



BALLOT BOX

JANUARY 2025

Speakers will discuss human trafficking at January luncheon



Human trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery involving the illegal transport of individuals by force or deception for the purpose of labor, sexual exploitation or activities in which others benefit financially. It is a global problem affecting people of all ages.

Approximately 1,000,000 people are trafficked each year globally, and between 20,000 and 50,000 are trafficked into the United States, one of the largest destinations for victims of the sex-trafficking trade. Florida is one of the top states for human trafficking with nearly 2,100 cases reported in 2023.

At the January 3 Belleair Women's Republican Club luncheon, three representatives from Selah Freedom, an organization working to end sex trafficking and to provide education and support services to those who have been victimized by human and/or sex trafficking. In addition, Selah Freedom provides education and outreach to law enforcement agencies, area schools and partnering non-profits in Hillsborough, Pinellas, Sarasota, Manatee, Polk and

Pasco counties.

The speakers on January 3 will be:

- Laurie Swink is Selah Freedom's Co-Founder and Director of Selah Consulting. In 2011, she established a residential home for survivors, realizing survivors coming out of trafficking were at the beginning of their journey and needed a safe place with wrap-around services. Currently, she provides training and resources for organizations that want programming in their communities. She also provides educational support to survivors in the residential program.
- Kassy Brewer is Awareness and Advocacy Liaison for Selah Freedom. She focuses on raising awareness about the prevalence of sex trafficking and advocating for the rights and support of survivors. She is currently serving on the Legislative Committee Board with the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce. Kassy, who is a member of BWRC, worked for

the United States Senate from 1999-2004 for Senator Jim Bunning of Kentucky. Previously, she worked in the healthcare field and served on numerous boards, including the American Diabetes Association (ADA).

- Gabrielle Triplett is a survivor of sex trafficking and a Selah Freedom graduate. Equipped with an Associates in Arts Degree and accreditation in Volunteer Management, she serves as a valuable asset to Selah Freedom's Awareness Team.

The January 3 BWRC luncheon will take place at Belleair Country Club, 1 Country Club Lane, Belleair. Check-in begins at 11:30 am, with lunch served starting at noon. The cost to attend is \$38 per person. (Please note the price increase.)

Reservations and payment for the luncheon are due by Thursday, December 20. Mail checks to BWRC at P.O. Box 1117, 850 E. Lime St., Tarpon Springs, FL 34688.

JANUARY MEETING INFORMATION

Friday, January 3

**Belleair Country Club
1 Country Club Lane
Belleair, FL 33756**

Luncheon Fee: \$38

**Registration & networking
begin at 11:30am.**

**Event begins
at 12 pm**

**To RSVP:
A \$38 check made
payable to BWRC is
due by December 20.**

**Mail check to:
BWRC
P.O. Box 1117
850 E. Lime Street
Tarpon Springs, FL 34688**

**Alternate meal must
be requested
with your RSVP.**

**No substitutions
may be made
the day of the luncheon.**

**Reservations and
advance payment required.
Please, no walk-ins.**

JANUARY MENU INFORMATION

**Salad w/ greens, toasted almonds,
dried cranberries, Feta cheese
& Balsamic Vinaigrette**

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**Salmon in Phyllo w/ Cream Sauce,
New Potatoes & Vegetable Medley**

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Rolls & Butter

+++

Key Lime Pie

+++

ALTERNATE VEGETARIAN PLATE

**Three-Cheese Ravioli w/
Fresca Sauce (Tomatoes, Garlic, Basil,
Olive Oil) & Vegetable Medley**

BWRC is privileged to host meetings and social events at Belleair Country Club. Members and guests must comply with BCC's dress and conduct code. Dresses, skirts, blouses, dress slacks and pantsuits are appropriate for women. Men must wear shirts with sleeves and remove caps in the dining room. Blue jeans are not permitted.



FROM THE BWRC PRESIDENT

It's time to celebrate! We have all been so blessed with changes that occurred over the last few weeks of 2024. We now have amazing politicians running our government, and President Donald J. Trump has moved forward already with exciting proposals and cabinet nominations, giving us a new hope for our future and optimism as the new year arrives. We can be proud of the work that was done to get here. Thanks to many, many volunteers, the number of registered Republican voters in Florida soared during 2024 with 450,000 more GOP voters than in 2023. That nearly doubled the distance between our party and Democratic voters in the state. In 2023, the gap was 56,301; in 2024 the gap rose to 112,145. Florida is red and getting redder!

People often come up to me, glance around and whisper excitedly, "We are so thrilled to have taken our government back!". Although, sometimes I am also asked, "Why do you have Trump/Vance and Luna stickers on your cars? Aren't you afraid your car will be damaged?" Well, we do not need to be silenced as we are now the majority and we've been proven right. We can be brave enough to speak our truth.

I have confidence we supported the right thing. "Life is not about expecting, hoping and wishing, its about doing, being and becoming". We must be proud and strong. We deserve to celebrate this New Year more than we have any other.

Dianne Blum
BWRC President



BWRC OFFICERS

President
Dianne Blum

First Vice President
Sara Mollo

Second Vice President
Claudia Walker

Treasurers
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Louise Davis

Hospitality
Candace Gardner

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Corresponding Secretaries
Kassy Brewer
Alyssa Palonis

Recording Secretary
Carol Abernathy

Historian
Deb Walker

Chaplain
Patricia Wagner

Past President
Deb Walker

Parliamentarian
Renatta Cochran

BWRC makes charitable gifts

In the spirit of giving back at holiday time, Bellair Women's Republican Club presented two area charities with \$1,000 checks at the club's December, 2024, luncheon to support their work in local communities.

The first donation went to Hero To A Child Foundation, formerly Guardian ad Litem, which has been the traditional recipient of a holiday contribution from BWRC for a number of years. The funds go to provide holiday gifts to children removed to foster care late in the Christmas season who otherwise might not receive a holiday present. In addition to the club's donation, those attending the luncheon and others who sent in checks raised the total amount contributed in cash, checks and gift cards by BWRC to the Hero to A Child "late shelter" children's program in 2024 to \$3,411.

A second \$1,000 check went to Raising Relief Foundation, which provides essential funding to organizations that address critical needs in local communities such as support for families severely impacted by recent hurricanes. Raising Relief founder and BWRC member, Devin Pappas accepted on behalf of the charity and assured those present at the



Claudia Thomas, left, accepts a \$1,000 check from BWRC Treasurer Jessica Reed on behalf of the Hero To A Child Foundation

luncheon that 100% of the money donated would go to local needs.

\$500 of the donation to Raising Relief was to honor the memory of Sue Berfield, mother of Florida State Representative and BWRC member Kim Berfield.

TIME TO PAY 2025 BWRC MEMBERSHIP DUES

\$25.00
annual dues
for 2025

Please make your check
payable to BWRC

Send your check to:
BWRC
P.O. Box 1117
850 E. Lime Street
Tarpon Springs, FL 34688

WELCOME TO THE NEWEST BWRC MEMBERS

Gil Abernathy*
Rebecca Ackerman
Stephaie Gaskins
Devin Pappas
Tom Shelly*

* Sustaining Member

*Did you get some new bling for the
holidays? Time to make room in your
jewelry box by clearing out some
unwanted items and donating
them to the BWRC Jewelry Sale.*



*Contributions will be
very appreciated!*



**NOTE: The price
for luncheons
has been raised
to \$38.**

PICTURES FROM THE DECEMBER BWRC LUNCHEON



(To see more pictures from BWRC events, visit bwrc.us > Photo Gallery)