

## OUR VIEW

# Support the local economy — become a Certified Tourism Ambassador



Kimberly Worner/The Daily News

Each year, millions of tourists — 6 million this year — flock to Galveston to bask in the sunshine and enjoy the surf. Tourism is the city's lifeblood and the ripple effects likely touch every city in this county. Tourism equates to more than \$723.3 million in economic impact and creates more than 10,000 jobs on the island. And if those numbers don't really register, think about this one. The revenue from tourism saves you more than \$2,000 annually in state and federal taxes.

We should celebrate and share the rich and colorful history of this island with everyone we meet. And whether you are a BOI or an IBC, there is a lot to brag about.

One of the most rewarding ways to promote the island is to become a Certified Tourism Ambassador through the Galveston Island Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"The ambassador program is important because it promotes the Galveston brand by creating positive experiences for visitors to our destination," said Stacy Gilbert, director of Convention Services and Visitor Center. Gilbert, a certified ambassador herself, also is the certification program manager.

The program is designed for front-line hospitality employees and volunteers, but benefits anyone who comes in contact with tourists, which, at some point,

is probably every one of us. And who better to sell the island and all it has to offer than the people who call it home?

We know the majority of visitors come for the beach and the Historic Pleasure Pier, but Galveston has a plethora of things to see and do. There are historical monuments throughout the city, and we have Galveston Island State Park, The Strand, The Grand 1894 Opera House, Lone Star Flight Museum and Moody Gardens.

We also have the Bryan Museum, home of the world's largest collection of historical artifacts, documents, and artwork relating to the Southwestern United States. And don't forget the Bishop's Palace, which AARP listed as one of the "10 Must-See American Castles." There is an amazing symphony, a working harbor and a haunted house or two. The list of things to tell tourist about is long and impressive.

You will benefit from becoming a certified ambassador, too. You will be giving back to your community/region, and you will have an opportunity to meet and share ideas and resources with other island ambassadors. You also get a discount card that can be used at some of the island's attractions.

Why does this matter? Because every positive experience with a tourist leads to a positive impact on the local economy. That benefits us all.

"Tourism is important for many reasons. Tourism as an industry is the largest employer on the island creating more than 10,000 jobs and generates tax revenues which helps to pay for important services to the island residents," Gilbert said.

So take the class and get out there and share your love for the island.

It's something the city can take to the bank.

• Kimberly Worner

# Living wage matters to our community's health

One of the most interesting discussions going on in Galveston is on the notion of a livable wage. Interest in the topic cuts across the political spectrum. Some people want to see a higher minimum wage for humanitarian reasons. They think it's the right thing to do.

But others think that paying a livable wage is just good business. They'd like to see all workers compensated well enough to lower the social costs that government bears, including subsidies for food and housing. If everyone made a livable wage, there would be no need for such subsidies for workers.

## Guest column



Heber Taylor is the former editor of The Daily News and lives in Galveston.

This discussion has been getting louder and more urgent. In Galveston, it has been going on for at least three years. In fact, the third annual Living Wage Conference is set for Sept. 28 at St. Patrick Catholic Church. The meeting is open to the public. It will be a good chance to get information on a topic that already has become a public policy debate.

In August, the Galveston City Council discussed a salary survey. A good part of that discussion focused on workers at the low end of the pay scale. Councilman Norman Pappous questioned whether it's reasonable to expect a worker to live on \$22,000. Earlier this year, the Galveston Independent School District raised salaries for its lowest-paid workers, those making less than \$9 an hour. That's \$360 a week, 18,720 a year.

Could you live on that? Raise a family on that?

What exactly is a livable wage in Galveston County?

It ranges. One adult could live on \$10.50 an hour, according to the Living Wage Calculator published by Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A family with two adults — one working and one caring for two children — would need an hourly wage of \$23.24 to make ends meet. For perspective, the city's salary survey states that three-quarters of its workers make less than \$17.

If you attend the Living Wage Conference, you can expect to get a report on the demographics of the county's low-wage workers. There will also be presentations on the living wage calculation and on the Section 3 obligations of local governments. That's an intriguing, and often ignored, responsibility to provide employment and job training for cities, like Galveston, that accept a lot of money from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

As you might expect from a meeting at a church, you'll also hear a panel discuss religious teachings on workers' rights.

This is an important meeting on an important topic. Caring for the good of wage earners is equivalent to caring for the overall health of the community. All of us should care.

**What:** Third Annual Living Wage Conference  
**When:** 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Monday  
**Where:** St. Patrick Catholic Church auditorium, 1010 35th St., Galveston

# Allen to be honored for work with turtles

Sea turtles are fortunate to have Carole Allen on their side. Carole has been working for more than 30 years for protection of the Kemp's ridley sea turtle, and on Sept. 26, Turtle Island Restoration Network will honor her lifelong dedication for conservation of this critically endangered sea turtle from noon to 2 p.m. in the Garden Restaurant at Moody Gardens, 1 Hope Blvd., in Galveston.

In 1982, Carole founded HEART (Help Endangered Animals-Ridley Turtles) and with the help of schools, formed HEART Councils. These councils were organized in more than 30 states and Saudi Arabia, and participants learned about the Kemp's ridleys, donated money to feed hatchlings and received a certificate of participation in the program.

She has raised over \$100,000 to feed the

## Guest column



Restoration Network.

Joanie Steinhaus is Associate Director of the Gulf Coast Turtle Island

hatchlings at the Galveston National Marine Fisheries Service Lab, purchased equipment for the Rancho Nuevo nesting beach facility, and supplied education material to schools in the U.S. and Mexico. She invited local teachers to join her at Rancho Nuevo beach while she completed presentations for schools close to nesting beach.

Carole was instrumental in securing the passage of the federal law requiring Turtle Excluder Devices in shrimp trawls in the mid-1980s, and more recently she worked to ensure the state of Louisiana implemented the federal TEDs

law in Louisiana state waters. Collaborating with Dr. Andre Landry Jr. at Texas A&M University at Galveston, they established the Sea Turtle Saturday event and in 2015 it celebrated its 10th anniversary.

Carole and her work have been the focus of numerous radio and television stations, both locally and nationally, and she has been mentioned in Oprah Winfrey's "O" magazine and in a book by Pulitzer Prize winner Edward Humes entitled "Eco Barons — The Dreamers, Schemers and Millionaires Who Are Saving Our Planet."

In addition, other accomplishments include: establishment of the public sea turtle reporting number (1-866-TURTLE5) which has been sponsored by Turtle Island Restoration Network for over 10 years, raising funds and producing the video "The Heartbreak Turtle

Today," and for the past 12 years being part of Turtle Island Restoration Network, an international organization saving sea turtles and other marine wildlife.

I would like to invite you to join Turtle Island Restoration Network to learn more about our Gulf of Mexico programs past, present and future, and opportunities for you to become a member of our conservation efforts.

Our founder and Executive Director, Todd Steiner, will join us to talk about the history of Turtle Island Restoration Network and his long-term collaboration with Carole Allen.

I hope you will be able to join us to honor a sea turtle heroine and to celebrate the Texas state sea turtle, the Kemp's ridley.

We hope to see you there. Also, many thanks to Moody Gardens for hosting.