

House sale to benefit Military Heritage Museum

Nancy J. Semon, Staff Writer, Daily Sun, 1/14/2022

The Military Heritage Museum, which rents space from Fishermen's Village, might soon get a home of its own.

Museum Executive Director Gary Butler announced that two volunteers are giving a gift that, "will help the museum preserve our military heritage for years to come."

Punta Gorda residents Dave Martens and Su Miscia have donated a home in Burnt Store Isles to the museum. It resides on a canal and has its own pool. Martens and Miscia first walked in as visitors to the museum but became volunteers.

The house will be sold, and its proceeds used toward the purchase of a building for the museum, Butler said. The home, estimated to be worth more than \$800,000 on [zillow.com](https://www.zillow.com), is being prepared to be shown.

A "friend of the museum" who is also a real estate broker, is charging a "nominal commission fee" to list and sell the home, he added.



The three-bedroom, two-bath residence is at 529 La Caruna Court in Burnt Store Isles. It is 2,160 square feet and was built in 2002.

Martens and Miscia had two stipulations for use of the funds:

- A building will be purchased as a permanent home for the museum and a restricted building endowment for fundraising will be established; and
- The endowment would be set up to provide additional income to ensure the museum can



continue its present programs and activities, including events in the Gulf Theater, veteran advocacy, and youth education.



The museum’s “Preserving Our Heritage Campaign” is underway to raise a minimum of \$500,000 in order to receive the additional match of \$500,000 set aside by the donors, Butler said.

A team of the museum’s board members, advisory committee members, staff and other museum supporters is being assembled “to lead the campaign to a successful conclusion,” said Butler, adding that the goal is to complete the campaign within two years.

Butler emphasized the museum has “a great relationship with our landlord with a generous lease.” He said the donors would want the museum to remain in its current location permanently should the building’s owners decide to sell.

He said the first choice would be to remain in place and buy the building it now occupies.

The museum occupies more than 17,000 square feet of space and houses a multitude of collections and exhibits.

He said the museum has a few other options as well.

Martens and Miscia became involved as volunteers with the museum in 2019 after several visits, Butler said.

After attending Veterans Day events, Martens learned about the theater’s need for renovations and technology upgrades, and two weeks later he and Miscia donated \$100,000 for the necessary renovations and upgrades.

A 20-year Air Force veteran, Martens also serves on the museum’s board of directors. Miscia has served as the museum’s community ambassador for the past two years, representing the museum at various community events. She has also been responsible for bringing groups and visitors to the museum.

Currently, the two serve as the museum’s hospitality co-chairs.

Miscia said that she and Martens, her partner of more than two decades, decided to donate the house “because we wanted to see where our money was going while we were still alive, and how it helps others.”

Miscia, who grew up in New Jersey, and Dave, who is a graduate of Charlotte High School, were snowbirds for many years until they became permanent residents of Burnt Store Isles several years ago.

Having no children — Marten’s son, a member of the military, has died — they wanted to create a legacy now rather than later, she explained.

“When we sold our big house on the water in New Jersey, we bought the house in Burnt Store Isles.”

But they decided the maintenance and high ceilings were more than they wanted in retirement, so they bought a condo and rented out the house.

When the lease was up, they decided to gift the house to the Military Heritage Museum, she said.

Miscia formerly worked as a social worker, owned a real estate franchise, and retired as a paramedic in New Jersey.

She said she got involved in the museum through Martens, who comes from a large, extended family with many military members, both former and present.

“I came to respect the military through Dave,” she said.

Among her many volunteer duties was scrubbing down the floors at the museum during the pandemic, she related.

Butler said it is expected the sale of the house will generate most of the funds for both the initial endowment fund and the funds set aside to be matched.

Inquiries regarding the house should be directed to Butler at 941-575-9002.