

LOCAL

Climate Champions to be honored by CAC for contributions and service to environment

Sarasota Herald-Tribune

Published 6:04 a.m. ET Jan. 25, 2024 | Updated 6:04 a.m. ET Jan. 25, 2024

The Climate Adaptation Center will celebrate five of Southwest Florida's most influential and accomplished contributors to the cause of protecting the environment at the second annual Climate Champion Awards Ceremony on Feb. 15 at Michael's on East.

The event will be hosted by Climate Adaptation Center CEO Bob Bunting and CAC Director Elizabeth Moore. The honorees were nominated by the community.

The Climate Champions:

- **David Tomasko:** Tomasko is executive director of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program. The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program oversees diagnostic studies on the bay's health and works with local, state and federal agencies and local stakeholders to develop and implement projects and programs aimed at restoring the health of Sarasota Bay. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection recently proposed Sarasota Bay for "de-listing" for water quality impairments from nutrient enrichment.
- **Jessica Meszaros:** Since 2012, Meszaros has been a voice on public radio stations in Miami, Fort Myers, and now Tampa. Meszaros is a climate and environment reporter for WUSF and a member of National Public Radio's Climate Desk. In her role as environment and climate reporter, Meszaros' goal is to let community members know what's going on in their backyard and how their neighbors are being affected.
- **Marshall Gobuty:** Global Network for Zero adviser Gobuty is nationally recognized as a pioneer in net zero home development. An entrepreneur, Gobuty is the founder and managing partner of Pearl Homes, a builder of sustainable, affordable, energy-efficient single- and multifamily communities throughout Florida and California. His portfolio includes Mirabella, a community of 160 sustainable homes in Bradenton and one of the first

communities on a production scale to achieve LEED Platinum certification. Gobuty was named “Power Builder of the Year” by the U.S. Green Building Council four years in a row (2016-19) and again in 2023.

- **Steve Newborn:** Newborn has been a reporter for WUSF for more than two decades, covering a wide range of issues, with a focus on the environment. Newborn is particularly proud of his work publicizing the need for a wildlife corridor to connect what could become isolated patches of preserved areas, allowing wildlife such as the Florida panther and black bear to migrate and not become inbred. He covered the Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition on their inaugural trip in 2012, from their start at the southern tip of the Everglades through the heart of the state, north to the Okefenokee Swamp. Thanks to the work of the Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation, covered by Newborn and others, the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act was signed into law in 2021 with unanimous bipartisan support by the Florida legislature.

- **Jennifer O. Rominiecki:** Rominiecki began her tenure as president and CEO of Marie Selby Botanical Gardens in February 2015. Since arriving, she has repositioned the institution as The Living Museum, securing a trademark from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Rominiecki has overseen the creation of the Selby Gardens’ Strategic Plans and a Master Site Plan for which more than \$57 million has been raised. Rominiecki is a member of Leadership Florida Cornerstone Class XXXVI and the International Women’s Forum Florida Suncoast Chapter. In 2023, Florida Trend Magazine named Rominiecki to the Florida 500, a list of Florida’s most influential business leaders.

For more information and tickets, visit theclimateadaptationcenter.org.

Submitted by Melanie Ringle

