

The Lighthouse

Matecumbe United Methodist Church
"Bringing the Light of Jesus Christ to Our Islands"

Matecumbe United Methodist Church

E-mail - matumc@bellsouth.net

Website – matecumbeumc.org

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Gail Gargano

A Special Member of the Church Family



Gail Gargano was born and raised in the Bronx in New York City, living in a tall brick structure with three apartments: one for her grandparents, one for her uncle and one where she lived with her parents and her older brother. Her parents sent Gail and her brother to a Catholic School, elementary through high school, certain the two would benefit from the discipline provided by the nuns.

Then it was on to the City University, the huge public university system of New York City. The university counts thirteen Nobel Prize winners and twenty-four MacArthur Fellows among its alumni. But here in Islamorada, the alum we love best is Gail Gargano, who graduated with a degree in math.

After graduation, Gail moved with her parents to Boca Raton in 1973. She spent two years as bookkeeper for a group of doctors, then joined an accountant and learned public accounting over the next few years.

Eventually Gail got a job as an accountant for the small city of Margate in Broward County. As Margate

grew, so did Gail's responsibilities. Before she knew it, she was the Director of Finance for the city. And that's where Gail stayed until she retired with 35 years of service with Margate.

Gail was a young retiree and having devoted so much of her life to her municipal job, she had developed few outside interests but had many plans for life after retirement. Her parents had died years before and so she had only her brother, his wife and their daughters as family.

Well not really. She had an adopted family who lived in Islamorada, as Chris Zeher and her kids and grand-kids were like family to Gail. Gail and Chris met back in 1969 at college and had remained close friends for decades.

Gail rented a home for two months in Port Antigua just to try out the Florida Keys. The house was right next door to Arlene Martin. Arlene introduced Gail to the Matecumbe Methodist stain glass group. And Gail loved the comradarie. She was hooked. Soon she bought a condo in Islamorada where she met up with a new neighbor, Barbara Haudenschild, who insisted Gail accompany her to Sunday church services.

It hadn't taken long at all for Gail's family list to grow by leaps and bounds. She now had a wonderful church family that meant the world to her.

Shortly after moving to Islamorada, Gail was diagnosed with kidney cancer. One of the most memorable events of her life was standing with church members in a circle as they prayed for Gail, giving her strength and allowing her to understand the importance of her new found family of church friends.

A church family that dearly loves Gail Gargano!