

TOURS

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of Waverunners (jet skis), sightseeing motor boats with seating for 10, kayaks, small sailboats and aqua-cycles (like a tricycle with enormous plastic wheels) await beach-goers looking for kicks.

Equipment is generally rented by the half hour or hour, with Waverunners being the most costly at \$100 for a full hour. It's \$60 or \$70 to parasail (the more expensive trip includes more height, longer duration, a picture and half off all future parasailing trips).

The most popular tour is the 90 minute Dolphin Adventure Tour, a journey undertaken on Waverunners (\$115 per person). Guides



FLORIDA WEEKLY PHOTOS EVAN WILLIAMS
Holiday Water Sports of Fort Myers Beach, Inc. owners Sharon and Kevin Faircloth, left, with Manager Gary Harrison.



First Mate Lucas Kisela is a host to Holiday Water Sports' guests when they parasail.

such as Manager Gary Harrison take guests the entire length of Estero Island, and into the back bay by Lovers Key.

"Some people like to go slow, some like to go (top speed) the whole time..." he said. "Every tour is different. Sometimes you see dolphins and manatees, or go shelling on the beaches.

"Sometimes the dolphins come right up next to you. They'll come up above water and give you a wink."

For the Faircloths - who were high school sweethearts and spent youthful vacations windsurfing, waterskiing and fishing in the Gulf - owning the water sports concession company now seems inevitable. But not always.

They went to separate universities after graduation and pursued other interests (including ill fated office jobs). He called in 1991 and asked her to be his business partner on Fort Myers Beach, after buying Holiday Water Sports from his brother. She agreed.

Two years later they were married, but in the interim they ran the business by themselves, renting out three wave runners and 10 umbrellas from their hut at the northern

tip of Estero Island, in front of Pink Shell Beach Resort and Spa.

"The only days off we had was if it rained," Sharon Faircloth said. "We would pray for rainy days."

Over the next ten years they started a family and watched the beach, and their business, grow. Ownership changed at the Pink Shell, and the renovated resort brought in new customers. Also, three large condos next to the resort replaced a smattering of smaller cottages. The Faircloths eventually expanded to two other locations on Fort Myers Beach.

(The Best Western Beach Resort in 1993 and the Diamond Head Beach Resort in 2006.)

Now they're weathering the slowest business month of the year - May - along with a hike in gas and insurance prices, they say, but local families come back starting Memorial Day weekend when the kids are out of school.

Even with three children of their own - Kacie, 5, Ben, 8 and Bailey, 10 - the couple has continued to operate the business 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week, with help from managers like Harrison.

And they've moved their family within view of sky high parasailers - to a home in Fort Myers, just over the bridge to Fort Myers Beach. Sharon Faircloth admitted parasailing is most popular with teens; however, a group of seniors were spotted drifting into the sky, one or two at a time, above Captain Hall's boat last Thursday.

It was a windy day, and later when the wind picked up even more and two teenage girls from Switzerland wanted to ascend, Hall, who has 11 years of parasailing experience, decided against it. They were too light, he thought, to not get jostled around by the wind up there.

He radioed Captain Derek Elverd, who shuttles guests out to the parasailing boat and back, to pick the girls up.

"(The wind) picks up so quickly out here," Elverd said. "If you're not comfortable with it you don't do it. Safety comes first."

Faircloth said guests can expect a serene experience when they parasail. "Most people will be very scared or just excited when they come to the counter and sign up. By the time they come back in they say 'it was so relaxing up there, so quiet, it was peaceful.'"

And, according to First Mate Kisela, even romantic. He said it's not unusual to see a couple go up, and then be engaged by the time they're reeled back in. ■

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Commercial construction

GATES recently completed construction of the Interpretive Center at The Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve for Lee County Government. Completed ahead schedule, the building is currently pending LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification, Silver Rating. Upon certification, the Interpretive Center will be the first LEED certified commercial project in Lee or Collier Counties. LEED is a national standard for green building design developed by The United States Green Building Council (which GATES is an active member of).

Eagle Concrete Systems has completed concrete work for general contractor J.L. Wallace Inc. on the Park Center Offices, located at 8255-8267 College Parkway. The project includes a 14,532-square-foot office building and a 14,751-square-foot medical building. Both buildings were constructed using CMU concrete. Dave McNamara of Eagle Concrete Systems was the project manager, and Abel Limones was the project superintendent. Gora-McGahey Associates designed the building.

Eagle Concrete Systems has completed the concrete work on the 16,323-square-foot Hopgood Building, located on Mercantile Avenue between Industrial Boulevard and Commercial Boulevard in Naples. Eagle Concrete provided structural construction services for the office and warehouse facility using steel-reinforced, concrete blocks. The project included a whole-

sale fish packaging plant, freezer and office space. Torrey Company was the general contractor, and Disney Associates designed the structure.

Bobby Vetri of Eagle Concrete Systems was the project executive, and Alonso Castillo served as project superintendent.

J.L. Wallace Inc. has completed construction of the Fitness Center at Heritage Bay. Developed by Lennar Homes, the new community is located at 10168 Heritage Bay Blvd. in Naples. The 7,986-square-foot fitness center consists of a workout room, aerobics room, salon, massage parlor and a 1,998-square-foot swimming pool with spa. David Grossman of J.L. Wallace served as project manager, Robbyn Spears was project manager assistant and Michael Seifert was the superintendent. Titsch and Associates provided architectural design services.

Compass Construction, Inc. has completed renovation work on the Wheelhouse, located at The Landings on McGregor Boulevard in South Fort Myers.

Residents can now relax at the granite-topped bar, faced with recycled wood from forest fires, while enjoying a sunset view of the Caloosahatchee River.

The bar is equipped with a state of the art sound and entertainment center. The upgraded kitchen with stainless steel commercial grade equipment offers residents a full entree' menu. Restrooms also received a makeover and now boast granite counter tops to match the bar and

faux painting. The newly landscaped entrance is now more inviting with easy access to the dining room. A new canvas awning, railings and siding complete the exterior upgrades.

This project was Phase I of a \$6.9 million dollar multi-phase project. Phase II renovations to the Helm Club are expected to be complete this fall. Phase III, an addition to the administration offices, is also underway.

Brad Neidigh is Project Manager, Joe Luft is the Project Superintendent and Erin Olsen is the Project Administrator.

Meetings

The Urban Land Institute Southwest Florida District Council will host a breakfast meeting on "Infrastructure 2008: A Competitive Advantage" on Thursday, May 22. The meeting will be held at the Three Oaks Banquet & Event Center located at 20991 Three Oaks Parkway in Estero. Registration and networking begins at 8 a.m. with the presentation starting at 8:30 a.m. This is the second of ULI's annual reports on international infrastructure. While last year's report examined broad issues facing countries and regions globally, this year's update focuses on the importance of infrastructure to a city or county's economic competitiveness. Globally, it looks at Western Europe, Asia and North America with special attention to fast growing urban regions in China and the United Arab Emirates. The cost of the meeting is \$45 for ULI members, \$55 for non-members, \$35 for young leaders, \$25 for government members, and \$25 for students. For additional

information or to register, call the ULI Southwest Florida District Council at (800) 321-5011.

The Department of Energy will convene a plenary panel on alternative and renewable energy at 8 a.m. on Thursday, May 29 at the Rosen Centre Hotel in Orlando. This plenary panel is one of the highlights of the Spring 2008 National SBIR/STTR Conference.

The DOE panel will feature presentations by some of the nation's finest minds that are engaged in aiding in the development of alternative and renewable energy.

This interagency, integrated panel will discuss the importance of developing renewable and alternative energy technologies and will brief attendees on opportunities for future funding available to small businesses engaged in innovative research and development.

The 2008 SBIR/STTR National Spring Conference, co-hosted by NASA, the Florida SBDC Network and the Florida Small Business Development Foundation, celebrates the 25th Anniversary of the SBIR Program and 50 Years of NASA Space Exploration. It brings together federal program administrators from the 11 SBIR participating agencies, investors, lenders, university and federal laboratory representatives, prime contractors and others who provide assistance to early-stage ventures. A \$2.2 Billion appropriation is set aside for the SBIR program this year. To register for the conference or to obtain more information on conference activities, individuals should visit www.sbirflorida.org. ■