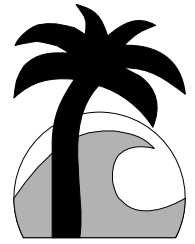


Island Parks Insider



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In This Issue...

In this issue of the *Insider* **Tim Marshall**, **Pete Krulder** and **Jacques Rene Marion** provide information on the status of the Nature Center's construction, proposed programs and early plans for a grand opening. **Karen LeBlanc** describes a new program involving local schools and our regular features attempt to catch you up with events past and future as well as information about our fellow Friends and park personnel. If you get nothing else from this issue though remember this: the Nature Center now has an official name. It is the "*Rotary Centennial Nature Center at Honeymoon Island State Park*". You can shorten it to the "Nature Center" as we do but you can't call it the "visitor center" anymore!

Nature Center Update

By Tim Marshall
OPS Ranger, Training Coordinator

The Nature Center building is completely renovated at this time. The interpretive exhibits will be installed next by *Wilderness Graphics, Inc.* (which is preparing the exhibits). This is likely to be late this fall. Visit the Friends website for info and photos.



All interior construction work is now 99% complete, including carpeting and flooring. A refrigerator, microwave, carpet sweeper and other kitchen needs were recently delivered. Classroom chairs are on the way.

Once the center opens, which could possibly be as early as the beginning of December, the operating hours will be seven days per week, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. There will be trained staff on duty at the front desk, as well as some additional staff to conduct scheduled tours and programs. These will supplement the park's existing Interpretive Programming. There will be all-day and half-day shifts available to volunteers. A schedule and job descriptions will be made available so volunteers may sign up for hours.

The Nature Center's very first volunteer training session was held October 14th with 18 enrollees and several very welcome surprise guests.

Presenters included: **Pete Krulder**, park manager; **Melanie Metcalfe**, volunteer ambassador for Florida Park Service; **Albert C. Hine, Ph.D.**, professor and associate dean of research, College of Marine Science, University of South Florida; **Jacques Rene Marion**, Friends president; and **Carole A. Ketterhagen**, CDME, Executive Director of the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Convention and Visitor's Bureau.

Special thanks for needed assistance goes out to: **Pete**; **Gloria Beauchamp**, assistant park manager; **Karen LeBlanc**, park services specialist; **Jacques**; **Sally Hess**, for ordering supplies; **Ray Dabkowski** for printing and set up assistance; **Dianne Hood**, for the wonderful Friend's wine and cheese; **Cheri Turner** for presenter leads; and to **Jean Sibald** for the great tasting coffee.

Some of the topics were: "What is a Barrier Island?", "Cracker Swapping of Nature Objects", "About the Friends of the Island Parks CSO" and "Tourism and Marketing of the Nature Center".

Topics for the next session include: "History of Honeymoon and Caladesi Islands", "Living History with Myrtle", "Research Resources and Methods", Nature Center Library Overview; Nature-Speak, Prescribed Burns, and an Osprey Trail Tour.

If anyone else is interested in this training, another session similar to this one will be offered, likely scheduled in January or February of 2007. Those on our mailing list will be informed as to specifics once plans are finalized, and updates will be posted on the website as well. Likewise, if any of you would like to sit in on specific sessions you can, space permitting, by contacting me in advance at: tim.marshall@dunedinet.com or on 727-415-1784.

President's Message

By Jacques Rene Marion

President, Friends of the Island Parks

On December 7, 2006, Honeymoon Island will celebrate 25 years as a designated state park. **Pete Krulder** speaks of the "vision" of everyone involved in creating, supporting and maintaining these barrier islands as we plan for the grand opening of the *Rotary Centennial Nature Center*. The vision of our community was turned into a reality by securing the island as a natural resource for generations to come back in 1982. In 2002, a group of individuals came together to form the *Friends of the Island Parks, Inc.*, becoming the 75th Citizen Support Organization in Florida specifically supporting Honeymoon and Caladesi islands as part of the 159 parks statewide. The idea of bringing a nature center to Honeymoon Island was the foundation that brought the Friends together. In 2003 the Rotary Clubs of Dunedin adopted the nature center as their centennial project giving the Friends' fundraising efforts a gigantic leap forward. In recognition of Rotary contribution, the state of Florida formally adopted the name "*The Rotary Centennial Nature Center at Honeymoon Island State Park*" this summer. This beautiful structure, now overlooking St.

Joseph's Sound, was formerly "bath house #4". If it had remained in its former place on the northwestern end of the island, it would be in the water today as result of the erosion of the shoreline from the weather of the last two years. We are all part of this vision to create a center that celebrates the natural resources of Honeymoon, Caladesi and the surrounding ecosystem.

Clark and Logan, Inc. recently completed interior renovations totaling \$311,161 to the Nature Center. Thank you to **Phil Jester** and **Carl** of Clark and Logan. **Sally Hess** and **Sam Martin** have been coordinating the purchase and delivery of the furnishings to include tables, chairs, refrigerator, microwave and vacuum cleaner. *Clark and Logan* has also graciously donated a 42" flat panel TV for the media room. Thank you to those Friends who participated in the Saturday work day at the Nature Center in August. Raking and picking up rocks after the construction made a difference and assistant park manager **Gloria Beauchamp** and the park staff followed up by planting grass. There is a new nature trail located within walking distance of the center. Signs describing the natural resources will soon be displayed along the trail. The funds for these signs were provided by the *Catherine Wells Grant* received from the *Pinellas Community Foundation* last spring through the efforts of **Stephanie Bergeron**.

On September 29th, I signed the contract with the *St. Petersburg / Clearwater Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)* for a \$49,000 advertising and marketing grant for the Nature Center. **Bill Francisco** of *AdSharp* is preparing the campaign in coordination with the CVB, park resources and the Friends. **Bill** has been a longtime Friends member and currently is the President Elect of the *Dunedin Rotary Club*. At September's Friends Meeting, **Bill** presented **Pete** and I with a donation to the Friends for \$1,500 from the proceeds of the *Rotary Triathlon* held at Honeymoon Island earlier in the summer. *Wilderness Graphics, Inc.* is moving towards the finalization of the interior exhibits and will be installing them in the near future. A schematic of the exhibits is posted on the Friends' website. The cost of \$125,000 is being shared between the state, a \$35,000 grant from the *Southwest Florida Water Management District* and the Friends. The *Clearwater Chapter of the Audubon*

Society donated \$6,500 towards the exhibits as well as a spotting scope which was used by **Tim Marshall** and the volunteers participating in the initial training for staffing and supporting the opening of the Nature Center.

The 2nd Annual Caladesi Golf Tournament was held at the *Lansbrook Golf and Country Club* in August. The winners were **Doug Grear, Kris Quillin, Steve Rhodes** and **Dusty Rhodes**. Over \$2,000 was raised towards projects on Caladesi Island from this event. It also was the send off for **Shawn Yeager**, then assistant manager at Caladesi Island. **Steve Koba, Greg Cagle** and **Pete** teamed up with **Shawn** in the tournament. **Shawn** has accepted a position in the district office. He has relocated with his wife **Sharon** and their dog Dorothy to the Sarasota area. On behalf of the Friends, thank you **Shawn** and good luck in your new position. Thank you also to all the sponsors and participants of the golf tournament. A special thank you goes to *Café Honeymoon* and *Café Caladesi* and our own Friends member **Shane Bittaker** for sponsoring the *Hole in One Contest* at the golf tournament.



Doug Grear, Kris Quillin, Steve Rhodes, Dusty Rhodes



Glen Cagle, Steve Koba, Pete Krulder, Shawn Yeager

I welcome new board members **Ray Dabkowski** and **Barry Metcalfe**. I wish to thank **Megan Cagle** for her dedication and outstanding work coordinating the Friends membership, monthly meeting postcards and her volunteer enthusiasm for supporting the parks. **Ray** will be taking over the membership duties. I ask each of you to introduce one of your friends to our group. We need your help and support to continue the growth of our membership. If each of us introduces a new member, we will be bringing in new volunteer energy to support Honeymoon and Caladesi islands.

Welcome back board member **Pat Linn** and her husband **Bob** who have returned to the area from Indiana.

The Annual Citizen Support Organization (CSO) meeting will be held at the *Hampton Inn/ Courtyard Marriott* complex in Cocoa Beach, Florida November 16 -18, 2006. This is an opportunity for members and representatives of all the CSOs in the state to gather and meet with park management in a casual, coordinated manner.

Rest in Pieces IX, a safe alternative to trick-or-treating for Halloween, is scheduled for Friday, October 27th and Saturday, October 28th from 6 to 10 p.m. This event is sponsored by the Friends, the Florida Park Service, and community volunteers. Featuring an “enchanted forest”, “haunted maze”, scary trails, story telling, face painting, children’s games and much more as the northeast part of the island near the Osprey Trail is transformed for this Halloween celebration. Thank you to rangers **Shirley Meggs** and **Karen LeBlanc**, and **Marianne Davis, Megan Cagle** and **Skip Meadows** for leading the park staff and volunteers. Proceeds from this event will be used to purchase a beach accessible wheel chair.

Thanks to **Ron Geisheimer** for his work on the *Pinellas County Community Foundation Grant* submitted in September. We are anxiously awaiting news for this \$2,000 funding, which if awarded will benefit Caladesi Island with new signage.

“Celebrate with Friends”, the concept put forth by **Gabriella Mullins** as we undertook *Island*

Fest 2006 last spring, continues to define our vision. The Friends board is holding an extra meeting in October to redefine the vision of *Island Fest* to align it with current park needs and support of the natural resources on the islands. The *Caladesi Kayak Challenge* has been renamed the *Shark Bite Challenge* and will be held on Saturday, April 21st as part of the Earth Day celebration of 2007 supported by the Friends. The Grand Opening of the *Rotary Centennial Nature Center* will highlight this vision put forth 25 years ago. The plans are for a VIP event in the morning with all the donors, dignitaries and organizations that have contributed with a ribbon-cutting ceremony emceed by **Pete Krulder**. All members of the Friends are invited to this event. The doors will then be opened to the public later in the day. Stay tuned as we finalize our efforts in turning this dream into a reality.

Park Manager's Report

By Pete Krulder
Park Manager

As I sit and write this the first of the cooler weather has arrived. What a beautiful day it is to be out in the park! With the arrival of the cooler weather comes the first of our winter visitors. Some of our resident volunteers should be arriving in the next few weeks as well.

Along with the human snowbirds, many of our feathered friends should be starting their annual migration through the area. Just this morning I saw a bald eagle flying around behind the house. The trails in the park are finally dried out from the summer rains and the bugs are starting to slow down. Get out in the park and enjoy some of this great weather!

Halloween is fast approaching and the committee is hard at work getting ready for the event on the nights of the 27th and 28th of October. It should be hauntingly good night.

Things are moving along on the development of the exhibits for the Nature Center and we are still shooting for a late fall opening.

The Park Service's annual reports on attendance and revenue are in and Honeymoon Island State Park was number two in attendance and Caladesi Island State Park was

number 18 out of the 159 state parks in Florida. The combined attendance for the two parks was over 1.2 million visitors. The direct economic impact to the local community was just short of 40 million dollars.

Without the efforts of the staff, volunteers and the support of the Friends all of this would not be possible.

Since I last wrote we have had to say farewell to **Shawn Yeager** the assistant manager at Caladesi Island. Shawn has been promoted to Operations Management Consultant II at the district office. His replacement will be **Bill Gruber**. Bill comes to us from Oscar Scherer State Park, where he was a park ranger. Bill started work on the 16th of October. So if you see him around the parks give him a warm welcome.



New Caladesi assistant park manager Bill Gruber

Volunteer News

By Karen Le Blanc
Park Services Specialist

When people call to inquire about volunteering, I don't think they fully understand how much work goes into managing and maintaining a park or - maybe they do and that's why they want to help! I sometimes have to laugh when visitors say, "...wow, you have such a fun job..." when they see rangers patrolling the beach because as we all know the job entails maintaining a delicate balance between the needs, wants and desires of our visitors with what is best in order to protect this precious resource we all love. The Nature Center programs will assist us greatly with the Florida

Park Service's mission to provide resource-based recreation while preserving, interpreting and restoring natural and cultural resources. Currently eighteen volunteers are going through training. Once they are trained, they will serve as front desk staff and docents to help with questions our visitors may have. For example, a visitor from out of state may not understand why we burn the forest or why we ask visitors to keep their dogs on leashes or why having rattlesnakes on the island is a good thing. With all of the work in launching of this new facility sometimes we forget why we are doing this and it is my belief that the Nature Center will be yet another vehicle to promote a healthy respect for nature and in turn, we will all benefit in countless ways. Being a part of this is very exciting and rewarding! The many volunteers such as the Friends and Rotarians who raised the funds to turn an old bath house into a nature center, and volunteers like **Ed Hughes, David Dunn, Ken Baker** and **Ron Doyon** who worked with the staff under ranger **Mike Emmerich's** supervision to landscape the grounds and create a nature trail have a lot to be proud of! On behalf of the Florida Park Service we thank you for your inspiration as well as your perspiration!

Another exciting thing that is happening is a new program called *Learning in Florida's Environment (LIFE)* that is a partnership between the Department of Environmental Protection and the public schools in Florida. *LIFE* is an initiative to establish a series of field-based, environmental science education programs around the state. The goal of this initiative is increased student achievement and teacher professional development in science. Honeymoon Island will partner with *Kennedy Middle School* beginning in 2007. We will work with the teachers to design field labs that encourage student learning through inquiry-based instruction and real-world application specifically to assist with teaching concepts such as the *scientific method*. We will work with approximately 100 students and all will have pre-tests and post-tests; will keep portfolios with their research; and will maintain journal entries about their findings. Students will complete their field labs here at the park.

Special thanks to **Marianne Davis, Megan Cagle, Skip Meadows, Diane Hood**, ranger **Shirley Meggs** and assistant park manager

Gloria Beauchamp for planning and organizing our ninth annual Halloween program. They have done an outstanding job!

Finally, if you are interested in any of these exciting projects, please contact me and be sure to watch for more information on *Volunteer Appreciation Day* which will be held on February 10, 2007 at Alafia River State Park.

Our Web Sites

By Tim Marshall
Webmaster

Continued updates to the Friends website are being made regularly. This allows us to post new special events and other news items, and to clean up any outdated materials. Important news is always featured on the front page. The **Nature Center** page has been reorganized and updated to include Nature Center construction with a *Construction History Page* that includes a history of the project from start to finish, and the **Construction Latest Updates** page featuring the most recent construction news and photos.

We also have set up the **Nature Center Training** page which includes details and registration information for the docent training, and a new **360 panorama** of the north end of the Pelican Trail including a "virtual tour" overlooking Pelican Cove and St. Joseph Sound.

Website visits for the year through October 11th are at 23,849 and the trend is upward! Please be sure to visit us at www.islandparks.org and note these other handy sites:

Island Fest:

<http://www.islandparks.org/islandfest>

Honeymoon Island State Park:

<http://www.floridastateparks.org/honeymoonisland/default.cfm>

Caladesi Island State Park:

<http://www.floridastateparks.org/caladesiisland/default.cfm>

Florida State Parks:

<http://www.floridastateparks.org>

Friends CSO News

2006 Board and Officers

Ray Dabkowski and **Barry Metcalfe** were voted in by the Board at its October meeting. **Barry** and **Ray** both already are major contributors to Friends' efforts and their willingness to contribute now to the decision making process is greatly welcomed as well.

Welcome New Members

Please welcome our newest Friends:

- **Connie Behrns**
- **Ellen Richter**
- **Gayle Lawrence**
- **Patricia Wolfe**
- **Patti Ganson**
- **Rose Marie Uva**

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 Hot Rod

Below is a picture of a brand new Gravely lawn mower purchased for Caladesi Island State Park with funds provided by the Friends. Such purchases are part of a program whereby a percentage of Friends income is made available to each of the parks for items at their discretion. The program is not meant as a substitute for State of Florida funding but instead as a source of funds for hard or slow to get items that park management feels will boost operational effectiveness. **Sam Martin**, our Treasurer, says he heard it rumored that former

assistant park manager **Shawn Yeager** was going to install a governor on the throttle because it was so fast. We don't know about that but the picture below shows Caladesi ranger **Carl Calhoun** on the mower in neutral!



Carl Calhoun reins in the new Gravely

Looking Ahead

Island Fest (?) 2007

At a special planning meeting on October 24th the board focused exclusively on the nature and direction of the annual Island Fest event.

Details will be worked out as the event draws nearer but this much has been resolved: it will be a one-day, daylight hour's event with less of a "carnival-like" atmosphere and with more of an environment-related focus; there may be a new name; there will be food, vendors, music and libations but on a smaller scale compared to past Island Fests; and it will be held on Earth Day, April 21st and will incorporate the *Shark Bite Challenge* kayak race as part of the event. **Marianne Davis** and **Barry Metcalfe** are co-chairing. Stay tuned for further details and on ways you can help!

Island Calendar

Oct	27	Halloween Event
	28	Halloween Event
Nov	12	Breakfast w/ Ranger
	16	Annual CSO statewide conference
	17	Annual CSO statewide conference
	18	Annual CSO statewide conference
	21	Friends meeting
Dec	Tbd	Friends meeting/Holiday party

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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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!



Friends of the Island Parks

Members of the Board

President: Jacques Rene Marion
 Vice President: George Skalkeas
 Treasurer: Sam Martin
 Secretary: Ron Geisheimer
 Shane Bittaker
 Megan Cagle
 Ray Dabkowski
 Marianne Davis
 Sally Hess
 Diane Hood
 Scott Hood
 Pat Linn
 Skip Meadows
 Barry Metcalfe
 Mike Moran
 Gabriella Mullins
 Linda Taylor

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