



FLORIDA LEAGUE OF CITIES

301 S. Bronough St., Suite 300 • Post Office Box 1757 • Tallahassee, FL 32302-1757
850.222.9684 • Fax: 850.222.3806 • Website: flcities.com

Sanibel Councilmember Holly D. Smith Named 2023 Municipal Official of the Year

Florida League of Cities presents Holly D. Smith with the 2023 E. Harris Drew Municipal Official Lifetime Achievement Award

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 18, 2023

CONTACT: Kelli Gemmer

kgemmer@flcities.com / 850.701.3606

TALLAHASSEE, FL – The **Florida League of Cities (FLC)**, the united voice for Florida’s municipal governments, announced that **City of Sanibel Councilmember Holly D. Smith** is this year’s recipient of the League’s prestigious E. Harris Drew Municipal Official Lifetime Achievement Award.

Presented annually, this award is named for Supreme Court Justice E. Harris Drew, the man who coined the League’s motto: “Local self-government, the key to American democracy.” The award recognizes and honors local elected officials who have made lasting and worthwhile contributions to the citizens of Florida through their efforts and dedication in the performance of their duties at the local level.

“I am incredibly honored to have received this award,” said Smith. “I don’t hold this alone. There were so many people that worked with us, for us, beside us and ran to us in our City’s greatest time of need. I will be forever grateful for the love our island felt and feels. We have a long road ahead. My position as Mayor in the aftermath of the storm was to lead and to keep our citizens, as well as those from all over who love our island, informed daily. I simply did the very best job I could to that end.”

Smith has served on the City Council for six years and held the positions of Councilmember and Vice Mayor before her appointment as Mayor in March 2021. She was Mayor when Hurricane Ian made landfall on Sanibel on September 28, 2022. A storm surge of 8 to 15 feet washed over the entire City. Immediately following the storm, she demonstrated calm and effective leadership in the face of extreme crisis.

The causeway that connects the island community of Sanibel to the mainland of Lee County was breached in five places, and boats were the only access to the island. As city staff worked to secure boat access to the island, Smith spoke to Governor Ron DeSantis concerning the breach and the catastrophic damage to residential and commercial property on Sanibel. During that call, Smith explained the dire conditions: water, sewer and electric utilities were out of service, with nearly 100% of electric utility poles destroyed.

When the Governor met with her and viewed the damage from a helicopter, he immediately put into action a plan to reconstruct the breached section of the causeway. On October 12, just 14 days after Hurricane Ian made landfall, nearly 300 utility line trucks drove over the causeway after sufficient repairs were made to grant them access. On October 20, the causeway opened to general traffic.

Smith's local community and business commitment spans nearly 35 years in the Sanibel area and across state and federal levels.

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Founded in 1922, the Florida League of Cities is the united voice for Florida's municipal governments. Its goals are to promote local self-government and serve the needs of Florida's cities, which are formed and governed by their citizens. The League believes in "Local Voices Making Local Choices," which focuses on the impact citizens and city leaders have in improving Florida's communities. For more information, visit flcities.com.