

Avow support groups are open to all, and there is no cost to attend. Most Avow services are covered by Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance, and there is typically no cost to the patient or family.

“We don’t turn anyone away,” said Stoll. Outreach services are provided in communities including Marco Island, Goodland, Everglades City, Chokoloskee, and even to homeless people living in the woods.

One of Avow’s most visible outreach programs is the annual Avow Butterfly Release, held each April at Cambier Park for 20 years. At the butterfly release, families and loved ones of the deceased have the chance to sponsor a butterfly and see it released along with over a thousand others when the roof and walls are removed from the big screen house next to the bandshell at the ceremony’s conclusion.

At the most recent ceremony on April 6, over 650 of the butterflies were sponsored by families to commemorate a loved one. For the emotional climax of the ceremony, a series of speakers read the long list of names of those being honored and remembered. Finally, volunteers carefully peeled the screen panels off the PVC frame, and like the people on the ground, the butterflies headed off into an uncertain but hopeful future.

Fundraising is a constant need. Avow operates Avow Treasures resale shop in North Naples and receives grants from groups, including the Naples Winter Wine Festival. Longtime Marco Island attorney Patrick Neale is the secretary for the board of directors for Avow and the Avow Foundation. Those who contribute their time as volunteers are valued as much as financial donors.

Avow cares not only for those who are terminally ill but also for their families, for those who have serious and chronic illnesses, or who have suffered great loss.

“You never truly get over the loss of a loved one. But you always have their memories,” said Roa. Speaking of grief, songwriter Willie Nelson put it to music – “it’s not something you get over, it’s something you get through.”

In one form or another, Avow has helped ease the end-of-life experience for thousands in Collier County. To learn more about Avow services, volunteer, or contribute to Avow, call 239-261-4404 or go online to [avowcares.org](http://avowcares.org).



Solana Calix, left, and Mag Day exemplify the smiling faces found throughout the Avow offices.



A kid-friendly exam room.

SEA TURTLE REPORT

# Overnight Beach Chairs on Marco Block Nesting Sea Turtle

By Maria Lamb

What happens when a nesting loggerhead comes ashore and encounters large obstacles such as beach furniture? The encounter may cause them to crawl back to the water without depositing their eggs. For the week of May 7th to the 13th, eleven false crawls were recorded on Marco beaches.

According to Sea Turtle Monitor Tyler Beck, a row of beach loungers left overnight on the beach blocked a loggerhead from nesting as she came ashore early Mother’s Day morning. He reported this incident to Marco Code Enforcement and stated, “Tracks lead straight to the chairs and went back into the water. With false crawls like this, we call this an obstructed nesting attempt.”

According to the Sea Turtle Conservancy, there is also increasing documentation of nesting females becoming entrapped in beach furniture. Marco Island has specific rules during the Sea Turtle season that each night, hotels and beach vendors should remove all beach furni-



Tracks show that a Sea Turtle came up against the beach loungers and crawled back to the water. The incident was reported to Marco Island Police Department.



Submitted Photos  
A row of beach loungers blocked a sea turtle from nesting causing a false crawl on Mother’s Day morning.



Photo by Mike Herron, Mote Marine  
This Mote Marine photo shows how a sea turtle can get trapped inside a beach chair.

## Sea Turtle Activity Update May 7 - 13, 2024

Beach	Nests		False Crawls		Hatched Nests		
	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	Disoriented
Barefoot	19	12	9	20	0	0	0
Delnor Wiggins	2	5	0	14	0	0	0
Vanderbilt	15	21	18	33	0	0	0
Parkshore	7	3	10	25	0	0	0
City of Naples	13	16	20	23	0	0	0
Keewaydin Is.	19	14	19	19	0	0	0
Sea Oat Island	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marco Island	7	1	11	11	0	0	0
Kice and Cape Romano	11	3	9	11	0	0	0
10,000 Islands	8	6	7	6	0	0	0
Collier County Totals	102	81	103	162	0	0	0

To report dead, injured or disoriented sea turtles on Marco call 239-289-9736 or 239-289-9687

ture from the beach by 9:00 PM and return them back to the beach in the morning only after the sea turtle monitors or surveyors have given the “all clear.”

Let’s keep Marco’s beach sea turtle

friendly – fill in all holes before you leave the beach and remove all furniture from the beach by 9:00 PM through October 31st.

# The Next Chapter

## Former MIA Student Pursues Graduate Degree

By Steve Stefanides

As high school seniors approach their 2024 graduation, let’s look back to past graduates to see where they are today. One such recent graduate of the Marco Island Academy that we found in 2018 was Chelsea Casabona.

Ms. Casabona went to Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida, after graduating from Marco Island Academy in 2018, where she undertook studies in International Affairs and Political Science during her four years there. She graduated with degrees in both areas of studies and a minor in film. She is now in a master’s program and will graduate in August with a master’s in journalism – New Media Journalism.

Casabona thanked community organizations for the financial assistance provided to her, including the Rotary Club of Marco Island, the Marco Island Police Foundation, The Professional Education Association (PEO), and the Florida’s Bright Futures Scholarship and Grants Programs, among many others she is eternally grateful for. “If it wasn’t for the scholarship programs offered at the local level, many well-deserving youth would not have the resources to follow their dreams,” said Casabona. and other students during



Chelsea Casabona. Submitted Photo

her undergraduate work at Florida State University.

Casabona complemented the Naples Council on World Affairs who sponsored her for a program called The Governor’s Institute of Vermont for Current Events and Youth Activism. Students from around the nation, as well as other countries, were there for over two weeks, immersed in an intensive discussion regarding world affairs. That experience opened her eyes to global issues during

her years in high school, creating her interest in international affairs and the areas surrounding politics in general.

It was her experience with the Naples Council on World Affairs that created a friendship with Debra Doyle, a group member who she describes as a mentor. “She is really incredible,” said Casabona in describing that relationship and the impact on her interest.

She also credits her experience with the faculty at MIA - Lori Galiana, her Social Studies Teacher, who provided her with an initial interest in political science, and English teacher Keith Scalia, who impressed upon her the need to layout and create a narrative to communicate the story you want to tell.

Today, Casabona is pursuing her master’s in journalism - documentary filmmaking. As part of that, she is doing a documentary on a young blind Filipino American woman’s journey and pursuing her dream of the Gold Medal in the 2024 Paralympics in Paris, France.

This is her second Paralympics, as she aims to become the first American woman to bring home the gold in para-judo.

The Casabona family is looking forward to Chelsea’s graduation in August and moving on to the next chapter in her life.