NEWS RELEASE

On Florida's Gulf Coast, It's Clear How Jared Volunteers are Inspiring Love

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Like many coastal communities, Clearwater, Florida is famous for its blue skies, beautiful beaches and aqua Gulf waters. This time of year, the sandy shores of Florida's west coast are also known for their vital role in the sustainability of the area's oldest neighbor: the sea turtle.

Sea turtles have existed for over 100 million years, but species have been struggling the past several decades due in part to the polluting of oceans and beaches. This month, with the all-important nesting period for sea turtles underway, Clearwater residents peek from afar and hope for the best.

This is precisely why Jared district manager, Shelly Richard, and some of her team members volunteer their time and energy to keep the beaches of Clearwater as pristine and "turtle friendly" as possible.

"Clearwater is a beautiful community with people who love nature and want to see it thrive," Shelly said. In order to thrive, beaches need to meet the finicky needs of the sea turtles, as they are very idiosyncratic when it comes to the environment in which they lay their eggs. Conditions need to be ideal.

To get the beaches in tip-top turtle shape, Shelly and some of her team comb the beach for trash and debris. They even knock down and smooth over sandcastles that were left standing from beachgoers. They do this because female sea turtles will often take the exact route to shore from previous years, so and holes and sandcastle moats can be hazardous traps for them.

Shelly's Clearwater cleanup began with just her and her husband serving as good stewards to the community. A year ago, some of Shelley's Jared team began joining them. "On the first Sunday of every month we get a group together and comb the beaches for trash and debris," she said. "At the end of an hour or hour and a half, it's amazing to see what we get done together. It's actually really sad to think of all the trash that's on our beaches, but it's also rewarding when you see the difference we're making."

Originally from Wisconsin, Shelly has worked in the Jared's Clearwater store for six years. Given her passion for nature and especially sea life, you would think she's a coastal native. Thanks to her inspiration, the Clearwater Aquarium, a non-profit, rescue-and-release organization, has designated three nests in honor of Jared's Clearwater store. "When people see the preserved areas for the turtles and hear that we're from Jared, they are so thankful," Shelly said. "One family even stopped and asked us if we're looking for oysters to make pearls for our store," she said with a laugh.

If all goes well this nesting season, female sea turtles will lumber their way ashore under a cloak of darkness, and they'll find the ideal nesting spot to lay up to 128 eggs at a time. Maybe that spot will be under a small Jared sign gently perched in the dune.

"We're just doing a small part to help keep our beaches clean and to help sustain the sea turtle population," Shelly said humbly.

With Earth Day tomorrow and the sea turtles in Florida scurrying delicately to their nesting spots, we're proud that Shelly and her team exemplify what it means to Inspire Love and to selflessly give their precious time for others. In this case, the others being families of prehistoric wonders who will hopefully make their home in the surf of Clearwater for years to come.