



Ten Years Strong

It's hard to believe we'll soon enter our tenth year as Lee County's foremost lifestyle publication. When *Times of the Islands* was launched in September 1996, the barrier islands epitomized relaxation, peace and down-to-earth, no-nonsense simplicity. In fact, when we distributed our first issues, the magazine was perceived as too highbrow for the islands. It seems that we were simply anticipating the future.

Except for a slight growth in their year-round population and the myriad new, large-scale homes that punctuate the landscape, Sanibel and Captiva have undergone few changes over the past eight years. There are still no traffic lights and the fast-food-formula restaurant remains a consensual no-no. Periwinkle Way still bears two lanes, and the causeway introduces the slow pace of life as one travels to and from the mainland. Hurricane Charley did away with the canopy of Australian pines, but new vegetation is growing quickly.

Beneath the surface, however, Sanibel and Captiva have been growing by leaps and bounds, not with taller buildings but with higher standards required for accommodations, restaurants, entertainment, and service goods. The best illustration is Jim George's feature on page 46, "Checking In". Read it and imagine what the next season will offer to visitors and residents alike. The new causeway bridge—its construction now in full swing—likewise will expedite traffic flow. Plans to restore the Periwinkle corridor are taking shape as I write this.

Meanwhile *Times of the Islands* has continued to evolve too. We are proud to be a part of the area's growth and to reap the fruits of this process. Our first issue had sixty-four pages; this issue has 112. We started with 54 advertisers. Leaf

through this issue and meet the 100 who, by placing ads in our publication, express their confidence in our ability to reflect the rising expectations of the area's residents, visitors, and observers.

Since 1996, we have extended our editorial coverage to include all of Lee County's—for that matter, all of Florida's—diverse cultures, from Boca Grande to Bonita Beach, from Tallahassee to St. Augustine, and all the way south to Homestead. Read Julie Clay's "Creature Comforts" feature, starting on page 58, and see what I mean. We have also broadened the scope of our subject matter. These days, I'd be hard pressed to find anyone who still deems *Times of the Islands* too highbrow for our area.

The barrier islands have become less isolated. Visitors and residents travel to and from the islands for entertainment, shopping, and dining without thinking twice. As Lee County's Ambassador-at-large, *Times of the Islands* has ridden in tandem with these changes, and our logo these days clearly spells out who we are: "Southwest Florida's Island Coast Magazine."

For our readers, this means a more rewarding experience with every issue. For our advertisers, it means *Times of the Islands* provides a unique opportunity to reach an ever-wider audience of people with discriminating taste and high standards. As we move into our tenth year in print, I'm happy to take our and the area's performance pulse and report that it's very healthy, indeed.

Friedrich N. Jaeger
Publisher



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