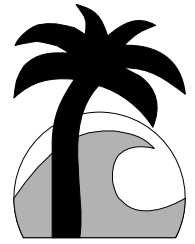


Island Parks Insider



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Friends Growing Stronger

By George Skalkeas

This issue of the *Insider* features a lot of information on the tangible results of our Island Fest efforts. **Pete Krulder** and **Jacques Renee Marion** each give their respective takes, and **Barry Metcalfe** describes an interpretive program developed for *Island Fest* that will continue as an ongoing theme on Honeymoon Island. I would add that there have been intangible results of the *Island Fest* experience as well – a larger, more engaged board of directors for the Friends organization has emerged. From its decision to “go it alone” when it learned in early winter that the *Dunedin Chamber of Commerce* would no longer participate in the planning and execution of the event (the Chamber did continue active participation as a sponsor), the board took on tasks that had previously been covered by other entities. The concentrated planning process and “hands on” participation in running the successful event developed an esprit-de-corps that was contagious and which should serve us well as the board attacks the Next Big Thing – opening the *Rotary Centennial Nature Center*. Be sure to look over the *Friends CSO News* item to see who comprises this infusion of talent. *Island Fest* likewise had a beneficial effect on our volunteer program as you will see in **Karen LeBlanc’s** *Volunteer News* report of another big orientation class, and **Barry’s** story about the new interpretive program. General membership in the organization as a whole got a boost as well so be sure to check our *Welcome New Members* feature for a list of newcomers since the last edition of the *Insider*.

President’s Message

By Jacques Renee Marion

Lots of exciting things have been happening at Honeymoon and Caladesi since our last newsletter. *Island Fest 2006* was a great celebration of Honeymoon Island with our community, visitors and friends! Thank you to **Sally Hess**, my co- chair, the committee members, the volunteers, and dedicated staff of Honeymoon and Caladesi Island State Parks for making this a fun and successful *Island Fest 2006*. It was truly a “Celebration with Friends”! The attendance over the two days was in excess of 14,000 visitors. Congratulations to **Karen LeBlanc**, park services specialist, for organizing the informative and interactive Osprey Village, which included exciting speakers such as **Zander Srode** talking about his sea turtle experiences to the *Didgeridoo* workshop. The music was headlined by local favorite *Buffalo Strange* playing to a dancing crowd on the bright sunny Saturday afternoon. **Donald Tipton** entertained the crowd on Sunday as the MC. Our own **Pat Linn** teamed up with Donald to close out the raffle sales on Sunday. Thank you Pat for all your efforts in making the raffle sales the most successful ever! Thank you to *Ship-N-Trips* and Friends members, **Bill and Chris Gray** for their support and generous donation of the cruise to support *Island Fest*! **Doug Opie**, general manager of *Ferman MINI of Tampa Bay* organized a customer appreciation day attended by over 100 MINI owners. **Matt “Danger” Bradley** assisted with the MC duties as well as entertained the crowd with his smashing Austin Powers look!

Barry and Melanie Metcalf organized a team of volunteers and developed *Discover the Island* with six informational stations strategically placed to discuss with visitors the diverse flora and fauna of Honeymoon Island as

well as celebrate the colorful history during *Island Fest*. **Diane and Scott Hood** did an excellent job of organizing the craft vendors. Thank you to the city of Dunedin for its support in so many ways to include the stage, tents, tables and personnel to assist with the event. On behalf of the *Friends of the Island Parks, Inc.*, I wish to extend our gratitude to our sponsors, the *St. Petersburg Times*, *Ships –N-Trips*, *Ferman MINI of Tampa Bay*, *Rotary Clubs of Dunedin*, the *Dunedin Chamber of Commerce*, *Huettig Electric*, *Nature's Food Patch*, *Knology*, *Evatone*, *JMC Communities*, *Great Bay Distributors*, *Bon Appetit*, *Synovus Bank* and *Albertsons*. Thank you to **Marianne Davis** for her efforts to secure this community support. The event netted over \$32,000 which will be used to continue the support of the Nature Center, the Tour Program and both Honeymoon and Caladesi Islands. The dates for *Island Fest 2007* will be April 21st & 22nd to coincide with Earth Day celebrations. To each and everyone, for tram driving, collecting trash, delivering ice, staffing the toll booth, pouring beer and handling tokens, you all contributed and made a difference! Thank you!

The annual *MarineMax May Weekend* at Caladesi Island was held only weeks after *Island Fest*. Caladesi Assistant Park manager **Shawn Yeager** and his staff had a most successful weekend capped off by a generous donation by *MarineMax* to the Friends in the sum of \$5,000. There is a picture of Pete, Shawn and I accepting the check from our friends at *MarineMax* on the website. Thank you for your support *MarineMax*!

I am happy to report that Caladesi Island has taken delivery of a new *PM – 144 Zero Turn* lawn mower that was donated by the Friends. Caladesi Island also was recognized by **Dr. Beach** as the second best beach in America! I also had the pleasure of speaking about our group and activities with Caladesi visitors at the *Breakfast with Ranger* held on Father's Day.

The *Annual Rotary Triathlon* was held on Saturday, June 4th starting with a ¼ mile swim off the beach by bath house 3, followed by a 12 mile bike race through the park, out on the Dunedin Causeway, and returning to complete a 3.1 mile run up to Osprey Trail and back to the finish line at bath house #1 near the pet beach. Congratulations to **Suzanne Henslee**,

the event organizer, all the volunteers and the participants who made this event so much fun. There were over 500 participants with ages ranging from 9 to 79 year old.

The Nature Center renovations are well underway. With a brand new metal roof and fresh coat of paint on the exterior, the *Rotary Centennial Nature Center* is shaping up. We held our May monthly meeting there, hosted by Honeymoon Assistant Park Manager **Gloria Beauchamp**. It is exciting to see the building taking shape. The contractors working with **Clark & Logan Construction** are doing magnificent work and are scheduled to complete their work this month. Please plan to join us for a "post construction clean up" at 8:30 AM on August 5th. Pete and I signed the contract with *Wilderness Graphics* for the interior exhibits to be delivered this fall. With December 7th marking the 25th Anniversary of Honeymoon Island becoming a Florida State Park, we will have a grand celebration later this year.

A huge thank you to longtime Friends member, newly elected Dunedin Rotary President and owner of *AdSharp*, **Bill Francisco**, who graciously donated his time in preparing the *St. Petersburg/Clearwater Convention Visitors Bureau (CVB) New Product Marketing Grant* application while we were all focusing on *Island Fest*. On Wednesday, June 28th, Pete, Bill and I made a presentation to the CVB board on the Friends application which focused on the new Nature Center. I am happy to report that the board voted to fund this grant for \$50,000. There are two more steps for approval in July and August which will result in the signing of a funding agreement between the Friends and the CVB in September. These funds will be for the marketing and advertising of the Nature Center in collaboration with the CVB.

Park Manager's Report

By Pete Krulder

Summer is finally here and what a trip it has been getting here. As I look back since the time of my last Manager's Report so many things have happened. From construction activities, *Island Fest*, the *Rotary Triathlon*, the end of our fiscal year and one unwelcome visitor named **Alberto** it has been one hectic quarter.

Construction on the Nature Center is nearing completion. For those of you who have been through the park lately you may have noticed the nice new roof on the building and the new paint job on the building. As the fiscal year was winding down we were able to secure the funds to make these extras happen. The interior is also nearing completion. The walls are finished, the air conditioning and the tile work in the rest rooms is nearly complete. Completion of the exhibits is scheduled for this fall and completion of the project should happen late fall.

Island Fest was an incredible success. The cooperation dedication and hard work of our members and friends was instrumental in making this happen. It really reinforced the events motto "*Celebrate with Friends*". The event truly was a celebration. I thank you all for the effort put forth in making this event the huge success it was. A special thank you goes out to our co-chairs of this event **Jacques Marion** and **Sally Hess**. Without their tireless effort and determination it would have difficult to pull this off.

The Rotary's triathlon was also a huge hit. Over 500 competitors took part in this event and the comments from them were that this was one of the best triathlons they have competed in. Thank you to the many friends that came out to volunteer for this event. Thank you also to **Suzanne Henslee** the event coordinator and friends from Rotary for bringing this event to the park. The triathlon is the biggest fund raiser for the Rotary Club of Dunedin. The proceeds help with Rotary's many local and worldwide projects. Some of those projects help with world hunger, combating polio in developing nations and most importantly fostering peace and understanding throughout the world.

The park faired well through tropical storm **Alberto**. We had to close for 22 hours due to the storm and had some minor damage but all in all we did well. The storm hit a couple of days after we had removed the old roof from the Nature Center. We only had tar paper on the roof and ended up with some water in the building. The roofing contractor came out after the worst of the storm had passed and made some quick repairs and we got through it without suffering any lasting damage. We also had some over-wash into the event area

parking lot. The staff and volunteers were quick to get the sand and rock put back on the beach and it was back to business as usual. With luck the beach nourishment project will go forward this fall and the parking area will once again be safe.

As I close, I would like to wish everyone a safe summer.

Honeymoon Island – More Than a Beach

By Barry Metcalfe

In September 2005, Melanie and I took advantage of the shuttle to Egmont Key from Fort DeSoto organized by their CSO as part of the annual *Island Days* event. As our feet landed once more on 'terra firma' visitors were greeted and invited to explore the island via a number of displays set up around the island.

With the change to a more environmental theme to our own *Island Fest* this year, Melanie unashamedly took full advantage of the idea and thus was born "*Discover the Island*" (DTI). The concept was to set up displays around Honeymoon Island, each covering a different set of interests and information, to encourage visitors to visit places on the island that they did not normally see; so often had we observed that regular visitors would always go to the same location time after time. We therefore sought to identify a number of sites on Honeymoon that would showcase the tremendous and surprising variations that the island has to offer and give visitors a chance to uncover some of the gems that go unnoticed.

The sites we identified not only physically took the visitor to all parts of the island but also, using the location as the touchstone, enabled us to identify the varied themes highlighted by that site. We sought and obtained input and sign off to the concept from park management and then to achieve the desired result all we needed was the labor resource to research and put the displays together. This was January and we struck lucky as just at that time a new Volunteer Orientation was scheduled. We hi-jacked these new volunteers and, with the addition some existing volunteers, created a team of over 30 individual talents. Expanding

on the concept paper we split the volunteers into six teams, each with a team leader, arranged regular bi-weekly meetings at the park, provided the raw materials and encouragement and let the teams develop the displays.

A downsized replica of a “*Honeymoon Cottage*” was an attention grabber at the “*Sands of Time*” display which focused on the history of the Island located on the *Pet Beach* trail. The *Osprey Trail* boasted two displays - the flora and fauna of the trail and resource management. Other locations were on the deck of the as yet unopened Nature Center (fabulous view); *Sandy Beach* featuring the beach habitat, sea and shore birds and turtles; and *Lagoon Beach* where crabs, shells and rocks were avidly discussed. After much hard work by the volunteers all displays were ready to go and by 10.00 AM on the 6th of May we were already speaking with our first visitors. To encourage visitors to go to more than one display a draw prize of an annual pass, kindly donated by *Café Honeymoon*, was to be given to one lucky winner who visited all six sites. We received 38 valid entries and the annual pass was won by **Danielle Wachob**, a local Dunedin resident.

Although the visitation numbers to the displays were not as high as we might have wished, now that the displays are available we will be making use of them in future events and they will also be featured as the basis for presentations to the monthly Friends meetings. If you missed the displays at this year’s *Island Fest*, come along to the monthly Friends meetings and find out what you missed. A spin off from the whole DTI experience is the number of new Friends members and enthused volunteers who continue to be available to help our visitors enjoy the park.

Volunteer News

By Karen Le Blanc

The volunteer department is in full swing again! We had an orientation session for new volunteers on June 17th and had 22 people attend. This means you will be seeing some new faces around anywhere from the toll booth to out on the beaches educating visitors about the fragile wildlife the Florida Park Service

strives to protect. Volunteers were able to choose from categories including visitor services, administrative, maintenance, special events and interpretive.

Special thanks to volunteers **George Skalkeas, Melanie Metcalfe, Ron Doyon and Ashley Douthirt** for helping out with the Volunteer Orientation.

With the many demands a highly visited park puts on staff, we welcome these new volunteers. So if you see these new faces introduce yourself and help them to feel welcome! You never know, you just might make a new *friend*.

In the meantime, we are looking for creative volunteers who want to assist in developing and making quality interpretive displays that we will be able to rotate to the different display boards. Guidelines are located in the Interpretive Library. Our goal is to create fun, visually attractive displays with information that is useful to visitors and that supports both the *Florida Park Service* Mission and the *Statement for Interpretation Themes and Objectives*. We will try to make them semi-permanent so that we can change them out seasonally to prevent them from fading and also to keep things fresh, new and relevant to visitors! Topics include: turtles, dolphins, sharks, stingrays, things found on the beach, horseshoe crabs, shorebirds, prescribed fires, exotic plants, “watch out plants”, snakes, butterflies, great horned owls, ospreys, red tide, weather, safety, mangroves and sea grasses.

Our Web Site

For up-to-date Friends information and great photos, be sure to visit our web site at **www.islandparks.org**. One recently added feature is the availability of back issues of this newsletter. The last ten issues of the *Insider* are available in PDF format for your digital reading pleasure.

Friends CSO News

2006 Board and Officers

By George Skalkeas

The past few months again brought changes to the board of directors and its officers with the addition of several new members and the unfortunate loss of a member. Captain Sam Marshall, who provided a strong voice for Caladesi interests, resigned in July for personal reasons. His good counsel will be missed. On the plus side, the board gained considerable strength with the addition of **Marianne Davis**, **Ron Geisheimer** (who was also elected Secretary), **Diane Hood**, **Skip Meadows** and **Mike Moran**.

Welcome New Members

Please welcome our newest Friends:

- **John and June Connell**
- **Marianne Davis**
- **Nancy Dunne**
- **George and Kathy Fischer**
- **Janice Moulton**

Friends Membership

You can be a part of **Friends of the Island Parks** with one of several membership options:

General: \$25.00
Non-Profit: \$50.00
Corporate Bronze: \$100.00
Silver: \$250.00
Gold: \$500.00
Platinum: \$1,000.

Benefits include voting rights, a quarterly newsletter, and free admission to Honeymoon and Caladesi islands on the second Saturday of each month. Refer a friend! Membership applications are available on-line at www.islandparks.org, at the toll booth on Honeymoon Island and at the ranger station on Caladesi Island.

Caladesi Honors

On Wednesday May 17th, at the Annual Park Managers' Meeting in Gainesville, Caladesi Island rangers Steven Collier and Carl Calhoun, and Café Caladesi assistant manager Robert Nordstrom received the State of Florida's Lifesaver Award.

The award was given for their response to a heart attack emergency at the park's café eating area on March 25th. The men performed CPR and applied the park's AED (defibrillator) to a victim who was not breathing and had no pulse. The victim began to respond and was evacuated by air to a local hospital where he recovered.



Steve Collier (far left), Carl Calhoun (far right) and Bob Nordstrom (Bermuda shorts) meet with appreciative Korte family members after rescue.

Looking Ahead

Second Annual Caladesi Open Golf Tournament

On Saturday, August 12, 2006, the Lansbrook Golf Club will again host this event sponsored by the Friends of the Island Parks for the specific benefit of Caladesi Island. For further information and all of the particulars contact **Shawn Yeager**, Assistant Park Manager, Caladesi Island State Park, by phone on 727-469-5917, by e-mail at shawn.yeager@dep.state.fl.us, or check the web site at www.islandparks.org.

Island Calendar

Aug	12	Caladesi golf tournament
	15	Friends meeting
Sep	3	Breakfast w/ Ranger
	19	Friends meeting
Oct	17	Friends meeting
	27	Halloween Event
	28	Halloween Event
Nov	12	Breakfast w/ Ranger
	16	Friends meeting

Island Amenities

Be sure to visit Cafe Honeymoon and Cafe Caladesi when on the islands for food, gifts and beach supplies. Try out the **pancake breakfasts** on Sunday at Cafe Honeymoon. In addition, check with them about special occasions on the islands.

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For More Information Contact: Shane Bittaker
727 • 736 • 2132
1 Causeway Blvd.
Dunedin, FL

Friends Board and Member Meetings

The Board of Directors meets at 6:00 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month for approximately one hour. That meeting is followed by the general member meeting that begins at 7:30 p.m. at the Osprey Center on Honeymoon Island. You are welcome to attend the Board meeting and highly encouraged to come to the member meetings!



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Officers

President: Jacques Rene Marion
Vice President: George Skalkeas
Treasurer: Sam Martin
Secretary: Ron Geisheimer

Members

Shane Bittaker
Megan Cagle
Marianne Davis
Sally Hess
Diane Hood
Scott Hood
Pat Linn
Skip Meadows
Mike Moran
Gabriella Mullins
Linda Taylor

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