

Live! »

THIS WEEKEND'S BEST BETS



THE DOLL MAKER

Naples woman makes dolls of historically prominent women

By Katie Egan

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Rosa Leon Riley is trying to teach Collier County girls to be strong, confident young women. And she intends to



Rosa Leon Riley

do that with dolls based on historical women throughout history.

For the past decade, the 36-year-old Neapolitan has been an advocate for the Shelter for Abused Women and Children, starting as a counselor in Immokalee. But her true passion is creating

handmade trinkets and inspiring girls to dream.

"I'm trying to teach girls that they can dream big and accomplish the goals they set for themselves and I'm trying to do that, too," she said. "They can dream as high as they want to dream as little as they are."

"Joan and her Rad Friends" features famous war heroine, Joan of Arc, who Riley said, just kind of popped into her head one day; Harriet Tubman, an abolitionist and humanitarian who Riley thought more girls should learn about; and someone who's not so well-known, Riley said, Loretta Walsh, the first woman to make equal pay and be accepted into the Navy.

The 14.5-inch dolls — from their

See DOLLS, 4F

IF YOU GO

What: Joan & Her Rad Friends, a collection of three dolls based on significant women throughout history

When: 5:45-8 p.m. Friday

Where: South Street City Grill, 1410 Pine Ridge Road, Naples

Cost: Free

Information: 239-537-5312, rosa@twirlingtinysticks.com or twirlingtinysticks.com

1 ARE YOU A PINHEAD?

Play in **pinball tournaments** at 7 p.m. Friday and at 9:30 a.m. Saturday at the Pinball Asylum (register to learn more details, such as the location). Go head to head with pinball enthusiasts and see if you can be crowned king or queen of the hill. Preregistration is not necessary to play Friday night. You must preregister to compete Saturday. Check the website for competition details. Information: pinballasylum.com



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BE A BEACH BUM

If you'd like to recharge after a busy week, visit one of the **best beaches in the country: Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park**. Consistently ranked among the most pristine and beautiful, Delnor-Wiggins Pass — 11135 Gulfshore Drive, Naples — boasts white sands that face the warm Gulf of Mexico. Admission is \$6 per vehicle if you're carpooling with up to eight passengers. This weekend, you can sign up for beachcombing adventures from 9:30 to 10:30 Friday and Sunday mornings. Participation is free with the cost of regular admission. Check the state park's website for more details. Information: floridastateparks.org/park/Delnor-Wiggins



HAVE A COCKTAIL

Looking to mingle with other young arts and culture lovers? Then attend the **United Arts Council Contemporaries Social** on Sunday. Enjoy craft cocktails, a taco bar, live music and good conversation from 3 to 6 p.m. at Seventh Avenue Social, 849 Seventh Ave. S., suite 101, Naples. Tickets are \$40 per person or \$70 for two. Buy them online. Information: uaccollier.com

2

KICK UP YOUR HEELS AND DANCE

This weekend includes the third Friday of the month. That means it's time for Music Walk in downtown Fort Myers along First Street. Music starts playing just around sunset. You can catch performances in and out of the restaurants and bars. Events are mostly free. You may have to pay for parking, though. Information: fortmyersriverdistrictalliance.com



SAY YES TO THE DRESS

If you're getting married soon, you may want to check out Bridal Blast 2015, billed as Southwest Florida's largest bridal show. Bridal Blast is from 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday at Germain Arena, 11000 Everblades Parkway, Estero. Preregister online for ticket information. bridalblastfla.com

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DOLLS
from 3F

head to the bottom of their feet — are made to order and are available Friday for \$47.99 at South Street City Grill in Naples.

A portion of the sale of each of the first 100 dolls will be donated to Girls on the Run, a group that helps empower young girls and women.

Riley also will customize dolls for potential owners, but she won't craft famous people who are still alive, she said, for legal reasons.

She doesn't know which historical woman she'll make next, but said people pass her posted notes of potential candidates "all the time."

About a year ago, Riley started her blog "Twirling Tiny Sticks." "I have the freedom to

design what I make and I put myself in the pieces that I make. It brings me moments of peace and happiness and really, I wouldn't want to be doing anything else."

On a good day it takes her about an hour and a half to make a doll. She normally spends her Fridays making them. That's also her day off.

"It took a while to draw the pattern, test fabrics, figure out how to make the hair," she said. "I want them (the fabrics) to be a little quirky. Loretta's has Navy signs up the body because she's part of the Navy. Joan of Arc has armor."

The dolls are also hand-painted, so no two dolls are the same.

Friday's event, Riley said, is not about selling the dolls. It's about creating awareness.

"I think I'm always looking for ways to empower children and empower people."



Handcrafted dolls, based on historical women throughout history, by Rosa Leon Riley include Loretta Walsh, from left, Joan of Arc and Harriet Tubman.

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