

# FLORIDA SCENIC HIGHWAYS PROGRAM

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



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Spring 2024



## MICANOPY POLLINATOR GARDEN

By Mary Horn

Originally published in the *Alachua County Master Gardener Volunteer Newsletter* (December 2023)

### DEAN'S CORNER

Springtime is nigh upon us. While much of our Country is still experiencing freezing temperatures, the oak trees in North Florida are already beginning their annual release of pollen. In South Florida the palms are busy pushing out their new flush of fronds. And so too, our byways will soon be visited by many spring break folks escaping the cold temperatures and trees still in dormancy.

Just this past week, a discussion I had with someone up North reminded me that I'm lucky to be living in Florida (they had ice and snow).

The time is now to revisit annual work plans and gather up your volunteers. Spring is a great time to take stock of byway accomplishments, and to make plans for growing and strengthening your byway organization. Above all make sure to have fun and promote genuine camaraderie in all your byway endeavors. In this way you ensure the success of your byway events.

On Tuesday, November 7, about fifteen gardeners gathered for a tour of the new **Pollinator Victory Garden** in Micanopy. The newly planted garden is located around the Bat House adjacent to the Post Office in this historic town about ten miles south of Gainesville.

Claudia Larsen, owner of the Micanopy Wildflower Nursery, created this garden. Many wildflower lovers from Micanopy, Alachua County Master Gardener volunteers, and other volunteers from around Alachua County worked on the garden.

Funding for the garden came from the Florida Wildflower Foundation, part of the *Viva Florida Grant Foundation*. The Town of Micanopy and the Old Florida Heritage Highway organization gave additional funding.

The garden is 50 x 50 feet, with a fence in the center surrounding the pole which elevates the Bat House, providing safe habitat for local bats. The fence will be planted with Carolina jessamine, passionflower vines and coral honeysuckle. There is space for



*Painting by Linda VanLeer showing the partnership between OFHH and the town of Micanopy.*

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The elevated Bat House provides a safe habitat for local bats.

small trees and shrubs and another spot for tall wildflowers and grasses. The rest of the garden is planted with many different wildflowers including firebush, salvia, aster, coreopsis, yucca, goldenrod, ironweed, brown-eyed Susan and so many others! Only a few were in bloom on the day of planting, but these new plants will mature, and they will delight us and local pollinators with lots of colorful blooms, nectar, and pollen!

These recent plantings are already sprouting new growth, thanks to a timed irrigation system. Soon, benches for sitting and resting will add to the setting. Identification signs are planned for each species, enhancing the garden's educational value.

Learning about this new pollinator garden from the grower who designed and installed all the plants provided an insightful learning experience for the group.

Additionally, a total of 500 plants (75 trees, shrubs and grasses, and 425 wildflowers) were procured from three local native nurseries and were planted by more than 20 volunteers over the first two weekends in October 2023.

*For those that want to learn more about this project please contact Aaron Weber, OFHH Chair at [preserve\\_micanopy@icloud.com](mailto:preserve_micanopy@icloud.com) or check out the Facebook page created specifically for this project: [Micanopy Pollinator Victory Garden](#).*



Volunteers planting in the garden.



Volunteers working in the garden.

# CALL FOR ARTICLES!



Dean wants YOU to share your byway happenings, experiences, and good news. Please reach out to your Scenic Highways Coordinator for more information on getting involved.

The next newsletter will come out in May/June 2024, but development is already underway.

**REACH OUT TODAY!**





# TED MOORHEAD LAGOON HOUSE IS 20 YEARS OLD



*Ted Moorhead Lagoon House*

Owned by the City of Palm Bay and managed by the Marine Resources Council (MRC), Ted Moorhead Lagoon House is the official welcome center for the **Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway**. It's an exceptional venue for school field trips, workshops, meetings, and exploration, as it houses an environmental learning center that helps tell the story of the Indian River Lagoon. Visitors arrive at Ais Lookout Point, an 11-acre city park named in honor of the native people of the lagoon that overlooks the waterway from atop a 30-foot-high natural bluff.

The idea for the Lagoon House began in 1998 when Ted Moorhead, a local lagoon advocate became aware of Florida Department of Transportation plans to construct a highway retention pond at Ais Lookout Point, former home to the Riverview Motel and an Ais shell mound. His wife, Ann, proposed the name "Lagoon House" and Palm Bay grant writer Dave White suggested that the National Scenic Byway program could potentially be a source of funding for construction of the facility. Soon after, a funding package was cobbled together to complete design and construction of the Lagoon House. Construction was made possible by grants of \$100,000 from the Florida Inland Navigation District, \$800,000 from the National Scenic Byways Program, and \$100,000 from FDOT. Once constructed, the Lagoon House opened to the public with exhibits offering insights into the natural history of the Indian River Lagoon and promoting the Lagoon's preservation for future generations. The grand opening was made possible by a dedicated team of private and public contributors and a generous donation from Jan Smith and the



*Volunteers at the future site of the Lagoon House*



*The Lagoon House under construction.*

T.R. and Dorothy Tomlinson estate, who were the Riverview Motel owners.

Today, 20 years since it's opening, the City of Palm Bay, MRC and other partners are re-imagining the property, which is in need of upgrades to showcase Low Impact Living and Low Impact Development practices while continuing to serve as a byway visitors center and environmental learning facility and always the center of the **"lagooniverse"**.

**Learn more about Indian River Lagoon at the links below:**

[Marine Resources Council - Protecting and Restoring the Indian River Lagoon](#)  
[Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway](#)



# BYWAY DOINGS



*Residents gather to honor a 280 year old oak tree.*

## Happy Birthday to a Town of Penney Farms Resident

The Town of Penney Farms, including the **JC Penney Memorial Scenic Highway** organization recently celebrated a long-time town resident's birthday. While the town is currently making plans to celebrate it's 100-year anniversary, that momentous accomplishment pales in comparison with the town's oldest resident - a stately oak tree that in early January was celebrated for being 280 years old!

Born in the mid-1700s, one can well imagine the experiences and changes this oak has been part of over the years. In the mid-1700s, much of North America was caught in the struggles between England and France, more commonly known as King George's War while much of the Florida territory was under Spain's control.

Fast forward to today, this stately oak resides on private property in downtown Penney Farms near the Penney Retirement Community campus.

For more on the story of this tree, please check out the Penney Retirement Community Facebook page: [PRC Facebook](#) while additional information on the JC Penney Memorial Scenic Highway can be found at: [J.C. Penney Memorial Scenic Highway](#)



*The celebration continues under the old oak tree.*

**Consider submitting articles to the FSHP blog, the [Byway Buzz!](#) You can access submittal forms [here](#) to include information, graphics, and photos for a blog post to highlight everything your byway has to offer, from upcoming events to intrinsic qualities.**





**IRL - TC New Byway Coordinator -  
Stephanie Torres**



**St. Lucie** Transportation  
Planning  
Organization



*Stephanie Torres*

Four for the past 14 years. While the scenic highway program was new to her as she joined the TPO, she has quickly learned the ins and out of the program coordinating development of the Committee's 2024 Work Plan and 2023 Annual Report. She's now planning the Committee's first meeting for 2024.

District Four DSHC Kaylee Kildare and the entire byway community welcome Stephanie to the team.

Check out all 42 miles of the Treasure Coast Scenic Highway at: [Treasure Coast Scenic Highway](#)

**Martin Grade's Facebook Posts Help Advance the Byway Mission**

The **Martin Grade Scenic Highway** is one of the state's newest byways and for several years the organization has struggled to build and maintain momentum. Surrounded by large landowner properties and with no commercial businesses or residential communities to speak of on the corridor the organization looked for ways to better tell the corridor's story and attract interest in their 12-mile-long canopied byway.

In 2023, the organization, led by Tiffany Kincaid and the Keep Martin Beautiful team launched a social media campaign that delved into the

FDOT District Four and the **Indian River Lagoon - Treasure Coast Scenic Highway Committee** welcome Stephanie Torres as their new byway coordinator. Stephanie was recently hired by the St. Lucie Transportation Planning Organization where she also serves as their Bicycle Pedestrian Program Manager.

She brings a wealth of transportation knowledge to the TPO having worked for FDOT District



*Historical image from Martin Grade Scenic Highway*



*Historical image from Martin Grade Scenic Highway*



*Martin Grade Scenic Highway volunteers*

rich history and importance of the Martin Grade Scenic Byway. Through a series of captivating posts complemented by compelling historical and related imagery, the team aimed to captivate their audience. The response was overwhelming, with these posts sparking meaningful organic interactions and reaching over 521,700 individuals! The campaign also garnered 1,264 new likes to the byway organization's Facebook page, showcasing the power of storytelling and community engagement.

Their top performing post from the campaign with more than 600 post shares - can be checked out [HERE](#) with an active Facebook account. All the engagement was organic (not paid) and as the organization heads into 2024, they're looking forward to continuing to build upon this momentum.

For more on the Martin Grade Scenic Highway: [Martin Grade Scenic Highway](#) ([keepmartinbeautiful.org](http://keepmartinbeautiful.org))