



GICIA announces match challenge and wildlife art auction

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SUBMITTED BY THE GICIA – The Gasparilla Island Conservation and Improvement Association (GICIA) is extremely pleased and encouraged by the outpouring of support toward the purchase of the Mercabo site from residents of Gasparilla Island and the surrounding areas.

As of Monday, Jan. 11 the GICIA has received nearly \$20.5 million in pledges toward the \$22 million goal.

This goal includes the \$20.6 million purchase price and \$1.4 million to demolish the buildings and begin the restoration process that will return the site to its a natural state.

New pledges are being made in response to last week's \$250,000 match challenge.

"We encourage residents to respond to this challenge to help us make our goal," said Misty Nichols, GICIA Executive Director.

GICIA is pleased to announce a new \$50,000 challenge from a long- time Palm Island family. This match challenge is being made in the hope of encouraging other residents of Palm Island and the Cape Haze Peninsula to make a donation toward the Mercabo purchase.

“The protection of this large parcel is important to everyone who lives in, works in or visits our unique paradise, and everyone should do what they can to support this important effort,” said Nichols.

GICIA has also received a donation of a beautiful piece of Florida nature art from Rick and Karen Hugger. The Gregg Murray original color scratchboard of a Florida gray fox will be auctioned off in a silent/closed email bid process.

From Friday, Jan. 15 until 4 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 25, GICIA will welcome bids via email, sent to GICIA@embarqmail.com. With a closed bid process, bidders are not notified of where their bid stands. However, everyone who emails a bid will be informed on January 25 via email of the winning bid.

All proceeds will go toward the purchase of the Mercabo site.

The scratchboard original will be displayed at the Buyers Resource Office, located in Suite 5 of the Railroad Depot building.

The 30-acre Mercabo site is located at the entrance to the Boca Grande Causeway. With Charlotte County in the process of amending its Comprehensive Plan in a way that significantly weakens protections against high-density development within the Coastal High Hazard Area, it is vital that we acquire the property to ensure its protection.

The GICIA'S vision for this property is to create a preserve by removing the buildings and creating and enhancing much needed habitat for native birds, animals and marine life. The goal for the property is to officially add it to the GICIA Land Conservancy holdings and protect it in perpetuity.

To make a donation, please stop by or call the GICIA office, 964-2667.

The GICIA Board and staff thank the Boca Grande Community for their tremendous support of this very important acquisition.

POSTED BY [MARCY SHORTUSE](#)

Marcy Shortuse is the editor of the Boca Beacon, and has been with the paper since 2007. She is also editor of the Boca Beacon's sister publication, Gasparilla Magazine. She has more than 20



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