

## **Big Pine Winn-Dixie Is First National Chain To Partner With “Got Your Bags? Florida Keys” Program**

### ***Big Pine Key Grocery Hosts a Special Event With Significant Environmental Benefits To Help Reduce The Impact Of Single Use Plastic Bags***

**Big Pine Key, FL, December 9, 2014** ~ Winn-Dixie will partner with nonprofit Green Living and Energy Education’s “Got Your Bags? Florida Keys” program by holding a reusable bag giveaway and sale event on Saturday, December 20, 2014 from 10a – 2p at the store on Big Pine Key.

Green Living and Energy Education (GLEE) volunteers will set up a “Got Your Bags? Florida Keys” (GYB) station outside the Winn-Dixie, and provide a free reusable shopping bag to anyone who signs a pledge to do their best to avoid using plastic bags when they shop. The reusable bags have been donated by local businesses and individuals who support the program.

“Each individual pledge takes a big step toward reducing single use plastic bag litter on streets, highways and shorelines,” says GLEE Board member, Shirley Gun. “More importantly, eliminating plastic bags also reduces the harm caused to the wild birds and marine animals from ingestion and entanglement,” she adds.

Big Pine Key Winn-Dixie Store Director, Kenny Lowe, and the store’s Area Service Manager, Dan Jensen, are thrilled to support the Keys environment with this project. Plastic bags are costly to provide, and that impacts the costs to shoppers as well. But the biggest cost is to the precious Florida Keys environment. An enormous number of plastic bags leave the store. **Lowe and Jensen calculate that shoppers have taken almost 2.5 million plastic shopping bags from this single store in the first 11 months of 2014.** Most of them will return to the environment in landfills, in the atmosphere via incineration, or will litter roadways and shorelines threatening birds, sea turtles and other animals.

Winn-Dixie will also contribute to the event by making its store brand reusable bags available at a special savings for shoppers who want additional bags. As part of an ongoing campaign, the store will post signs and banners to remind shoppers to bring reusable bags, and train cashiers to ask shoppers about them at check out – or encourage them to load items from the shopping cart directly into their vehicles without using plastic bags at all, if possible. All store employees will be issued “Got Your Bags?” buttons to wear, to encourage and remind shoppers to choose reusable bags.

The GYB program, operated as part of GLEE’s nonprofit pro-environmental mission, started as a local citizen’s initiative in Big Pine Key in 2012, involving with numerous small retailers. Winn-Dixie is the first major chain to adopt the program, which is expanding throughout the Keys.

It has been adopted in Islamorada with the assistance of Monroe County Extension Service director, Alicia Betancourt. For the past two years, the Key West Film Festival has participated as a GYB sponsor, providing reusable bags for festival participants and incorporating numerous other green initiatives. In September, Help Yourself, the

independent natural and organic market and restaurant became the first Key West retailer to promote the use of reusable shopping bags. A GYB project is also in the works in Key Largo.

For more information on the GYB program, check out GLEE's website at

<http://www.keysglee.com/gyb/>

and

Follow the "Got Your Bags? Florida Keys" campaign online at

<https://www.facebook.com/GotYourBagsFloridaKeys> .

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