

December -- 2009

Helping Hands

The women and children taking refuge at the Samuel's House emergency shelter had a brighter holiday, thanks to the women who make up the City of Key West's Human Resources Department.

Stephanie Johnson, Pearline Lewis, Schavawn Yarber, Phyllis Reynolds, Alice Parker and Sandy Gilbert were looking for a way to make the holidays more meaningful. So, instead of exchanging gifts amongst themselves, they decided to buy gifts for people who face uncertain times.

They shopped and shopped, then shopped some more. Before they knew it, they had purchased dozens of gifts.

"In a way it was freeing to shop for someone you don't know," said Alice Parker. "We knew there were things the moms need, and we got things for children in different age ranges."

The women give a lot of the credit to Stephanie Johnson for not only coming up with the idea, but doing much of the shopping and nearly all of the gift wrapping.



(Left to right): Phyllis Reynolds, Sandy Gilbert, Schavawn Yarber and Alice Parker gather the gifts to take to the women and children of Samuel's House

"She's got a lot of energy," said Parker.

Samuel's House provides a safe haven for women and their children, whether they're the victims of domestic battery or just down on their luck. It gives them a much-needed home until they get their feet under them and get back into the flow of daily living.

Though the shelter is a godsend, there's still not a lot of opportunity for those little extras that many of us take for granted. That's why the HR Department picked out goodies like scented bath soaps for moms as well as toys and even an iPod for kids.

This isn't the first time city staffers have done for others. In the past, employees got together and provided gifts for people living in the local convalescent center. That facility, however, has been closed for some time.

On Friday morning, Yarber, Reynolds, Parker and Gilbert piled the gifts into one of the women's vehicles and took them over to Samuel's House. The City's Human Resources Department is living proof that Santa doesn't necessarily dress in red and drive a sleigh.

View From the Top



The end of the first decade of the 21st century is upon us. It's been an interesting year for the City.

Together we have accomplished many good things and you can all be very proud of the way you have continued to support our community each and every day. The major successes for this past year include: Approval for a new City Hall, the Flagler Ave. project was started and is near completion, the Mallory Square renovation is nearing completion, Charter Boat Row is finishing a major facelift and new dock installation, we have a new fully functional Transfer Station on Rockland Key and we even sank the Vandenberg -- the newest artificial reef in the U.S. and now the premier dive spot in the country.

Not a bad year, despite the challenges that face us. We successfully balance the daily priorities to preserve our City's unique qualities and provide the full measure of Health, Safety and Welfare for our citizens and guests.

Thank you all for your hard work and let's move into the new decade with renewed confidence that we will continue to get things done for Key West.

CITY OF KEY WEST

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Questions? Comments?

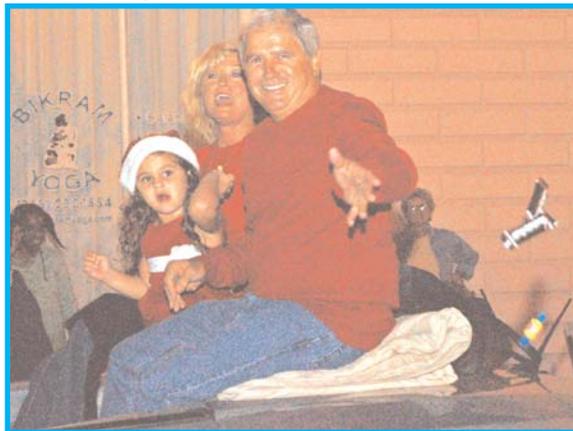
If you have information for the next City newsletter or would like to see something added to the publication, please contact Communications Manager Alyson Crean at acrean@keywestcity.com. This newsletter is a publication of the City of Key West.



Key West City Commissioners Mark Rossi and Billy Wardlow join Monroe County Airports Manager Peter Horton in welcoming AirTran Airways to Key West.

Key West City officials -- including City Manager Jim Scholl and Commissioners Mark Rossi and Billy Wardlow -- joined a throng of local businesses to welcome a new air service to the Key West International Airport this month. The inaugural flight of AirTran Airways arrived to a warm greeting, providing a new aerial link to the mainland. AirTran flies out of Orlando, offering enjoyable amenities including complimentary wi-fi, XM satellite radio, and roomy overhead bins. The new service will fly four days a week.

Holiday Parade Winners



Mayor Craig Cates and his family tossed goodies to a happy crowd during the December 5th Holiday Parade.

Choosing the winning floats was a tough choice for judges who had over 50 fantastic floats to choose from. Each entry was a winner in its own right, but the judges finally picked out the best of the best:

Best Commercial Float: Truman & White Chevron

Best Float by a Non Profit: Mary Immaculate Star of the Sea

Best Youth Group: Key West High School Band

Honorable Mention: Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority

Just 4 Kids Art Center Dedicated

There was a sea of young and happy faces on hand for the December 21st unveiling of the cornerstone at the Just for Kids Art Center on Petronia Street. The party was hosted by the Masonic Lodge and was topped off with Just 4 Kids' annual gift giveaway. This year's party had a somber side when a flock of white doves was released in memory of Marques Butler. Butler, a Key West boy and graduate of Key West High School, was just 23 when he was killed in October.



City Commissioner Clayton Lopez (right) joined his fellow Masons in dedicating the Art Center.



City Commissioner Jimmy Weekley (left) and Mayor Craig Cates unveiled a cornerstone dedicating the center "to the artist in every child."



Holiday Soiree



City staffers and their families enjoyed a wonderful evening at the annual Holiday Party at the Westin on December 12th. In addition to a delicious spread, there was an array of door prizes and gifts, including the grand prize: Portia Navarro, executive assistant to the assistant city managers, took home the fabulous 22-inch flat screen TV!

Young Officer Remembered

Every year in December, Roxy Drew sets aside her own grief long enough to remember all those who, like her own son, made the supreme sacrifice and died in the line of duty.

Key West Police Officer Norman Drew was a motorcycle officer. He was just three months out of the Academy when -- while backing up another officer -- he was killed by a car that did not yield to his lights and siren. Drew was just 22 years of age.

It's been 34 years since that fatal day, and, sadly, other names have joined the roster of officer who have died in the line of duty.

Through all of those years, Officer Drew's mother Roxy has kept in contact with the Key West Police Department.

"Knowing you keep Norman's memory alive helps so much," she said during a memorial commemorating the 31st year of Drew's death. "Tim [Norman's brother] and I are not alone as we consider the KWPD part of our family."

Drew's name will be among those read at the annual Law Enforcement Memorial in May. But as members of the department and the community pass the lovely poinsettia at the entrance of the Police Department, it's good to remember the fine young man who gave his life to Key West on December 18, 1975.



Key West Police Chief Donie Lee and Executive Assistant Brittany McGaughan with Roxy Drew's memorial poinsettia.

TELEVISED PUBLIC MEETINGS

City Commission:

January 5 & 19

Bahama Village

Redevelopment

Advisory

Committee:

January 7

Schedules for HARC, the

Planning Board, Code

Compliance and other live

meetings are still being final-

ized as of press time. Please

check the City's Web site for

up-to-date information.



Canine Served with Honor and Dedication

On September 11, 2001, as the nation stood in disbelief watching the twin towers go down, Key West Police Detective Sgt. J.R. Torres was completing his K-9 training in Homestead. He was working with a 4-year old black Labrador retriever named Balou.

Balou was the kind of dog who didn't always listen. He had a mind of his own and was always running away during training exercises.

As the planes plunged into the buildings, Torres joined the millions of Americans on the phone, checking with loved ones to assure their safety.

"I glanced at my unpredictable partner and realized that, with all the excitement, I'd dropped his leash," said Torres. "He was free, and I mean free!"

The new canine recruit suddenly had the opportunity to bolt away from his handler into the vast acreage of the training facility.

But Balou hadn't moved. He remained at Torres's side, sensing the concern and unease in the voice of his new partner.

"I knew then a great partnership had just begun," said Torres.

Balou died Wednesday, ending a spectacular career of public service. In five years, Balou assisted Torres in achieving more than 500 felony arrests and over a million dollars in seizures. And when he came home from a day's work fighting crime in Key West, Balou watched over Torres's wife and children.

"He served us well. He served us proud," said Torres. "We're going to miss my faithful and honorable partner."

