



## NEWSLETTER January 2011

Siesta Key Association

[www.siestakeyassociation.com](http://www.siestakeyassociation.com)

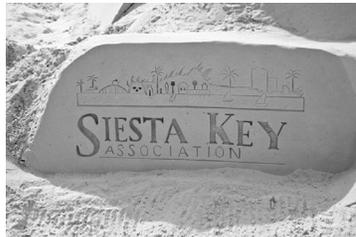
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SKA Board Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month at 4:30 P.M. at St. Boniface.



SKA, a sponsor of the Crystal Sands Master Sandsculpting Competition.

### SKA Annual Breakfast

Saturday, February 26, 2011 at 9:00 A.M.

Breakfast is **FREE** for 2011 paid members who **reserve before Feb. 19**

by calling (941) 364-4880 (max. 2 per member)

Non-members or members without reservations are also welcome and the cost is \$10 at the door

St. Boniface Community Center, 5615 Midnight Pass Road

Guest Speakers:

*Sarasota County Commissioner Nora Patterson* who will present the 'State of the Key' address  
*Parks & Recreation General Manager John McCarthy* who will update the members on the planned improvements of Siesta's 2 public beach parks - Crescent Beach and Turtle Beach

## From Lourdes Ramirez, President

Alas, all good things must come to an end. Over the past 8 years on the SKA Board, I have been president for 5 of them. In 2011, the torch gets passed on to a new president who will be announced at our Annual Breakfast on Feb. 26. It has been a rewarding experience with many twists and turns. I could not have fathomed the depth of passion I see in the residents and property owners of Siesta Key until I joined SKA. We certainly love our island!

Although SKA has reached new milestones in the past few years, our 52 year history is rich with important contributions to the quality of life here. SKA was formed in 1948 by a group of residents concerned about the development of the Key. Their determination resulted in Sarasota County's first zoning code adopted in 1953 for Siesta Key. It took the rest of Sarasota County 6 more years to apply the zoning code county-wide. In 1982, SKA convinced our local government to down-zone residential development and those standards are still in effect today.

Some of us remember the 1992 "Save Our Sands" issue where SKA led the charge to keep our shoal, which supplies our beaches with the white quartz sand, from being dredged to replenish Venice's beaches. With a move that would certainly please the founders of SKA, we convinced the County in 1999 to develop our own set of zoning standards called the Siesta Key Overlay District. By separating our zoning requirements from the mainland, we were able to reduce the impact on our fragile barrier island from the building frenzy during the boom times.

Over the past decade, we have encountered several challenges and met them head on. SKA convinced the County to eliminate a loophole which created illegal short term rentals in 2003. These illegal short term rentals not only created more competition for our legal rental community but also had an unfair advantage since they avoided paying bed taxes. In 2005, SKA also stopped the County's Planning Dept. in their issuance of illegal permits that

double the density on small lots. When we were sued by a nightclub owner in 2009 because he was unhappy with our efforts to protect local neighborhoods (and the rest of the Village) from blatant code violations, we did not back down. In the end, the nightclub owner dropped the suit, apparently when we realized we would not be intimidated.

I am proud to have been part of the SKA's team during these years. Although I will continue to be involved in Siesta Key zoning issues, it is time for someone else to lead this terrific group of directors. We also need more people, with a passion to protect our island, to join our board. The commitment is only a few hours per month, including attending our monthly meeting the first Thursday of each month. From my experience, seeing the positive impact we make on our community is richly rewarding.

Thanks to all who have supported SKA. I also appreciate the kind personal notes and comments received over the past few years. We will continue to strive to make Siesta Key a wonderful place to live and visit.

## Supporting Island Events

by Joe Volpe

As always, SKA participates in various Siesta Key events. Last summer, we sponsored the successful Junior Lifeguard program, which provided more than 20 young citizens the opportunity to learn about water safety and provide an awareness of our fragile coastal environment. In July, we supported the Island fireworks to ensure this popular tradition continues at no charge to our visitors and residents. Every

two or three months, a group of SKA members joins the Siesta Key Village (Merchants) Association to clean up trash along the length of Ocean Blvd. This November we financially supported the Crystal Sands Master Sandsculpting Competition, which benefits Mote Marine Laboratory. On Nov. 27, we also participated in the first Siesta Key Holiday Parade that started on Siesta Public Beach and ended in

Siesta Village with the arrival of Santa Claus. In addition to our guest, Sarasota County Commissioner Nora Patterson, our SKA directors were aboard a Christmas decorated antique fire truck owned by Bob Waechter, an SKA board member. Also, for several months this year, individual SKA directors participated in the protection of the nesting snowy plovers and sea turtles on our beaches. The cooperation of beach front

residents in turning off Gulf facing lights was critical during turtle nesting season. These are never ending projects that require time and dedication.

We will continue to support and participate in events that promote, protect and enhance Siesta Key. These events are announced at our monthly SKA meeting as well as on our web site.



www.siestakeyassociation.com

## Island Safety

by Joe Volpe

Under the leadership of our Sarasota County Sheriff, Tom Knight, along with the professionalism and dedication of the deputies, our island continues to be a safer place.

We are fortunate to still have a local Sheriff's Department substation located in Siesta Village since the mainland Sheriff's substations have closed due to budget cuts. One of Siesta's patrols includes a beach patrol, led by Sergeant Osborne, who politely enforces the rules and regulations. It can be difficult since many visitors are unaware of some of the beach regulations, including the prohibition of dogs. Some don't

see the pole signs at beach accesses that provide a partial list of beach prohibitions. In addition, the Sheriff's beach patrol became involved last year in the friction between beach front homeowners and visitors regarding the use of private beaches. Fortunately, Sarasota County government, including the Sheriff's Dept. made an effort to ease tensions by meeting with private beach front owners who graciously allow the public use of their beaches (much of Siesta Key's beaches is privately owned down to the high tide water line).

The Sheriff's deputies attend

SKA's monthly meetings to report on local crime, which largely turns out to be vandalism, car break-ins and occasional burglaries. The reported events tend to be crimes of opportunity. The occasional illegal entry into cars and homes can easily be solved by locking the doors! This may be paradise, but it is still part of the real world.

Siesta Key has been known for years as the "safe, laid back island" and the Siesta Key Association will strive to work with the Sheriff's Dept., other local organizations, and our County government to maintain that ambiance.



SKA Board of Directors and Sarasota Commissioner Nora Patterson, participating in the Siesta Key Holiday Parade.

### *Join the fun!*

Apply to be a director on the SKA Board and have lots of fun while making a positive impact in our community.

To apply go to the web site [www.siestakeyassociation.com](http://www.siestakeyassociation.com) and print out the Board application under the Board/Committees section, and send it in with your membership. The Nominating Committee will be contacting interested members in early 2011.

## Working Together: Home for our Imperiled Snowy Plover

by Catherine E. Luckner

For several years, a small bird nesting on the beach of Siesta Key has captured the attention and concern of nature and conservation supporters. The Snowy Plover (referred hereafter as SNPL) is a small beach nesting bird, listed on the Imperiled Species list by the State of Florida. The decline of their numbers has been dramatic due to loss of habitat, primarily caused by human activity (recreation and development).

The tireless, enthusiastic commitment of leadership by Michelle van Deventer, SKA member, and coordination of volunteers by Jeanne Dubi, Sarasota Audubon President, resulted in increased survival rate of newly hatched birds that changed from 8% in 2008, 0% in 2009, to 70% in 2010.

Efforts to help this native bird accelerated this year, with more than 3,000 hours of logged volunteer time. Sharing information, providing Beach Ambassadors, "chick checkers" and security for the nesting areas, brought our community together.

Volunteers included local Siesta Key residents, Audubon members, SKA members, Sarasota County employees, State employees, and volunteers from other parts of Florida. A significant contribution occurred when Sarasota County Parks and Recreation staff allowed closure of certain beach access paths and limiting access to parts of the beach where SNPL were observed nesting.

Beach visitors of all ages were excited to be part of the effort helping these chicks survive. Photos and viewing of SNPL chick through donated scopes became part of their vacation.

Nesting season for SNPL begins usually in March and can continue through August. The SNPL project will again seek volunteers and coordinated support for 2011. These birds remain on the Imperiled Species list.

For more information on how you might participate, please contact Sarasota Audubon at [www.sarasotaaudubon.org](http://www.sarasotaaudubon.org).