

# "And to All, a Good Arf, Arf, and Meow!!!"

Story by Rachel Peine/photos by Rich Peine

When Santa's sleigh landed on the roof of Keys Kritters In Key Largo, there were no milk and cookies waiting. Instead, there were pina colodas and candy canes, with an eager crowd sampling the treats.

After shaking his head a few times, Santa settled into a comfortable chair amid the palm trees, ready to hear Christmas wishes from dogs, cats, birds, and even a bright green baby iguana.

People came from Key Largo, Ocean Reef, even Homestead, waiting their turn and enjoying the free pina colodas. There was even a gift bag of treats to take home.

Since Keys Kritters owner, Robby started offering pet pictures with Santa over ten years ago, he's seen chickens, turtles, snakes, and even a skunk lining up to sit on

Santa's lap. The program has grown in numbers every year, which creates benefits far beyond the cute picture of Fluffy in his Santa hat. Robby donates 100% of the proceeds plus a 200% match to the third grade class at Key Largo School, where Lisa Taylor's "Wild Kingdom" teaches kids to appreciate their furry, feathered, and finny friends.

Kids can help take care of the hamsters, hedgehogs and fish that live in the "Kingdom," and those kids who do really well have the reward of taking a friend home for the summer.

"Santa" Bob donates his time for this event, and he looks forward to it each year. He's been growing that beard since taking on this labor of love, so if you tug on it, you'll find out it's real.



Right: Zoe Warren (left), with Basil, a 5 year old green-cheeked parrot and her sister Mackenzie holding Ziggy the iguana, who's about 6 months old. The Warrens bought Basil from Keys Kritters, and say Basil is the "best bird ever!"

*If you missed "Pets and Pina Colodas" in 2006 you only have 11 months until it's here again. So mark your calendar and get Fluffy a new sweater and hair bow. We thank Robby and Santa for bringing the holiday "spirits" to one and all!*

Right: Keys Kritters owner Robby Majeska taste tested the event's libations.



Left: The Noskes brought their Shi-tzu Micki to pose for a photo with Santa. Micki enjoyed meeting Santa and said, "Only in the keys...Arf! Arf!"

## Big Seas and Wind for Key Largo Steeplechase

Story and photo by Rick White

Miami sailors won the top two spots of the 22nd Annual Key Largo Steeplechase sail-boat race for beach catamarans the weekend of December, 16 and 17.

Kenny Pierce of Miami teamed up with John Casey of Orlando and won first to finish and first on handicap rating. Also from Miami were two youngsters that recently won the US Sailing Youth Championships. Michael Siau and Lindsay Young were sailing a Hobie 16 and held a 45-minute lead the first day, but did not fair as well on the second day and had to settle for 2nd place. Third place went to brothers from Massachusetts, Chris and Nate Titcomb. Fourth place was Mike Krantz and David Lennard from South Carolina, and Fifth was Jake Kohl and Frank Moore also from South Carolina.

The race begins in Barnes Sound at the mouth of Jewfish Creek, goes north to Angelfish Creek, crosses over to the Atlantic side of the islands, then turns south to a beach near Caloosa Cove. The next day the boats go south to Channel Five Bridge, back up the IntraCoastal to finish

off at Key Largo Boating and Watersports.

The race is a two-day, 110-mile trek that attracts racing sailors from around the country and world. However, probably due to a cold front that crashed through, and the forecast of big winds and seas the fleet was much smaller this year than normal - only eighteen boats registered. Usually this race draws well over 40.

On Saturday morning there were a lot of sailors sitting around listening intently to their weather radios and not liking what they were hearing - northeast winds of 20-25 knots and gusty. By starting time, only ten boats departed. Of those only seven made it to the finish line after the first day.

The host for the sailors was Key Largo Boating and Watersports at Mile Marker 104, where the sailors were greeted with Sloppy Joe's after their adventure. Caribbean Watersports located at the Key Largo Grande Resort provided trophies, and Calvert Sails of Islamorada supplied drinks. Chip Short of Key Largo supplied the starting boat.



John Casey and Kenny Pierce flew to a big lead on the second day.

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