMA Board contact information and more. A map of Gulfport village landmarks and GMA businesses is in progress as well as a list of links to member businesses. More content is planned as the site continues to be updated. According to statistics, traffic to the site has already dramatically increased in the three months since the site began upgrading. An enhanced presence on the web has been a goal of the GMA for some time, and these changes will greatly expand our profile to customers, locals and other Bay Area residents, tourists, artists, event vendors and others.

Rob is also the creator and webmaster of the informative site [www.GulfportFlorida.us](http://www.GulfportFlorida.us), which has attracted a large following since its launch one year ago in June 2008.

## **Enhanced Internet Benefits for GMA Members**

by Rob Fowler

One of my visions for the future of GulfportMA.com is to create a featured page for every GMA member that will help to promote your business with the title of the page being your business name. The page will be developed using specialized techniques for keyword emphasis on your products or services for improved results on major search engines,

## **Enhanced Internet (continued)**

quality links to your primary website (if you have one) and possible additional links to key pages on your website, such as "Services Offered," "Sale Items" or "Menus," etc. You may send me two or three good photos for the page or request that I come out and take new ones. Furthermore, I encourage you to write a paragraph or two that describes and promotes your business and what you offer. A GMA directory will be created and that will add another level of marketing exposure for you as a GMA member.

The benefits of having these member pages on GulfportMA.com will be enjoyed by the Merchants Association as well as its members. By having valuable supplementary content on the site, we will attract more visitors to the website and ultimately to our community and its events. And by linking back to your websites it helps build quality "incoming links" for your own search engine optimization (SEO) efforts while expanding your internet presence and new customer awareness. It is a win/win situation for all parties!

The Gulfport Merchants Association has recognized the importance of growing a powerful website and I am very excited and proud to have been hired to take this project on. These new pages will help promote your individual businesses, the GMA as a mature organization, and all of Gulfport as a community. The GMA is offering this service to its members free of charge as a part of your membership benefits. All I need is your cooperation in providing me with the content to put on the site. Please take full advantage of this valuable tool to increase your sales and exposure. For more information and further details, please contact me by email at [rob@007computer.com](mailto:rob@007computer.com) or call 727-388-9442 to request a visit. Thank you!

## **Kurt Z. and Kayak Nature Adventures Honored**

Congratulations go to Kurt Zuelsdorf and his Kayak Nature Adventures in Gulfport for recently being included in the "Green100," a list of the Bay Area's foremost environmental leaders published by *Creative Loafing*. The publication chose 95 list entries itself, leaving five more slots to fill by online public nominations. The

## Kurt Z. (continued)

nominations submitted for Kurt were numerous and impassioned. His Kayak Nature Adventures has become well known for its program of free kayak rental time in exchange for trash collection in Clam Bayou. Beyond that, Kurt is well known as a passionate outdoorsman and tireless defender of wildlife and the ecosystems upon which they rely. Gulfport is proud and lucky to have Kurt as a Green champion and spokesman for the natural wonders that surround (and include) us.

## Summer Events

The annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July festival is just around the corner. Popular among locals, Gulfport's festival also draws crowds from out of town for one of the best fireworks spectacles in Tampa Bay. Art and craft vendors will be present on Beach Blvd. pavers, while food vendors will set up on Shore Blvd. A live music stage, kid-friendly events, and a decidedly home-spun but charming parade will be part of the fun. The activities will go on all day Saturday, July 4<sup>th</sup>.

New to the events calendar, a summer concert series will be held on three consecutive months on the second Friday: June 12<sup>th</sup>, July 10<sup>th</sup> and August 14<sup>th</sup>. Performances of big band, swing and jazz music are planned for entertaining outdoor audiences on the waterfront point behind the Gulfport Recreation Center at Shore Blvd. and 58<sup>th</sup> St. from 7:30 to 9:30 each evening. Admission to the concerts is free. Non-profit community groups have been invited to sell snacks and beverages. The concert series is co-sponsored by the City of Gulfport, the Gulfport Chamber of Commerce and the Gulfport Merchants Association.

## Coming Up Soon

Tue. June 2: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM  
Fri. June 5: Art Walk 6-10PM  
Sun. June 7: Full Strawberry Moon  
Tue. June 9: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM  
Tue. June 9: GMA Member Meeting  
(@ Sail Away Realty)  
5:30-7PM  
Fri. June 12: Summer Concert Series at  
Rec. Center Point 7:30-9:30PM  
Sun. June 14: Flag Day  
Tue. June 16: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM

## Coming Up Soon (continued)

Sat. June 20: Art Walk 6-10PM  
Sun. June 21: Father's Day  
Tue. June 23: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM  
Tue. June 30: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM  
Fri. July 3: Art Walk 6-10PM  
Sat. July 4: July 4<sup>th</sup> Festival (all day)  
Tue. July 7: Full Buck Moon  
Tue. July 7: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM  
Fri. July 10: Summer Concert Series at  
Rec. Center Point 7:30-9:30PM  
Tue. July 14: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM  
Sat. July 18: Art Walk 6-10PM  
Tue. July 21: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM  
Tue. July 28: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM

## Your GMA Board Members

Ballots for electing/re-electing Gulfport Merchants Association Board members are included with this newsletter for GMA business members. Please complete ballots and return promptly. Voting results will be provided on the website ([www.GulfportMA.com](http://www.GulfportMA.com)) and will be published in the August/September issue of *Gulfport Messenger*.

Feel free to contact current board members with questions and comments about GMA activities and events. Your voice is appreciated.

Mike McCue (Domain Home Accessories):  
President ([mmccue@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:mmccue@tampabay.rr.com)  
or 302-9299)  
Leslie Gilchrist (The Outpost): Treasurer  
([gilchristleslie@gmail.com](mailto:gilchristleslie@gmail.com) 439-1485)  
Lori Rosso (Sea Breeze Manor): Board Member  
([rsvp@seabreezemanor.com](mailto:rsvp@seabreezemanor.com) or  
343-4445)  
Mary O'Malley (Reef Dog Gifts & Grooming):  
Board Member ([reefdogmary@  
yahoo.com](mailto:reefdogmary@yahoo.com) or 323-7007)  
Michele King (Sail Away Realty): Board Member  
([michwilltwo@aol.com](mailto:michwilltwo@aol.com) or 433-3610)  
Suzanne King: Events Coordinator  
([gulfportevents@gmail.com](mailto:gulfportevents@gmail.com) or  
322-5217)

## Something to Think About

**"If you would take, you must first give, this is the beginning of intelligence."**

**Lao Tsu**