

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IMAG Contact: Richard Smith  
239.243.0043 x206  
richard@theIMAG.org

### **Celebrating the Grand Opening of Earnie's Estuary**

[Fort Myers, FL - September 28, 2025] Suncoast Credit Union celebrated the grand opening of Earnie's Estuary at the IMAG History & Science Center on Thursday, September 25, 2025, with a dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony. Earnie's Estuary is a lagoon-type, water attraction at the IMAG which was recently restored and reimagined, thanks to the very generous support of Suncoast Credit Union, from the destruction of Hurricane Ian three years earlier in September of 2022.

The grand opening, dedication, and ribbon-cutting ceremony, attended by guests, local officials, dignitaries, and members of Suncoast Credit Union and the IMAG, started off with a tour of Earnie's Estuary, its docks, pavilion, lagoon, water features, and filtration system as well as its aquatic plants, mangroves, and surrounding landscape. Following the brief tour, Matt Johnson, Executive Director of IMAG, and Bob Hyde, Vice President of Community Impact of Suncoast, welcomed guests with opening remarks, a dedication, and ribbon cutting. "We're very excited and thankful for our support from the Suncoast Credit Union," said Johnson. "Working together, we are happy to create this wonderful new outdoor educational exhibit."

Guests were then invited to experience a "feeding frenzy" of hungry fishes and turtles by participating in a ceremonial "food toss" with Earnie's Estuary Fish n' Turtle Food. Afterwards, everyone was treated to an educational presentation by Christian Gould, Senior Director of IMAG Education, talking about the lagoon and its marine and plant life that make Earnie's Estuary their home.

"Suncoast has education in our DNA and the opportunity to expose children of all ages to the message of Ernie's Estuary is a joy and meets the criteria of our mission which is to improve the lives of our members and the communities we serve," said Hyde. "We are always pleased to work with like-minded partners who value the natural world like we do," he added.

Earnie's Estuary is the residency to many types of fish and turtles, both native to Florida and invasive. Blue Gill and Blue Tilapia, Pangasius Catfish and Redtail Catfish, Eastern Mosquitofish and Mayan Cichlid, call it home including other species of fish. What's more, Peninsula Cooters and Suwannee River Cooters, Yellow-Bellied Sliders and Florida Softshell Turtles, also call it home. You can identify and learn about these and other marine life and their habitats, lifespans, sizes, diets, and other interesting, fun facts from signage posted on the dock. As part of the Caloosahatchee Experience Exhibit, you can also learn about the mangroves, sea grasses, and other aquatic plant life that grace Earnie's Estuary as well you can learn about water in South Florida and how humans as well as plant and marine life affect the quality of water in our lakes, lagoons, estuaries, streams, oceans, and gulf.

In addition to the generous support of Suncoast Credit Union, other organizations and individuals helped restore Earnie's Estuary in many ways. They include Honc Industries, The Collaboratory, Lowe's, Greenway Landscape Supply, Florida Gulf Coast University, Taylor Landscape, Captains for Clean Water, and Mario Kotik.

Members of Suncoast Credit Union are invited to visit Earnie's Estuary and the other exciting attractions at the IMAG History & Science Center. Members can purchase one ticket and get a second ticket for free when they present their Suncoast Debit or Credit Card.

Earnie's Estuary and the IMAG History & Science Center are open Monday through Saturday 10 AM to 5 PM, Sunday 12 noon to 5 PM, and closed on Tuesday. IMAG is located at 2000 Cranford Avenue, Fort Myers, Florida and can be reached at 239- 243-0043 and online at: [theIMAG.org](http://theIMAG.org). Suncoast Credit Union can be reached at 800-999-5887 and online at: [suncoast.com](http://suncoast.com).

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### **About The IMAG History & Science Center**

#### *Bringing Inspiration to Life.*

The IMAG (pronounced ĩmag) History & Science Center is a family-friendly destination featuring interactive exhibits, activities, aquariums, and history displays for all ages including a 3D theater and virtual reality experience. The IMAG features many attractions including Science on a Sphere, an interactive exhibit that illustrates the sciences of our earth; Google Earth Wall that allows people to virtually climb the world’s tallest mountains, dive into the deepest canyons, visit exciting cities, learn about exotic animals, and more; and Shaping SWFL Watersheds, an interactive, augmented reality sandbox generating live topographical maps and fluid dynamics in real time. Bringing the IMAG mission to life, we use the lenses of history and science to help people explore and understand the rich culture and habitat of Southwest Florida through science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM education) as well as history, humanities, and the arts. A visit to the IMAG History & Science Center nurtures intellectual curiosity and innovation, discovery and fun.

### **About Suncoast Credit Union**

Suncoast Credit Union is the largest credit union in the state of Florida, the 8th largest in the United States based on membership, and the 10th largest in the United States based on its \$19.2 billion in assets. Chartered in 1934 as Hillsborough County Teachers Credit Union, Suncoast Credit Union currently operates 78 full-service branches and serves more than 1.3 million members across Florida. As a community credit union, anyone who lives, works, attends school, or worships in Suncoast Credit Union’s service area is eligible for membership. In 2021, Suncoast Credit Union’s field of membership was expanded to include public K-12 teachers, college educators, and educational support staff from all of Florida’s 67 counties. Suncoast is passionate about community support. Since its founding in 1990, the Suncoast Credit Union Foundation has raised and donated more than \$55 million to organizations and initiatives that support the health, education, and emotional well-being of children in the communities that the credit union serves. For more information, visit [suncoast.com](http://suncoast.com) or follow us on social media: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram.

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