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# COCONUTTELEGRAPH

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Photo: Greg Dumas



# New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival 2006

The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival was envisioned as a cultural event that would have popular appeal in and out of The Crescent City. It called for a large daytime fair with multiple performers from varied musical backgrounds, food booths of Louisiana cuisine, and arts and crafts booths, along with an evening concert series. Less than 400 people attended the first Jazz Fest in April of 1970, and they were entertained by Mahalia Jackson, Duke Ellington, Pete Fountain, Al Hirt, The Preservation Hall Band, and many others.

Jazz impresario George Wein opened the festival noting that, "The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival represents a new and exciting idea in festival presentation. This festival could only be held in New Orleans because here and here alone is the richest musical heritage in America." In 2001, the Festival celebrated Louis Armstrong's centennial, and the total attendance eclipsed 650,000, shattering records for virtually every day of the Heritage Fair, including the all-time single-day attendance record of 160,000. Wein's prediction that New Orleans would become the first city of jazz festivals had clearly come true.

Jimmy has appeared at Jazz Fest many times over the years, joining Zachary Richard, Lenny Kravitz, the Neville Brothers, Lyle Lovett and countless others in scheduled and impromptu appearances. In an A&E In Concert Series, Jimmy noted that, "I came here in 1966 the first time and have continued to play music here ever since. But a lot of people don't know that I spent about four years working around here on Bourbon Street - everything from a barker to a musician. Most of the people I knew went to Memphis, or Atlanta, or New York, got straight jobs. But I never had any doubt in my mind that I wanted to run away to New Orleans and do something weird."

The Margaritaville Store and Café are in the same neighborhood where he spent these formative four years, and I can not imagine how Jimmy, a right-brained balladeer, must feel prowling his old haunts; hazy days and misty nights long before he blew out his flip flop. And while New Orleans is a sprawling metropolitan area,

many equate it only with the French Quarter, and it is the Quarter that holds the magic, the history, *la joi de vie*, that capture your heart and soul. A weekend spent wandering the streets, exploring the history at Jackson Square, virtually absorbing the sights, smells and sounds will demonstrate its ethnic and cultural diversity. Spanish and French influences, the colorful *mélange* of food, music, climate and character all combine to create the obligatory gumbo reference.

But would there be a Jazz Fest in 2006? A festival after one of the worst weather catastrophes on U.S. soil? A celebration amidst all the ruin? Jimmy told Keith Spera, Music Writer for the Times Picayune, "Quint said whether it works or not, we need to step up here. Everybody is looking for something that's the first step back." Quint is Quint Davis, president of Festival Productions Inc. - New Orleans and the producer and director of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

"The first time I talked about it was at the "From the Big Apple to the Big Easy" benefit in New York in September. It came out of the emotions stirred up by that concert. Little things like going to rehearse with Allen Toussaint's band and the guitar player didn't have a guitar, because it got washed away. The emotional level was, "Of course I'll do it." The concern was more on a practical level of someone who does shows for a living."

I put out a newsletter for a living, and it was an excellent opportunity to visit NOLA, spend some time at Margaritaville and witness the rebirth and revival of this historically rich city. To my great pleasure, Judith Ranger-Smith, Executive Director of Singing For Change was there as well. We caught up over an Italian dinner and a liter of house red on Friday night prior to Sonny Landreth's performance at the café. My employer called way too early on Saturday morning to "request" my presence at a sit down with Sisters Jane Remson and Blaise Fernando. Sister Jane heads the New Orleans Artists Against Hunger and Homelessness, NOAAHH, and is a fixture in the beleaguered borough's charitable community. We accompanied these lovely, spiritual ladies on a personal tour through the devastated areas in and around New Orleans to visit beneficiaries of and witness the good that comes from SFC contributions. (See Judith's report on her visit under SFC).

On our return trip Sister Jane reminisced about an appearance with Jimmy and Rita Coolidge at an early NOAAHH Concert. "I haven't seen Jimmy in a while, please give him my best." Now I'm not a big believer in divine intervention, and I know that if a higher power exists he/she would have something more pressing to attend to than a conversation in the back of a compact, yet comfortable Honda. But what are the odds of us pulling up to the hotel to find Jimmy propped beside a shiny SUV? "Here's your chance Sister," I said. "Tell him yourself."

Jimmy spoke briefly with the soft spoken postulants as we parted ways. Jimmy was headed for lunch with old NOLA pals and we went to Margaritaville for an employee discount lunch. The filet gumbo and salmon were terrific, and the New Orleans Café crew were relishing in a rare busy weekend. Margaritaville was one of the first businesses to reopen after Hurricane Katrina serving mainly relief workers and others tackling the

cleanup in and around New Orleans. Jimmy told the Times Picayune. "I thought it was our contribution to the city to come back and get that restaurant open. People that work at other locations did an incredible job of helping out their fellow workers in New Orleans. They put together a rescue and support system that I had very little to do with, other than endorsing it and saying how proud I was of them. We paid everybody, and took a big loss. But we're in for the long haul. We do very well everywhere else, and it was the least we could do."

The Fairgrounds are a short cab ride from the French Quarter and the streets were lined with poncho and umbrella salesman riding the retail wave of impending thunderstorms. We made our way toward the Acura Stage after several stops at the legendary Jazz Fest food booths. Oyster Artichoke Soup, Crawfish Etouffée, Creole Sweet Potato Pone, Crawfish Strudel, and of course some BBQ Pork Ribs... a true gastronomical experience.

There was a scurry of activity as Jimmy and the Coral Reefers, along with several Little Feat band members, arrived in their unmarked white vans. After an interview with budding radio personality, Savannah Jane Buffett on Radio Margaritaville, Jimmy ran up the backstage ramp to face the 70,000 people waiting for this performance. Jazz Fest officials claim nearly 350,000 people attended this year. Bruce Springsteen gave a memorable performance the first weekend, adapting his Asbury, NJ anthem "My City of Ruins" to New Orleans' plight. James Taylor, Dave Mathews, Paul Simon, and an apologetic Fats Domino were there as well. But Saturday afternoon belonged to Jimmy.

Flashback to Sunday, September 4. Jimmy is in Chicago for one of the biggest shows of his life, the first concert ever held at Wrigley Field. New Orleans is under water. One of Jimmy's dearest friends was Chicago native Steve Goodman, and one of Steve Goodman's best known songs is "City of New Orleans." The record setting show at Wrigley Field opened with a 1983 video of mustachioed Jimmy Buffett singing the national anthem, dedicating it through an emotionally broken voice to Steve Goodman. Jimmy's 2005 appearance on this same field also began with a dedication, "To my friends and family along the Gulf Coast." The irony was missed by no one. After the second encore, Jimmy appeared deep in the right field bleachers, just he and Mac McNally, illuminated by a single spotlight, and performed City of New Orleans. A private, poignant moment shared with 40,000 fans.

Saturday May 6, 2006. A lightning and hailstorm bearing down on New Orleans from the west split around the city. Jimmy appears on stage and, recalling his earlier conversation with Sister Jane, thanks her for whatever influence she had in changing the weather. He then opened the show with... City of New Orleans. I could swear I heard his voice break a bit.

## In the Middle of Hopelessness, the one thing we have to cling to is Music.



Photos: Greg Dumas



## RADIO MARGARITAVILLE: ACROSS THE CONTINENT AND AROUND THE WORLD

Radio Margaritaville is Jimmy's very own radio station, which means you can always expect the unexpected! Heard around the world on the Internet and additionally on Sirius Satellite Radio (Channel 31) in the US and Canada – Radio Margaritaville continues to feature fantastic new music and great songs from nearly every genre.

Jimmy is now on the road for his Party at the End of the World tour –and Radio Margaritaville is there every step of the way. You can listen to every show LIVE – with Jimmy's daughter Savannah hosting the pre-show tailgate party! Listeners were also treated to Jimmy's triumphant return to Jazzfest in New Orleans – along with live concerts by Sonny Landreth and Little Feat at the Margaritaville Cafe in the French Quarter.

Jimmy also made his first musical appearance at the Margaritaville Cafe in Myrtle Beach – and while two hundred VIPs with free passes and lucky locals won their way in saw Buffett's hour-long performance, Radio Margaritaville was there to share the excitement with listeners the world over!

Other Radio Margaritaville exclusives included a tribute to Nicolette Larson – starring Jimmy, Bonnie Raitt, Carole King, David Crosby, Steven Stills, Graham Nash, Jackson Browne and others -- heard earlier this year.

Jimmy has also made quite a splash on the silver screen – with the release of Hoot, a motion picture based on a novel by Carl Hiaasen. Steve Huntington joined director Will Shriner for an insider's look at the making of the movie. We're also featuring all the great songs on the Hoot soundtrack!

Radio Margaritaville takes listeners to the far side of the world every day! Carson Cooper caught up with Captain Frothy in Tobago, the somewhat elusive fishing boat captain in Jimmy's book "A Pirate Looks at 50." Jerry Jeff Walker phoned in from Belize. Our friend Chris Mooney checks in via satellite phone from his boat, Moonsail, while sailing the Bahamas. Carson has also been on the coconut telegraph with Rio de Janeiro, Trinidad, St. Kitts, Martinique, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Haiti, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Ghana, Egypt, Christmas Island, Ireland, France, and various locales throughout North America.

**Radio Margaritaville is, quite simply, like no other radio station you've ever heard!**  
**Check us out on line – it's free – at [www.radiomargaritaville.com](http://www.radiomargaritaville.com). Or enjoy the mobility of Radio Margaritaville on Sirius Satellite Radio (Channel 31.)**  
**Go to [www.sirius.com](http://www.sirius.com) to sign up.**



## Marshall Chapman Mellowicious!

Marshall Chapman was born and raised in Spartanburg, South Carolina. To date she has released ten critically acclaimed albums, and her songs have been recorded by a variety of artists including Emmylou Harris, John Hiatt, Wynonna, Joe Cocker, and Jimmy Buffett. She has toured extensively on her own and opened shows for everybody from John Prine and Jimmy Buffett to Jerry Lee Lewis and The Ramones.

In 1998, Marshall began exploring new outlets for her creativity. One was theater. She and songwriting pal Matraca Berg contributed fourteen songs to Good Ol' Girls, a country musical based on the stories of Lee Smith and Jill McCorkle. The New York Times called it a "feminist literary country music review." In fall 2003, Good Ol' Girls played theaters throughout the South.

Marshall's first book, Goodbye, Little Rock and Roller (St. Martin's Press), was published in September 2003. Simultaneously, a companion CD was released. The book was a 2004 SEBA Book Award finalist, and one of three finalists for the Southern Book Critics Circle Award. A soft cover edition was released in September 2004.

In the past year, Marshall has performed from San Francisco to New York, from Blytheville, Arkansas, to Loachapoka, Alabama, developing a one-woman show called "The Triumph of Rock and Roll over Good Breeding." Now Chapman has crafted a work – her first studio album in nine years – that provides salvation for the listener with its remarkable authenticity. Here is a record that possesses a beating heart, an album that is fun, beautiful, and has a beat you can dance to. But more than anything else, Mellowicious! is all about the music.

Chapman has always been the kind of singer / songwriter who completely reveals herself through her music, and she displays that vulnerability and humanness on her new CD. Her observations about the magic of everyday life are captured in songs like "Call the Lamas" in which she sings of a baby sitting in a grocery store cart who seems to possess beatific powers over other shoppers in the store, or "Railroad Track," a tribute to Johnny Cash about the power of being alone to find one's self every once in a while.

Marshall has come to a place where everything fell together to make an album that fairly pulsates with wit, poetry, wisdom and palpable love for life. Chapman's joy for living, and signature songwriting skills inform every song.

Marshall Chapman's new CD Mellowicious! can be purchased at

[www.tallgirl.com](http://www.tallgirl.com)



**It's an overcast Saturday morning** over Jazz Fest weekend, and I'm in New Orleans to talk with Jimmy about the grants SFC has made in the Gulf Coast. Thus far I could only guess at the contrast between the lushness of the hotel and the barren landscape we would encounter outside the French Quarter. Like many others, I was anxious to see for myself how things looked, what the current conditions were, and what we could do to help.

Our hotel was located just off Canal Street. We left on foot and meandered north across the Quarter to Croissant d'Or, a great place to shake off Friday night festivities. After the minimum requirements were met (Advil, water, coffee and food), we set out on an adventure with Sister Jane at the wheel. Sister Jane Remson, a Carmelite nun, Jimmy's longtime friend, founder of NOAAHH (New Orleans Artists Against Hunger and Homelessness) and the New Orleans Chapter of Bread for the World, would serve as our guide. She and Sister Blaise Fernando provided commentary along the way. Singing for Change sent NOAAHH \$100,000 after Hurricane Katrina, and this was our chance to meet the people she found who were doing the dirty work.

I'm reminded of a heart monitor. The reassuring beeps and bumps of the red line were visible in the French Quarter, steadily pumping life blood through the critically ill body of New Orleans. The further we went, out to New Orleans East, into St. Bernard's Parish, and through the Ninth Ward, the heartbeats slowed, and the pulse weakened. Sister Jane steered as we stared. The lack of movement in the landscape was eerie. No people, no cars. Just the breeze. Strip malls, in ruins and abandoned. Former homes now endless piles of debris. Lives and locales ravaged by the fleeting fury of Hurricane Katrina and turned upon by a break in the fragile levee. There was stillness. Silence.

A sudden "beep" from a flat lined patient: we came upon a community of life, of action, of food, wood smoke and laughter. Emergency Communities (EC), a city of domes recognized by its sturdy teepees and for the fresh, hot, free meals from the lifeline that is now the heart of St. Bernard's Parish. Formed by two college friends, it is meant to be a mobile resource for people in crisis that can assemble and break down with relative ease, when its services are needed in the next disaster area. It felt like the hippie commune that we who missed the Sixties dream about: free food, shared work, quick smiles, roaming dogs, music, organic home remedies, group hugs, and a relaxed, happy and hopeful atmosphere of peace and acceptance. And it's working!

College aged kids and beyond, volunteers from around the country as well as from New Orleans work here, and work hard. In shifts, they prepare food, serve, and clean up, staff the medical tent, sort donations, and seem thrilled to be here. Who wouldn't at this point? If I were homeless I'd be desperate to connect, to reconstruct meaning in my life, to have fun, to be part of something permanent.

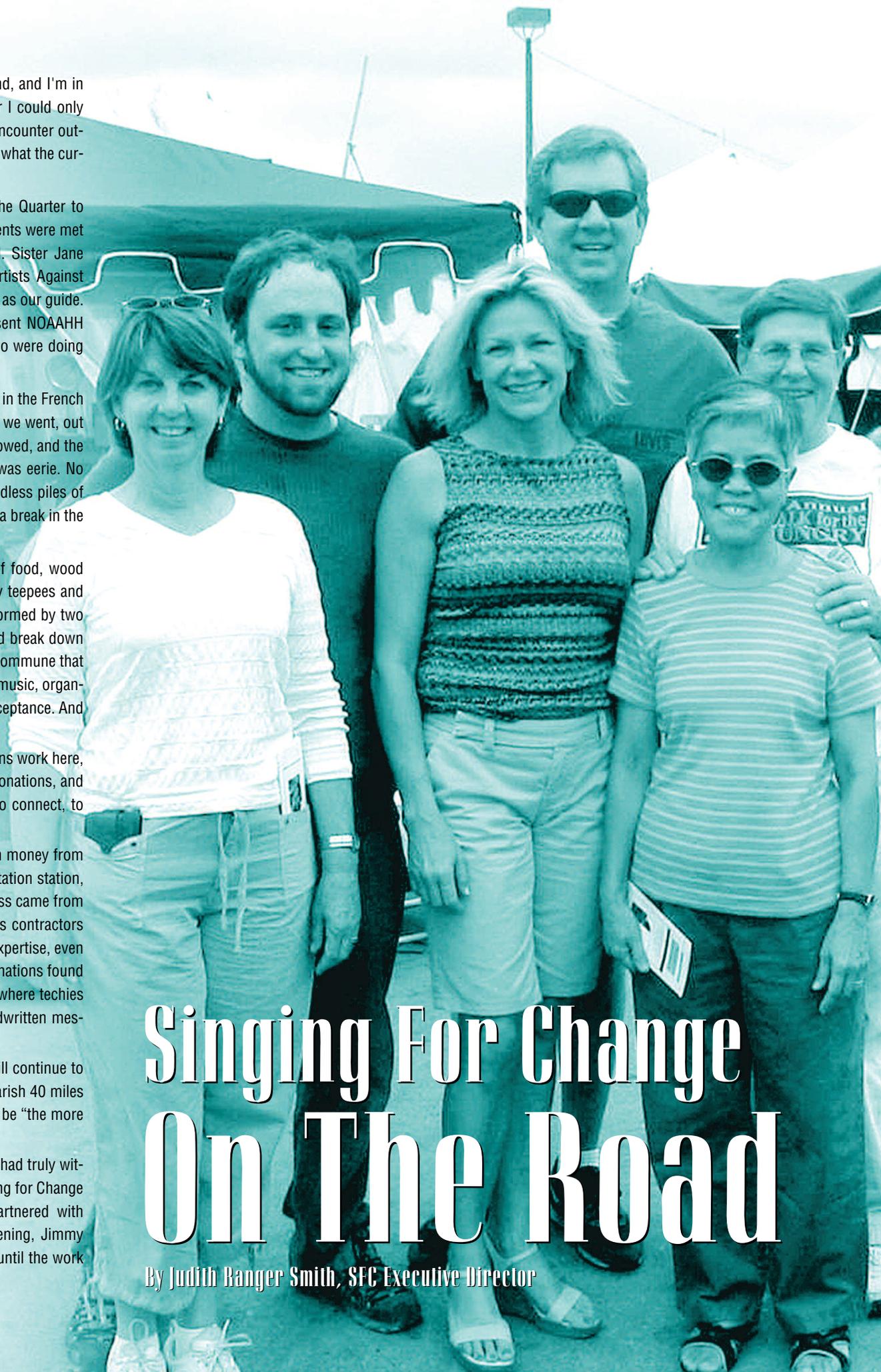
Like a great party, the story of Emergency Communities begins and ends in the kitchen. With money from Singing For Change, EC built an up-to-code kitchen complete with prep tent, fire pit and sanitation station, which is completely volunteer-led and run. Once the kitchen was set up, thousands of homeless came from far and wide, getting a meal and then staying to work. Many offered specific skills – such as contractors who hooked up generator trucks for electricity, restaurateurs who pitched in equipment and expertise, even doctors who mended the storm-beaten. Extra tents popped up in the compound as in-kind donations found their way to the site: a "free store" tent for clothes and supplies, and a communications tent where techies in another life now cobbled together phones, computers with free Internet service, and handwritten message boards.

EC founder Mark Weiner has an exit strategy as well; establishing a community board that will continue to run a center for residents once Emergency Communities is off to its next location - a razed parish 40 miles down the road. As we drove out of the parking lot, cars were pulling in. The mantra seems to be "the more the merrier".

Jimmy's performance that afternoon at Jazz Fest was exciting and uplifting as always, but we had truly witnessed the main event. It was encouraging to see signs of recovery, but it's a long road. Singing for Change has contributed \$400,000 to five different nonprofits focused on reconstruction, and partnered with Outback Steakhouse to garner another \$750,000 for the same cause. Over dinner that evening, Jimmy renewed his pledge that Singing for Change will remain a strong presence in the Gulf Coast until the work is done.

# Singing For Change On The Road

By Judith Ranger Smith, SFC Executive Director





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## Weekly Drawing

Every Friday throughout 2006 we will be drawing names at random from orders placed that week. The winning person drawn will receive a Free Gift for shopping with the Margaritaville Store in Key West. We have set aside unique items that we feel you would enjoy. You may win T-shirt, a cap, or a novelty item. Keep it or pass along to a friend. No returns or exchanges on this gift item, and as always thanks for your continued support.

Our Blue Fins Up Bracelet remains a popular item and popular fund raising tool. Proceeds from bracelet sales in June will benefit the Monroe County Association for Retarded Citizens, and to Heron House in July.

Blue Fins Up Bracelet #14950 \$2.00

