

# 13th TurtleFest set for March 19 in Juno Beach

Event aims to teach people about turtle hospital.

By Michael Readling  
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In the late 1970s, Eleanor Fletcher would invite groups of schoolchildren into the tiny room above the real estate office she and her husband, Robert, shared right on the beach.

She would dazzle the children with stories of turtles and let them touch real turtle shells. Her stories covered leatherbacks, green sea turtles, hawksbills and loggerheads, and included the tale about the time she was on the boat looking for turtles and her glasses fell overboard.

"So, if you see a turtle with a pair of glasses on, they're mine," she told the kids, this reporter included. "And I'd like them back, please."

There is no doubt some of those students spent the next few weeks looking for a turtle with glasses on.

That was before Juno Beach was known as one of the most active nesting beaches in the world.

It was before anyone really understood the importance of turning your beachside lights off during nesting season. And it was before what is now Loggerhead Marinellife Center occupied its current location encompassing 12,000 square feet and serving as the only sea turtle hospital between Orlan-

## LOGGERHEAD MARINELIFE CENTER TURTLEFEST

**What:** A daylong event designed to introduce the public to the work that the Loggerhead Marinellife Center does.

**When:** 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. March 19

**Where:** Loggerhead Marinellife Center and Loggerhead Park in Juno Beach.

**Admission:** Free

**Activities:** There will be activities designed for people of all ages, including a giant slide, rock-climbing wall, gymnastics, inflatable obstacle course, trampoline and carnival games. There will be food and beverage vendors, as well as arts and crafts. There will be a menu of live bands, including Erasmith, an Aerosmith tribute band to end the festivities. **Information:** Go to [www.marinellife.org/turtlefest](http://www.marinellife.org/turtlefest) or call 561-627-8280.

do and the Keys. Fletcher remained involved with the organization until her death in 2009.

The center treated 106 sea turtles last year, 45 of which were rehabbed back to full enough health to be released into the wild.

"We have a lot of turtle patients here, and they come in for a variety of reasons," said Kat Rumbley, communications and marketing coordinator for Loggerhead



The Loggerhead Marinellife Center will host TurtleFest on March 19. The daylong event features fun activities and will introduce the public to the work that the center does.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



TurtleFest will have plenty of free activities for kids.

Marinellife Center. "We get boat strikes, plastic ingestion, some that are chronically debilitated, those with fishing lines and fishing hooks. The thing is, turtles are the ocean's

ambassadors. They let us know what's going on out there. If you have a turtle coming in with plastic ingestion, that shows us the ocean is dirtier than we think."



A rock-climbing wall will be at TurtleFest.

For the 13th consecutive year, the center will

host TurtleFest at Loggerhead Marinellife Center and the surrounding Loggerhead Park. The added room is essential, Rumbley said, because the staff expects more than 10,000 people to make their way through the event.

When they get there, they will find games and activities designed for all ages. The theme is Slide Over The Sea, and in keeping with that idea, there will be a giant slide for children to play on. There will also be a rock-climbing wall, live music, food, beverages and crafts.

"The slide is new this year, and it's one of those really big ones you see at the fair. PNC Bank is also bringing some spin art bikes so you can pedal the bike and create art at the same time," Rumbley said. "That's kind of a neat thing we've never done before. There will also be gymnastics, an inflatable obstacle course, a 30-foot trampoline and carnival games. The best thing is it's all free."

The whole goal is to expose the community to Loggerhead Marinellife Center and try to get people to understand the important role the nonprofit plays in the community.

"Our main hope is that people come to TurtleFest and learn about what we do to protect the oceans and the creatures that inhabit them," Rumbley said. "This is a chance for people to get up close to the turtle patients that we have in the hospital right now ... and see them as they are recuperating."