



FreedomWaters
Foundation

2024 Impact Report



John Robert Weller

Co-Founder of Freedom Waters Foundation

March 7, 1945 - October 13, 2024

John Weller's Obituary 1945 - 2024

Written By his daughter, Clancy MacDonald

John Robert Weller was born on March 7, 1945, in Manhattan and peacefully passed away on October 13, 2024, in Jupiter, Florida. His final days were spent surrounded by family and friends, sharing stories and happy memories, and listening to his favorite Doo Wop and John Denver music.

Growing up in New York City and Cedarhurst, Long Island, NY, John developed a profound connection with both land and sea from a very young age. He spent countless hours with friends watching offshore boat racing, restoring cars and row boats to resell, and fostering a passion for giving back. At a young age, he founded his first non-profit, All-Together, which aimed to provide underprivileged children the opportunity to spend two weeks each summer with a suburban family, opening doors to a brighter future.

After exploring advertising sales, John's love for the sea beckoned him back. With his former wife Kate, they decided to buy a sailboat, quit their jobs, and sail to the South Pacific (what could go wrong?!). When a storm brought them into the Jupiter Inlet, John met his idol, famed offshore boat racing legend Dick Bertram, a chance encounter that would change the course of his life. Bertram recruited John to sell boats for Richard Bertram & Company Yachts, yielding an instant success. John became their top broker 26 times and remained a loyal friend and dedicated professional.

John's philanthropic spirit continued with the inception of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Broward County Annual Fishing Tournament 41 years ago.

Sailing remained a lifelong passion. John spent summers cruising the Abacos with his family on their beloved 33' Morgan Out-islander sailboat 'Shannon C', named after his daughter. He always said "In all the years we've owned the boat we've never spent one night aboard tied to a dock." He enjoyed being out at anchor to experience the beauty and adventure of the islands. John's love for boats led to a diverse collection, from Abaco dinghies to his cherished CatBoat sailboat with some Bertrams and Boston Whalers mixed in between. He'd often joke "All together, we probably have over a hundred feet of boat if you put them all in a line" and then quickly add, "Nobody ever accused me of being too smart."

John always loved a varnish project on his collection of boats and he also took great pride in washing and maintaining his many cherished cars and motorcycles, one of his favorites being their 1954 Buick named 'Bert', which he lovingly referred to as 'the family dog'. His daughter Clancy not only came home from the hospital in Bert when she was born but also learned to drive on it. He always reminded everyone, "If you take care of a car, it will

last you 200,000-300,000 miles." His dedication to car maintenance kept everyone on their toes, and they loved him for it.

Motorcycle riding was another passion of John's and he loved getting out onto the backroads of America. He took pride in the many thousands of miles he covered cross-country on his Harley Davidson Road King Classic. He was also an avid triathlete, continuing to exercise daily, often twice a day, until the very end. John believed in good health and dedicated his life to maintaining it.

In 2005, John was diagnosed with a very rare form of cancer, with only 600 cases in the world. He miraculously overcame it, no doubt due in part to his positive attitude and sheer determination. He was treated by the incredible doctors at M.D. Anderson in Houston, Texas, for whom we are forever grateful. John always made it a point to help anyone he knew who was diagnosed with cancer, ensuring they could get to Houston for treatment. He loved helping his friends and always remarked that he wasn't a salesman, but rather a friend maker.

Following his cancer diagnosis, John co-founded the Freedom Waters Foundation alongside Debra Frenkel in 2006. His dream of taking children battling life-threatening illnesses out on yachts became a reality. The foundation also includes adaptive sailing programs and outings for veterans.

John is survived by his daughter Clancy, son-in-law A.J., and two granddaughters, Claire (9) and Annabel (5), who brought him so much joy, as well as many lifelong friends who became like family.

As we celebrate the life of John Weller, we remember a man whose love for the sea translated into tangible progress and prosperity for the people and places he touched. His enduring legacy serves as a testament to the difference one dedicated individual can make. John's life was a voyage filled with adventure, discovery, and devotion to the waters he called home. He left a profound impact on the marine industry in Broward and Palm Beach Counties and beyond, leaving behind a legacy that resonates among those who knew him and the communities he served.

May his spirit forever sail the seas he loved, and may his memory continue to be a blessing to his family and a beacon of dedication and innovation for generations to come.

Celebration of Life will be held on Friday, November 22, 2024, 4- 7pm at Points of America, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

His daughter, Clancy and her husband, AJ MacDonald have chosen to honor John with contributions to support Freedom Waters Foundation.



Change is Inevitable

Ahoy, Freedom Waters Foundation Family and Friends,
Flowing and Growing through Change
Life happens and change is inevitable.

I have had the privilege and honor to know John Weller, my Co-Founder for over 25 years. Although we can no longer share a hug or tease each other over the phone, he is with me daily and always will be in my heart as I know he is with many. He is well woven into all of us. I am forever grateful that we have shared in life's journey and were able to create Freedom Waters Foundation. So, on behalf of all, John, thank you. We love you!

Clancy MacDonald, John's daughter, captured John so well in his obituary. If you didn't know him personally, please enjoy getting to know him through her wonderful tribute.

Life Happens and change is inevitable.

John passing, hurricanes coming and going, Freedom Waters Foundation continues on and serves many, and grateful to all who continue to support Freedom Waters Foundation's programs.

We continue to flow with life and in it - Sharing Freedom and Joy on and off the Water.

I am so proud and excited to report that in 2024, with three full-time, two part-time employees and over 600 volunteers, by the end of the year, we will have provided over 4600 on the water experiences for children and adults with disabilities, life threatening illnesses, youth at risk and veterans.

Providing therapeutic boat outings throughout south Florida, west and east coast, and a weekend on Lake Monroe in Indiana and a weekend on Lake Lanier in Georgia, our volunteer boat owners, volunteers and participants have come together to share in relaxing, enriching, caring experiences, that leave smiles and memories in their wake.

In Georgia, we provided almost 700 on the water experiences in one weekend and I was asked if it was special. I paused in thought and responded, "well, they (all boat outings) are special, but I guess bringing almost 700 people together in one weekend who didn't know one another and they all came with the same loving hearts and had a wonderful time with no incidences, that's pretty special."

I am honored to be the Executive Director of this organization for the past almost 19 years. Each person that comes to and through Freedom Waters Foundation is a family member and leaves their mark. I, and I know John was too, grateful to all the Board members, volunteers, boat owners, donors and participants who have made this organization the successful, loving family that it is.

On behalf of the Board and the staff, we look forward to continuing to improve the organization so that we can continue to enhance the well-being of all the participants we serve.

Thank you for joining us in Sharing Freedom and Joy on and off the Water!
Together, we make it happen for others!

Debra S. Frenkel, LCSW

Debra S. Frenkel, LCSW
Founder/Executive Director



Our Mission

To Enhance the well-being of children and adults with disabilities and veterans through therapeutic boating experiences.

Who We Serve

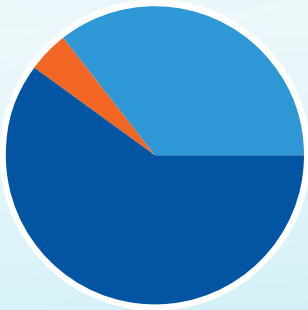
- Children and Individuals with Special Needs
- Children and Individuals with life-Threatening Illnesses
- Veterans and Active-Duty Military
- Youth At-Risk

Programs We Provide

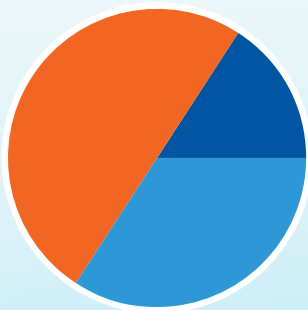
- "Weller Day" Boat Outings (local therapeutic boat outings)
- Adaptive Sailing and Regatta
- Fishing and Tournaments
- Veterans Programs

Our Impact

 2100 Children Served
  1750 Veterans Served
  825 Adults Served
 4675 water experiences
  218 Volunteered Vessels



- Donations
- Donations with Restrictions
- In Kind Donations



- Fundraising
- Programs
- Administration

REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Donations	\$582,481	Adminstration	\$328,383
Donations with Restrictions	\$41,525	Programs	\$477,336
In Kind Donations	\$342,575	Fundraising	\$148,538
TOTAL	\$966,581	TOTAL	\$954,257
		NET ASSETS	\$12,325

 3 full-time staff
  2 part-time staff
  600 volunteers



Agencies We Serve

PARTNER AGENCIES WE SUPPORT

SWFL **54** | SEFL **90** | GEORGIA **24** | INDIANA **25**

Florida West Coast - Collier and Lee Counties

- Able Academy
- Alzheimer's Support Group
- AVOW
- Barron Collier High School
- Best Buddies
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Cancer Alliance of Naples
- Candlelighters of SWFL
- Children's Network of Southwest Florida
- City of Naples Therapeutic Day Camp
- Collier County Parks and Recreation
- Collier County Public Schools
- Compassionate Families
- CPE Mental Health
- EasterSeals
- Expanding Possibilities
- FGCU's Veterans Program
- Galisano Children's Hospital
- God's Protected Harbor
- Golden Gate High School
- Gulf Coast Veterans and Friends
- Help a Diabetic Child
- Hodges University's Veterans Program
- Home Base
- Impossible dream
- JDRF
- Justin's Place
- LARC Adults
- Lee County Parks and Rec -Camp Allstar
- Lighthouse of Collier
- Masterpiece School for Autism
- My Autism Connection
- Nami
- Naples High School
- Naples Home Care
- Naples Women Shelter
- NCH
- New Horizons of Southwest Florida
- Pathways to Opportunity
- Project Build of SWFL
- Project Help
- Project Search
- YMCA
- Salvation Army
- Starability
- Sunshine Kids
- The Learning Room
- The Life Project
- Valerie's House
- Vet Center of Collier County
- Veterans Council
- Waterfront Warrior South
- YMCA
- Youth Haven

Georgia

- Aflac Cancer and Blood Disorders Center
- Ainsley's Angels
- American Legion Post 140
- American Legion
- Atlanta Veterans Association
- Bald Ridge Lodge
- Blaze Sports
- Cast for Kids
- Children's Healthcare of Atlanta
- Cure Childhood Cancer
- Dept of Veterans Services
- Legion Post 239
- Lekotek
- Parent to Parent
- Ronald McDonald House of Atlanta
- Special Olympics
- Team Red, White & Blue
- United Cerebral Palsy of Georgia
- Vet Center Atlanta
- Veterans Consulting Services
- Veterans Empowerment organization
- VFW Post 2681
- VFW Post 29
- Wounded Warriors

Florida East Coast - Broward & Palm Beach Counties

- American Legion #36 - SR 84
- American Legion Post 199
- American Legion Post 321 Cooper City
- Autism Center (Miami)
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Broward
- Bowtie Kids
- Boys & Girls Club
- Broward Health/Salah Foundation Children's Hospital
- ChildNet
- Community Foundation of Broward
- Deerfield Beach VA Clinic
- Deliver the Dream
- Epilepsy Alliance Florida
- Fort Lauderdale Vet Center
- Friendship Circle of Las Olas
- Gilda's Club South Florida
- Gold Coast Down Syndrome Organization
- Heart Gallery of Broward County
- Hollywood VA Clinic
- Irreverent Warriors
- JDRF - Broward
- Jessica June Kids Cancer Foundation
- Joe Dimaggio Childrens Hospital
- Jupiter Vet Center
- Kids Cancer Foundation
- Kids in Distress/Family Central
- Kids of Love Foundation
- Paley Institute (Kids Orthopedics)
- Palm Beach Children's Hospital
- Pediatric Oncology Support Team (POST)
- Pembroke Pines VA Clinic
- Pier Sixty-Six Marina
- Pompano Beach Vet Center
- Quantum House
- St. Mary's Hospital
- Stand Down House
- Student Support Services Veterans
- Superschool
- Tomorrow's Rainbow
- West Palm Beach VA Medical Center

Indiana

- Aspire Indiana
- CareSource
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Easterseals Crossroads
- HopeBridge
- Indiana National Guard
- Indiana State Reserve
- Indiana University
- Indianapolis Recruiting BN
- Indianapolis VA
- Indianapolis VA Medical Center
- Indy Honor Flight
- Indy Warrior Partnership
- InteCare
- Irreverent Warriors Indianapolis
- Joining Community Forces Indiana
- New Leaf Recreation
- Purple Heart Homes
- Special Olympics
- Veterans of Empowerment Organization
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Veterans Support Council (VSC) & the Mayors' Advisory Council for Veterans (MACV)
- VOA Community Outreach
- Wayne Township Veteran Service
- Wounded Warrior

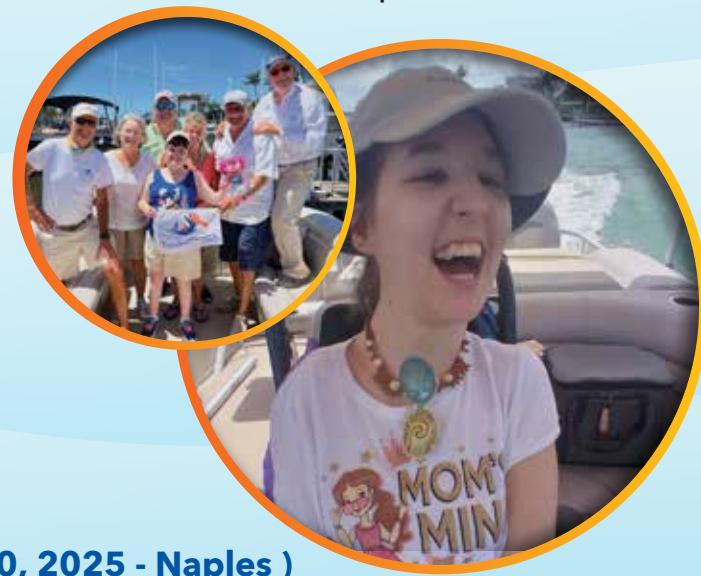


Thank You to Our Major 2024 Supporters

Allstate Benefits
American Legion of Florida
Autism Services Grant Council
Best in Boating
Beyond Juicery & Eatery
Black Dog Deli
Bluefoot Pirate Adventure
Brodie Hall Charitable Gift Fund
Carolina Catering Company
Construction Solutions Group
Davis Family Fund
FineMark National Bank & Trust
Fourwinds Lakeside Inn and Marina
Freedom Boat Club
Galley Gourmet, Inc.
Golden Corral
Gordon Food Service
GRMC Lending
International Yacht Brokers Association
JetRide Boat Club
Jim Moran Foundation
John Ullrich Charitable Trust
Keenan Marina
Kendra Scott LLC
Lacks Enterprises

Levi, Ray and Shoup Foundation
Macchia Family Foundation
Marine Industries Association
of Collier County
Marine Industries Association
of South Florida
MarineMax
Marine Specialties
MarineMax Yacht
M/Y Mariner III
Martin Docks
Memorial Healthcare System
N2N Homes
Natalie's Skin Solutions
Naples Fire Rescue
NBC Land Holdings, LLC
Old Naples Marina
Port Royale Marina
Pure Florida
RKH Properties
Robert & Virginia Hill Charitable Gift
Russell T. Stern Jr. Trust
Seminole Casino Immokalee
St. John's Episcopal Church
T.E.I. Marinas

The Dock at Crayton Cove
The Dykema Family Foundation
The Isles Community Foundation inc.
The League Club
The Naples Princess
The Wellington Group at Morgan Stanley
Vinnie's Wounded Veterans Fund
Winterfest Inc./ The Winterfest Foundation
Total Wine and More
Walmart
Walter Duke & Partners Inc.
Water Taxi Fort Lauderdale
Yamaha Motor Group



Mark Your Calendars!

***Kind Mariners Ball (- February 20, 2025 - Naples)**

Water Safety Family Fun Day - March 9, 2025 - Fort Lauderdale

Port Royale Marina Weller Days - September 6 & 7, 2025 - Georgia

Fourwinds Lakeside Inn and Marina Weller Days - August 16 & 17, 2025 - Indiana

How You Can Help

There are many ways to become involved with Freedom Waters Foundation, and each one ensures we can offer more participants a memorable experience on the water.

Donate or Sponsor

- Donate online
- Become a corporate sponsor
- Join the Treasured Friends monthly giving program
- Host a cultivating event, inviting your friends and family to learn about Freedom Waters Foundation
- Host a social media fundraiser
- Join us at the Kind Mariners Ball www.kindmarinersball.com

Please Give Today!

Thank you!



**Freedom &
Captain Happy
Thanks you!**

Volunteer

- Boat owners, share your love of being on the water and your vessels with us - all boat sizes are appreciated, and you can participate as often as you'd like
- Give a helping hand on an outing and interact with our participants
- Help maintain the boats, teach others to sail, or manage registration with our Adaptive Sailing program
- Teach participants how to bait hooks and catch and release fish with our fishing programs
- Come down to our office and assist with mailings, data entry, and more
- Capture beautiful memories for our participants with your photography and/or videography talents
- Join an event committee
- Be a Freedom Waters Foundation Ambassador in your community

For more information about volunteering, contact
Amvros@freedomwatersfoundation.org (SWFL), Georgia, Indiana
or Victor@freedomwatersfoundation.org (SEFL)

Participant Testimonial



Dr. Tong Le, Veteran

Saturday boat ride was definitely a very refreshing experience that I personally have never had before for a very long time after many combat tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan. It took me out of my inner isolation, pain, and moral injuries and gave me a different perspective in life.



**GET YOUR
TICKET HERE**



SCAN HERE



FreedomWaters
Foundation

Sharing Freedom and Joy on and off the Water!

Main Office: 895 10th Street South, Suite 302-F, Naples, Florida 34102

East Coast Office: 2860 W State Road 84, Suite 109, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33312

FreedomWatersFoundation.org | 239-263-2377 | info@freedomwatersfoundation.org

www.kindmarinersball.com February 20, 2025 - Naples

