

Seafarers' House Fact Sheet

Seafarers' House Mission

Seafarers' House is a welcoming place for seafarers and port workers as the gateway to a more, healthy, peaceful and spiritual maritime community.

History

Although we are part of a maritime tradition dating back several hundred years, Seafarers' House Port Everglades was established in 1989. Our founders were a female seminary intern from Spain, the Episcopal Bishop of Southeast Florida and a Coral Gables attorney. Together, they founded a faith-based program to care for our seafarers and port workers.

Importance of our Mission

Seafarers spend months at a time, year after year, away from their family and friends. The work is hard and the hours are long. What many people don't realize is that 90 percent of everything we use, consume and wear comes to us aboard cargo ships. That means just about everything you purchase: the clothing on your back, the car you drive, the medicine you need and medical equipment that you rely on, even much of what you eat, came to this country by sea. Their hours are long, the jobs are hard, and connecting with the mission when they reach our shores offers a place of welcome, a place of rest, a friendly face in a foreign land and emergency assistance if needed.

Location

We are located inside Port Everglades, next door to the FPL power plant and across from Terminal 18. Seafarers' House facilities include a small convenience store where guests can purchase a variety of foods and drinks native to their homeland, toiletries and some clothing.

Services

Also located at Seafarers' House is our chaplain's office, a multifaith chapel, a money wiring service, a recreational room with a pool table, and free WiFi. In addition, we have a small electronics store where seafarers can purchase a variety of items – from cell phones and computers, to television sets and the latest electronic items.

Besides the practical and pastoral services offered at Seafarers' House, we also visit all of the ships that dock at Port Everglades. All of the services we offer in our facility also are available aboard the vessels including religious services, communications and money wiring.

Capital Campaign

For 30 years, Seafarers' House has operated out of "temporary" modular structures that have outlived their lifespan. We are in the midst of a three-year, \$4.5 million capital campaign to build a new Place of Welcome. The new 15,000-square-foot Place of

Welcome will be built on an expanded footprint at the same location as the existing building inside Port Everglades. It will allow for the consolidation of administration and operations under one roof, offering a facility that provides for the emotional, physical and spiritual wellness of seafarers.

The new campus will include:

- A meditation garden where mariners can relax and enjoy the outdoors;
- Expanded recreation areas to improve overall health and wellness;
- An improved experience shopping for essential personal items;
- Space for training, meetings, and professional development;
- A café with indoor and outdoor seating so visitors can enjoy a hot meal with friends.

Transportation

Seafarers' House offers free transportation within the port and to convey seafarers through secure zones in the port. Our drivers are trained as authorized providers of secure escort under the Federal rules regulating the Transport Workers Identification Credential (TWIC).

Who visits Seafarers' House?

Seafarers' House is open to anyone who chooses to visit, although most of our guests are seafarers and port workers. More than 150,000 visitors come through our doors every year to benefit from our services.

Port Everglades is one of the top three cruise ports in the world, is among the most active containerized cargo ports in the United States, and is South Florida's main seaport for petroleum products such as gasoline and jet fuel. Most of the crewmembers who come to us are from developing countries where unemployment is high and labor costs are low. The majority are from the Philippines and other Asian countries, with many from Eastern Europe and South America.

Pastoral Team

Our pastoral care team, led by Father Sanford "Sandy" Sears, consists of nearly a dozen chaplains representing faiths from all over the world. They provide religious services, counseling and spiritual resources. Our team visits with thousands of mariners each year, providing compassion, guidance and resources for self-reflection. We are affiliated with congregations throughout South Florida to provide mariners with access to a religious leader of their own choosing.

We provide religious resources such as Bibles, devotional booklets, and other religious periodicals in various languages, as well as an array of supportive materials including health-related information for addressing specific concerns, which are distributed free of charge.

Funding

As a nonprofit organization, we rely on donations from our supporters and the community. Our largest fundraising event is the Golden Compass Gala, where we honor those who have achieved distinction in the maritime world, those whose vocation or avocation has been the sea, or those who have ministered to or otherwise assisted seafarers. Our 2020 honoree is Lisa Lutoff-Perlo, president and CEO of Celebrity Cruises. Past honorees have included: Paul Doell, National President of the American Maritime Officers (AMO); Michael Bayley, president and CEO of Royal Caribbean International; Jan Swartz, group president of Princess Cruises and Carnival Australia; artist, philanthropist and entrepreneur Guy Harvey; Joseph Farrell, president and CEO of Resolve Marine Group; and international seafaring hero Captain Richard Phillips, among others.

Our South Florida Business Leader's luncheon is another of our annual events. It is hosted by our friends at Holland America aboard one of their vessels. Acknowledged leadership, entrepreneurial background, philanthropic contributions to the communities where they live and work, as well as long-term contributions to the success, diversity and breadth of the South Florida business community, are all considerations for this award. Our 2019 recipient was Dodie Keith-Lazowick, President and Managing Principal of KEITH, a Pompano Beach-based civil engineering firm. Past recipients include: Peggy Nordeen, CEO of Starmark International, Inc. Bob Swindell, President and CEO of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance; Bob Moss, Founder, Chairman and CEO of Moss & Associates; and J. David Armstrong Jr., former President, Broward College.

Volunteers

Seafarers' House relies on its volunteers to help with various projects year-round. In the past, the U.S. Coast Guard has assisted us with renovation projects, architects have donated plans for renovations, local companies have donated shovels, trucks and manpower for landscaping projects. Church groups have performed concerts for mariners, while others will cook and serve dinner during the holidays. Volunteers help with the collection of toiletry items for our annual Shoebox Christmas drive. And of course, all of our board members and advisory council members are volunteers and we are grateful for their donations of time, talent and treasure.

A popular annual program is Shoebox Christmas. Each year, volunteers and community members put together hundreds of shoeboxes filled with toiletries and sundry items for seafarers who visit Port Everglades during the holiday season. These boxes are treasured by our seafarers, who often receive few tokens of appreciation and hospitality while at sea. We collect and hand out nearly 2,000 wrapped shoeboxes, so we are always in need of donated items, money to purchase the items and volunteers to help us wrap.

People donate books to our in-house library so that visiting mariners can take them back to their ships to read. We also accept clothing donations, again for both the mariners who visit and to take back to family members.

We have a gear and goodies collection project where donors can pack one-gallon Ziploc bags with items such as shaving cream, soap, tissue packets, tooth brush and toothpaste for adults. Some crew members travel with their children, so crayons and markers, paper, coloring books and small stuffed animals also are needed.

We also have a knitting project. Many of those on ships come from tropical islands so when they must travel to colder climates they welcome hats, scarves, gloves and warm socks.

We are also pleased to welcome volunteers who will assist with our special events throughout the year.