

The snowbirds are landing.

They can be identified by the various colors and designs of their license plates. One trait that they all share, however, is their love of Florida's warm sunshine which is second only to the welcoming warmth of Destin's residents and businesses.



Last Monday, November 4, Ted Spring, the 2019/2020 president, called his first board meeting to order. The agenda included updated board member reports and confirmation of the dates and places for special events. There will be reminders of these events throughout the season, but for those who like to fill their calendars in early, here are some dates to note:

- Monday, November 18, will be the Ribbon Cutting ceremony and first registration. It will take place at the Roost (the Destin Community Center) on Stahlman Ave. from 1 to 3 p.m. Mayor Gary Jarvis and other Destin dignitaries will be on hand to welcome everyone. Coffee and donuts will be available.
- Tuesday, November 19, will be the first snowbird meeting at 10:00 a.m. again, at the Roost.
- The Christmas street parade will be Saturday, December 7.
- The Christmas lighted boat parade will be Sunday, December 8, at Brotula's Seafood House & Steamer.
- The two craft shows will be Tuesdays, December 9 and February 4.
- The four T.G.I.T. parties will be Tuesdays, January 14 & 28, and February 11 & 18.
- The three Harbor party cruises will be January 27, and February 3 & 10.
- The Valentine Dinner Dance will be Saturday, February 15.
- Soundsations will be February 16.
- The Fashion Show Luncheon will be Monday, February 17.
- The New Orleans Mardi Gras Trip will be Sunday and Monday, February 23 and 24.

Only tickets for the Christmas lighted boat parade will be available for purchase at the first meeting.

One important change to note this year is that the weekly registrations will take place at the Roost on Monday's from 10:00 to noon. There will only be two exceptions:

- Monday, January 6, will be what is known as the "Big Registration" from 1 to 3 p.m.
- And, since January 20, is Martin Luther King Day, registration will take place before each meeting on Tuesday, January 21.

The weekly entertainers have been booked and confirmed and the activity chairpersons have finalized arrangements for what promises to be another sensational season.

All this information and more can be found on our website at www.destinsnowbirds.org.

The new prize committee chairpersons, Sandy and Gene Holzer, and their team of canvassers have been busy securing all of Destin's generous donors and enlisting some interesting newcomers. There will be an abundance of appealing door prizes this season. New vendors who would like to get involved are encouraged to contact them at destinsbprizecommittee@gmail.com.

Storage locker access will be available Saturdays November 16 & 30 and December 14 & 28 from 8 to 9 a.m. They will also be available after the Big Registration on January 6, from 2 to 3 p.m. and on most Saturdays in January from 8 to 9 a.m.



For many snowbirds returning to the sunshine state this season, a cloud of sadness will hover overhead. Mary Ellen Franklin passed away last May.

Unless you are new to the club this year, you knew her or, at least, you had seen her.

As an integral member of the registration committee for the past seven years, she filled out literally thousands of membership cards.

“She was always so bubbly and loved talking to all the new members,” said Linda Zukonik, registration chairperson. “And we loved talking to her. She was a fun, loving person who will be truly missed.”

If you attended the popular Fashion Show Luncheons you couldn’t have missed her. She either chaired or co-chaired the immensely successful event since 2015.

She was a daily water-exercise coach for many of the snowbirds residing in the Seascape resort. Her gift for creating energetic, exuberant workouts set to the beat of her favorite songs was only surpassed by her ability to sooth the ruffled feathers of quiet-seeking neighbors.

Hailing from North Dakota near the Red River Valley, Mary Ellen and her husband Tom first encountered the Emerald Coast back in 2011 while visiting high school classmates in Miramar Beach. As soon as they secured a place to stay, they joined the Destin snowbird club. Mary Ellen was “first lady” of the club while Tom served as president in the 2015-2016 season. After breaking her wrist in a fall during the Christmas street parade, Tom shared many hilarious stories of his fumbling inability to fold fitted sheets and other household chores he was suddenly forced to tackle.

If you had the pleasure of meeting Mary Ellen, she was your friend. Her smile had a way of saying. “I like you!” She made every snowbird season a little sunnier.

Those who would like to contribute to her memory can send a check, made out to the “Mary Ellen Franklin Scholarship,” and send it to Bette Ritterman, P.O. Box 100, Larimore, ND 58251.

May God rest her soul and comfort all who loved her.