

# FLORIDA SCENIC HIGHWAYS PROGRAM

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Real Places. Real Stories.™

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Fall 2024

## FALL FOR FLORIDA FARMS

*Agriculture and tourism are two of the largest sectors of Florida's economy. Agritourism combines both industries and creates a way to contribute to Florida's economy while also supporting smaller, local farms. The fall season is an important time in agritourism with farm tours, pumpkin patches, corn mazes, and much more. These programs provide farmers with the opportunity to share their resources directly with the community and educate the public on local agriculture. Agritourism is a fun and informative way to experience Florida's native resources and enjoy the beautiful weather. Take a trip down one of Florida's Scenic Highways to celebrate the change of seasons and stop in at one of the many local agritourism events this fall.*

### Amber Brooke Farms 4th Annual Fall Festival

**Closest Byway:** Green Mountain Scenic Byway

**Dates:** September 21 - November 3, 2024; Weekends & Select Weekdays

**Location:** Eustis, FL

**Activities:** Pumpkin Patch, Petting Zoo, Crop Maze, U-Pick Sunflowers and Zinnias, Hayrides, Specialty Fall Food Items and Canned Goods, and 25+ Farm Activities.

Amber Brooke Farms was established in 2013 as a family farm in Eustis. It has since grown with a second farm in Williston. This farm offers pick your own produce seasons with several blueberry and strawberry varieties and has fields of sunflowers and zinnias for picking. The farm has year-round family friendly activities and hosts annual Fall and Sweet Corn Festivals. The Fall Festival is the farms biggest event of the year.



Photo credit: Amber Brooke Farms Facebook page

Visit Us Online!





## Raprager Family Farms Fall Pumpkin Festival & Haunted Farm

**Closest Byway:** Suncoast Scenic Parkway

**Dates:** September 20 - November 3, 2024;

**Fridays - Sundays**

**Location:** Odessa, FL

**Activities:** Pumpkins, Hayrides, Haunted Hayrides, Haunted Barns, Petting Zoo, Pony Rides, Chute Slide, Corn Pit, Farmers Market, and Raprager's Sweet Shop with Fresh Gourmet Fudge, Candy Apples, and Warm Cinnamon Roasted Nuts.

Raprager is a family-owned farm in Odessa, Florida. At Raprager, they have a large variety of animals and offer interactive opportunities including a petting zoo, hand feeding cows, and a butterfly garden. Raprager offers guided tours of the farm and summer camps for kids to learn about Regenerative Farming and caring for farm animals. The farm has a kitchen and sweet shop for creating farm fresh meals and sweet treats for visitors, and even have goals of opening a winery on the farm. Raprager host several festivals throughout the year with the Pumpkin Festival being one of the largest.



Photo Credit: rapragerfamilyfarms.com

## Countryside Family Farms Fall Festival & Maze

**Closest Byways:** Indian River Lagoon - Treasure Coast & Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway

**Dates:** October 14 - November 5, 2024;

**Saturdays & Sundays**

**Location:** Vero Beach, FL

**Activities:** Hayrides, Pumpkin Patch, U-Pick Sunflowers and Wildflowers, Farm Made Pizza and Farm Fresh Salads, Farm Fresh Sweets, and Many Other Farm Activities.

Countryside is a family farm in Indian River County with multiple generations working together. The farm grows a variety of citrus for the area as well as to be shipped across the country. Countryside offers gift baskets and assortments of their fresh produce and farm products. The farm offers U-Pick flowers and strawberries, field trip opportunities, and multiple festivals throughout the year. The Fall Festival is one of their favorites of the year with so many activities and events. The crop maze has riddles, known as "Cornundrums", hidden throughout and a theme this year of "Celebrate Citrus". The farm hosts special events throughout the Fall Festival including Howl-O-Ween on October 29 when guests can bring their furry friends in costume to enjoy the festivities with.



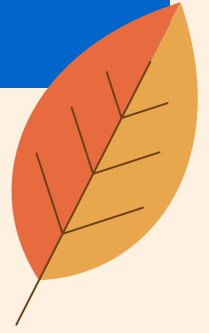
Countryside Family Farms Facebook Page





# CELEBRATION OF CULTURES

*Fall is a great time to get outside and enjoy all that Florida has to offer. Florida is known for its scenic views and natural resources, but it is also filled with a variety of rich cultures and unique history. There are many festivals and events scheduled throughout the year to celebrate these cultures, often including food, dancing, art, and much more. The fall months are a popular time for many of these celebrations. This fall cruise down a Scenic Byway to one of the many cultural experiences Florida has to celebrate.*



## Annual Greek Festival

**Closest Byway:** Halifax Heritage Highway

**Event Dates:** November 7-10, 2024

**Location:** Daytona Beach, FL

Since 1975, the St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church has hosted an annual Greek Festival where you can “be Greek for a day!” This free, family-friendly event features traditional Greek music and dancing and a variety of Greek cuisine, including gyros, pastitio, dolmades, and bakalava. Held at the church’s beautiful waterfront location, the Greek Festival has grown to become one of the famous cultural festivals in Daytona Beach.



Photo Credit: GreekFestivalDaytonaBeach.com

## ViVa Tampa Bay Hispanic Heritage

**Closest Byway:** Courtney Campbell Scenic Highway

**Event Dates:** September 28, 2024

**Location:** Tampa, FL

Held annually during National Hispanic Heritage Month, this festival aims to showcase Tampa’s cultural heritage and diversity as well as uphold the strong ethical values of ViVa Tampa Bay. The Hispanic Heritage Festival is a family friendly event that hosts a variety of food, drinks, art, culture and music. The event also highlights local Hispanic American community leaders through their Hispanic Heritage Awards. Proceeds from the festival go to Course of Action foundation to help fund scholarship grants for high school students. Through Course of Action foundation, ViVa Tampa Bay also provides disaster relief to a variety of communities. The festival is held with a goal to instill an appreciation for the roots and traditions of Hispanic cultures in all of Tampa.

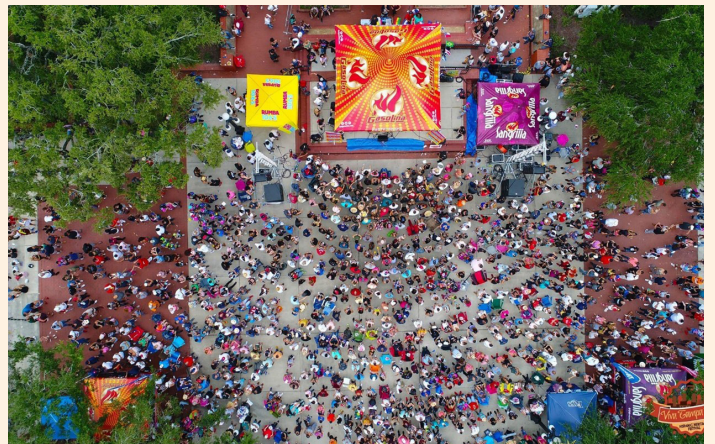


Photo Credit: ViVa Tampa Bay Hispanic Heritage Festival Facebook Page





## FusionFest Two-Day Festival

**Closest Byway:** *Green Mountain Scenic Byway*

**Event Dates:** *November 30 - December 1, 2024*

**Location:** *Orlando, FL*

FusionFest is a non-profit organization, created by the Orange County Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs, with the goal of celebrating the diverse cultures within the Central Florida region. Although the FusionFest organization hosts and participates in events throughout the year, their largest event is, of course, FusionFest. It is a two-day festival in Orlando, held on the Saturday and Sunday after Thanksgiving. Visitors can experience food, music, art, dancing, and interactive activities from more than 110 cultures.



Photo Credit: FusionFest.org



## Gullah Geechee Heritage Festival

**Closest Byway:** *Heritage Crossroads: Miles of History Scenic Highway, A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway*

**Event Date:** *December 7, 2024*

**Location:** *Elkton, FL*

Since 2013, the Gullah Geechee Heritage Festival has celebrated the rich culture and history of the Gullah Geechee people, who are descendants of Africans enslaved on plantations along the lower Atlantic coast. This festival honors 450 years of African culture in St. Johns County. The Gullah Geechee people have a rich culture of music and food, with their cuisine influencing what is now considered southern food. At this festival, you will find live music, dancing, arts and crafts vendor, and traditional Gullah Geechee food.



**WE WANT YOU** to submit 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.



Photo credit: GullahGeecheeFestival.com

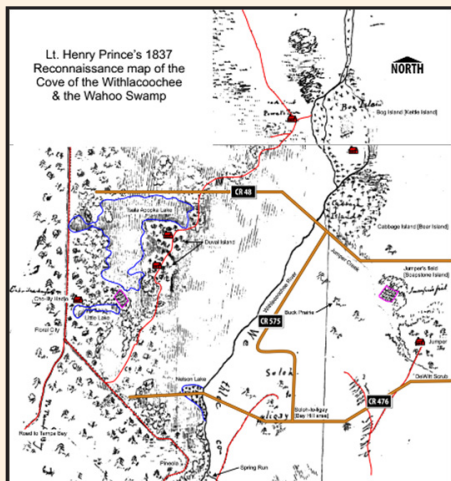
# BYWAY DOINGS

## Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway Looking to Expand



Dawn Cary, Byway Chair of the **Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway**, reports that her team is working to add an additional 17 miles to their current 62-mile corridor. The Sumter Byway traces the history and heritage of Sumter County with a story that has found its way into America's history books and is as significant in U.S. history as the Battle of the Alamo.

Wahoo Swamp was the site of one of the last great battles of the Second Seminole War, and the lands where this great battle raged represents one of the most well-preserved battlefields in the region.



Known as the **Wahoo Swamp Corridor Extension**, this byway addition will help to better complete the Byway's story, and offers the opportunity to increase public awareness of Florida history during the Seminole Wars (1812-1858), especially events associated with what is commonly known as the Second Seminole War.

The Byway organization submitted their Letter of Intent to FDOT in 2023 and eagerly awaits approval of their extension request. In the meantime, the organization continues working to better understand the issues associated with this period in Florida history including listening to a highly educational presentation by William

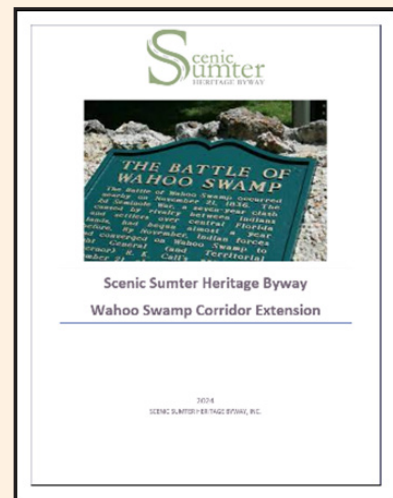
Locascio, Ph. D, Research Manager for the Seminole Nation's At Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum entitled "*The Seminole War in Sumter County.*"

Dawn also reports that the byway organization was honored to have their Congressman, Daniel Webster and his Community Relations Representative Cindy Brown in attendance at their June byway meeting at the Dade Battlefield Historic State Park. The Congressman, a long-time supporter of the Byway organization, was in town and interested in getting an update on the group's activities and work plan for the next year.

## All You Can Eat Pancakes

The **J.C. Penney Memorial Scenic Highway**, in partnership with the Penny Retirement Community and the Town of Penney Farms, recently held their "All You Can Eat Pancake Breakfast" to celebrate the arrival of Spring and Arbor Day.

While there is no bad day to enjoy a pancake and sausage breakfast, it's always special when hosted by the J.C. Penney Byway Organization - especially when it's held outside in the community park. Saturday, May 4th was the date of the event, and dozens of neighbors enjoyed a hearty breakfast







while enjoying a beautiful spring day and spending time getting to know their neighbors better.

While this annual breakfast serves as a small fundraiser for the Byway organization, it's more importantly, an opportunity to celebrate one of the more beautiful and unique small towns in northeastern Florida. The Byway's canopy roads and a relaxed lifestyle are rarely experienced anywhere else in the state.

The cooks for the day included the Town of Penny Farms Mayor Adrian Andrews. Adrian is also a byway board member. He and the other volunteer cooks served pancakes and sausage to approximately 50 hungry community members.



**Are you getting hungry reading this article? Remember it's less than six months till the next community breakfast!**

To learn more about the J.C. Penney Memorial Scenic Highway and Town of Penny Farms, check out the organization's website: <http://jcpenneyscenichighway.org/>



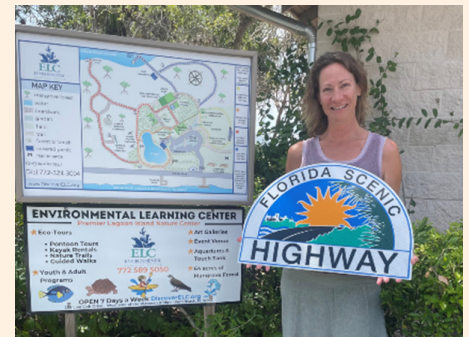
## Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway Celebrates a New Partner

The IRLNSB is pleased to welcome its newest byway partner, the Environmental Learning Center located in Vero Beach. The ELC is a non-profit nature center with a mission to educate, inspire, and empower all people to be stewards of the environment and their own well-being (<https://www.discoverelc.org/>). Heather Sears, Marketing & Communication Coordinator, represents the ELC on the Coalition's board. As part of this partnership, the ELC has been identified as an official welcome center for the Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway.



Being one of the longest byways in Florida, at well over 200 miles in length, the addition of this new welcome center will provide another opportunity for the Coalition to make byway information available to those that visit the region.

The Coalition now has five designated welcome centers strategically located around the corridor including the Ted Moorhead/



Lagoon House, Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce, Fellsmere Trailhead Preserve & Welcome Center, City of Titusville Welcome Center and the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. The Lagoon House facility, now celebrating its 20-year anniversary, still serves as the original visitor/welcome center for the Coalition and is one of two welcome centers located on the Byway whose construction was funded in part by National Scenic Byway Program grants - the other being the Fellsmere Welcome Center. While each of these facilities has a different presentation format, they all have informational materials available that introduce the Florida Scenic Highways Program, IRLNSB and the Coalition. **We welcome Heather and the ELC to the Coalition!!**

For more on the Coalition please visit their website: <https://www.indianriverlagoonbyway.com/>

## City of DeBary Hosts History Harvest



The mission of a “history harvest” is to help communities better comprehend the past while at the same time producing and preserving materials for the benefit of those who follow in our wake.

Originally developed at the University of Nebraska, “History Harvest” events engage individuals, communities and institutions to digitize important historical documents and facilitate discussion and research into the stories of a community. Since 2013, the University of Central Florida’s History Department has conducted a number of “harvests” in Central Florida and recently, partnered with the City of DeBary, a founding member of the River of Lakes Heritage Corridor organization to sponsor a community harvest. This event scanned and digitized community artifacts to ensure they are preserved for future generations. While the preservation of physical objects is always a priority, capturing the story of the community through firsthand accounts and personal narratives on DeBary’s past was the highlight of the day with UCF staff speaking to and



recording stories from many in attendance.

Officially hosted by DeBary’s Historic Preservation Board, this initial phase of a

multi-phase effort was decreed a success by all in attendance. Community members came with all sorts of historical memorabilia that reflected bygone days while a number of residents of the community with personal or family history of having lived in DeBary prior to 1993, attended to tell their story.

## City Landmark Resource is Lost

The Heritage Crossroads – Miles of History byway organization is saddened to report the loss of one our most treasured resources. The Flagler Playhouse, for 46 years a mainstay of the County’s performing arts community, lost the rustic theater it has occupied when it was destroyed in a fire last fall.



The structure, with its distinctive white steeple, was located in downtown Bunnell along the Heritage Crossroads byway. Built in 1957, it originally served as the First Baptist Church of Bunnell until the playhouse organization purchased it in 2006. In the 1930’s, an older portion of the building had once been the only movie theater in Bunnell.

The church has been a key landmark structure in the heart of downtown Bunnell, sitting next door to the historic old Flagler County courthouse and across the street from the Moody House – home to the Flagler County Historical Society. This playhouse was located along the route of the Byway organization’s trip itinerary and the Historical Society’s bus tour.







According to the Fire Chief, the structure had been remodeled several times over the years and the fact that it had multiple ceilings and a tin roof made dousing the flames more difficult. Preston Zepp, preservation specialist with the Flagler County Historical Society and byway board member, said it's been "the center of the community for a long time" and "just seeing another piece of our culture and history lost is horrible."

Since the fire, there continued to be hope in the community that the iconic steeple that still stood above the remains of the church could be saved somehow, but engineers recently determined that this most recognizable remnant needed to be removed.

Leadership with the Playhouse group says that with demolition of the entire structure now complete, they'll work on getting their other buildings adjacent to the church fixed up so they can finally host events again. For updates on the Flagler Playhouse, check their website:

[Flagler Playhouse Home](#).

To learn more about the Heritage Crossroads Byway Organization visit their website: [Heritage Crossroads Scenic Highway](#)

Photos courtesy of [Flaglerlive.com](#)



*A car travels north on High Bridge Road, along Bulow Creek, in the southern portion of the Heritage Crossroads.*



## BYWAY SPOTLIGHT:

### DISCUSSION WITH THE FLORIDA KEYS SCENIC HIGHWAY LEADERS

Byway interviews are intended to highlight the hard-working leaders of our byway organizations by learning more about them and allowing them to share important information such as projects, goals, and advice. It is also an opportunity for other byways to learn from different organizations with similar missions. For this edition, we had a virtual interview with William “Bill” Doxey, President of the Florida Keys Scenic Corridor Alliance (FKSCA). Luckily for us, Judy Hull, Vice President of the FKSCA, also attended the interview, allowing us to hear about her experience in byway leadership as well. It was a great conversation focused on the Florida Keys Scenic Highway and the alliance’s involvement in the beautiful landscape surrounding it.



*William “Bill” Doxey*

#### What is the FKSCA?



*Judy Hull after receiving the 2019 Garry Balogh Inspiring Excellence Award.*

Florida Keys Scenic Highway is Florida’s first and only All-American Road, known for its 110 miles of panoramic views. Florida Keys Scenic Corridor Alliance (FKSCA) is the management entity for the corridor. FKSCA was established in 2007 after the original byway organization dissolved. The alliance is operated by a board including a President, Vice President, and Treasurer. Currently, the board has ten members. Judy Hull has been a part of the FKSCA since its inception and served as President for several years. These days Judy has taken on the role of Vice President, with Bill Doxey serving as President of the alliance. Bill has been a member of FKSCA for 9 years, and reminisced that Judy was one of the first people he met after moving to the Keys and the reason he got involved with the scenic highway.

The beauty surrounding the highway is what initially attracted Bill to the corridor, stating it is unlike anything he has ever seen. The unique views of the Florida Keys Scenic Highway feature the beautiful waters of the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the Gulf of Mexico on the other. Because of these beautiful ocean sights, the highway is commonly known as “the highway that goes to sea.” While enjoying the scenic views, travelers can often spot wildlife including dolphins and manatees in the crystal-clear waters.

Byways that hope to achieve the All-American Road designation must have at least two of the six Intrinsic Qualities outlined by the Federal Highway Administration. These Intrinsic Qualities include archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic. The Florida Keys Scenic Highway is distinct because it possesses all the Intrinsic Qualities, making it difficult for the alliance to only choose two to highlight. Ultimately, scenic and recreational were the qualities selected, for the previously mentioned views and the endless recreational opportunities it provides.

#### FKSCA Priorities

The main goals of the FKSCA, as identified by Bill and Judy, is keeping the highway safe and clean. Biking is very prevalent throughout the Keys, making bicyclist safety along the highway critical. The roads are narrow with many neighborhood streets intersecting with the highway. The alliance is committed to supporting the completion of the Overseas Heritage Trail, allowing residents and tourists to safely bike from Key Largo to Key West.

FKSCA continues to show their dedication to keeping the highway clean through the Adopt-a-Highway Program. It is a large volunteering program for the corridor that involves community participation. It allows people from the area to take pride in the beautiful highway. Verbal support they receive from passing cars during a clean-up reinforces the importance of keeping the highway clean and makes the effort even more meaningful for the byway organization. The program hosts four trash pick-ups a year. These efforts have inspired others to host clean-ups and have raised



awareness on the importance of cleanliness along byways.

Another project started by the Alliance to help keep the Keys clean is the installation of Big Belly Trash Cans along the highway. An issue that is occurring with the trash cans is people putting trash beside the cans as they fill up on the weekends, and trash then blows into the ocean. FKSCA is pursuing a grant opportunity to fund solar powered compactors to help remediate this issue.



*The Florida Keys Scenic Corridor Alliance Annual Meeting on August 8, in Marathon, FL. Judy Hull second from the left and Bill Doxey to the right of Judy.*

## **The Future of FKSCA**

Bill and Judy agreed one key factor of a successful scenic highway organization is the quality of board members and sharing an equal passion and dedication to the vision. A unified and active board is fundamental to achieving goals. The future of the Florida Keys Scenic Highway, as they see it, is to grow in members with those qualities, and have a strong focus on recycling including leading the charge for a plastic-free environment in the Keys. The alliance is looking to prioritize landscaping along the scenic highway and identify areas that need attention. There were previous efforts to plant wildflowers in the median near Bahia Honda, but the tropical climate of the Keys was not conducive for the flowers.

Bill ended the discussion with a final thought: “In closing, it is vital that we recognize and protect the natural beauty of our country, not just through our National and State Parks but also through our scenic byways. These routes, like the Florida Keys Scenic Highway, offer a unique opportunity to experience and preserve the stunning landscapes and cultural treasures that define our nation. By valuing and safeguarding these areas, we ensure that future generations can enjoy and appreciate the extraordinary beauty that surrounds us.”