

Outdoor Times



MARION COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION
IT STARTS IN PARKS

Volume 3, Issue 1

January 2008

What is "It Starts in Parks"?

The benefits of parks and recreation are endless. It is proven that they add significantly to the quality of life in all communities. The "It Starts in Parks" slogan is a theme that resulted from a partnership between the National Recreation and Park Association and Sports Illustrated. It later was adopted by the Florida Recreation and Park Association as well as many parks and recreation departments as it encompasses the message of the importance and value parks and recreation has within a community.

There are eight messages that incorporate the benefits of parks and recreation to our community.

"Achievement"....where Marion County Parks and Recreation give children a chance to learn life lessons, to experience success early, and to dream big, as they venture up the Ocklawaha River on their first canoe trip.

"Community"....where your local park brings people together, developing lifetime friendships, and bridging

generations together at family gatherings.

"Conservation of our natural treasures".....as our population grows, our Marion County elected officials realize the importance of conserving green space and waterways with the acquisition of land for public use over the years.

"Economic development".....our own Rotary Sportsplex hosts many youth league baseball tournaments which attracts visitors to



Marion County and new dollars in our backyard.

"Good Health"....physical activity is a key to maintaining a healthy body and healthy mind....achieved in many of our parks and trails through such activities as hiking, biking, rollerblading and canoeing.

"Heritage".....jointly owned

by Marion County and the City of Ocala, the Ft. King site, was recently designated as a National Historic Landmark. This was an active fort during the Second Seminole War, and was established by the U.S. Army to protect the northern boundary of the Indian reservation.

"Respect for Nature"....the joy of tubing or canoeing down the Rainbow River from KP Hole, or experiencing the rustic feel of outdoor living at Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat where one can fish, canoe, hike, and enjoy the soft sounds of nature in the early evening, or a sunset across the lake.

Florida's Future....."It Starts in Parks".....1,000 new residents each day... with such growth people need a place to connect and form new relationships, learn about Florida and Marion County's heritage and its natural treasures. Our parks are a place where we come together. How do you weave strangers into citizens and friends? "It starts in parks."

Boy Scout Provides Water Trail

Preston Shisgal recently completed his Eagle Scout project by building a hand launch facility for canoes and kayaks at Little Lake Weir. This project will serve as the catalyst for Marion County's first designated water trail which will go from Carney Island to W. H. Willoughby Park, on

the west shore of Little Lake Weir.

The improvements include a paddle craft loading and unloading area, the trail itself, removal of exotic invasive plants, the planting of native aquatic plants and signage.

Commissioner Stan McClain, "was extremely impressed

with Mr. Shisgal's attention to detail and enthusiasm to provide a quality product for paddle craft users. This will enhance the facilities currently provided on Carney Island." McClain added that he, "would like to be the first to congratulate Preston on a job well done and on his Eagle Scout."

Outdoor Times is a monthly newsletter provided as a public service to park visitors and guests.

Any questions related to this publication may be directed to Gina Peebles, Administrative Manager, in writing at Marion County Parks & Recreation, 111 SE 25 Ave, Ocala, FL 34471, by telephone at 352-671-8560 or via e-mail at gina.peebles@marioncountyfl.org

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Carney Island Conservation & Recreation Area A Rich History



THE SITE...WAS ACQUIRED BY MARION COUNTY TO PROTECT ITS ECOLOGICAL CHARACTER AND TO PROVIDE A LOCATION FOR RESOURCE-BASED RECREATION

The Lake Weir area has a rich history. The property has historically supported agricultural uses dating back to the 1600's. When the Spanish missionaries first visited the Lake Weir region around 1600, the Timucuan Indians occupied Marion County. The diseases carried by the Europeans decimated the local tribes by mid-1600. Around 1700, the Creek Indians were forced into Florida by the British and swiftly became known as the Seminoles. Many Seminoles settled in the Lake Weir area where they farmed and raised livestock.

In the 1800's, the lake was named in honor of U.S. Army Lieutenant Weir, who was killed near the lake's banks by the Seminole Indians in the early 1800's. In 1875, Captain John L. Carney and his brother E.L. Carney purchased the land now known as Carney Island. They developed a 25 acre orange grove, which later grew in size. The Carney's were responsible for propagating several new varieties of citrus, including the *Parson Brown* variety. For most of the last century, the area

surrounding the Carney groves flourished as a citrus producing region. The citrus was shipped by steamboat from a packinghouse on the east shore of the property across Lake Weir to the railroad. Pilings still exist on the property today from this packinghouse.

Minute Maid Corporation. In 1990, officials with Coca-Cola agreed to sell the Carney Island property to Marion County at a price below market value. The property was acquired using funds from the "Pennies for Parks" program. The site, which includes over 750+ acres of sandhill islands, causeways, wetland systems and shoreline beaches was acquired by Marion County to protect its ecological character and to provide a resource-based recreation area for its residents.

A hard freeze in 1894 wiped out the citrus trees around Lake Weir. Most groves were re-established, and citrus groves remained an important agricultural industry until another widespread freeze in 1984.

Over the years, several fruit growing companies had interest in the Carney Island property, and it was eventually acquired by the Coca-Cola Company in 1960 when they purchased the

Bass Tournament a Success

On December 1 and 2, a tournament was held on Lake Weir. Participants launched from the new boat ramps on Carney Island.

Tournament coordinator, Charles Dehlinger, stated that, "the ramp facilities and park at Carney are better than anything our club has

seen, and we have fished all over Florida. Marion County should be proud of this beautiful facility."

To schedule your bass tournament at Carney, or any of our other boat ramp parks, please contact the Department at 352-671-8560.



Volunteers in Parks (VIP)

The Marion County Parks and Recreation Department is looking for individuals that share a love for the preservation of our park system, a true recreational interest in various leisure areas and will share their skills and enthusiasm with others.

Become part of our *It Starts in Parks* campaign by getting involved as a Volunteer in Parks (VIP) and experience Marion County's quality of life opportunities.

We are looking for volunteers that have an interest in the following areas:

- Canoeing and Kayaking
- Guided Nature Tours
- Walking Programs
- Geo-caching
- Umpires / Scorekeepers
- Graphic Design
- Special Events
- Clean-up Efforts
- Tree Planting
- Monitoring Wildlife
- Clerical Assistance

Volunteers must first complete a Volunteer Application, available at our office or online at www.marioncountyfl.org/parks.htm.

No experience is necessary...just a willingness to contribute your time and expertise.

Interested individuals may contact the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department at (352) 671-8560.



Veterans Park Volunteer Honored

After five years of service as the volunteer Office Manager for the Ocala / Marion County Veteran's Memorial Park, Sarah Fitzgerald retires.

Sarah was responsible for coordinating the Park volunteers and lent her assistance during events. She also handled Park tours, as well as bench and brick sales.

On December 12, Sarah was honored by a number of military groups, including the Marion County Veteran's Council, Veterans Services and the United States Submarine Group for her contributions to the Park.

When asked what she hopes to do in her new found free time, Sarah laughingly replied that she hopes, "to

clean and vacuum [her] house."

Gen. Pat Howard noted that, "she will be missed. She developed many close ties with our Veterans by serving on the Veteran's Council and was instrumental in forming a ladies veterans group, which met for the first time in November."



New Park Fees Take Effect

The Board of County Commissioners recently adopted a resolution to revise fees at several County park facilities. Day use prices have been standardized to \$5 per day per vehicle, excluding KP Hole which remains \$3 per person.

Additionally, Hope Boat Ramp has been designated

as a "park pass holder only" location. Several fees have also been increased at Horseshoe Lake Park and Retreat.

Annual and semi-annual park passes are available to Marion County residents for \$35 and \$25 respectively. Residents with proof of 100 percent disability, and Active

Duty Military Personnel, are eligible for 1/2 price park passes.

Purchase your pass today. Cash, check, debit and credit cards are accepted at the Parks Office or you can download an application at www.marioncountyfl.org/parks.htm



Outdoor Times

Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Location	Time
January 5	Art Van-Go	Liberty Community Park	10:00 a.m.
January 5	Art Van-Go	Baseline Trailhead	12:00 p.m.
January 5	Art Van-Go	Wrigley Fields	2:00 p.m.
January 11	Cal Ripken / Babe Ruth	Wrigley Fields	6:00—8:00 p.m.
January 12	Cal Ripken / Babe Ruth	Wrigley Fields	9:00 a.m.—12 noon
January 14	Senior Softball	Wrigley Fields	10:30 a.m.
January 17	Youth Play Day	Coehadjoe Park	9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.
January 18	Cal Ripken / Babe Ruth	Wrigley Fields	6:00—8:00 p.m.
January 19	Cal Ripken / Babe Ruth	Wrigley Fields	9:00 a.m.—12 noon
January 20	Adult Co-Ed Softball	Wrigley Fields	1:00 p.m.

For additional information on programs, please call 352-671-8560 or visit us on-line at www.marioncountyfl.org/parks.htm



Parks & Natural Resources Division

The Department is pleased to welcome Parks & Natural Resources Specialist, Rodney Sieg, to the Parks & Natural Resources Division. Rodney, a Marion County native, came to the Department from the Florida Division of Forestry as a Lead Forester with 18 years of experience.

Rodney has extensive experience managing natural areas throughout Marion County including native plants and wildlife.

Some of his responsibilities will include prescribed burns, necessary to help reduce wildfire fuel and enhance natural habitats; establishing and installing water regulatory zones,

designated swim areas and idle speed / no wake zones to protect personal property, natural habitats and for general public safety.

Parks & Natural Resources Manager, Greg Wiley, is “excited for the addition of Rodney to our County team and for his many years of expertise managing County properties.”