

Back-to-back stadium events rally support

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Countless 'friends' showed up recently at two back-to-back events, throwing support behind the Friends of Miami Marine Stadium's efforts to restore the historic structure.

The first, the State of the Stadium Shindig, a fundraising-slash-appreciation bash held at Bayside Hut, opened with Poppa E and the E Band, followed by sounds of The Big Bounce and DJ Lance-O. Bayside Hut donated the venue and food, and the musical artists donated their time. The John and Selenne Devaney Foundation matched contributions dollar-to-dollar up to \$12,500, and will do so until June 8.

Organizers also unveiled the Friends of Miami Marine Stadium logo design contest entries. Judges will soon decide on a winner.

Friends of Miami Marine Stadium members were recently successful in halting the stadium's planned demolition, and the structure was recently listed on the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of the nation's most endangered.

Miami native Johnny Reed, a former stadium basin powerboat racer, reflected on times gone by. "I raced here 30 years ago; I set national speed records here," said Reed, who just purchased another race boat.

Reed said he was saddened by current condition of the stadium. "I couldn't believe the mess and the disgrace," he said.

On the other hand, he can imagine a stadium revitalization. "I'd even put on my jacket and helmet just to [race] again."

Frank Mackle, grandson of Frank Mackle, Jr., original developer of Key Biscayne, said, "It is terrific that they're making an effort to preserve and restore the stadium."

Mackle spent a good part of his younger days at the Miami Rowing Club. "Part of our training was running up and down the stadium steps, so I have a love/hate relationship with the place."

Mackle also remembers with fondness

Jimmy Buffet in concert. "It is a tremendous venue."

Key Biscayne friends Nancy Mele and Suzanne Kromrey attended a Phil Donahue Show at the stadium years ago, although they didn't know each other at the time. A third friend, Dora Piccini, said, "What goes better together than Miami and water? The stadium has so much potential. Could you imagine the concerts?"

Master Plan

The second event, held at the Miami Rowing Club, introduced attendees to Master Planning Strategies and Recommendations designed by soon-to-be graduates of the University of Miami School of Architecture. The students studied under the direction of professor Hilario Candela, original architect of the stadium, and architects Jorge Hernandez and Catherine Lynn. The architectural design studio was developed to provide students with real-life scenarios involving relative architectural topics including preservation and planning.

"A tremendous amount of research went into this project," said Candela, noting students considered "components of maritime activities, best operation of marina, aquatic sports and potential users, new and more effective ways to store boats on dry dock."

"This would always remain a public space, a park with multiple uses," said Candela.

The students also created appropriate guidelines for built spaces and worked to bring the stadium up to current codes, including the Americans with Disabilities Act. In addition, students proposed preserving portions of the graffiti that currently covers the structure.

Miami City Commissioner Tomas Regalado told the gathering, "You have the real vision. We can't keep bulldozing in the name of progress."

Regalado said he will do whatever necessary to help preserve the stadium. "You have a friend at City Hall."

Karen Nickless, representative for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, said

since 1988 the Trust has listed the nation's 11 Most Endangered Places. "The Trust does this to draw attention to these places. Sometimes it's cultural; sometimes it's architectural. In this case, it's both. It is a classic example of what the preservationists meant when they said, 'this place matters.'"

Don Worth, cofounder of Friends of Miami Marine Stadium along with Hernandez, said, "When you see a place that has so much magic, it behooves you to see what you can do." To the naysayers, Worth points to Miami Beach's Ocean Drive and its deteriorated condition of 35 years ago.

"Just think of what we can accomplish," he said.

He thanked Commissioner Regalado and Commissioner Joe Sanchez for their support.

Since its inception in 1963, the Miami Marine Stadium has been a unique cultural resource for speed and crew boat racing, concerts and other events. Candela, along with Albert Ferendino, designed the grandstand as a lightweight poured-in-place concrete structure with hyperbolic paraboloids that form its iconic cantilevered roof.

The stadium was damaged by Hurricane Andrew in 1992 and has since been a victim of deferred maintenance.

For more information, or to make a donation, visit Friends of Miami Marine Stadium at www.friendsofmarinestadium.org.



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