

City Welcomes New Manager

submitted by Holly D. Smith,
Mayor, City of Sanibel

On behalf of the Sanibel City Council, the City of Sanibel employees, and the citizens of Sanibel, I have the privilege to warmly welcome Dana Souza as he begins his position this week as Sanibel city manager.

Souza was selected for the job out of 96 candidates through an extensive search conducted by Colin Baenziger and Associates, a nationally recognized consulting and municipal recruiting firm.

Souza has over 35 years of local government experience. Most recently, he was the interim city manager in Naples, Florida. He previously held positions in Naples as deputy city manager and community services director. Souza served the City of Greenville, South Carolina as parks, recreation, and sustainability director; Marco Island, Florida as interim manager and parks and recreation director; City of Portland, Maine as



Dana Souza photo provided

director of parks and recreation; Union, New York as director of parks and recreation; and City of New Bedford, Massachusetts as director of parks, cemeteries and forestry.

Souza's vast knowledge and experience brings immense value to our city. I am confident his leadership skills and managerial talents will create a huge

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Making Holidays Bright For Seniors

FISH of SanCap has added a new element to its programming – Home for the Holidays – designed for the islands' senior population. To help bring cheer to the elder population, FISH will provide a holiday gift in the December holiday-themed Smile Box. The gift will be something requested by seniors such as a heated blanket, robe, new pet dish for furry friends, or plants.

"Over the years, we've noticed that our older population begins to feel more isolated and unhappy this time of year," said Maria Espinoza, assistant executive director of FISH. "Because of the COVID pandemic, many have not seen their family or loved ones for over one year and still have mixed emotions about making holiday plans for this season."

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), "socially isolated older adults are at higher risk for depression. The focus on family, friends and togetherness during this time of year can actually bring melancholy feelings to



Bring a smile to an island senior this holiday season photo provided

the forefront for many elders."

"We want to offer something special to show support and care of our older neighbors," Espinoza said. "By adding the Home for the Holidays element to the already existing Smile Box, we hope to lift the spirits of our seniors as we celebrate the holiday season in a safe and healthy way."

In support of FISH holiday programming, the Sanibel & Captiva continued on page 10

New Flag Flies Over Captiva In Remembrance

by Kathy Kurtz Ferrari

Veterans Day took on even more significance on Captiva as a donated American flag was raised in memory of a dedicated islander.

Ron Gibson, a longtime Captiva resident who died in October, was a military veteran, former commodore of the Captiva Island Yacht Club, a volunteer firefighter, former board member of Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF) and volunteer for many island organizations. He was also a member of the Captiva Civic Association (CCA), and a new American flag now flies over the CCA's building in his memory thanks to his near-lifelong friends Clay and Rita Ewell, who live part of the year on Captiva.

Gibson's absence has left an indelible mark on Captiva, and especially on the Ewells who have called Gibson their friend for nearly 50 years.

"I think I was 26 years old when I met him," said a tearful Rita Ewell, remembering times she and her husband spent with Gibson and his wife, Phyllis,



Clay Ewell and Emily Hess Anderson by the new American flag that flies in memory of Ron Gibson photo by Rita Ewell

including the last 45 consecutive New Year's eves. "We have never missed a New Year's Eve. This year will be so hard."

Gibson took part in ROTC training in high school and was a veteran of the

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Author Series Lineup At Sanibel Public Library

The Sanibel Public Library 2021-22 Author Series lineup has been finalized. For more than a decade, the library, in partnership with the Sanibel Public Library Foundation, has connected local readers to award-winning authors by bringing in high-caliber writers for an intimate evening, followed by a book signing and Champagne reception. Past guests included Joyce Carol Oates, Sue Monk Kidd, Jodi Picoult, Lee Child, Dennis Lehane, Amor Towles, David Baldacci and Margaret Atwood.

The *New York Times* calls Elin Hilderbrand "Queen of the Beach Reads." She will speak at Sanibel Public Library on Wednesday, January 19. Her past books, including *28 Summers*, *The Identicals* and *Here's to Us*, have become a summertime staple, with stories set in and around the island of Nantucket, where she has lived for many decades. The author has written 27 novels and the newest one, *Golden Girl*, was published in June of 2021. Hilderbrand is launching a book club and aspires to become a book influencer, where she recommends books to others. She is a mother of three, a



Elin Hilderbrand

Peloton rider and an at-home cook. Hildebrand is also a seven-year breast cancer survivor.

The next speaker in the series is Marie Benedict, a lawyer who found her calling unearthing the hidden historical stories of women. She will be at the library on Thursday, February 10. Benedict embarked on a series of historical novels with *The Other Einstein*, which tells the tale of Albert Einstein's first wife, a physicist herself. The next novel in the series is *Carnegie's Maid*, which was released in 2018. The



Marie Benedict



Scott Turow

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On Veterans Day, Clay Ewell presented a new American flag to Captiva Civic Association Director Emily Hess Ankerson in memory of Ron Gibson photos by Rita Ewell

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New Flag

Air National Guard during the era of the Cuban Missile Crisis. He was proud of his military service and was even prouder of his grandson who joined the military and was deployed to Afghanistan a few years ago.

“Ron was always focused on service, always, and to his country, even in high

school. He was really proud of the fact he was a veteran,” Ewell said.

Gibson played the bugle, and one of the roles he had during his military service was to play *Taps* at military funerals.

Gibson continued to perform at funerals after his military days were over, and often performed at Veterans Day and other events on Captiva.

“That was his way of honoring those people,” Ewell said. “He was just really



Clay Ewell helping Emily Hess Anderson raise the donated American flag

proud of that. And he always, always flew a flag. He even had a veteran’s license plate on his car. He was so proud that people would pull behind his car and know that he was a veteran.”

The Ewells had been searching for some significant way to honor their dear friend. As active members of the Captiva Civic Association, they were present when a worn and tattered American flag, which adorned the pole in front of the CCA building, was lowered to half-staff to honor the passing of former Secretary of State Colin Powell in October.

“We saw the flag which was so awful, and Clay said, ‘Let’s get a new flag and we’ll donate it to honor Ron.’ And I said we could do it in memory of him being a veteran, and on Veterans Day,” Ewell explained.

In order to get an appropriate flag, Ewell did some research and learned a lot about the history of the red, white and

blue banner.

“With the colors, white stands for purity and innocence; red hardiness and valor; and blue signifies vigilance, perseverance and justice. And I thought, ‘That’s Ron.’”

The Ewells donated the flag in an intimate and emotional presentation to Emily Hess Ankerson, director of the CCA, on the morning of Veterans Day.

“I think it’s such a wonderful gesture,” said Hess Ankerson. “And the significance of presenting the flag on Veterans Day to honor Ron, who was a veteran, is wonderful. It’s a nice and tangible thing to have here at the CCA, as he was a dedicated member of the community. It’s a special way to remember him.”

Gibson’s ashes will be interred in the nearby Captiva Cemetery in the spring.

“I just thought the flag would be nice,” Ewell added. “Every time we go by, we’ll be able to think about him.”**

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