

# Scherer Delight Newsletter

## Oscar Scherer State Park



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### From the President:



Now is a good time to stop for a moment and reflect on where we have been and where we are hopefully going. The winter season is over, we are halfway through the calendar year, our fiscal year ended on June 30th, and we are about to gear up for the next season.

So where have we been? The short answer is that, despite an unseasonably cold winter, we had a very good year with a series of incredibly successful programs. The simple formula is that we work very hard to do it right, have an incredible group of members whose volunteer efforts continue to soar, and also have the support of local companies who go out of their way to help us out even when they themselves are working hard to make ends meet in a limp economy. Elsewhere in this newsletter you'll read about our programs – please think of our sponsors and contributors when you need something.

And where are we going? Mother Nature, who traditionally uses the summer season to refurbish the park, got an early start this year: the month of May was *hot*. According to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ... “Florida tied for its second-warmest May [2010] on record.” Although the summer heat dictates that we work a bit more conservatively, it doesn't mean that we take the summer off! The Nature Center is still being staffed by us seven days a week from 8:00-3:00, coffee and donuts are available every Saturday from 8:00-10:00, the children's programs are also on every Saturday, and the Scrub Walk is held every Sunday morning. Additionally, our volunteers who will be chairing programs and events in the upcoming season are already hard at work getting the details worked out. Last year we contributed over 23,000 volunteer hours and this year I'm betting the number will even exceed that. Whew! and Wow!

We are sorry to report that we recently lost one of our most dedicated volunteers and board member, **John Mongelli**. John was a fixture among “The Old Curmudgeons,” and volunteered over 2,500 hours at the park. The Board has elected him to the Memorial Honor Roll, and soon he will be included in the Virtual Memorial on our Website at <http://www.friendsofoscarscherer.com>. John will be missed.

*Russ Delaney*

### From the Park Manager:



*What a beautiful day!*

I am referring to Saturday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, National Trails Day. On this day, another great feature of the park was presented to the community for use by all when we opened the newest addition to the park, the Lake Osprey Trail. On this day, The Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, Inc. outdid themselves in service, commitment, and support. My sincere thanks to all involved – park and district staff, AmeriCorps, and of course, you our volunteers.

That's how our summer started and it didn't stop there. All the people involved in District 4 were recognized on June 16th at the **Davis Productivity Awards** ceremony in Tampa. Staff and volunteers in District 4 received an award for their efficient use of very limited budgets and for increasing visitation, and the Friends and the park staff received a Davis Award for their increased public service. In addition, our maintenance mechanic, **Joe Bernier**, and his daughter, **Charlotte O'Neal**, were given an honorable mention for their efforts to relocate surplus Department of Environmental Protection equipment from the Tampa office to our park for extended service.

All of these actions by these great teams save thousands of dollars and allow us to get more done, present more programs, serve more visitors, and spend our limited funds on needed supplies. **TEAM OSCAR LIVES!**

It is wonderful to see and hear how much the improvements done by the Friends have increased the enjoyment of so many. I thank all of our Friends for their contributions to the park, and I thank our staff for their dedication and willingness to work as a team, making Oscar Scherer State Park the best state park in the nation.

*“We are often so caught up in our destination that we forget to appreciate the journey. Especially the goodness of the people we meet along the way. Appreciation is a wonderful feeling, don't overlook it.” ~ Anonymous.*

I hope everyone has a happy and safe summer, and I look forward to having all our seasonal members back!

*John Roche*

**Earth Day** Despite less than ideal conditions – it rained all day – the 21st celebration of Earth Day took place at the park on Sunday, April 18th. The crowd was smaller than in previous years, probably because of the weather, but those who braved the soggy conditions were treated to a wonderful variety of vendors and displays all geared towards supporting the environment.

**Mike Thomason**, our multitasking AmeriCorps member, wowed the crowd with his very professional juggling acts. Oscar's Grill, under the leadership of Chef **Nancy Bloomquist**, and her crew provided food all day long. The photo contest entries were stunning; the judges had their hands full trying to pick the winners. The children's games were a big hit as usual, and to top it all off a variety of talented performers provided music throughout the day.

Earth Day has become a great annual celebration at the park. If it isn't on your calendar every April it should be. When you add free entry to the park to all of the above how can you possibly go wrong? See you next year!

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### Annual Father's Day Map & Compass Treasure Hunt

The combined efforts of AmeriCorps and the Friends of Oscar Scherer have caused this program, which has been running for several years now, to become something of a Father's Day tradition at the park. The Map & Compass Treasure Hunt tests the skills of both child and adult as they work together to find a series of markers hidden along a half-mile stretch of secluded trails.

About 20 families participated in this year's event held on Sunday, June 20th. At the completion of the hunt, the families got to choose a fun item from a "treasure chest" before enjoying lunch provided by the Friends of Oscar Scherer.

Many thanks to the Friends and to **Mike Thomason** and **Rachel Hansen**, the park's two AmeriCorps members, for organizing the program.

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### Did You Know ...

... that Florida State Parks are celebrating their 75th Anniversary this year?



(Photos in this newsletter courtesy of Ed Burns)

## Lake Osprey Trail Opening

Over 300 people attended the festive opening of the Lake Osprey Trail on Saturday, June 5, 2010. In the following order, District Manager **Valinda Subic**, Park Manager **John Roche**, Friends President **Russ Delaney** (pictured below right), County Commissioner **Jon Thaxton**, and local developer **Lee Wetherington** (pictured below left) addressed the crowd. Bill White (pictured below center) was also at the opening.



Thanks to Lee Wetherington from Friends of Oscar Scherer Park  
Dedication of the Lake Osprey Trail June 5, 2010

It was Lee Wetherington's vision that led to a \$250 donation for each home he built in Willowbend that translated into the Access For All trail that encircles Lake Osprey. The Friends leveraged this donation with an engineering study from the **Department of Environmental Protection**, a donation of equipment and services from **Hazeltine Nurseries**, three full days of labor from a **nine-member AmeriCorps team**, and thousands of hours of labor from members of the Friends to turn Lee Wetherington's vision into a reality. Two local youths, **JC Chace**, who is blind, and **Victor Rocco**, who is wheelchair-bound, assisted in the ribbon cutting and then proceeded to lead the hike around the lake.

The next time you're in the park make it a point to hike this short trail around the lake and see it for yourself. Many thanks to **Bruce Snyder** and **Bob Sendrey** for co-chairing this project.



Working on the trail.

# Youth Programs

We offer three youth programs on Saturdays at the park. The programs are run by **J.T. Eldreth** and **Joyce Crowl** with the help of other volunteers.

**Oscar's Nature Detective Program** is for young people 7 years and older. This involves a hike around Lake Osprey while we tell the participants about all the different marine life that lives there. We also look for animal tracks using an animal track card that can be taken home, and later show them how to make a cast of a track that we find while hiking. And we show them how to identify trees and plants along the green trail, describing how important it is to leave nothing and/or take nothing from the park in order to protect the wildlife that lives there. In the picture below, the children discuss their findings along the hike overseen by JT and Joyce.



After the hike, we return to the screen room to paint a one-of-a-kind bobcat track. This is followed by a short video about what everyone saw on the hike but it also covers things of nature in the park that they did not see.

As its name suggests, **Paper Making**, is just that. We shred recycled paper and put it into a mixer to create a liquid. This liquid is then poured into a mold, all the water is worked out, and the new paper is left to dry. This program is also geared to children 7 years and older.

The third program, and the most popular, is **Elsa's Fish Printing**, which is a great family activity. For this, we use rubber molds (casts from real fish) for the children to paint, and they then transfer their work onto a tee-shirt or hand towel. We provide the hand towel if they do not bring a shirt.

These programs are the highlight of the park visit for some of our young visitors, whether campers or day visitors. Check out times and programs offered while visiting our Nature Center open every day from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Have a Great Summer!



## JOHN MONGELLI 1934-2010

*On May 28, 2010 Friends of Oscar Scherer board member **John Mongelli** passed away after a brief battle with pancreatic cancer.*

*John was a regular and enthusiastic volunteer and a member of "The Old Curmudgeons." He could be found at the park every Monday and Wednesday morning, and was always among the first to volunteer when help was needed to support any program or event at the park.*

*Over the past eight years, John contributed more than 2,500 hours of volunteer labor participating in such projects as the construction of four bridges, the building of the shed addition at the Nature Center, the construction of the observation bench, the planting of 66 new trees, countless cords of wood split, miles of trails cleared, and most recently the work he contributed on the Lake Osprey Trail. He was always available to help park cars at events, guide hikers on the trails, assist with tram rides, and countless other efforts. Our deepest sympathy is extended to John's wife, Jane, and his family.*

## NEWS FLASH!

### MAJOR EMPLOYMENT AND COMMERCIAL CENTER PROPOSED ADJACENT TO OSCAR SCHERER STATE PARK

You may have heard or read about the development center proposed for just south of the park.

The Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, Inc. are always concerned about development actions that have a potential impact on the park, its visitors, and especially on the wildlife and ecosystems that reside there.

We are fortunate that Friends past-president **Laurel Schiller** has volunteered to represent us in this matter. Both Laurel and park manager **John Roche** have been in contact with Sarasota County officials to ensure they take into account agreements and plans already in place before proceeding with any action. Both Laurel and John have copied us on their memos which detail our positions in this matter.

Unfortunately, space prohibits us from including the memos in this newsletter; therefore, we will put them up on our Website as soon as possible.

<http://friendsofoscarscherer.com/>



Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, Inc.  
 1843 S. Tamiami Trail  
 Osprey, Florida 34229

Great people having fun doing good things for the environment and Florida at Oscar Scherer State Park. To learn about volunteer opportunities at the park, join us at one of our monthly meetings with no commitment. Meetings are held at 6:00 pm on the second Monday of each month in the Nature Center. If you'd like more information, call the park at (941) 483-5956.

Use this form to join The Friends of Oscar Scherer and/or adopt a scrub jay.

**Send form with check to:**

Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, Inc.  
 1843 South Tamiami Trail  
 Osprey, Florida 34229

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual Dues**

- Youth \$10
- Individual \$20
- Household \$25
- \_\_\_\_ Number in household
- Business Friend \$100
- Corporate Sponsor \$500
- Other donation \$\_\_\_\_\_
- Scrub Jay Adoption(s) @ \$25

A copy of the official registration (SC-00263) and financial information may be obtained from the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services by calling toll-free 1-800-435-7352 within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state. We are a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization under the Internal Revenue Code, so your dues and donations may be deductible. Percent of each contribution retained by any professional solicitor: Zero. Percent of each contribution retained by our organization: 100.

*Scherer Delight* is published quarterly by the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, Inc., 1843 S. Tamiami Trail, Osprey, Florida 34229, to provide its members and the public with information about Oscar Scherer State Park in Osprey, Florida and the importance of its natural environment in Southwest Florida. Content is by Friends' members and park staff, unless otherwise specified.

Florida State Parks are in various stages of accessibility and are working to improve access to services and facilities. Should you require assistance, please contact the individual park office as soon as possible. Sometimes as many as ten working days may be necessary to schedule a particular accommodation. Service animals for visitors with disabilities are welcome in all areas of state parks.

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