



2009

INSIDE:
employment
law enforcement
education
government
weather
healthcare

Almanac

the official resource guide to the Florida Keys

THE CITIZEN Press

photo ROB O'NEAL • design SARA MATTHIS

**FLORIDA KEYS
LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Monroe County Sheriff Office

- Headquarters
5525 College Road, Key West
292-7000
- Freeman Substation
20950 Overseas Highway,
Cudjoe Key
745-3184
- Marathon Substation
3103 Overseas Highway,
Marathon
289-2430
- Roth Building
88770 Overseas Highway,
Tavernier
853-3211

Key West Police

- 1604 N Roosevelt Blvd, Key West
809-1083

**Florida Fish & Wildlife
Conservation Commission**

- Wildlife Alert: Report wildlife law violations. Call 888-404-FWCC (888-404-3922)
- Cellular phone users, call *FWC or #FWC.

Florida Highway Patrol

- Marathon, 289-2383

United States Coast Guard

- Marathon
1800 Overseas Highway,
Marathon
Emergencies 743-6388
Non-emergencies 743-6778
- Islamorada
183 Palermo Drive, Islamorada
Emergencies 664-4404
Non-emergencies 664-8077
- Key West
Emergencies 295-9735
Non-emergencies 292-8713

United States Border Patrol

- 3770 Overseas Highway,
Marathon
289-0942

Islands are still a safe place to live

Citizen Staff

Incidents of violent crime in Monroe County are down, but property crimes are up. It is to be expected said Monroe County Sheriff's Office spokesperson Becky Herrin.

"As the economy has deteriorated, we've certainly seen an increase in property crimes — thefts and burglaries — and that is something to be expected because some people are desperate. It doesn't excuse the fact that they are breaking the law, but it is something we anticipated due to the current economic times," she said.

The majority of crime is easily prevented, she said. Lock your doors. Put your valuables away. Reinforce the locks on windows and doors.

"Probably 90 percent of the crime that we see can be eas-

ily prevented — don't leave a bike in the front yard, don't leave an iPod on the front seat of an unlocked car," Herrin said.

One of the best lines of defense is communication between the Sheriff's Office and the affected neighborhoods or just neighbor to neighbor.

At the moment there are probably 50 active crime watch areas in the Keys. Some of the groups are new, responding to a rash of boat burglaries in the Lower Keys. Thieves have been making off with complete outboard motors or just the lower unit. The Sheriff's Office recommends marking the engines



with something more permanent than the serial number on a sticker that's provided by the manufacturer. Better yet, is to prevent the theft all together. The Sheriff's Office put out a list of recommendations that include disconnecting the battery from the trim and tilt function of the motor; keeping the trailer and boat in a well-lighted place; destroying the threads on one of the bolts for each engine; and parking the boat very close to the house so thieves can't get

access. According to 2008 data submitted to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the burglary rates were up (almost 900 incidents), larceny was up (about 2,800 incidents) and reports of car theft were down in Monroe County. The non-violent offenses constituted an almost 16 percent rise over the 2007 data, while the violent offenses were down 7 percent.

What is the green flash?

Stand in a crowd at sunset, and you're sure to hear about the green flash. Supposedly, it's a visual phenomenon that occurs at the exact moment the sun disappears under the water horizon — a brief glimmer of green light to mark the end of the sunset show. But is it real or an imagined vision brought on by a bad case of sun glare?

Both. It really does happen, but it's only a mirage.

"It's a term that's listed in an American Meteorological Society book," said a senior forecaster at the National Weather Service in Key West. "But it is rare. I've only seen it once or twice."

According to the dictionary, the image "is a portion of the sun, rather than an earthbound object." In other words, it's the way light bends during times when the sun is low in the sky. It's a spectacu-

lar visual effect that wasn't designed by Spielberg.
— Sara Matthis

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- Depression
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia and other psychotic spectrum disorders
- ADHD
- Conduct disorder
- Oppositional defiant disorder
- Substance abuse and dependence
- Self mutilation
- Eating disorders
- Anxiety disorders

ADULT AND GERIATRIC PSYCHIATRY CONDITIONS

- Major depressive disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia and other psychotic spectrum disorders
- Dysthymia and minor depressive disorders
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse and dependence
- Somatoform disorders
- Sleep disorders

TREATMENT MODALITIES

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- Supportive Therapy
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Education takes a different shape

Citizen staff

At present, there are approximately 8,000 children enrolled in the Monroe County School system. The students are spread out across five elementary schools, one middle school, three Kindergarten through eighth grade facilities, three high schools, three charter schools and three centers for special education. Because Monroe County's geography is long and skinny, the students are served in small schools strewn throughout the islands to minimize the distance students travel to their neighborhood institutions.

Last year, Monroe County was named an "A" school district because of the high marks students achieved in state standardized testing.

In addition to the regular school system, Monroe County residents have some pockets of enthusiastic home schoolers. Home School High

School (HS2), based in Key West, is one such example. There are two private schools in the Florida Keys — Mary Immaculate Star of the Sea, a Catholic school in Key West, and Island Christian School in the Upper Keys. Monroe County has



one community college — Florida Keys Community College — and the main campus is in Key West. Besides academic courses, it also offers continuing-education credits and recreational learning opportunities such as pottery classes, art and SCUBA lessons. FKCC partners with other schools to offer full degrees in some subjects such as business administration.

Many islanders turn to on-line learning to complete the degrees they abandoned when they moved to paradise. Anne Romance of Marathon is pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting.

She investigated commuting to a school on the mainland for a fast track program, but it would have required six hours of commuting at least once a week.

"Now, I can hop online anytime I want to do my homework, take exams, check my grades or participate in classroom discussions," she said. "I will graduate in December."

According to U.S. Census data, almost 85 percent of Monroe County residents ages 25 and older have a high school diploma. Twenty-five percent possess a bachelor's degree or better. Both percentages are well above state-wide averages.

KEYS SCHOOLS

Monroe County Schools receive a letter grade from state officials every year. As a district, it received an 'A.' Below find a list of the public schools and individual rankings:

- B Coral Shores High School**
89901 Old Hwy., Tavernier
Grades: 9-12
Phone: 853-3222
- A Gerald Adams Elem. School**
5855 College Rd., Key West
Grades: PreK-5
Phone: 293-1609
- A Glynn Archer Elem. School**
1302 White St., Key West
Grades: PreK-5
Phone: 293-1600
- A Horace O'Bryant Middle Sch.**
1105 Leon St., Key West
Grades: 6-8
Phone: 296-5628
- A Key Largo School**
104801 Overseas Hwy., Key Largo
Grades: PreK-8
Phone: 453-1255
- C Key West High School**
2100 Flagler Ave., Key West
Grades: 9-12
Phone: 293-1549
- B Marathon Middle & High School**
350 Sombrero Rd., Marathon
Grades: 6-12
Phone: 289-2480
- A Plantation Key School**
100 Lake Rd., Tavernier
Grades: K-8
Phone: 853-3281
- A Poinciana Elementary School**
1212 14th St., Key West
Grades: K-5
Phone: 293-1630
- A Sigsbee Elementary School**
Sigsbee Park, Key West
Grades: PreK-5
Phone: 294-1861
- A Stanley Switlik Elem. School**
3400 Overseas Hwy., Marathon
Grades: PreK-5
Phone: 289-2490
- A Sugarloaf School**
225 Crane Blvd., Sugarloaf Key
Grades: PreK-8
Phone: 745-3282
- CHARTER SCHOOLS**
- Big Pine Academy**
30220 Overseas Hwy., Big Pine Key
Grades: Pre-K - 6
Phone: 872-1266
- Treasure Village Montessori**
86731 Overseas Hwy., Islamorada
Grades: Pre-K - 8
Phone: 852-3438
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Monroe County government times 3

Citizen Staff

Monroe County was born on July 2, 1823 and named after then President James Monroe. It became the sixth county in Florida territory and covered the entire southern portion of the Florida peninsula. Eventually, other counties



County.

As Monroe County is configured now, it's about 120 miles from Key West to Ocean Reef although, geographically, Monroe County makes inroads to the mainland. Because there is no single county seat that is easily accessible to all, every county function must be accomplished in triplicate. There are three county government centers — in



FILE PHOTO

Monroe County stretches from the mainland to Key West, about 120 miles.

Key West, Marathon and Plantation Key.

Monroe County government is made up of six departments — administration, public works, public safety, growth management, community services and management services. The five elected county commissioners hire a county administrator.

Other elected county officials include the supervisor of elections, clerk of the courts, Monroe County sheriff, property appraiser and superintendent of schools.

Monroe County has about

80,000 full-time residents, but the population swells during “season” with the arrival of many tourists.

Five cities

Key West was “claimed” about the same time that Monroe County was created. For many years, it was the only inhabited part of the Florida Keys and certainly the only city.

For years and years, Monroe County as a whole was largely governed by the Monroe County Commission. But in 1997, Islamorada declared itself a city. Then Marathon followed suit in 1999. Now there are five municipalities in the Keys — Islamorada, Key Colony Beach, Key West, Layton and Marathon.

All of the cities elect a governing body of commissioners — or council members, as they are sometimes called — and hire a city manager.

Key West is by far the largest city, with about 25,000 residents according to the last available U.S. Census

count.

Islamorada has almost 7,000 residents. Key Colony Beach and Layton are the smallest cities in the Keys, with populations of about 800 and 200 residents respectively. Marathon has about 10,000 residents.

KEYS GOVERNMENT

GENERAL INFORMATION

www.fla-keys.com
www.monroecounty-fl.gov

CITIES

www.islamorada.fl.us
www.keywestcity.com
www.keycolonybeach.net
www.ci.marathon.fl.us
www.cityoflayton.com

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Besides hurricanes, Keys weather is calm

Citizen Staff

It has never, ever snowed in the Florida Keys. Not once.

The lowest of all time was 41 degrees. The thermometer hit that mark once in 1981 and once in 1886, both times in the second week of January. The Keys haven't seen temperatures below 50 degrees since 2003.

"On January 24, 2003, the low was 45 degrees. It set a record as the lowest temperature ever recorded on that date," said a senior



FILE PHOTO
Locals take a walk on Duval after Hurricane Georges in 1998. Keys official have a thorough hurricane plan in place.

rainstorm. Typically, August and September are the rainy months in the Florida Keys. Not coincidentally, those are also the months where hurricanes cruise over or near the Keys. Barring a tropical "event" or hurricane, most rainfall in the Keys comes in heavy, but quick, downpours.

When it comes to hurricanes, Keys residents and officials are seasoned professionals. There is an extremely well thought-out plan in place that is exercised regularly. Residents know how to prepare and how to play it safe. There have been no deaths in the Keys in recent memory that have been attributed to the storms.

During August and September, the Keys register about 5.5 inches of rainfall. In February, it's usually only 1.5 inches.

"We're not exactly a desert here, but compared to other cities in Florida we are the driest one," the official said, "in terms of annual rain fall."

Beyond hurricanes, the Keys also have water spouts and tornadoes and occasional hail.

The only other temperature Keys residents take into account is water temperature. The coldest month to take a swim is in February.

meteorologist from the Key West National Weather Service office.

Those are heady memories for those of us sweltering through what seems to be a very hot summer. The mean temperature — the average between the high and low — is usually about 84 degrees in August. But that's before you factor in humidity. The heat index, or perceived heat, can be as high as 100 degrees.

"It's going to feel hotter if the dew point is higher," he said.

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Tavernier to 18-Mile Stretch

Keys Sanitary Service
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Monroe county cares for its health

Citizen Staff

Like the rest of the nation, the Keys biggest healthcare concerns are cancer and heart disease. What sets Monroe County apart from the rest of the state, is its “unfavorable” ratings in the following areas — colorectal cancer, melanoma, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, suicide and kindergarten-age children who have not been fully immunized. In those six areas, Monroe County has a higher average of incident or infec-



FILE PHOTO

The county maintains a registry of old or infirm individuals who need to evacuate when a hurricane approaches the Keys. The county organizes transportation to — and shelter on — the mainland.

tion than the rest of Florida. To deal with the ailing part of the population, Monroe County relies on fewer than 200 physicians. According to data collected in 2007, there are 162 licensed physicians operating in Monroe. Fifteen of the doctors were family practice physicians, 21 were internists and 5 were pediatricians. The Keys have three major hospitals — Lower Keys Medical Center in Key West, Fishermen’s Hospital in Marathon and Mariner’s Hospital in Tavernier. The most recent data puts the number of hospital beds at fewer than 300. The Monroe

See HEALTH, page 8

KEYS HEALTHCARE

- **Health Care Center**
1200 Kennedy Dr.
Key West, FL 33040
292-6885
- **Roosevelt Sands Clinic**
105 Olivia St.
Key West, FL 33040
293-1741
- **Ruth Ivins Center**
3333 Overseas Highway
Marathon, FL 33050
289-2708
- **Tavernier Public Health Unit**
50 Highpoint Road
Tavernier, FL 33070
853-3240
- **Lower Keys Medical Center**
5900 College Road
Key West, FL 33040
294-5531
- **Fishermen’s Hospital**
3301 Overseas Highway
Marathon, FL 33050
743-5533
- **Mariners Hospital**
Mile Marker 91.5
Tavernier, FL 33070
852-4418

Learn the lingo of the Florida Keys

BY SARA MATTHIS
Special Sections Editor

I was reading a novel the other day and the author referred to some fishermen that live “on the Keys.” Wrong. Wrong. Wrong. But a common mistake. If you’re considering relocating to the Florida Keys, you must understand that we have a complicated, convoluted method of explaining where we live fractured by many exceptions. For example, you can live in Key West or you can live on Big Coppitt Key. Generally, the rule is that you live in a city, on a Key. If the Key has no city, than you simply live on the Key. We have four cities and one village — that is to say, five incorporated areas — in the Keys: Islamorada (the Village of Islands), Layton, Key Colony Beach, Marathon and Key West. The rest of Monroe County is considered unincorporated, or governed by the county government. But

Keys people hate rules, so ... you can live in Tavernier and in Key Largo, although they are not technically cities. Both Tavernier and Key Largo are on the key named Key Largo which used to be called Rock Harbor. In the Keys, residents say they are heading “up” or “north” to Miami, when in fact we are actually headed mostly east. The same goes for going “down” or “south” to Key West, which is mostly west. If asked by a fellow islander where, exactly, you reside you can augment your explanation with a number. You can say, “I live on Grassy Key which is at Mile Marker 58.” The highest Mile Markers are toward Key Largo. Key West, of course, is located at Mile Marker 0. It’s impossible not to know this because

See LINGO, page 8

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311458

Health

Continued from page 7

County Health Department operates four clinics, two of which offer primary care services.

According to the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration, there are seven PPO's that will sell policies to individuals living in Monroe county. The biggest insurer in Florida is Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida. In second place is United Healthcare. Also

offering health insurance plans in Monroe is Aetna Life Insurance, American Medical Security Life Insurance, Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Golden Rule Insurance Company and Humana Health Insurance Company of Florida.

According to a 2007 survey conducted by the state, 20 percent of Monroe County adults are uninsured.

The data is the most recent available, but with the economy in recession, and many businesses cutting their employee coverage, real fig-

ures are probably higher, local health industry officials say.

"Usually we run about 25 percent as far as people who don't have insurance," said Bob Eadie, who heads the Monroe County Health Department.

Besides getting care at a doctor's office or hospital, Keys residents also have a few walk-in clinics to choose from such as Rural Health Network. Locals can also receive services through hospice organizations, AIDS Help and Womankind.

— *Some statistics provided by the state Department of Health's "CHART" data.*

Lingo

Continued from page 7

every other bumper sticker or T-shirt sold in Key West proclaims it with a replica of the little green signs that dot our highway.

If you're driving north, that is to say, east, your lane will overlook the Atlantic Ocean. If you're driving south, or west, then your lane will overlook the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf of Mexico is also called Florida Bay or the "backcountry," but mostly by fishermen.

If you want to be really specific about where you live, you can say, "I live on the gulfside of Grassy Key, which is at Mile Marker 58.3." Gulfside and oceanside are usually spelled as one word and sometimes can be part of your physical address. In some parts of some towns, the street will cross U.S. 1. The mailman needs to know what side of the island you live on. Adding tenths of a mile to your directions will make you seem *really* local.

If you live in the Keys, and

are speaking to someone from the north, you say, "I live in the Florida Keys." And even though you can't live in a bunch of islands, it's still OK because you're referring to a region. Generally, the Northerner's next question will be, "Is that Key West?" And then you can patiently explain, if you care to, exactly how many miles away your home is from the Southernmost City.

Despite all the weird talk, getting around the Keys is a pretty simple matter because it has only one road — U.S. 1. But sometimes it's called Overseas Highway. Of course, the tippy top-most part of U.S.1, right before you get to Florida City, is called "The Stretch" or "The 18-Mile Stretch."

With all of these little eccentricities about naming areas of the Florida Keys, I couldn't tell you what is north of Fort Lauderdale. My head is too full of Keys jargon.

Maybe I need to "get off the rock." That's what locals say when they are making a trip to the mainland.

healthy pets

Local veterinarian Ronit Berdugo and trainer Cathy Baier weigh in on pet health issues every month in the Locals Guide.



MAJOR EVENTS

- **Sculpture Key West**, January to April, Key West
- **Key West Literary Seminar**, January, Key West
- **Upper Keys Gigantic Nautical Flea Market**, February, Upper Keys
- **Pigeon Key Art Festival**, February, Marathon
- **Marathon Seafood Festival**, March, Marathon
- **7 Mile Bridge Run**, April, Marathon
- **Annual Bay Jam**, April, Islamorada
- **Key West Songwriters Festival**, April, Key West
- **Conch Republic Independence Celebration**, April, Key West
- **Hemingway Days**, July, Key West
- **Lobster Mini-Season**, July, Keyswide
- **WomenFest**, September, Key West
- **Florida Keys Birding & Wildlife Festival**, September, Keyswide
- **Fantasy Fest, October**, Key West
- **Key West World Championship Powerboat Races**, November, Key West

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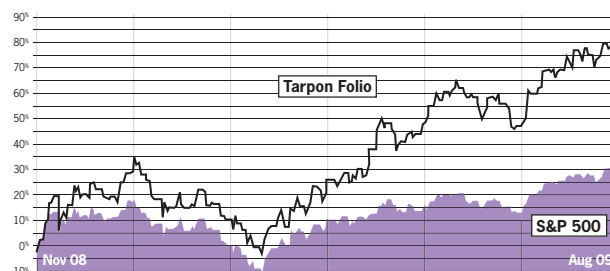
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