

Heat and Heroism

By Trei Johnson



Courtney Spann is the first Black female firefighter for the City of Gulfport.

When Courtney Spann joined the Gulfport Fire Department three years ago, she made history. She became the city's first Black female firefighter.

At 26, Spann carries herself with quiet confidence. Her voice is soft and warm, but her work requires

strength, discipline, and courage.

Spann did not originally plan to become a firefighter. She first imagined a career in healthcare.

"I wanted to help people in my community, especially in their worst times," Spann said. "I also like medical work. At first I wanted

to be a nurse, but I changed it to EMT."

Her path began with Sunstar Paramedics, where she worked as an EMT before attending the fire academy and eventually joining the Gulfport Fire Department.

Courtney continued on page 6

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VOICES

Remember: "Believe in the Force."

Sundown Town

I was fascinated by the article in the March 12 *Gabber*, acknowledging how *The Gabber*, intentionally or unintentionally, supported a racist narrative in the past.

I'm proud of *The Gabber* for doing this.

I would like to see a follow-up with more details... specific examples would be interesting and informative. I was looking for examples and details in the article but they were lacking.

I would not hold it against the paper or the authors for past mistakes... quite to the contrary. Much like the way that Germany owned up to its past in recent times, it speaks to the integrity of the editors to be transparent about the dark side of their past.

Gulfport has come a long way from its "sundown town" years. Owning up to the past, rather than burying it, says a lot about who we are today.

Thanks for the article.

—Michael Barnett, Gulfport

Cathy, I just read your great racial article in *The Gabber Newspaper*. It was so well said. I'm proud of you. Thanks for addressing it.

—Carol Dowd, Tierra Verde

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What Is Democracy Worth to You?

Why The Gabber Matters to Me

By Julia Bull



JULIA BULL

Julia Bull speaks to you about why *The Gabber Newspaper* matters to her.

working on behalf of the paper, do not get paid in their effort to save and keep this historic public service alive for all of us.

The Gabber Newspaper is the oldest, local, independent, weekly community news outlet in Florida, telling our stories, providing information to visitors, and reporting on city councils for the benefit of all of us, since 1968.

Please join me in investing in our democratic future and give a tax-deductible donation to support *The Gabber Newspaper*. Give large or small, give one-time or recurring, but give what you can to help *The Gabber Newspaper* reach sustainability – a goal of \$100,000 for 2026.

What is democracy worth to you? ♦

Dear *Gabber* readers,
I believe the first step toward supporting a healthy democracy, is supporting our local, free, and independent press: *The Gabber Newspaper*.

Studies show where communities lose their local news, democracy is directly affected by a loss of civic engagement, increased government corruption, constituent disengagement, increased partisanship, and lower voter turnout. Local newspapers offer voices and perspectives other than your own, engaging in the democratic process of free thought.

We must invest in this institution if we value democracy. Last year *The Gabber Newspaper* faced increased printing and operating costs. They also faced an advertising shortfall as local businesses also faced rising costs and hurricane recovery.

The Gabber Newspaper supports several full-time staff, whose dedication goes unrecognized. And the owners, despite

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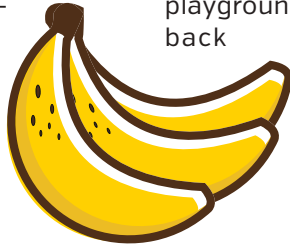
A City To Cherish

Free Bananas: 20 Years in Gulfport

By Sam Henderson

Gulfport has been my home since March 10, 2006. I have lived in this little city longer than anyplace I've ever called home. Three years to the day after arriving, I was elected to the Ward IV seat on city council. Sixteen years after that, the people of Gulfport finally voted to let me return to civilian life. Cheers to that. The dual perspective of being a long-time public servant and resident has colored my take on the metamorphosis of this town.

The evolution of Gulfport goes back 116 years. It was once called Disston City, Veterans City, and for a brief stint held the moniker Bonifacio, loosely meaning "good fortune." When my family moved here, we were looking for a neighborhood that would be ideal for raising our daughter and living a happy life. Gulfport fit the bill in myriad ways – good parks and green space, affordable bungalows with yards and sidewalks, friendly community, lots of trees, not too shabby, not too hip and not too fancy. At the time we purchased our home, we were complete-



FREE BANANAS

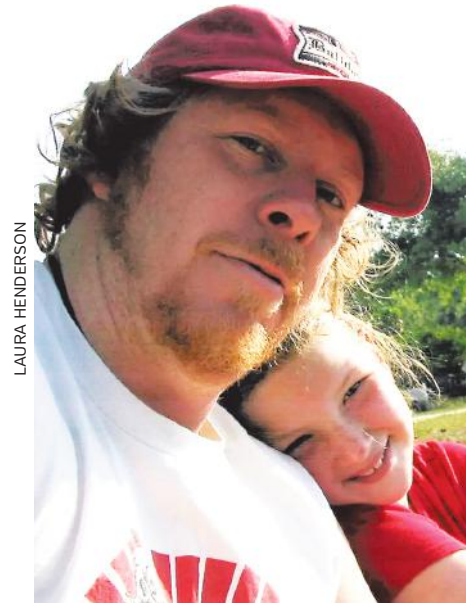
ly unaware that there was even a downtown.

We discovered that component on a bike ride the evening after we returned the U-haul. There was a pay phone on Beach Boulevard, a modest uncrowded beach with a playground and a couple of laid-back

waterfront bars. There was plenty of parking in those days. It was just our speed. It was our good fortune.

Before we finalized the purchase, my wife Laura suggested that I park in front of our would-be home for a couple of hours on a Friday night. Her thinking was that a neighborhood really shows its true character on the weekend, so I should check it out. As I sat parked under the big Laurel Oak at the corner of our prospective house, I cracked a beer in the dark and rolled the windows down to bear witness.

It was quiet, but not too quiet. There were people out and about, but not too many people. Birds calling, music floating out through backyards, dogs barking here and there. It felt like an unpretentious



LAURA HENDERSON

Opinion columnist Sam Henderson and his daughter Brenna on the day they moved to Gulfport.

and comfortable place. After looking at more than 20 houses in South Pinellas, we settled on the first one we looked at. It is the same cozy home we share today.

Much has changed in these two decades. Gulfport has become quite the popular destination. People gravitate to this place. The small cottages are being replaced by increasingly larger domiciles in smaller yards with fewer trees. Only a handful of the businesses from my early days still remain. It is different. Change is inevitable, but we can ease up on the throttle. The buildings, the faces and the business names may change, but I hope that the coolness of Gulfport will continue to survive.

So to the new folks in town and the Old Gulfport crew still sticking around, I say this: Cherish this place for what it is. Step back from the rush to turn it into Anywhere, USA. Remember what brought you here. Keep it fun, keep it cool, keep it friendly, and by God, keep it weird. Maybe the real progress for Old Bonifacio would be in recognizing the beauty in what we already possess, and doing our part to sustain it. ♦

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Eye on Gulfport

Gulfport Police Weekly Activity Report March 5-11

By Chief Mary Farrand



Rather than a traditional police blotter, GPD sent a sampling of all types of services the police provided in Gulfport from March 5-11.

Our weekly report contains examples of calls for service we handled throughout the week. These calls resulted in a report being generated, an arrest being made, or are important for other squads to know about. It is not a full report for all calls; for a call log, please refer to Pinellas County's Crime Viewer.

Patrol Division:

- Dispatched calls for service: 125
- Self-Initiated calls for service: 319
- Incident/offense reports: 32
- Arrests made: 6
- Traffic/vessel stops: 39
- Parking violations: 42
- Ordinance violatons: 42
- House checks: 16

Examples of significant incidents:

Sergeant Kellington received a message about a dinghy recovered from the water behind the Gulfport Recreation Center. The dinghy had previously been posted for removal, had significant damage, and was no longer seaworthy [it was inflatable and had a large hole].

The owner was contacted, but did not retrieve the dinghy, so it has been disposed of.

A person found a man hanging in the mangrove-type trees along the south side of Lincoln Cemetery. There were no signs of foul play; it appears the man died by suicide.

The mother of a student who attends Boca Ciega High School said her daughter left the campus earlier in the day and did not return, so she wanted to report her daughter missing/runaway (March 5). The daughter had contact with an officer from the St. Petersburg Police Department on March 11 at a Walmart in the area and was transported to a relative's home in Largo.

The manager of the golf course at Pasadena Yacht and Country Club reported seeing several juveniles riding E-bikes through the course, damaging the greens and fairways. The course owner would like the juveniles trespassing if located. Officers attempted to contact one of the juveniles' parents, but she slammed the door and refused to talk.

A resident reported that a wom-

an stole her city trash can. She said that when she saw her dragging the trash can, she did not realize it was hers until she saw that hers was missing. She said this happened three weeks ago, and the city replaced the can.

Officers responded to a reported domestic where a man was screaming at a woman and kicked her out of the vehicle. Officer Yancey quickly located the vehicle described by the caller, and Officer Gischel located the woman who was walking in the area. When Officer Yancey stopped the vehicle, a records check revealed that the driver did not have a valid license. There was no violence reported by either party; however, the male half was arrested for driving on a suspended license.

A homeowner received a message from her son that his brother was on the way to her house to break the windows. Officers located the son on the property. He admitted he was trespassing from the property and came over intentionally to get arrested. He was arrested for trespass after warning and taken to jail.

Read the full report at thegabber.com. ♦

Courtney continued from cover

■ Breaking Barriers

Spann said she never viewed firefighting as out of reach.

"I tried it and ended up liking it and being good at it," Spann said. "I want other girls to see that it doesn't matter how you look. You don't have to be buff. Strength looks different for everyone."

Inside the department, she says she has found support and encouragement.

"This is a very easygoing team," she said.

She credits Fire Chief Rene Fernandez for setting that tone.

"I'm grateful for my chief for giving me the opportunity. He's a great leader and always looks out for us. He's been positive from the beginning."

Chief Fernandez said Spann is a great addition to the department and the community.

"She has shown incredible heart, courage, and dedication in her nearly three years of service with us," said Fernandez.

He said her commitment to the job and to the people she serves reflects the spirit of the department.

■ A Family Warning About Gulfport

Spann was born and raised in St. Petersburg and is a proud gradu-



GULFPORT FIRE RESCUE

Fire Chief Rene Fernandez said Courtney Spann is a great addition to the department and the community.

ate of Lakewood High School.

Before applying, she said her mother recalled moments of racism and warned her about Gulfport's history as a sundown town.

"My mom told me about it when

I applied here. She told me the stories," Spann said. "She told me to be careful. But I haven't run into anyone like they described back then. I said, 'Everyone seems friendly... It feels different now.'"

■ Pushing Through Challenges

Like many people entering demanding careers, Spann faced moments of self-doubt early on.

"I was smaller than I am now. It encouraged me to work harder and push myself to be the best I could be," she said.

One of her proudest achievements came when she completed paramedic training.

"I'm proud of passing paramedic school," she said. "It was long and required a lot of studying, but I got through it."

She initially failed the national exam but passed on her second attempt. Support from leadership at the fire department helped keep

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her motivated.

"I took it again and passed. My chief always believed in me," she said. "Before I even passed it, he already had a uniform with 'paramedic' on it, because he knew I was going to pass."

Fernandez said Spann's determination reflects the values of the department.

"As Chief, I am honored to have Courtney as part of our department and look forward to seeing her grow," Fernandez said.

Supporting Women

Working in a male-dominated field has strengthened her resolve.

"It makes me feel good. It makes me want to push myself harder," Spann said.

Spann continues to invest in her future. She is currently working toward a bachelor's degree in public safety.

"Eventually I want to be a lieutenant, captain, or even a chief

one day," she said.

Spann believes women should support each other rather than compete.

"I don't like when women tear each other down. We should lift each other up," she said. "If you see someone struggling, help them instead of gossiping."

Life Beyond the Firehouse

Some calls stay with firefighters long after a shift ends. For Spann, one of the hardest involved an 18-year-old who died by suicide.

"That was very sad. I couldn't sleep that night," she said.

Experiences like that remind her how emotionally demanding the job can be. Finding healthy outlets helps her process what she sees on duty.

Spann also turns to creative expression. She recently appeared in a theater production at The Sunshine Center in St. Petersburg.

Written by actor, playwright, and City of Gulfport sanitation worker

Tron Montgomery, the show was titled *Snaxx*. It took place March 6 and 7, and sold out both nights.

"It was really fun," Spann said. "I'm going to be in the next one, too."

She said activities outside the station help her decompress.

"Sometimes calls stay with you, but going to the gym, doing theater, and listening to music helps me clear my mind," she said.

Advice for the Next Generation

For young women considering careers in public service, Spann encouraged persistence.

"Never give up and always push yourself. Anything is possible. Don't let anyone discourage you," she said.

She also stressed the value of lifelong learning.

"Education is the key to success," Spann said. "Never stop learning. Getting degrees and certifications will open a lot of doors for you." ♦



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City Officials, Charter Review, and Chipotle

South Pasadena's March 10 Commission Meeting

By Christopher Collier

Mayor Arthur Penny was once again sworn into office at the March 10 South Pasadena Commission meeting. The Commission also approved a motion to appoint a seven-person Charter Review Committee.

City reports also indicate the building permit for the proposed Chipotle on Pasadena Avenue is currently under review.

■ Mayor Penny Sworn in Again

City Clerk Carley Lewis read Mayor Arthur Penny the Oath of Office, which he recited. Penny ran the mayoral race unopposed. He expressed his gratitude to the City of South Pasadena. He recounted his record of serving the public and how he began his political career as a substitute.

"I've been doing this since 2009," said Penny, after being sworn in. "I'm glad I'm back in because the City needs a lot of work still."

After Penny was sworn in, Commission unanimously voted Thomas Reid as Vice Mayor. The Commissioners then voted to keep the current heads of each department as they were before Penny's re-election.

Penny oversees the administration department, meanwhile Reid oversees the public works department. Along with that, Commissioner Mark McAlees is the head of the community improvement depart-



CHRISTOPHER COLLIER

On March 10, City Clerk Carley Lewis (left) swore in Arthur Penny (right) as South Pasadena's mayor for another term.

ment. Additionally, Commissioner Gail Neidinger oversees the finance department and Commissioner Lynda Thompson is the head of the public safety department.

■ Charter Review Commission

Despite having only seven members available, the Commission voted to continue with the Charter Review Committee appointments. Normally, there would be nine members on the Charter Review Committee, but the City was unable to fill all the seats.

The Charter Review Committee's mission is to update and revise the current City Charter for the City of

South Pasadena. This means updating any laws or regulations that are unnecessary and identifying any need for improvement.

Commissioner McAlees will be the Committee's Chairman due to his seat on the Commission. If the Charter Review Committee decides to change the chairman, they will have the opportunity to do so at a later date.

The Charter Review Committee will meet in the coming months to review potential updates before presenting recommendations to the Commission.

■ Chipotle Permit Under Review

City reports indicate that the building permit for the proposed Chipotle restaurant at 900 Pasadena Ave. S. is currently under review.

The restaurant would be located at the site of the former Boston Market building. While the permit has not yet been approved, the review process represents another step toward potential redevelopment of the property.

City officials did not indicate a specific timeline for approval, but permit review is a standard part of the development process before construction can begin. ♦

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Hurricane Eddie's, Coffee, and Dessert Stay Up-to-Date With Pinellas Businesses

By Ester Venouziou

Hurricane Eddie's Reopens

After 16 months of repairs following major hurricane damage, Hurricane Eddie's in Gulfport has reopened.

The waterfront bar at 5413 Shore Blvd. S. closed after Hurricanes Helene and Milton struck the area in September 2024. In a Facebook post at the time, the owners described the emotional toll of the storms.

"There are just no words to describe the feeling in the pit of our stomachs and in our hearts," they wrote.

During the rebuilding, Hurricane Eddie's hosted several fundraisers, including T-shirt sales with proceeds going to employees.

In March 2025, the business welcomed customers back with a St. Patrick's Day celebration on the patio. Throughout the following months, Hurricane Eddie's kept music playing and drinks flowing outdoors while crews continued work inside.

The business celebrated its grand reopening on March 12 and thanked the community for its support during the long rebuilding process.



Hurricane Eddie's in Gulfport reopened March 12.

Hurricane Eddie's also operates a sister location, Eddie's Bay Pines, at 9685 Bay Pines Blvd. in St. Petersburg.

Lucky Cup Coffee Co.

Best friends Lauren Kirk and April Lupkey opened a coffee shop in downtown St. Petersburg.

Since the summer of 2025, Lucky Cup Coffee Co. has operated inside

the Galaxy Hotel at 101 3rd Ave. N.

The two first met in high school.

Lupkey said their shared love of coffee and creating welcoming spaces inspired the venture, calling the shop a natural extension of their friendship.

"We're both deeply inspired by nostalgia and the flavors that tell a story," they wrote on Instagram. "Many of our ideas are rooted in the recipes and traditions we grew

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LUCKY CUP COFFEE CO.

[L-R] Best friends April Lupkey and Lauren Kirk opened Lucky Cup Coffee.

up with.”

The name Lucky Cup reflects a personal story for Lupkey, who survived a medical emergency at birth. She said that experience shaped the brand’s focus on gratitude, positivity and community.

Before opening Lucky Cup, Lupkey tested a coffee concept in 2019 at Karma Juice Bar and Eatery in Safety

Harbor, owned by her mother, Josie Barber.

Eat This Dessert First

A dessert concept that began with a pile of melted cheesecake won this year’s inaugural Brick Pitch competition.

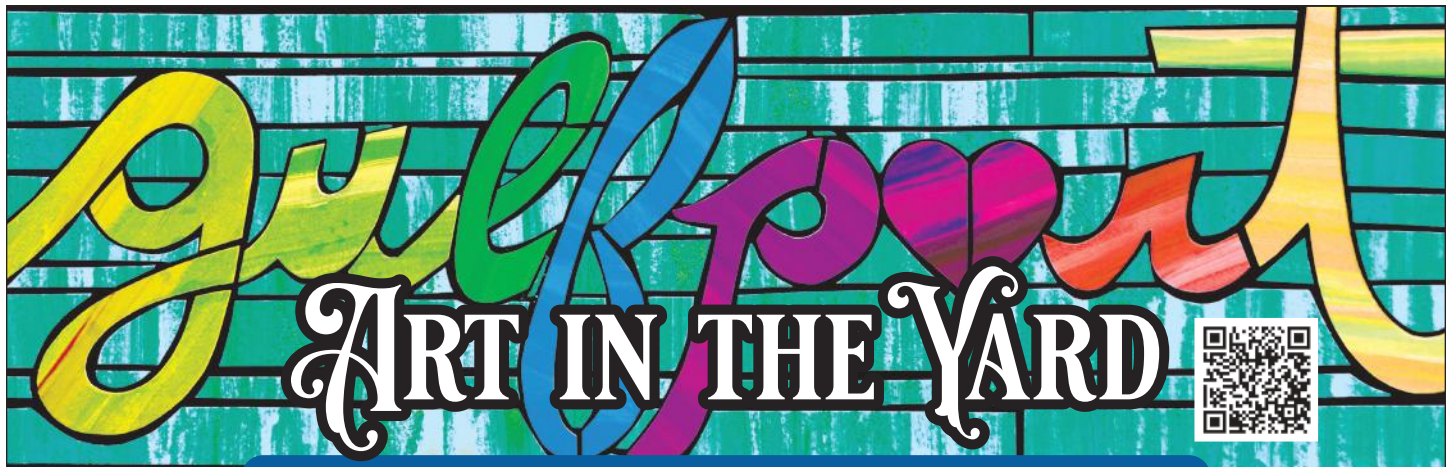
Joseph “J” Jackson, founder of

Eat This Dessert First, won the top prize, which included \$7,500. The Greenhouse presented Brick Pitch Night and hosted by the St. Pete Opera in early March.

Eat This Dessert First features jar-filled cheesecakes, cannolis and other desserts, along with ice cream and specialty coffees. The business operated as a mobile vendor before opening a storefront presence in October. They are now inside Sunshine City Popcorn at 2533 Central Ave. in St. Petersburg’s Grand Central District. The company continues to sell at markets and festivals while working toward a goal of opening its own standalone dessert cafe.

“We are humbled and grateful for the honor to be selected as the first Brick Pitch winner,” the business wrote on Facebook.

Judges included Reuben Pressman, St. Pete Athletic; Tricia Johnson, Regions Bank; Evan Brownstein, St. Pete Distillery; and Brooke Beeler, Thrive DTSP. Regions Bank was the main event sponsor. ♦



Saturday, March 21 • 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Rain date Sunday, March 22)

Single Artist Locations

- 807 Hull St. S.
- 5210 14th Ave. S.
- 2606 Miriam St. S.
- 5625 23rd Ave. S.
- 1826 Gray St. S.
- 1713 55th St. S.
- 5315 19th Ave. S.
- 2301 58th St. S.
- 5757 26th Ave. S.
- 2626 49th St. S.
- 5856 11th Ave. S.
- 2509 52nd St. S.
- 1801 59th St. S.
- 5818 13th Ave. S.
- 6344 10th Ave. S.
- 1801 52nd St. S.
- 5148 25th Ave. S.
- 2601 54th St. S., Apt. B
- 2820 DuPont St. S., Apt. 103

- 5716 Tangerine Ave. S.
- 2518 York St. S., Apt. 2
- 5526 13th Ave. S.

Multi Artist Locations

- 2208 Beach Blvd. S.
- 5202 20th Ave. S.
- 2513 Beach Blvd. S.
- 2514 59th St. S.
- 5830 27th Ave. S.
- 5321 13th Ave. S.
- 2532 Beach Blvd. S.
- 2608 Beach Blvd. S.
- 2210 53rd St. S.
- 5409 21st Ave. S.
- 4943 27th Ave. S.
- 2708 56th St. S.
- 2306 53rd St. S.
- 5848 23rd Ave. S.
- 1809 59th St. S.
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*AREAS ARE NOT IN ANY ROUTE ORDER

Leading the Change

Women's History at the Brenda McMahon Gallery

By Maggie Duffy

The Brenda McMahon Gallery in Gulfport is currently celebrating women with an all-women artists group art show, *Women's History: Leading the Change*.

Brenda McMahon was first inspired to recognize Women's History Month several years ago, when an oil painting artist she represented made miniature portraits of historical women. That show was a huge hit, McMahon said.

While there hasn't been a Women's History Month show every year, McMahon said they always get a massively positive response. This show, especially being a group show, was no different. McMahon said the opening reception was extremely well attended by both sexes and all ages, eager to learn about the women represented in the show.

"Everybody's kind of like sharing and learning and appreciating that together. And then, of course, the artistry is phenomenal," she said. "I'm really taken aback at how widely they're appreciated and how many times and how many ways I'm thanked for doing it.

"I feel like part of why I'm thanked



Judith Villavisanis' powerful mixed media piece, "Gather the Women, Save the World" won Best in Show.

so much is because there's so little acknowledgement out there. And people are like, ravenous for it, they're parched, and they go, thank you."

Leaders in the Community

To get sponsors for the juried show, which gave cash awards to winners, McMahon went to women leaders in the Gulfport com-

munity, who stepped up "beautifully," she said.

They are Karen Keaton, Gulf Beaches Law; Barbara Banno, Stella's Diner, Sundries and Divine Wine & Gourmet; Stacey Purcell, Gulfport Realty, and Pia Goff, Pia's Trattoria. The Enroy Foundation and The North End TapHouse are also sponsors.

McMahon also invited artist Samantha Modder to create a piece for the show, which she calls her "centerfold."

Modder makes intricate ballpoint pen drawings that are digitally manipulated to become a large scale and seamlessly attached to the wall. "Sock Dancer" greets you as you enter the gallery, below the show's title.

Local arts writer Jennifer Ring juried the show. She had the tough job of giving out awards for the exhibition that has so many incredible artworks.

"The best part of judging the awards for *Women: Leading the Change* was that it forced me to think about the many ways in which women can catalyze change. It's empowering," Ring said in a message.

Gabber Newspaper BOOK CLUB



Wednesday, April 8

Sunset Beach

by Mary Kay Andrews

5:30 p.m. at Habana Cafe

5402 Gulfport Blvd S

Gulfport

All are welcome,
no reservations, no
membership fees, but
you must first read
the book.





BRENDA MCMAHON GALLERY

Gulfport's Brenda McMahon Gallery has an all-women artists group art show titled *Women's History: Leading the Change*.

■ Celebrating Women

Best in Show went to Judith Villavisanis' powerful mixed media piece, "Gather the Women, Save the World."

The piece depicts women activists sitting together at a table. Among them are Gloria Steinem, Greta Thunberg, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, to name a few. Lady Liberty holds down one end, with Sacagawea at the other. On the walls are portraits of activists who have died, including Jane Goodall and Maya Angelou.

An "inscription" on the table reads, "Whenever Women Gather Together, Failure is Impossible."

"I'm always very interested in doing pieces that are what I call, 'statement pieces,'" Villavisanis said. "I wanted to show the women having a conversation, and have activists, present and past activists in the piece."

Before the call for artists even went out, Villavisanis had many women activists portraits drawn in her sketchbook. Then she had to figure out which ones to include, so she picked women who represented different issues, like environment, education, feminism, to ensure the piece was well-rounded. She wanted to capture their spirit, she said.

The piece is built of layers of birch wood, that she then paints. She said she had to fit the figures in based on the scale and said she calls it "her big puzzle."

Villavisanis hides messages in her pieces. In this one, a black cat refers to the statement Vice President JD Vance made during the election that elderly women who own cats

shouldn't be allowed to vote.

"I decided Liberty needed a cat on her lap," she said.

First place went to Carol Hess' elegant "Sakura Kimono," made from tea bags and coffee filters and sari ribbon. McMahon said the use of tea and coffee evokes the notion that the kitchen table is where conversations begin, becoming the boardroom for women.

Jamie Goldenberg's painting "Uncaged Bird" took second place. The piece depicts American poet and activist Amanda Gorman with a birdcage.

On a wall label, Goldenberg wrote of it, "Through imagery of confinement and release, the piece situates Gorman within a lineage of women whose voices insist on resilience, collective responsibility, and hope."

McMahon pointed out a piece by Victoria Jorgensen, which is a globe with tiny flowers pinned to the countries where women are the leaders.

"When you actually see a globe with all these countries, and you see very few pins, but then you go, oh, we are leading," McMahon said. "So it's like, things are changing, right? I didn't know there were that many. Look at how many more we still can have."

■ View *Women's History: Leading the Change*

There will be a Meet the Artists event Saturday, March 21 from 6-8 p.m., featuring an artist's talk with Judith Villavisanis. This event is free.

Brenda McMahon Gallery, 2901 Beach Blvd. S., Gulfport. Through March 30. Free. brendamcmahon-gallery.com, 727-454-0453. ♦

**Painting Exhibition:
Saturday, March 21**

**10am-4pm
6344 10th Ave South
Gulfport**



**Paintings by Jan Wampler
an architect and painter
of watercolors on Chinese
paper. Please come to SKY
SHADOWS, an exhibit of
his paintings as part of Art
in the Yard.**

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CELEBRATION
AND PLANT SALE**

**MARCH 21
10AM - 4PM**

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GARDEN CLUB AND A FREE RAFFLE
FOR A 40" VIZO TV!**



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ST. PETE**

More Tricks at Mirror Lake

Gulfport Ghost Cycle: A Serial Fiction

By Frank Booker

Told by Sean McBay

Mirror Lake plays tricks at night. Not the funhouse kind. The kind that pulls at your nerves like a loose thread. Cassy says the lake is a scrapbook of unfinished stories. I say it's a bad mirror with a long memory. We're both right.

We walked up to the west bank, where a man's body floated face-down in the snag lilies. Same position as the photos from the old case files, same angle, same stillness. But I already knew what we were looking at wasn't flesh.

I crouched anyway, habit more than necessity.

"Male. Late twenties, maybe. No lividity – he's fresh."

Cassy gave me a sideways glance.

"You know he isn't really here."

"Yeah," I said. "But I like to keep my forms."

The air felt thick, like humidity with a heartbeat. Cassy wrapped her arms



FLORIDA MEMORY

Welcome to *Gulfport Ghost Cycle*, serial fiction by Gulfportian Frank Booker. This week: "More Tricks at Mirror Lake."

around herself and stared at the water.

"She's close," she whispered. We found her at the railing dip – the exact spot the report said she'd stood before everything fell apart. The ghost of her shimmered like moonlight on wet glass: early twenties, soaked hair, clothes clinging. Not raining, but she dripped anyway.

Cassy stepped forward, soft and warm, the way she does.

"Hi, sweetheart."

The ghost didn't turn. Her voice came out thin.

"It wasn't supposed to be me."

I moved beside Cassy, hands in my pockets.

"We're not here to hurt you. We're here because the lake won't let you sleep."

Her chin quivered.

"He slipped."

"Looks like it," I said. "Bruising matches the railing. You didn't mean it."

The ghost shut her eyes.

"I left him."

Cassy breathed in, steadying herself.

"Sometimes ghosts lie to themselves before they lie to us."

That hit her harder than any shove ever had. Cassy kept going, gentle but unflinching.

"You ran. You were terrified. Anyone would've been. But you blamed yourself so deeply that you came back."

The ghost's shoulders tightened. The lake made a quiet sound – like

something exhaling underwater.

"That night," Cassy said softly, "two bodies were pulled from this lake. His. And yours. You didn't drown by accident."

Silence.

Then the ghost whispered: "I thought the water would wash it away."

I stepped closer.

"It doesn't work like that. Not for the living, and sure as hell not for the dead."

She finally looked at me – really looked. The pain on her face made her seem younger than the photos ever captured.

"You want to stay here and loop that moment forever?" Cassy asked. "Fine. But if you want peace? You have to face what happened."

The ghost's breath shook.

"I didn't mean to kill him."

"You didn't," I said. "He slipped. The lake remembers the truth. That's why it keeps showing you this."

Cassy reached out her hand. Not to touch – just to offer.

The ghost took it anyway.

Light rippled across the water – soft, final, like a candle blown out on purpose. And then she was gone. So was he. The scene collapsed like a tent with the poles pulled. Cassy let out a long breath.

"Loop's broken."

"Good," I said, standing. "Let the lake keep someone else's secrets for a while."

And the night finally felt like night again. ♦

OPENING RECEPTION

Waiting
The Artwork of Irina Lapin

Monthly Art Exhibition
Sat., March 21, 4 - 6 pm
5317 Gulfport Blvd. S.
Presented by the Gulfport Merchants Chamber

ACROSS

- 1 Velvety garden bloom
- 6 Big blow
- 10 Hindu music
- 14 Unaccompanied
- 15 "Sayonara" sash
- 16 River to the Caspian Sea
- 17 Presidential hopeful Henry Ross
- 18 So that one should not
- 19 Normandy town
- 20 Oscar's bashes?
- 23 Coral buildup
- 26 Down
- 27 Aptitude
- 28 Remaining whole
- 30 Part of NB
- 31 Willy Wonka author's residences?
- 34 Cow or dull add-on
- 37 Lycée
- 38 Pose
- 39 Very, to Verdi
- 41 Map abbreviations
- 42 Richard's dresses?
- 44 Walden, for one
- 46 Richly-patterned fabric
- 47 Verdi opera

- 50 Ruminant remark
- 52 Nebraskan Native Americans
- 53 Sigmund's favorite food?
- 56 Solid
- 57 Highlander
- 58 Helmsman
- 62 Rose's love
- 63 Nimbus
- 64 Trioxygen layer
- 65 Bruce and Brandon
- 66 Caesar's way
- 67 Feel

DOWN

- 1 Baby food
- 2 Pub order
- 3 And not or not either
- 4 Wet blanket?
- 5 Abominable Snowman
- 6 Former prime minister of Israel
- 7 Red as ____
- 8 Have ess trouble
- 9 Will subjects
- 10 Steal, in the Wild West
- 11 Musical Shaw
- 12 Greatest physician until Hippocrates

- 13 Cather's "____ Lady"
- 21 Apollo's mother
- 22 Wasn't colorfast
- 23 Fare
- 24 Act out on stage
- 25 Character of a people
- 29 "Evita" role
- 30 ____ noire
- 32 Secondhand
- 33 A Beatle's title
- 34 Comparably obese
- 35 "Midnight Cowboy" character
- 36 Records, var.
- 39 Triumphant interjection
- 40 Polish the car
- 42 Italian dumplings
- 43 Coyote st.
- 44 Feathers
- 45 See 32 Down
- 47 Rubbish
- 48 "... his ____ increase?"
- 49 Spooky
- 50 Thousand, in Tours
- 51 Thesian
- 54 Warmth
- 55 Poetry of tradition
- 59 Chaney
- 60 Switch positions
- 61 Anger, with off

Silly Word Play

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Art Sales, Home Tours, and Italian Ice

■ **Thursday, March 19**

Community Garden Celebration & Plant Sale Dig into spring at the first annual Bartlett Park Community Garden Family Celebration and Plant Sale. Shop flowers, vegetables, herbs, houseplants, and trees while exploring the garden, meeting local vendors, and enjoying food, games, and hands-on activities for all ages. The event also features garden tours, educational exhibits, and a free raffle for a 40-inch Vizio Smart TV. *Bartlett Park Community Garden, 1443 Highland St. S., St. Petersburg. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. 727-612-8640.* **F P**

■ **Friday, March 20**

Italian Ice Giveaway To celebrate the first day of the season, Rita's Italian Ice is handing out free Italian ice all day long as part of its annual tradition! Swing by for a cup. *Rita's Italian Ice and Frozen Custard, 2141 66th St. N., St. Petersburg. 12-10 p.m. facebook.com/ritasofstpetersburgtyronefl, 727-350-8580.* **F**

The Mysterious Origins of Florida Ever wonder how Florida came to be? Dive deep into the wild geological story behind the Sunshine State with fossil enthusiast and artist Hermann Trappman. He will share the incredible history hidden beneath our feet, inspired by a lifelong fascination that began when he discovered a mammoth toe bone as a kid right here in Florida. *Gulfport Public Library, 5501 28th Ave. S., Gulfport. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; Program at 7 p.m. mygulfport.us, info@gulfporthistoricalsociety.org.* **F**

■ **Saturday, March 21**

Largo Train Show Calling all train lovers and hobby collectors! Regal

Railways is rolling into Largo with a day full of model trains, collectibles, and hands-on fun. *St. Jerome Catholic Church Parish Hall, 10895 Hamlin Blvd., Largo. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. \$6 adults, kids 12 and under free. 727-244-1341.*

Artsy Rummage Sale The Gulf Coast Artists' Alliance (GCAA) is opening the ultimate artist's supply closet for its annual Artsy Rummage Sale, packed with gently used art materials and creative treasures. Expect everything from paint, colored pencils, canvas, beads, shells, fabric, and wood cutouts to art prints, frames, books, jewelry, equipment, and display pieces. Proceeds support the GCAA. *GCAA ArtWorks, 5546 1st Ave. N., St. Petersburg. 8 a.m.-3 p.m. gcaa-artworks.com, 727-738-8010.* **F P**

Historic Roser Park Tour of Homes Step inside one of St. Pete's most charming historic neighborhoods during the Historic Roser Park Tour of Homes. This self-guided walking tour features four unique homes, a commercial restoration project, and a stop at the community garden. Guests can also hop aboard the Star Trolley for complimentary neighborhood tours led by local historian Rui Farias of the St. Petersburg Museum of History. The tour also includes an optional wine tasting experience at three of the featured homes for an additional fee. *900 MLK Jr. St. S., St. Petersburg. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. \$25, or \$35 with the wine tasting add-on. historic-roserpark.org, 727-215-4399.* **P**

Art in the Yard Gulfport's neighborhoods turn into an open-air gallery during the bi-annual Art in the Yard sale. Gulfport artists will display and sell original artwork right from their

front yards. Find addresses online. *Gulfport. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. mygulfport.us, 727-893-1000.* **F**

Pass-A-Grille Homes on Tour Take a peek behind the doors of Gulf beaches' most charming neighborhoods during the Pass-A-Grille Homes on Tour. Hosted by the Pass-A-Grille Woman's Club, this self-guided, walkable tour showcases five unique homes. *Pass-A-Grille, St. Pete Beach. 1-5 p.m. passagrillehometour.com, patsylmaclean@gmail.com.* **F**

Nerd Nite Nerd Nite St. Pete invites curious locals to explore a shared Gulfport urban homestead led by former Nerd Nite speaker Laura Oldanie. Tour the property, see buzzing beehives and backyard chickens, and more. *Address provided after registration. 2-4:30 p.m. \$20. events.humanitix.com, 727-415-2951.*

Great American Grunt Hunt & Fish Fry Fishing meets fish fry at the Madeira Beach Marina's 15th Annual Great American Grunt Hunt. After a day on the water, the community is invited to the weigh-in and fish fry. *Madeira Beach Marina, 503 150th Ave., Madeira Beach. 4-8 p.m. Fish fry plates: \$15. madeirabeachfl.gov, 727-391-9951.*

Charity Casino Night Place your bets for a good cause at the Junior League of St. Petersburg's Charity Casino Night. You can try your luck while supporting the Junior League's work across the St. Pete area. *FloridaRAMA Art Gallery, 2606 Fairfield Ave. S., St. Petersburg. 6-10 p.m. \$25 and up. st-petersburg.jl.org, 727-210-5450.*

■ **Sunday, March 22**

Jewish Jazz Concert Clarinetist Seth Kibel and pianist Daniel Weiser bring you a concert inspired by the influence of Jewish immigrant musicians and the Great Migration on the birth of jazz. *First Presbyterian Church, 701 Beach Dr. NE, St. Petersburg. 4 p.m. Donations appreciated, but not required. fpcstpete.com, office@fpc-stpete.org.*

■ **Tuesday, March 24**

Tales of Treasure Island Take a trip back in time with the Treasure Island Historical Society. Through photos, video interviews, and firsthand tales from longtime residents, this program explores the people and moments that shaped Treasure Island and the surrounding beach communities. *St. Pete Beach Public Library, 365 73rd Ave., St. Pete Beach. 2-3:30 p.m. sp-blbrary.com, 727-363-9238.* **F**

■ **Wednesday, March 25**

Grand Opening for Parc Celebrate a milestone for Tampa Bay families as Parc Center for Disabilities unveils the Tom & Mary James Children's Services Center, a brand-new home for early childhood care and therapies. Guests are invited to enjoy refreshments and tour the new facility. *Parc Center for Disabilities, 3151 73rd St. N., St. Petersburg. 5-6:30 p.m. business.stpete.com, info@parc-fl.org.* **F**

■ **Thursday, March 26**

Historic Sunset Boat Tour See St. Pete from a whole new angle on this sunset cruise packed with local history. Hosted by the St. Petersburg Museum of History, the tour dives into the good, the bad, and the downright weird stories behind how a quiet fishing village became a bustling tourist destination. *Tampa Bay Watch Discovery Center Eco-Tour Dock, 400 2nd Ave. NE, Slip Q47, St. Petersburg. 6-8 p.m. \$40-45. sp-moh.com, 727-894-1052.*



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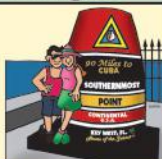
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- APRIL 16, THURS. – LUNCH BUNCH with TODD at DER DUTCHMAN...\$79
- APRIL 18, SAT. – "ALL SHOOK UP" at the Broadway Palm...\$169

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The GABBER

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JS COMPUTER REPAIR Mobile Computer Repair - \$50 per visit/hr - 727-643-0697. <https://jscomputerrepair.com/>

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AC ELECTRIC 727-345-3108

Over 30 years experience. Residential & commercial, new or remodel work, service up-grades, lightning arrestors, fans and lighting installed. State license #ER0007653.

LOCAL ELECTRICIAN SERVICE Shoreline Electrical Logistics, Florida State Certified Master Electrician Service offering both residential and commercial plus new construction/remodeling serving Gulfport with local dispatching along with all Pinellas county and the entire Tampa Bay region. License # EC13014771. Call 727-400-1279.

Handy Person

NEED A MAN? I FIX THINGS!

Experienced in all types of home repair including toilet repair & replacement, kitchen faucet and shower fixtures, gutter cleaning, power washing, painting, drywall repair, and general fixes. Reliable upkeep for residential or commercial properties. Friendly, prompt & affordable service. Call or text Joe: 727-385-8855.

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Contracting business expanding to handyman work. 40 years experience with excellent service from Gulfport resident & USMC veteran. Let me help fix your stuff. Text or call 727-400-1279 for more information.

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With 40 years experience as tradesman and business owner, I offer a wide range of home improvement services. As a resident, I take pride in serving our community with insured and trustworthy work. Call/Text 727-242-0892 or email Titantech68@gmail.com.

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Great work with great prices. We do it all. Check us out on Google at Good Riddance Landscaping. 727-265-6454.

NEED LAWN SERVICE? Pete Trevino Lawn Service. Licensed & insured, 20 years experience. Weeding, hedges, mowing, or one time clean up. Free estimates. Call 727-432-0523. No texts.

MAKE IT BEAUTIFUL AGAIN - 407-244-6045

Flower beds made new again. We install mulch, shells, rocks, sod, plants, and rock gardens. Small tree removed/installed, weeding done. 30 years experience. Free estimates. St. Pete/Gulfport. 407-244-6045. CLEAN UP CLEAN UP CLEAN UP.

Miscellaneous Service

ATTENTION ALL BOCA CIEGA HIGH PIRATE GRADS

Ahoy! Bring your friends & family and join your classmates on a 4 day Caribbean cruise on Jewel of the Seas out of Tampa scheduled for February 18-22, 2027. Call Nelah Parker for details: 727-244-7600.

HOME KITCHEN HELP

Local St. Pete Beach/Gulfport chef offers 5 hours of in-home prep, cooking, and cleanup for \$100. You provide the groceries and recipes—I provide the labor! Perfect for seniors, busy families, or party prep. I cook, clean up, and leave. Zelle only. Text Chef Joe (Bear) at 970-376-7481.

EARLY AIRPORT RIDES

Furnishing rides to the airports, cruise lines, and wherever you may need. TEXT Nancy at 860-719-5099 to set up your ride to your next destination!

NOTARY SERVICES \$10

The Gabber Newspaper provides Notary Services, in office only, at 2908-B Beach Blvd S. in Gulfport. Our Notary Public is not an attorney licensed to practice law in the State of Florida, and may not give legal advice or accept fees for legal advice. The Gabber Newspaper does NOT provide witnesses for document signing. Please call 727-321-6965 for appointment.

Moving / Hauling

HB HAULING & HANDYMAN SERVICES

House/garage clean outs. Demolition. Shed removal, fence removal, yard clear out, etc. Dump trailer rental. Lowest price guaranteed. Local family owned business. Call Kenny at 727-793-5816.

JUNK REMOVAL FULL SERVICE

Big or Small, We Haul it All. Eviction/hoarder/property cleanouts. Shed/fence removal, carpet removal, garage/storage clean outs. Too much stuff, let us help! Fully Licensed and Insured. Free estimates. Lamys Hauling and Removal Service. 727-501-6464. Lamyshaulingandremoval.com.

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EMPLOYMENT

Help Wanted

RECREATION LEADER City of Gulfport. Summer seasonal full-time positions available from June 1st thru August 7th. Education/experience preferred in education, physical education or child care. Knowledge of recreational activities including games, arts & crafts and sports. Minimum qualifications include high school diploma or equivalency. Entry \$17.808/hr. Level II Background check, drug screening and physical will be conducted. Applications accepted from 3/2/26 thru 3/20/26 at Gulfport Recreation Center, 5730 Shore Blvd. S. or City Hall, 2401 - 53rd St. S., E.O.E. <https://info.flclearinghouse.com/>



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JUNIOR COUNSELOR City of Gulfport. Summer seasonal part-time positions available for Gulfport residents ages 15-17 years old from June 1st thru August 7th. Experience working with children preferred. Entry \$14.00/hr. Level II Background check, physical and drug screening will be conducted. Applications are being accepted from 3/2/26 thru 3/20/26 at Gulfport Recreation Center, 5730 Shore Blvd. S. or City Hall, 2401 - 53rd St. S., E.O.E. <https://info.flclearinghouse.com/>

MISCELLANEOUS

Card of Thanks

POWERFUL PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT
Holy Spirit, you who solves all problems, who lights all roads so that I can attain my goal, you who give me the divine gifts to forgive and forget all evil against me and that in all instances of my life you are with me, I want in this short prayer to thank you for all things and confirm once again that I never want to be separated from you, even in spite of all material illusions. I wish to be with you, in eternal glory. Thank you for your mercy toward me and mine. The person must say this prayer for 3 consecutive days. After 3 days the favor requested will be granted, even if it may appear difficult. This prayer must be published immediately after the favor is granted, without mentioning the favor, only your initials should appear at the bottom. 4AD

For Sale

UTILITY TRAILER

5'x10' Heavy Duty. Haul your golf cart, motorcycle, lawn equipment. \$1,000 OBO. Call or text 727-463-6525.

HANDSOME 6X9 RUGS (2) Two brand new rugs for \$100. Tan and brown. Versatile. 904-325-8812

THREE BURIAL PLOTS FOR SALE

Three plots in historic Lincoln Cemetery. Available together. Wonderful resting place for your loved ones. Text 727-420-8693 for more information.

ITEMS FOR SALE

Concept 2 Rowing Machine - like new - \$700 OBO. Kayaks - separately \$450 each, \$800 for pair. Pongo 120 - new seat - equipped for fishing - orange. Pongo 100 - new straps - green. Consoles for each included. Kayaks have been well-used and have some minor signs of love but float and track well. Call or text 727-656-5420.

General

PASS-A-GRILLE COMMUNITY BEACH THRIFT STORE

Now open at 1606 Pass-A-Grille Way, St. Pete Beach [corner of 17th Ave. & Pass-A-Grille Way]. Open Tuesdays, Thursdays, & Saturdays from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

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CJPAWS

CJPaws, Inc., local non-profit cat rescue looking for adopters, volunteers, and fosters for kittens, older kitties, and special needs kitties. Please check us out online at CJPAWS.ORG for more information and to fill out appropriate forms for consideration.

Yard / Garage Sale

INDOOR FLEA MARKET

5700 40th Ave. N., Kenneth City, 33709. Friday, March 20 & Saturday, March 21, 8am - 3pm. Jewelry, housewares, clothes of all kinds, plants and home decor. Breakfast, lunch and bake sale. Clearview Oaks and Palms of Paradise.

SPRING CLEANING RUMMAGE SALE

Presented by TownShores Social Events Group. Sat., March 28, 8 a.m. - 1 p.m., TownShores Clubhouse Auditorium. Lots of Treasures: jewelry, purses/luggage, glassware, pictures, quilt fabric, kitchen & household items, art, rugs, lawn furniture. Hot dogs, soda, baked goods, coffee, & elevator available.

REAL ESTATE

Commercial Properties Rent

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Join a team of holistic healthcare providers. Room for rent with separate entrance, use of waiting room. 5301 Gulfport Blvd., \$500/month plus share of utilities. Contact 727-215-9720.

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Cute, furnished one bedroom, garden apartment available April 2026 for monthly rentals. Small pet accepted with prior approval. Walking distance to Senior Center, library and downtown. Off street parking. Large travertine patio with plants and garden furniture. Call 781-325-5965.

2/2 RENTAL IN TOWN SHORES

Kenmore 314, non-smoking, 55+ 2bd/2ba, furnished. Pool. \$1,800/mo includes utilities except electric. \$1,000 security & last month's rent. Background check required. Call/Text 727-735-1256



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Real Estate For Rent

GULFPORT ARTS DISTRICT

Garage/storage/workshop. 17 x 34, available now. No flooding. \$600/month. Call Ken: 513-374-2443.

55+ CONDOS FOR RENT ANNUAL LEASE
1bd/1ba lanai, 1st floor, new paint & flooring. 2bd/1ba lanai, 2nd floor, elevator. \$1,300 - \$1,600/mo. Great community. Lush landscaping. Recreation center. Activities. Heated/cooled pool, jacuzzi, sauna. Shuffleboard. Bus service. Next to Mall. Non-evacuation. 727-639-9801.

1 BDRM CONDO FOR RENT Town Shores, Chatham 207. 55+, no smoking. \$1,700/month, all included except electricity. Call 727-902-7553 or 727-283-9741.

PASADENA COVE CONDO FOR SALE OR RENT

For rent or sale, first floor, 2 bed/2 bath. W/D, freshly painted, new carpet in bedrooms. \$2,000/month all included except electric. Fair price: \$250,000 for sale by owner. Call 727-531-1607 or 727-688-6276.

OLDE FLORIDA STYLE COTTAGE 1bd/1ba, near Gulfport pier/beach/arts district. Did not flood. Shared washer/dryer, no pets. Call 207-590-9498 for details.

Real Estate For Sale

FURNISHED CONDO IN FIVE TOWNS BY OWNER

Exquisite 2 bedroom, 2 bath condo on first floor with covered carport. Totally renovated from ceilings to floors. Three percent commission will be paid to buyer's agent. No hurricane damage, no upcoming assessments, \$701 HOA, \$239,000. Call or text 727-804-3416.

Place your classified line ads online!

Deadline for classified ads is 3 p.m. Friday for the following week's issue.

theGabber.com

Gulfport Real Estate Sales

Find More Home Sales at thegabber.com

Here are some Gulfport homes sold from March 6-13.



CAMERON HEALY

2602 47th St. S. (Marina)

This three-bed, two-bath home, built in 1961, has 1,600 square feet. It listed for \$725,000 and sold for \$720,000.

5950 Pelican Bay Plaza S., #PH-2F (Pasadena Yacht & Golf Club)

This two-bed, two-bath condo, built in 1982, has 1,476 square feet. It listed for \$630,000 and sold for \$607,000.

2801 Miriam St. S. (Marina)

This three-bed, three-bath home, built in 1961, has 2,203 square feet. It listed for \$575,000 and sold for \$540,000.

1114 53rd St. S. (Tangerine)

This three-bed, one-bath home, built in 1959, has 984 square feet. It listed for \$299,000 and sold for \$280,000.

The Gabber lists real estate sales every week, as space allows. This may not be a comprehensive list of all homes and condos sold in Gulfport, and often does not include commercial properties or business sales.

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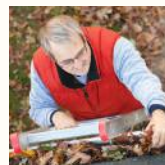


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One-Piece Design	✓	✗	✗	✓
Customized to Your Home	✓	✗	✗	✗
Never Have to Clean	✓	✗	✗	✗
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