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First Impressions

Plato once said, “The beginning is the most important part of the work.” Recently, I’ve learned the truth in that statement. In my life, I’m facing not one but two beginnings. Not only am I the new editorial director of *Times of the Islands*, but I’m also a new resident of Southwest Florida.

My husband and I moved to Florida in October, after nine years in the Washington, DC, area. I started working for *Times of the Islands* shortly thereafter, quickly jumping into the fray by editing documents, hiring photographers, assigning stories, and generally making sure that all deadlines were met.

To be honest, there was a point when I thought I might not get the chance to join the *Times of the Islands* staff. My first interview with the magazine was scheduled for August 30. After Hurricane Charley hit, I thought that meeting would be cancelled. To my surprise, it wasn’t. Granted, I did have to sweet-talk my way on to Sanibel, since I didn’t have a hurricane pass, required at that time to access the island. But somehow I convinced the officer at the tollgate that I did indeed have a job interview.

During my first day on Sanibel, as I drove past fallen trees and resolute restaurants proudly proclaiming they were open for business, I realized how vibrant, determined, hard-working, and welcoming the people of Southwest Florida are. And I eagerly looked forward to joining this community.

Since my move, I have been struck by the friendliness of area residents, whether it’s the cashier at the grocery store calling me “hon” or a longtime *Times of the Islands* contributor recommending good places to eat. It has certainly made my twin transition a bit easier. I hope to become a valuable member of this spirited community, and I look forward to meeting more of you, whether at chamber of commerce meetings, *Times of the Islands* events, or your places of business.

I can already tell what a great organization I’ve joined. It feels good to know how many readers look forward to their next issue of the magazine. I hope that anticipation continues under my watch, as I and the rest of the staff strive to bring you interesting stories about the people and places of the region. I’m excited about the future, both of *Times of the Islands* and of Southwest Florida.

During the next several months, I’ll be busy learning more about my new home. I still have so many shops to browse, restaurants to visit, parks to explore, and beaches to comb. This issue alone has opened my eyes to several of the area’s natural wonders—the burrowing owls of Cape Coral, the wild kingdom that is Rookery Bay, the waters of Pineland. So as I continue my on-the-job education, I’ll remember the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson: “The writer is an explorer. Every step is an advance into a new land.”

Beth Luberecki

Beth Luberecki, Editorial Director