



NEWS RELEASE

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Wells family hoteliers honored by Lee County VCB for community contributions at annual meeting

Owners of Cabbage Key Inn & Restaurant and Tarpon Lodge & Restaurant receive Junonia Award

LEE COUNTY, FL – The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB) presented its longstanding annual Junonia Award to the Wells family, a true “island family,” today at its annual meeting at Sanibel Harbour Marriott Resort & Spa in Fort Myers.

In attendance to receive the honor were Rob and Phyllis Wells Jr., Rob and Jessica Wells III, and Ken and Melina Wells, owners of the Cabbage Key Inn & Restaurant and Tarpon Lodge & Restaurant.

Created in 2006, the VCB’s Junonia Award recognizes individuals who have positively impacted the local tourism community by demonstrating unique capabilities, leadership, commitment, and dedication. The Junonia is a highly treasured shell and was selected as a symbol of the VCB’s annual award because of its rarity and exceptional quality.

“One of the many things we treasure about this year’s Junonia Award winner is the refreshing realness of who they are,” said Tamara Pigott, executive director of the Lee County VCB. “They are stalwart friends of the environment, yet remain cannily aware of the importance and need for responsible tourism to our area. They, and their children, and now grandchildren, settled here and stayed true to what makes Lee County the unspoiled, rare, gem it is to the rest of the world – our old Florida, natural beauty and sense of place. They didn’t change it, and it gave back. As they often state, ‘our work is for future generations.’ ”

The Wells family moved from the Piedmont area in the early 1970s and bought Palmetto Island, a 100-acre cay. In the 1960s, it was known as the Hide-A-Way Resort. Their address was a channel marker. With no power, no phone lines, just ship-to-shore radio, they fell in love with the island. There, they raised two sons who attended school off-island and got there by boat. They saw the tourism potential of what would become Cabbage Key Inn & Restaurant.

In the late 1990s, the family bought an old lodge built in 1926, because it looked promising and had history. Now the Tarpon Lodge & Restaurant, it had been known in the 1980s as The Cloisters and was Gra-Mar Villa in the 1930s.

“People love you all because you’re a true ‘island family’ and belong to the community, to us,” Pigott said.

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