

ISLAND HOPPING

Islanders Ready For Summer Life, Fourth Of July Festivities



ellaNAYOR
enayor@floridaweekly.com

If you have not had a chance to venture out to the islands in the past week or so, I would highly recommend taking a trip there. The snowbirds have seemingly flocked back north for the summer and the roads are back to a nice driving pace. This is the time for staycationers and locals to take part in the best that the islands have to offer — pristine beaches, quaint shops and restaurants and lots and lots of relaxation. Did I mention relaxation? Most of the island inns and resorts offer off-season rates and discounts. You can truly get away from it all without leaving too far from home. To read more about staycation opportunities, check the Florida Weekly Staycations guide out in this week's edition.

Summer on Sanibel is reminiscent of the halcyon, carefree days of ice cream, playing on the beach and July 4th parades. If you have not had a chance to experience a Fourth celebration on Sanibel, I invite you to come this time around. The annual parade is filled with dazzling floats, candy tossers for the children and lots of the good old-fashioned Americana. The parade and many other island events are free. If you want to make a day or night of it on the islands, The Dunes golf community will be featuring its annual Fourth of July party. There will be live music and face painting. For \$5, you get admission to a fabulous party and even parking. This year, the Sanibel and Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce is coordinating and running the festivities, said Blanaid Colley of Hillgate Communications.

Alison Dry, co-owner of Cip's Place on Sanibel, and Blanaid Colley of Hillgate Communications. Alison Dry, co-owner of Cip's Place on Sanibel, and Blanaid Colley of Hillgate Communications. Speaking of Blanaid, I had the opportunity to have lunch with her and speak to her about the July 4 event and other island activities last week at Cip's Place on Periwinkle Way. I had a wonderful lunch in the cozy, islandesque restaurant. Cip's has become a popular "it" restaurant for locals since it opened 18 months ago. Before Cip's, the Mermaid Kitchen used to be located in the building.



Alison Dry, co-owner of Cip's Place on Sanibel and Blanaid Colley of Hillgate Communications

I quickly found out why Cips is so popular — good food, social staff and a great ambiance. We noshed on yummy lunches while we chatted about upcoming events. I must recommend trying the buttermilk chicken and barbecued shrimp. Both dishes are tender, perfectly seasoned and well worth the drive.

The husband and wife team of Alison and Blaine Dry own Cip's. Blaine is an artist in the kitchen, according to Alison who took time from her busy day to chat with Ms. Colley and me. She showed us around to the outside dining section where orchids and tropical foliage cascade near the tables. It's like eating lunch in some remote, exotic Pacific isle — without the 17-hour flight.

In other island news: The Sanibel Neighbors Club, which was recently formed by four islanders, is growing. The organization encourages and supports local businesses and shopping. The membership fee is \$15 — \$5 of which goes to charity, Ms. Colley, a member and founder of the club said.

The 19th annual Sam Bailey's Island Night will be held at the Miracle's baseball game at Hammond Stadium in Fort Myers Wednesday, May 16. Come out and meet islanders and enjoy games and fun between innings. This annual event is a must-go to. See you over the bridge. !

— Send information about island events to enayor@floridaweekly.com.