



Photos by Maria Lamb

In keeping with the Blue Zones principle of “working together for a common goal,” (l-r) Susan LaGrotta, Kathy McNabb, Donna Kay, Nancy Adams, Mary McIntosh - members of the Calusa Garden Club’s Butterfly Garden brigade – making sure the garden has plenty of hosts and nectar plants for the butterflies. They maintain the Butterfly Garden on the last Saturday of the month from 9am-11am.



(l-r) Calusa Garden Club Members Sharon Lewis and Sara Wolf with Southwest Florida Blue Zones Project representatives Chante Pemberton and David Longfield.

Calusa Garden Club Recognized as a Blue Zones Project Organization

By Maria Lamb

On March 1, 2021, Calusa Garden Club officially became a recognized Southwest Florida Blue Zones Project organization with a ribbon cutting ceremony at Calusa Park Butterfly Garden on Winterberry Drive. Blue Zones Project Community Outreach Coordinator, Chante Pemberton, looked on as Calusa Garden Club members Susan Neustadt and Cindy Adams held the banner while Garden Club Blue Zones Project Chair Sharon Lewis cut the ribbon. About a dozen Calusa Garden Club members gathered to celebrate the symbolic joining of the Club with Southwest Florida Blue Zones Project.

Lewis welcomed Pemberton, saying that the Calusa Garden Club is delighted to join

the Blue Zones Project and to contribute to Marco Island becoming a “Blue Zones City.” Lewis added that the Club members want to foster the principles of well-being - the members are already socially connected and work together for common goals and look forward to working on additional Blue Zones Project goals. “Joining the Blue Zones Project will encourage our Calusa Garden Club members to focus on the aspects of well-being that we currently participate in, such as being connected with others with common goals. We also hope our members branch out into other Blue Zones Project goals, such as exercising together and promoting vegetable and herb growing in our home gardens to promote healthy eating.”

Pemberton remarked that the “Calusa Garden Club of Marco Island is a perfect fit



It’s Official! Copy of the certification designating Calusa Garden Club as a Blue Zones Project organization.

as a recognized Blue Zones organization because it is a moai – which means ‘a group meeting for a common purpose’. Calusa Garden Club’s group of like-minded people

who have common interests in gardening, the environment, and floral design are socially connected, and they work together for common goals, as evidenced by this beautiful Calusa Park Butterfly Garden.”

A bit of history on the Calusa Garden Club: In 2001, under the leadership of Syd Mellinger, CGC raised over \$12,000 through the sale of a Garden Guide called “Palms, Pineapples and Periwinkles.” The current updated version of the Gardening Guide is geared for Marco Island gardeners and landscapers for subtropical and coastal Zone 10A.

The Butterfly Garden was made possible by a 2003 public endowment from Calusa Garden Club to the City of Marco Island in the sum of \$10,000. It is located in Calusa Park, a one-half mile winding



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Southwest Florida Blue Zones Project ribbon cutting ceremony designating Calusa Garden Club as a Blue Zones organization. Shown here is CGC member Sharon Lewis cutting the ribbon with the large scissors.

shared pathway on Winterberry Drive, now very popular with both walkers and recreational cyclists.

The Butterfly Garden provides a burst of color and is abundant with both host and nectar plants attracting bees and butterflies. Seating benches are conveniently located for quiet observation of the Monarch butterflies and Swallowtails fluttering about.

The Park was deeded by the Mackle Brothers as a Green Belt and was referred to as Tract C & D. In July 2011, its name was changed to Calusa Park by the Beautification Advisory Committee.

Marco's dry season starts in October and runs through April, when the average rainfall may be an inch or two each month. The handy Gardening Guide will help you maximize your monthly planting success with helpful tips for the cooler, drier weather in the fall and winter.

Helpful tip for March: Time to plant annuals, such as bulbs, including caladium and gladiola. This is the time to plant perennials such as salvia, red penta, blue daze and lantana.

The Gardening Guide for Marco Island is available for purchase through Calusa Garden Club. Please leave us a message through our website, Calusa.org.

The Calusa Garden Club is a member of the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs. Membership is open to those interested in



Photo provided by Susan LaGrotta

Syd Mellinger, honorary member of the Calusa Garden Club, now retired and residing at Bentley Village with Butterfly Garden Coordinator, Susan LaGrotta. Syd's daughter, Nancy Adams, is a very active member of the Calusa Garden Club. Syd started it all in 2003!

horticulture, floral design, and the environment. For club information, visit calusa.org, or visit the Club's Facebook page at Calusa Garden Club.

Capri from A/3

There were lots of questions brought up by the participants and John answered all tactfully and with information. The biggest concern was about the traffic issues. John stated that he and his partners had purchased a section of the large inner parcel that could be used for parking and they were hopeful that the center parcel could be reconfigured for better access and parking, but it wasn't just the parking issue.

Concerns from Tarpon Village residents were focused on noise, traffic, litter, whether there would be a wall or fence between them and the project and the hours the venue would be open. John addressed the concerns. There would be adequate parking both on the property and possibly in the newly purchased land in the center of the island; hours would be 10am to 10pm with possibly a food truck that would serve coffee and breakfast to those early walkers, runners, and bikers (and there are many) who'd like to stop for a breather and visit with friends before finishing their route.

One of the biggest concerns came from a few Capri Community Church attendees who said that after church let out, they had to wait through two light changes even now, due to the traffic, before heading out on Collier Blvd. Although there were some in the audience that countered that they had to wait through four light changes at intersections in Naples, but the delay at this particular light was particularly bothersome to the people that spoke up. John said he would see if there was a solution. Like this conundrum, John seemed committed to solve concerns.

Time will tell. There are permits already issued, according to John, and more are on the path to change the way of life that Capri residents savor. The days of walking, running, biking, playing bocce, fishing, boating, partying could all be changed, improved or maybe not. Can we exist with



Photo by Jory Westberry

John Rogers shares information about proposed changes to the property at Capri Boulevard and Kon Tiki.

progress? Can we be changeable, flexible, and faced with change, meet it in the middle and decide on a mutual solution?

One of the things that John made plain in his reveal of the proposed changes is that, no matter what you may think, there are more changes and building coming.

So, what do we do as a community? Work together, share ideas and compromise or fight a losing battle that still changes things in the end? I personally don't know. But it's a good sign that John Rogers is willing to share information and listen and, hopefully, his partners will follow this lead.

Watch for more information on the Isles of Capri development in upcoming editions of Coastal Breeze News.

Jory Westberry has been a dedicated educator for over 40 years, the last 14 as Principal of Tommie Barfield Elementary, where she left her heart. Life is rich with things to learn, ponder and enjoy so let's get on with the journey together!

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