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Chamber leader: 'My time to give back'

By Theresa Java Free Press Staff

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Contributed Key Largo Chamber of Commerce Chairman-Elect Roberto Alonso cuts a ribbon at a past grand opening.

KEY LARGO — Reliable and stable are words often used to describe the community-minded Roberto Alonso.

"I'm just a simple man," he said of himself.

Alonso has spent time as the manager of a small bookkeeping firm.

"Before that, my trade was fine jewelry hand-engraving, a dying trade that I loved very much because of its artistic content and acquired special skills," he said. He's been an insurance agent since 1975.

A long-time sole proprietor of a local small business, Alonso has garnered the confidence of his fellow Key Largo Chamber of Commerce board members, who have again named him chairman-elect of the organization, where he also heads up the Governance Committee.

Alonso has owned and operated Borland and Associates, the local Florida Blue contracted agency in the Pink Plaza since 2004, and has been awarded into the Federally Facilitated Marketplace Circle of Champions for the last three consecutive years by enrolling 20 or more consumers during the open enrollment period.

"I also provide my customers with insurance planning and enrollment in the life, dental, ancillary, supplemental, disability and retirement market segments," he said.

Alonso's role with the Key Largo chamber, and the community, is important to him.

"As a business owner, it's important to be a part of the chamber since we are in an unincorporated area of Monroe County. This gives us a voice and this is an important resource to have especially during this global pandemic," he said.

Alonso serves on the boards of the Florida Keys History and Discovery Foundation, Friends of the Murray Nelson Center and the Center for Independent Living in the Keys, is chairman of the Good Health Clinic and secretary-elect of the Key Largo Rotary. He also volunteers with Guardian Ad Litem which he believes to be "a noble cause."

"This is my time in my life to give back to the community. Many people supported me when I was growing in my career and anything I can do to help, I will do. This is a community I love with all my heart," he said.

Alonso said many of the organizations he's involved with have been trying to find ways to help and support the community while adhering to social distancing mandates to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus.

"Like many others, we are trying to find our way through this," he said.

When asked how the COVID-19 pandemic may affect local business, Alonso said, "We are in a fly-by-the-seat-of-your pants kind of situation. Most of us are navigating through this in the dark."

The road to recovery may be long.

"This began as an unprecedented health crisis and will have several chapters. We are in the beginning chapters and after this are the economic consequences," Alonso said.

"We are going to come out of this wiser. We are going to know who are friends are and how to be self-sufficient and be better prepared. We will pay dearly for these lessons, but this a magnificent country and we are resilient."

Between Alonso's work and civic duties, he voraciously reads, writes, exercises and oil paints. He enjoys public speaking and misses watching live sports.

Alonso and wife Ana will soon celebrate their 52nd wedding anniversary. Alonso said he often wonders two things: how Ana has put up with him for so long and how his golden retriever Savannah became his boss.

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