

## 'Eternal reefs' in the ocean off South Florida memorialize loved ones in a lasting legacy



Families and friends gathered at Haulover Park Marina in Miami-Dade County this weekend to memorialize concrete balls made of their loved one's remains that were lowered into the ocean about two miles offshore Monday morning. Seven concrete balls will form "eternal reefs."  
(Eternal Reef / Courtesy)

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Theresa Shaner loved the ocean. Whether she surfed, snorkeled, scuba dived or studied fish populations, she seemed at home at sea.

So when it came to memorialize the late Riviera Beach physician assistant, her family wanted to do something different and unique for Shaner. To do so, they helped create an underwater memorial because the 65-year-old "saw God in the fish," according to her niece Gina Conn, of Tallahassee.

Shaner is one of seven people memorialized with the release in the ocean off South Florida of concrete reef balls containing their ashes.

In the culmination of a series of events that began Friday, the placement happened Monday, about two miles offshore of the Haulover Park Marina, 10800 Collins Ave. in north Miami-Dade.

About 50 family members and friends of the deceased gathered to send off the hollowed-out balls that were being placed on the ocean floor to create an aquatic memorial by the organization Eternal Reefs, the Sarasota non-profit that creates the underwater “living legacies.” The group started as a reef saving project with its first placement in 1992 near Fort Lauderdale before expanding to the memorial with ashes several years later. The process creates a permanent living memorial and also creates an underwater natural reef.

Eternal Reef personnel take a person’s ashes and mixes it into environmentally-friendly balls that look like boulders with holes punched throughout to help create the reef.

On Friday, family members took part in a “casting” ceremony when they placed their handprints onto the balls along with plaques and other personal memorabilia to honor their loved ones.



This Friday, June 22, photo during the "casting" ceremony, shows the grandchildren of a Long Island man, Edward Fisher III, placing handprints on the reef ball (Photo courtesy of Eternal Reefs)

That was followed with a viewing Sunday afternoon when the seven reef balls were unveiled. Additionally, there was a military honor ceremony for Shaner, who was a former U.S. Army medic who died last August after scuba diving in Jupiter.

Along with Shaner’s family members, friends and relatives of the other six people who were memorialized traveled from Georgia, New York, Maryland, Delaware and even Japan to take part in the ceremony at sea.

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/florida/fl-reg-reef-concrete-balls-lowered-north-miami-20180625-story.html>