It takes a village

By Frank Derfler

This is the 28th year in the history of the Upper Keys Rotary Gigantic Nautical Flea Market. Because of this event, our Rotary Club can make substantial academic and technical school scholarship awards to an average of more than 90 Coral Shores High School graduates every year.
About half of the awards go to students who are already
in a college, university, or technical training and proving themselves. The total scholarship awards from the Gigantic Nautical Flea market comes close to $300,000 annually. That money stays in the Keys.

Once or twice a year visitors from up north come to the Upper Keys Rotary Club and say, "Hey, this is great! We want to do this. How do you do it?" We tell them that it's easy. You simply must get substantial help from the local town or village like we get from the Village of Islamorada, receive skilled volunteer help from an organization like the Florida Keys Electric Cooperative, get craftsmen from companies like CBT Construction, Massey-Richards Surveying and Mapping, Webb Bros. Contracting, and others. Then you need a hard-working group of over 100 Rotarians and more than 200 other highly organized volunteers from the community.

It really helps to have the support of companies like Islamorada Brewing and Distillery. You also need a venue like Founders Park so you can create what we call "The Big Boat Show with a Beach". Don't forget the massive parking and attendee transportation like we have at Coral Shores High School.

Success means having loyal annual sponsors like Hurricane Boat Lifts, Caribee Boat Sales, and The Pool Spa Billiard Store. Plus, you need a major presenting sponsor like Keys Deck & Dock Supply and a major sponsor like AJ Vetter P.A. and Anna Richards with Coastal Realty. Finally, it helps to hold the event the weekend after the Miami Boat Show, so you have vendors with top national reach who come to south Florida for the week. And oh, this year we included a Food Truck Rally with over Eighteen food trucks. That's all.