

# WYLAND ADDS TO THE WALL

## Mural refresh foreshadows SurfStyle opening



Wyland poses with his new additions to Whaling Wall #87: a mom and baby manatee, flanked by mangrove roots. ALEX RICKERT/Keys Weekly

**ALEX RICKERT**  
alex@keysweekly.com

The creator of one of Marathon's most beloved murals gave a thank-you to the Middle Keys community as renowned artist and conservationist Wyland returned to his Whaling Wall #87 on Oct. 20.

Pausing, as he always does, for plenty of photo ops, autographs and storytelling with local residents who stopped by to see the master at work, Wyland added a larger-than-life mother and baby manatee to the sub-sea scenery, first painted in 1991. Teaming up again with local muralist Shannon Wiley, the pair later added a protective clear coating donated by Sherwin Williams to the entire wall.

Inspiration for the mural's new members, he said, came from recent rescues by Dolphin Research Center's manatee rescue team, which gave a second chance at life to female manatee "Stripes" and her two-day-old calf in May of this year.

In attendance at the paint-slinging session were DRC co-founder Mandy Rodriguez and Turtle Hospital manager Bette Zirkelbach, who together with her staff provided an educational station and opportunities for a meet-and-greet with a rehab patient.

Originally set to be covered in plans for beachwear retailer SurfStyle's redesign of the old Kmart building on Overseas Highway, the mural will now be preserved in full after word of the plans inspired widespread community support for the longstanding art installation.

Taking the facade of its storefront back to the drawing board in a move heartily praised by Marathon residents and officials, the reimagined store-



Mike Goheen, right, shows a special photo to the famed muralist: a signed photo of himself as a baby, in Wyland's arms at the Whaling Wall.

front now includes the fully-lit Whaling Wall next to companion scenery by the original mural's co-creator, Guy Harvey. The store helped furnish equipment needed for the mural refresh, Wyland told the Weekly.

"I was super stoked to come back and do the complete restoration for the community," he said.

According to manager Bruce Blevins, SurfStyle plans to open its doors by the final week of October or first week of November, promising a fully-stocked array of Keys-appropriate apparel, fishing gear and an ice cream and candy bar. Drawing eyes from the front of the store is a much-anticipated Flow Rider attraction – a pool providing a perpetual wave for guests to "surf," set to stay open well into the evening on most nights.