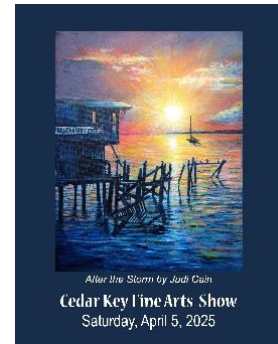


Coming Back... After the Storm

When Judi Cain was notified last September that she won the 2025 Old Celebration of the Arts Design Contest she did not know how poignant that decision would be, and neither did the Cedar Key Arts Center Board who coordinates the event. Her acrylic painting was titled *After the Storm*.



The damage to Cedar Key caused by Hurricane Helene on September 26 was extensive. Popular shops and restaurants on Dock Street were severely damaged, businesses along historic second street were flooded, homes were lost and hearts were broken. Judi Cain's was one of those hearts. From her first visit to Cedar Key over 50 years ago through her time as an artist in the Cedar Keyhole Artist Co-op, Judi says "She always wanted to live there." Coming in from Gainesville early to work or staying late to walk around the town she loved, she took pictures for future paintings. One of them, a black and white photo she took several years after the fire at Coconuts on Dock Street, inspired her winning artwork. Like others, Judi, who had recently moved to West Virginia to be near family, watched the news and cried.

When the Cedar Key Arts Center board met several weeks after the Hurricane, concerns were raised about whether Cedar Key would be able to host the annual spring arts festival - the Old Florida Celebration of the Arts - which had celebrated its 60th Anniversary in 2024. However, by the November board meeting the resilient island community was showing signs of coming back as a few shops and restaurants began to reopen, even as the clean-up continued. By December the path was clear. The community of Cedar Key needed to have the festival, but the board would need to reimagine the event in a way that would bring visitors to the town without overwhelming it as rebuilding continued.

The decision was made to modify the festival by hosting a one-day event with a smaller number of juried artists calling it the Cedar Key Fine Arts Show. The reputation of Cedar Key's Old Florida Celebration of the Arts has grown since returning to a juried fine arts event in 2007, and its popularity with artists and art enthusiasts has been recognized nationally. It is that reputation that makes the 2025 event possible as a talented group of artists in multiple disciplines, who have come to love Cedar Key, have committed to being part of the show even though amenities will be limited and there will be no prize money. The hope is that others who also love Cedar Key and love art will join in supporting Cedar Key, April 5, 2025, as it works to come back "*After the Storm.*"

In addition, the Arts Center, whose mission is to nurture and encourage the arts, is coordinating several workshops or "Creative Connections" every other weekend beginning in January. These will include two Art in the Garden shows (February 1st and March 1st) featuring local artists impacted by the hurricane. You can find out more about these opportunities to visit Cedar Key on the Center's website at www.CedarKeyArtsCenter.org