

Marine Resources Council Brings Fun and Awareness with Local Community Event
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Saturday, to both celebrate the holiday season and raise money for their lagoon restoration efforts, the Marine Resources Council (MRC) presented its third annual Margaritas for Mangroves event.

The gathering was hosted by Melbourne BMW—which sits right across from the Indian River Lagoon itself—combining light-hearted fun and educational counsel.

Upon walking into the establishment, guests were directed to the check-in table, where they were given a custom MRC miniature stemless wine glass, three tickets and an instructional flyer. The glass was to be used as a sample cup for margaritas provided by restaurants and other participating organizations at the event, and the tickets represented one vote for the margarita contest. Each table had its own container for guests to cast their votes for the margarita competition.

The BMW Lobby had gone from a floor full of cars to one encircled with tables run by local businesses, hors d'oeuvres, Christmas décor, community residents, live music and margaritas galore. Also on display were other special prizes and a silent auction for local art pieces on display. Serena Chin, event representative for The Melting Pot explained, “everyone has a different type of twist on their margarita and everyone has a different type of food.”

Other restaurants represented included The Melting Pot, Oyster Boss, The Bar Butlers, The Jungle Organic Restaurant + Market, The Cuban Restaurant and more.

Justin Barnes, chef and owner of The Jungle, whose restaurant has an organic concept, said the event was “good for local businesses to promote themselves and support a good cause.”

The event's purpose was to raise money for the MRC's restoration efforts, specifically, the planting of mangroves along the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) shoreline. According to the MRC webpage, the purpose of these plants is to provide nutrient uptake, habitat for wildlife, protection from storms, and erosion control.

Functions like Margaritas for Mangroves provide community members an opportunity to learn more about the Marine Resources Council and its local efforts. Attending the event for the third year, Lori Reader, director of sales at Space Coast Living Magazine emphasized the event's importance, “it's very important because it brings a lot of awareness to those who don't realize how much trouble our waters are in.” As a local resident and one who lives on the water, saving the lagoon is a priority.

MRC's mission, as stated by Lead Scientist, Caity Savoia, “is all about the lagoon and restoring it through science and volunteerism”. The organization, seeks to improve issues within the IRL such as water quality and other matters through education tactics. “It's easy for it to get overlooked,” Savoia explained, “but MRC is trying to raise awareness about the lagoon and its problems by bringing science, restoration and an opportunity for volunteers to help with the problems it has.”

The set up provided an opportunity for attendees to sample over 20 classic and flavored margaritas, including traditional house and triple berry from El Leoncito and fresh organic flavors from The Jungle. Samples from Leoncito ceviche, Oyster Boss oysters, Old School pizza, and even chocolate covered strawberries from The Melting Pot were available.

For one night, MRC employees, volunteers and local community members were able to celebrate a successful year with a lively social gathering while concurrently raising funds for a philanthropic cause that benefits residents across the coast.

If you missed this year's event and would like to get involved in restoration efforts with the Marine Resources Council, visit their website savetheirl.org. The Mar