The Future is bright!

An undertaking that was eight years in the planning and three years in the funding has come to fruition. The Friends of John D. MacArthur Beach State Park were proud to hold their groundbreaking ceremony for the new Pew Family Natural Science Education Center on April 13th, 2010 at the Park.

The atmosphere was thick with accomplishment and the ushering in of a new era for the Park. The ceremony attracted around 95 attendees including dignitaries such as Diego Echeverri, Special Assistant to Governor Charlie Crist, County Commissioner, Karen Marcus, Mayor of Riviera Beach, Thomas Masters and the Mayor of the Village of North Palm Beach, William Manual. Also in attendance were representatives for the Community Foundations of Palm Beach and Martin Counties, Lost Tree Foundation, Pew Foundation, Quantum Foundation, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Friends of MacArthur Beach Board of Trustees and countless honored donors.

Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park Board President Rebecca Doane opened the ceremony by introducing the immediate Past President Ted Thoburn. Ted spoke of the vision that led the Friends, along with help from the State, to raise over 2 million dollars to build the new Pew Family Natural Science Education Center along with updates to the existing Welcome Center. Diego Echeverri, Special Assistant to Governor Crist read a letter from Governor Crist “The Pew Family Natural Science Education Center will create exciting new opportunities for the students of Palm Beach County to learn, understand, and appreciate nature and science. This new education center will positively impact not only your community but the entire Sunshine State. Thank you to everyone involved for your hard work and commitment to make this dream a reality which will enrich the lives of the residents of Palm Beach County for many years to come.” County Commissioner Karen Marcus spoke in regards to how much John D. MacArthur Beach State Park, Palm Beach County’s only State Park, means to Palm Beach County and to the community. Finishing the speeches were John and Stephanie Pew who were proud their leadership gift would help provide programs for education, technology, environmental expansion and enhancement and teacher resourcing. Mrs. Pew encouraged the audience to continue giving to the Education Fund so that these resources will continue well into the Education Center’s and the Park’s future.

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Letter from the President
by Past President Ted Thoburn

Twenty years ago, and just one year after the Park opened, the Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park was chartered as a fully charitable Citizens Support Organization created with a mission of generating supplemental resources to preserve, restore, and interpret the natural and cultural assets of the Park for present and future generations. Since its inception, and prior to the recent Building Campaign, the Friends group has raised over $1 Million dollars for computers, software, ongoing support of the Park’s summer day camps, playground equipment, trams that carry visitors to and from the beach and community special events to mention only a few.

In 2005, the Park management approached the Friends, and while very complimentary of the financial success of the gift shop, said that it had far outgrown the space and there was a need to look for new facilities. That appeared to be an easy project when the location was identified and the estimated cost of construction came in at $500 Thousand dollars. But it did not stop there. The need for expanded teaching facilities and equipment to accommodate a growing Natural Science program operated for the Palm Beach County School system was brought forward. And, while we were approving projects, the need for improved exhibits for the Nature Center as well as new audio/visual equipment for the theater and outdoor amphitheater were also identified. So what started off as a $500,000 project quickly grew into a project exceeding $2 Million dollars. Having never raised that much money, we began the process of serious strategic planning, a consultant driven feasibility study and amendment to the State’s Ten Year Operating Plan for the Park. Upon completion, and with a Campaign Cabinet recruited and in place, we officially opened a $2.1 Million dollar ‘Island in Time’ Building Fund Capital Campaign in 2007.

That leads us to the present where we recently celebrated the groundbreaking for the new Pew Family Natural Science Education and Welcome Center. As we witness the building come to fruition, we must stop and thank all the volunteers who gave so tirelessly of their time during the campaign as well as all the donors whose generous donations provided the needed funds. And, special acknowledgement and appreciation must be given to John and Stephanie Pew whose leadership gift allowed the campaign to come to a timely and very successful conclusion.

On behalf of everyone in the Campaign Cabinet, and all the members of the Board of Directors of the Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park, we thank you, we thank you, we thank you.
NatureScaping 2010
by Arthur Carton

Everyone that knows me calls me, “plant man”, due to my love for plants and native plants in particular. Before I even moved back down to South Florida from Ocala, I wanted to eventually champion an event that promoted the use of Florida native plants in the home landscape. When I interviewed for the Park Specialist job over six years ago, Asst. Park Manager, Pat Rash asked me if I would be comfortable with running a park event called NatureScaping. He said that the event focused on educating the public about the benefits of Florida native plants. At that moment, I knew I was meant to move back to South Florida.

Six years later, after helping to organize and put together the past five NatureScaping events, I still get excited. This year was no different. When I woke up on Saturday, April 10th and saw that the weather was going to be beautiful, I knew that NatureScaping 2010 would be a success. And it was. Over 2,100 people visited the park that day and left with the knowledge to make our community a little “greener.” Visitors were treated to great lectures on environmental art and green architecture by Rob Hopper, landscape design by John Carton, ASLA and regional native plants by Friends of MacArthur Beach board member, Steve Bass. Visitors also learned how to protect sea turtles by talking with Debbie Sobel of the Sea Turtle Conservation League of Singer Island and Larry Wood of the Florida Hawksbill Project. Children of all ages had fun at the kid’s pavilion making crafts or getting their face painted. Families at the kid’s pavilion could also have a family portrait taken by professional photographer and board member, Ruth Petzold. There were many other vendors and exhibitors promoting recycling, butterfly gardening, water conservation and more. One of the highlights of this year’s event was the variety and quantity of Florida native plants for sale. Three weeks after the event I am still receiving phone calls from people who would like to purchase more native plants for their backyard.

I can’t talk about NatureScaping without thanking the sponsors of this year’s event. Our main sponsor was The Friends of MacArthur Beach, Citizen Support Group. Without their help the event wouldn’t have been a success. Friends of MacArthur Beach board members, Stephanie Pew, Marianne Gold and Gretta Curry helped volunteer Kari Foster with the silent auction. They did such a good job that our auction raised over $5,000. Money that will be used to support our educational programs. I would also like to thank our many private sponsors who include, The Palm Beach Post, The Palm Beach Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, The Audubon Society of the Everglades, Natural Awakenings Magazine, Excellent Bodywork Massage Therapy Inc., John Carton Landscape Architecture Inc., Marjorie Gadarian Graham, P.A. and the Florida D.E.P. Many thanks also goes out to the over 75 volunteers who helped with the event.

As we wrap up our NatureScaping 2010 event I hope that you had fun. But most of all, I hope you learned something from our exhibitors and vendors that will help to make this community one of the “greenest” in the nation. Remember Earth Day is everyday and I hope to see you next year.

Bright Future continued

The Parks new facility, The Pew Family Natural Science Education Center is being constructed on the site directly beside the existing Nature Center. At just over five thousand square feet it will be joined by a covered boardwalk. The Center will be used for classes and educational activities such as research, as well as meetings and special events. The Center will be equipped with up to eight wet labs, a PupilCAM, 8-10 tables, 60 chairs and ample storage space. The classroom will accommodate school groups of up to 40 students and instructors. The building will also house the Research Library, the Discovery Lab and brand new and exciting Gift Shop.

The Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park know that this addition will be one of the most useful tools in teaching the children of Palm Beach County the love of nature and science, helping ensure that our community will be appreciated and cared for by future generations.
Manager Matters

I was recently asked what the Pew Family Natural Science Education Center groundbreaking meant to me as the Park Manager at John D. MacArthur Beach State Park. While there are many features of this project that I am excited about, there are a couple that really stand out for me personally. In particular, the center’s contribution to educational programming provided to Palm Beach County students and the community involvement that went into making this project a reality are two aspects that make this such an amazing project.

Judging by the feedback we receive from students and educators alike, the value of the hands-on learning experiences available to students at our park can’t be overstated. Clearly the staff and volunteers at MacArthur Beach State Park are providing a vital community service by making that experience possible for the thousands of Palm Beach County students who take part in our educational programs annually. The new education center will not only enhance the programming already available to students but also enable us to offer those programs to even more students in years to come.

Don Bergeron
Park Ranger

Volunteer Spotlight

Get to Know – Mort Green

Volunteer Full Name: Morton Green

Job Assignments: Visitor Services
a.k.a Tram Driver

Occupation: 24 years in the Army, retired
Lieutenant Colonel and
Executive Officer General
Hospital
Optometrist

Special Interest: Golfing – Mort shot under
his age four times last year
Driving the Tram – Mort has
served over 1500 hours of
volunteer service

Birth Place: Woonsocket, Rhode Island

Years in Florida: Started visiting Florida in
1987 and became a fulltime
resident in 2005

How long have you been here at MacArthur:
21 years and Leni Bane was
my mentor when I first started

Favorite part of MacArthur:
I just love this park, it’s the
best keep secret in town. I
wished more people knew
about this special place.

Looking forward to:
Good health and many more
years at the park.
Sea Turtle Nesting Season 2010
by Scott Duncan

We are fast approaching another sea turtle nesting season here at Macarthur Beach. As always I am very eager to get back out on the beach doing morning nesting surveys and turtle walks. So what are we expecting for this season? Well, the only thing that I have figured out about sea turtle nesting is that we have not got them figured out yet! Loggerheads did not do so great last season. In fact it was the lowest nesting figure on our beach in the past 20 years! Loggerheads have exhibited an alarming downward trend over the past 20 years statewide, so much so that there has been talk of upgrading, (or downgrading, depending on how you look at it), their current status as threatened to endangered. The news is not all bad however. A recent study of loggerhead population in north Florida revealed that the population of juveniles is on the rise. Hopefully we should see the number of nests start to turn around in the next 10 years or so, as those turtles start to mature. To me, this is an indication of our conservation efforts starting to pay off.

On to our favorite Chelonian friends – the greens. We thought that we were starting to see a trend in green nesting, but last season threw a wrench into our thinking. Green sea turtles tend to exhibit an up / down pattern of nesting, meaning a season of high nesting followed by a season of low nesting. In 2007 we saw an incredible year of green nesting, demolishing the old record by almost doubling: 778 nests. Then in 2008 we had 305 green nests, our “low year.” I thought, “if we had that many nests, (3rd highest on record in fact), in what was supposed to be a low year, then in 2009 we will have more green nests than we know what to do with!” Quite frankly that didn’t happen, only 179 nests. I keep thinking that 2010 will be a high year for greens since last year was a low year, (I think), but I wouldn’t put my money on it!

Last but definitely not least – the leatherbacks. Leatherback nesting has been incredible the past few years, their numbers just keep going up and up. In 2007 we had a record year of 47 nests and last year we topped that number by 1 and had 48 nests. This was the same story throughout the state. Florida Fish and Wildlife reported having a greater number of leatherbacks nests than previously recorded statewide. So I am hoping for another huge year from these huge turtles.

All in all, we can only wait to see what the season has to offer and what surprises are waiting around the corner!

Volunteer Appreciation Event

On Saturday March 13th, 2010, we held our annual MacArthur Beach Volunteer Appreciation event at the Tiki Waterfront Grill in Riviera Beach. What a success, with over 92 volunteers including CSO Board Members and staff attending. Volunteers spent their time shopping at the Beach Boutique provided by generous donations from the Friends of MacArthur Beach, creative volunteers and dedicated staff members. The Tiki Waterfront Grill provided everyone a wonderful breakfast complete with omelet station.

Volunteer Coordinator Megan Harris helped make it all happen, and we appreciate all the time, energy and support from all our volunteers, staff and Friends. MacArthur Beach volunteers have served over 110,000 hours of community service over the past 20 years. Without their service, MacArthur Beach State Park would not be the place it is today. It is with much gratitude that we thank you.
It’s Time
The Sea Turtles are returning to nest at John D. MacArthur Beach State Park

Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park
Cordially Invite You to the
2010 Members Only Sea Turtle Talk and Walk and Sea Turtle Nesting Observation.
8:00 pm to 11:00 pm or later...Depending on the turtles

• Cocktail Refreshments
• For Members, ages 18 and older

• One guest per member
• Space is very limited, call for reservation

June 26 - RSVP by June 18 ~OR~
July 10 - RSVP by July 02 ~OR~
July 17 - RSVP by July 9

Please phone 561.776.7449 to reserve your date

Friends Gift Shop

Friends Members, Park Staff and Volunteers will again receive a 20% discount in the Gift Shop from May 1st to June 20th*

Do All Your Birthday and Holiday Gift Shopping and help support the Park’s Programs.

New at the Gift Shop:
- T-shirts commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the Park (1989-2009)
- Great gifts for children and adults on your list
  - Youth tee-shirts with new Pirate and Salty Dog designs
  - Kids bucket hats, puzzles, toys, stuffed animals and books
  - Colorful Women’s hats, wide brim and Men’s gambler straw hats and baseball caps
  - and much, much more.....

Funds from the Gift Shop go directly in support of Park programs.

GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE for
• Memberships
• Gift Shop
• Kayak Rentals

* MEMBERS - PLEASE HAVE MEMBERSHIP CARD AND PHOTO ID AVAILABLE AT TIME OF PURCHASE

* Does not include kayak or dive flag rentals
Up and Coming Activities

Activity Details

- All activities except MacArthur Under Moonlight concerts are free with Park admission –

Birding - Learn the names, characteristics and behaviors of the common and rare wading birds that browse the exposed mud flats at low tide.

Bluegrass - Music Listen to some of the best bluegrass music in South Florida; Nathan Rich and Friends will be playing bluegrass music in the amphitheater.

Bluegrass Music Jam - Join us for foot-stompin’ bluegrass music in the amphitheater. Acoustic musicians are welcome to join in and jam.

Butterfly Walk - Join a staff naturalist on a mile long walk identifying the butterflies that inhabit the park. Reservations recommended.

Learn to Kayak - Adventure Times Kayaks teach the basic skills necessary to safely enjoy the exciting sport of kayaking; instruction on land only. Reservations required.

MacArthur Under Moonlight Concert Series - Join us for a magical night of music, gates open at 6:00 p.m. Concert 7:00 p.m. with a fifteen minute intermission at 8:00 with stargazing on the boardwalk. $5.00 per person; members and children under the age of 10 are free.

Recreational Skills Lessons: Introduction to Kayak Fishing - Join Park Ranger Bill Wilson and learn the techniques and equipment needed to kayak fish in South Florida. The program is on land and reservations are recommended.

Recreational Skills Lessons: Introduction to Surfing - Park Ranger Rob Matriscino will lead you through the basics of surfing. This program is on land and in the water, good swimming skills are a must; children ages 10 and above may participate with parent supervision. Reservations required.

Volunteer Orientation - Come join our team and help visitors appreciate the importance of preserving this beautiful place by volunteering. Reservations required.

Yoga on the Beach - Certified yoga instructor, Annemarie Phelan, leads one hour yoga sessions on the beach for beginners and experienced participants. Reservations recommended.

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• Daily Guided Nature Walks at 10:00 a.m., also an 11:00 a.m. walk on Saturdays
• Every Weekend Animal Feeding in the Nature Center at 11:00 a.m.
• Every Sunday at 3:00 p.m. Snake Talk in the Nature Center followed by a snake feeding
Thank you for your membership in the Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park!

All funds raised by the Friends through memberships, the Gift Shop and kayak rentals stay in the Park. YOU assist the Friends to -

• Purchase equipment and supplies for the Natural Science Education Program
• Provide funding to purchase Passenger Trams and other equipment
• Fund volunteer training and recognition
• Provide funding for Picnic Pavilions and Playground
• Purchase and maintain the kayak fleet
• Fund Park printing, supplies and technology needs
• Provide funds for Park Staff Training
• Operate the Gift Shop
• Produce the Park quarterly newsletter, The Dune News

Thanks!