

Keys Children Foundation

A Triumphant
Life Journey



The Keys Children's Foundation is proud to present Steve Pemberton as its guest speaker at the annual "Be An Angel Luncheon" on **Monday, January 15, 2018** at Town Hall.

His story will captivate you. Defying insurmountable odds of overcoming abuse and neglect as an orphan in foster care to become a corporate executive, an incredible leader, and a youth advocate, Steve Pemberton has earned national recognition for his accomplishments. As an acclaimed speaker, he is motivating and inspirational.

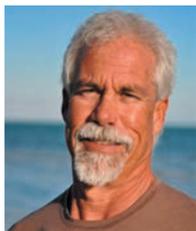
Steve's best selling memoir, *A Chance in the World – An Orphan Boy, a Mysterious Past, and How He Found a Place Called Home*, will be available for purchase at the Luncheon.

Join the Ocean Reef community in celebrating this remarkable man along with supporting the Keys Children's Foundation in its mission to provide programs for disadvantaged children and their families living in the Upper Keys. This year, more than ever, your help is needed.

Please check your mail at the beginning of December for your invitation and make your reservations for the January Luncheon.

PHILANTHROPY MATTERS

Fishing Guides Navigate Irma's Wake



by Capt.
Xavier
Figueredo,
Florida Keys
Fishing Guide
Association

As the Ocean Reef Community Foundation works to assess needs and provide solutions through our Florida Keys Hurricane Response efforts, we're sharing our Philanthropy Matters space with a series of guest columnists to bring the Hurricane Irma experience beyond Ocean Reef's gates home for our readers. Islamorada-based Captain Xavier Figueredo has lived and worked in the Keys for 20 plus years and currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Florida Keys Fishing Guide Association. He estimates about 110 backcountry guides and offshore fishermen have been displaced by damage in the Upper Keys alone and we are at risk of losing them to other areas during what is forecast to be a long recovery.

A thriving recreational fishery helps define the Florida Keys, providing a sense of place and purpose for residents and tourists.

Hurricane Irma had no regard for this notion when she barreled through the Keys with her 140+ knot winds. She left a mess in her wake, disrupting the flow of our island life. The economic impact on the backcountry fishing community will be felt for a long time.

Professional fishing guides and charter captains of our community were reminded of the tenuous hold they have on their livelihood. The



ORCF has awarded the Guides Trust Foundation's Hurricane Irma Relief Fund a \$30,000 grant, along with two grants of \$10,000 each from the Ocean Reef Conservation Association and Bonefish & Tarpon Trust (BTT) for a total donation of \$50,000 to assist Florida Keys guides. Pictured at the BTT International Science Symposium Awards Banquet are (left to right): master of ceremonies Andy Mills, ORCF Bill Nutt, BTT Chairman Emeritus & OR Conservation Association Board Director Tom Davidson, Sr., Monroe County Mayor George Neugent and BTT Chairman Harold Brewer.

same people who define the cultural heritage of our island chain rely on a healthy ecosystem, abundant fish, good weather, and a steady tourist population to make a living. They help drive the economy of the Keys and South Florida (to the tune of \$750 million annually) when these items are in order.

And yet a cultural heritage that includes a rich history of fishing does not stand alone. It depends on a robust infrastructure of hospitality. Each industry needs the other. The hospitality industry needs a ready and available team of fishermen for their guest, and the fishermen need a ready and available infrastructure for their customer.

The massive destruction of residential and resort properties has significantly reduced the number of available beds for fishing clients. Many Islamorada and Middle Keys oceanfront resorts, which account for thousands of beds, will be closed for months. (At press time, less than 30 percent of Islamorada's

hotel rooms are habitable. Many rooms are expected to be offline through the 2018 season.) The long-term loss of business, in combination with additional personal property loss has the potential to drive some guides out of business.

The professional fishing community has been overwhelmed by support. The recognition that fishing is a critical part of the story we tell about the Florida Keys is affirming. The guide fishing community, along with other tourism dependent citizens will feel the impact of Hurricane Irma for months to come. The fishing community feels fortunate for the support they have been gifted.

To make a tax-deductible donation to the Florida Keys Hurricane Response Fund, please mail your check made payable to the Ocean Reef Community Foundation with Florida Keys Hurricane Response in the memo line to: 35 Ocean Reef Drive, Suite 148, Key Largo, FL 33037. We are also now accepting online donations by credit card at www.orfound.org.