Recovery and Restoration

In October, Hurricane Michael devastated many in our community and especially our neighbors to the east in Bay, Washington, Jackson, Holmes, and Gulf counties. Although our small part of the world in South Walton may not suffer the depth of destruction our neighboring counties experienced, we have all been affected by it.

The leadership of the Seaside Institute contracted with FEMA expert Laura Clemens of Collaborative Communities Management Company, LLC. We had the opportunity to tour some of the more devastated areas. Seeing the destruction first hand has left an indelible impression on each of us along with the realization that we must do more than raise money.

What we at the Seaside Institute learned is just how much is not known, on how to recover after a disaster. The “rules” of recovery are not simple and unfortunately, our need to return to a sense of normalcy is counter to how recovery is framed in reality. Our determination to get back to normal is much more than repairing the damage to buildings and roads. It’s fixing the nuances of insurance, finances and government support. Finding housing, food and clothing, filling out forms and getting medications can be challenging on a good day so while you are in shock after losing must, if not all of what you own. Sadly finding some sense of normalcy in a situation that is anything but normal can be more stressful than the main event itself.

As a society we are generally reactive. We don’t like to think about unpleasant events that may affect us so significantly. Someone must though, otherwise, those in the immediacy of the destruction will not recover fully, if at all. Regardless of the challenges, we are not alone. Events such as this tend to bring people together; through damage and recovery, many are moved to aid our neighbors and have done so.

The Seaside Institute created the Hurricane Michael Relief Fund and has raised significant funds from the community, our partners and members. Thank you to all who have donated for your generosity. All the money raised (less credit card fees) is going directly to local families to help in rebuilding homes that have been damaged so that families have a safe place to live.

Hurricane Michael has disrupted lives, but we continue to move forward.

Let’s Talk

On Dec. 4, Jay Walljasper spoke on his work “All That We Share.” His topic is one that adds a dimension to the definition of community. The amenities and ambiances that bring people together; an award-winning writer, popular speaker, veteran communications specialist and authority on vital communities, Jay Walljasper shared stories and strategies that inspire us to make changes in our lives, our hometowns and the world. Even in the age of big data, storytelling is still the best way to grab people’s attention and activate their imaginations. More than 70 people from the 30A community registered for the event. It was an informative evening for all.

Aging With Grace

The Seaside Institute continued with the Aging With Grace Symposium Oct. 18-19. This day symposium included nine notable speakers focused on social and design needs for aging adults 55 years of age and greater. The Seaside Institute represented the AARP, Health Care Community Design, and more.

The Latest News of the Seaside Institute

Each year, the Seaside Institute hosts the Seaside Prize Weekend, which honors those who design the environments in which we live. It allows us to define our quality of life through innovative designs, buildings, and roads. The 2019 winners of the Seaside Prize are known for their designs of homes and communities shaping the way we live.

We would like to congratulate and introduce you to our 2019 Seaside Prize winners:

Thomas Christ, principal architect of Chip & Associates of Santa Rosa Beach, Chip has had a significant impact on our area designing more than 90 homes and communities Seaside and has won many design awards along the way. In addition, Tom Christ has contributed his work to the communities of Alys Beach, Rosemary Beach, WaterColor and WaterSound.

Richard Gibbs is an experienced architect, urbanist and preservationist. Leaving a significant impact on our area both as a designer and the town architect of Seaside. His work includes restoration of old homes and new designs that easily integrate into historic sites and can be seen in Seaside, Rosemary Beach, Deer Lake and Brewer Point in Rockport, Maine.

John Massengale has won awards for architecture, urbanism, natural history and historic preservation. He is a founding member of the Congress for New Urbanism and has designed the Savannah Sands house in Seaside. His commitment to his craft is exemplified in his work as architect, author, and professor for Notre Dame and the University of Miami.

Derrick Smith is the principal architect at A+ Architects and Planners in Miami Florida. Earning a Master of Architecture degree from Harvard University and a Bachelor of Architecture from University of Miami, Smith is a leader in architectural and sustainable design, as well as comprehensive planning. His work includes designing 10 homes in Seaside such as Fourth of July, Marisol and Summertime, as well as being the town architect in 1985.

Charles “Chip” Warren is an award-winning architect based in New York. His work includes award-winning designs across the United States, including Natchez Park in Seaside. He also served as Seaside’s town architect and taught at Michigan’s College of Architecture and Urban Planning. Chip has authored a number of books on Architecture and his work.

Each of these award-winning architects has left their indelible mark on our world through their work, leadership, and contributions to education in the arts and craft of architecture.

The 27th Annual Seaside Prize Weekend begins on Feb. 22 with seminars, lectures, tours and awards dinner sure to please. Join us as we celebrate community and improved quality of life. Walkable, sustainable and connected communities are the future for a quality lifestyle not just for some but for all. We invite you to be part of our future, this future, your future. To make your reservations, go to seasideinstitute.org/seasideprize019. ±

The Seaside Institute works your- mund in bring people together and build great communities. Through education, innovation, the arts and engaging our community, we are working to improve the quality of life for families and individuals within Seaside as well as nationally and globally, while at the same time creating an innovative design that not only enhances the beauty of our environment but, preserves it as a legacy for future generations.