



MARCH 2021

Birch Bulletin

Americorps Launches Project A.N.T. in Park



From left: Americorps volunteer Sarah Bachar and Park Manager Kyle Easley (not pictured: Katie Gwaltney)

The Florida Conservation Corps is a program available through Volunteer Florida with support from Americorps. They have partnered to bring two Americorps volunteers to Birch Park for a year of service which began February 15. The volunteers will work on Project A.N.T. (Americorps Non-Native plant Terminators) to eradicate exotic plants in the Park. State parks are nature parks. Their goal is to preserve the natural flora of Florida so future generations can experience the "Real Florida". Each volunteer will spend 1700 hours/11 months working in our Park on natural resource management. Activities can also include prescribed fires, and disaster recovery.

Americorps volunteers gain leadership skills and on-the-job-training as well as a living stipend and an education award that can help pay for college or repay student loans.

"This is our 5th year hosting Americorps volunteers and what an excellent partnership it has been." – Park Manager Kyle Easley

Emerging Leaders Volunteer at Birch Park for "Clean Up" Day

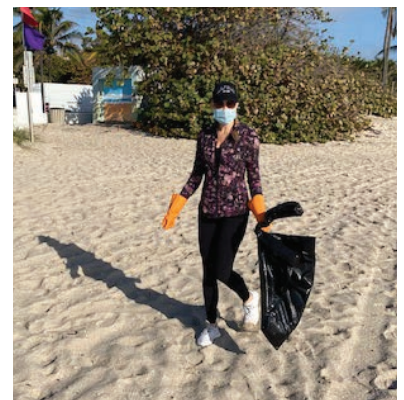
Emerge Broward Member Brittany Caldwell led a team of volunteers in a Birch Park Clean Up Day on Saturday, February 20th. A team of ten scoured the beach, the outer rim of the Park and along the Intracoastal Waterway for debris left by visitors.

Emerge Broward is a 501c3 non-profit organization the mission of which is to connect current community leaders with Emmerge Broward members to foster their personal, professional, and leadership development.

Community service projects are a focus of these up-and-coming young professionals.



From left: Caro Chauvet, Zoe, Brittany Caldwell, Brian Stafford, Will Anastasiou, Emily Dmiszewicki, Aaron Dmiszewicki, Hannah Bourgeois, Hayley Zagacki, Megan, Hannah Colson





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We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization formed to help preserve, conserve, enhance, and promote Hugh Taylor Birch State Park through community support.

(954) 566-0660
birchstatepark.org



Board President's Message

It's been almost a year since the world hunkered down to wait out the pandemic. What did we learn? Well, for one thing, we learned to slow down and appreciate our lives and our loved ones a little more. We also appreciated being able to escape to the outdoors and nature to de-stress. Many of you have let us know that Birch Park, more than ever, became your "go to" place when you needed more space and a change of scenery. Outdoor exercise became the option to staying inside working out to videos. It also became a better option than visiting your refrigerator too often!

Soon, once we all get vaccinated, the Park will open to full capacity again, malls and movie theaters will fill up and there will be many other forms of entertainment that will tug at us. Still, I hope our takeaways will be the gratitude for family, friends and space... especially green space to help us recharge. Wishing you all a healthy Spring. See you in the Park!



Christine Madsen

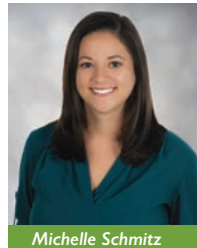
Friends' Message



Gale Butler

Since last year was a challenge, in 2021 we plan to resume activities and launch new projects. We plan to hold both our golf tournament, Birdies for Birch (4/26), and a new event, Camp Birch BBQ Family Day (6/5). Both events will include social distancing outdoors and the wearing of masks. We're asking you, our members and friends, to support these events in whatever way you can. You could be a sponsor, attend, or volunteer. Just go to birchstatepark.org for more information or call 954-566-0660.

When it's safe to do so, we will re-start the Live Animal Program and the Ranger-guided Trail Walks. We will also be introducing new Living Well programs in Marti's Meditation Garden such as Tai Chi, Qi Gong, meditation and standing yoga. Finally, remember, we are here to offer golf cart tours of the Park to show you the upgrades we have made. Just call Gale and Michelle at 954-566-0660.



Michelle Schmitz

Gale Butler, Executive Director

Michelle Schmitz, Development Director

Birch Park Sightseeing Train Memories



Elaine and Jon Krupnick sent us this photo of their boys, 2-year-old Jack (now 56) and an ER doctor in Asheville, North Carolina, and 3-year-old Mike (now 57) and an architect here in South Florida. Their Uncle Austin, who lived in Deerfield, took them on the popular sightseeing train that ran in Birch Park from the mid-sixties through the mid-eighties. Elaine said it is still "one of their favorite memories"!

Birdies for Birch: April 26, 2021

Co-chairs Stephen Botek and Whitt Markum are spearheading the committee that will bring the 2021 Birdies for Birch back in Covid-style! It will be held at Fort Lauderdale Country Club on Monday, April 26th with registration at 11:30 a.m. and a shotgun start at 12:30 p.m. This year, all attendees will be able to have his or her own golf cart, if they choose. We will cap players at 100. A box lunch, holes with food and cocktail stations as well as fun bazooka and photo holes will keep the party going. We will have a virtual auction followed by an outdoor reception. To sponsor or sign up visit BirchStatePark.org.



Friends Welcomes the Following New Board Members



Bill Brown

Bill Brown, a 37-year veteran of the Indianapolis Fire Department, retired as Fire Chief of the Brownsburg Fire Territory. During his tenure, Bill was named Fire Fighter of the Year and inducted into the American Red Cross Hall of Fame, receiving the Recognition of Heroism Award.

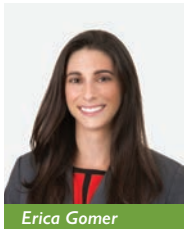
Bill currently serves as President of the Central Beach Alliance and is a member of the Bonnet House Board of Directors. Bill also serves on the DHS/FEMA National Urban Search & Rescue Response Team and was deployed by FEMA to assist during Hurricanes Michael, Dorian and Laura.

Peggy Gehl grew up in the Rio Vista neighborhood and was a Broward judge for over 30 years. She served as a probate mediator and arbitrator until she was appointed General Master in the 17th Judicial Circuit overseeing guardianship and family court. Judge Gehl was appointed to the Broward County Bench assigned to the criminal division for 15 years. She was a member of the Florida Bar and upon her retirement, was designated by the Florida Supreme Court as a Florida Senior Judge. During her career, Peggy served on the boards of Outreach Broward, the Humane Society of Broward County and the St. Anthony's School Foundation.



Peggy Gehl

Erica Gomer is a community-minded young lawyer with Akerman who earned her B.S. (cum laude) and J.D. (magna cum laude) degrees from the University of Florida. In 2019-20 she was named a Rising Star by Super Lawyers Magazine. She is a member of the Florida Bar and practices in the U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida. Her litigation focus is on businesses ranging from family-owned operations to large corporations and private equity firms.



Erica Gomer

Erica speaks Italian and is a board member of the Friends of Jack and Jill Children's Center. She and her husband Eric live in Fort Lauderdale.

Sarah Leonardi has joined the Friends' board as our Broward County School Board District 3 representative, replacing Heather Brinkworth. We thank Heather for her time with us and look forward to working with Sarah on school programs going forward. Sarah grew up in Cairo, Egypt and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. She returned to the states to go to college and follow in her mother's footsteps to become a teacher.

After Sarah graduated from the University of Miami with a BS in English, she taught in South Florida high schools for a decade. Sarah was voted Teacher of the Year at Coconut Creek High School in 2016. She and her husband Ross live in Pompano.



Sarah Leonardi

Thank You! Terramar Society Members

The Terramar Society of the Friends of Birch State Park is the backbone of Friends' operations. We thank these very loyal annual supporters.

Banyan Level - \$5,000

Joe & Wini Amaturo
Jim Ellis & Olya Salehi
Steve & Jeannie Hudson
Ed & Sherry Meehan
Bill & Anne Scherer
S. Donald Sussman & Michelle Howland

Manatee Level - \$2,000

The Mastriana Family
The Miniaci Family

Sea Turtle Level - \$1,000

Stephen & Kari Botek
Gale M. Butler
Andrew & Connie Caldwell
Connie Chaney & Al Rothstein
Tyler & Sarah Chappell
Michael & Mary Ellen Coen
Ed Cumisky & Amanda Hunt
Fran Custer
Dorian & Pat Damoorgian
Ted & Kathy Drum
Doug & Jane Eagon
Martin Lesser & Linda Groene
Gary & Roberta Karch
Jon & Elaine Krupnick
Lee McDonald
Mark McGuire & Craig Wilson
Bruno Mejean & Martina Hund-Mejean
Mari Mennel-Bell & Joel Greenbaum
Robert & Jennifer Roselli
Bill & Nancy Thies
E.C. Traver

Marti's Garden Club - \$1,000

Joe & Wini Amaturo
Gale M. Butler
Rick & Rita Case
Michael & Mary Ellen Coen
Dorian & Pat Damoorgian
Ted & Kathy Drum
Jim & Janet Jordan
Lisa Kitei
Monica Maroone
Ed & Sherry Meehan
Mari Mennel-Bell & Joel Greenbaum
Bill & Anne Scherer

For more information visit birchstatepark.org

Garden Party: A Success

We were able to hold our in-person Garden Party on Friday, November 11th outside on the lawn of Terramar in a large tent with ocean breezes and great weather! Everyone wore masks when not seated and when photos were being taken. Everyone enjoyed being out and about, seeing friends in person for the first time in a long time. Hughes Catering supplied individual hors d'oeuvres served in special small plastic containers per safety guidelines and Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits and One World Properties supplied the libations.

Thank you to our sponsors for supporting us as always: Presenting Sponsor UKG (Ultimate Kronos Group), Hudson Family Foundation, JM Family, EDI, Conrad & Scherer, The Chappell Group, Rick Case Automotive and One World Properties.

Ginny Miller, a former Friends' board member was honored with the Birch Legacy Award for her support of the Park and many community organizations over the years.



Left to right (top): Friends' Board President Chris Madsen, Executive Director Gale Butler, Olya Salehi and Past President Jim Ellis honored with the Birch Founder's Award



Left to right: Friends' Board Member Dawn Read Diehl and Honoree Ginny Miller



Left to right: Friends' Board Member Andy Caldwell, Cameron Lichty, Taylor Lichty, Brittany Caldwell, Connie Caldwell



Left to right: Garden Party hostesses Ann Burris and Janet Jordan



Left to right: Friends' Board Member Nancy Thies and Linda Carter

Birch Park and Water Taxi Partnership



Hugh Taylor Birch State park is the official Number 8 Water Taxi Stop on their daily cruises on the New River and Intracoastal Waterway.

The Number 8 Stop is also where you can disembark for our outdoor eatery overlooking the ocean called Park & Ocean. Grab your Water Taxi ticket for a day of adventure either online or at Park & Ocean's gift shop.

You can explore Fort Lauderdale at your own pace or ride round trip with hop-on, hop-off tickets. The Water Taxi staff can help you choose where to shop, eat, and play! Water Taxi captains share fun facts about the homes and yachts and their owners, and even throw in some South Florida history while you ride to your next destination. Go to www.watertaxi.com or call 954-467-6677 to learn about the various cruises and routes. You can also check out special discounts at each stop with Water Taxi's Cruise & Save partners.

Water Taxi Founder and CEO Bill Walker is a loyal and active member of the Friends' Board of Directors.

Camp Birch BBQ Family Day

Our fun family day event will take place on Saturday, June 5th from 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Activities will include a rubber tire train, crafts, family activities, relay races, music, photo booth, pony rides, a fire truck, and our live animal show. BBQ and craft beer will add to the fun.

Our co-chairs, Ashely Sawyer Smith and Laura Elmore, have already begun holding meetings and planning a great first-time family event.

To sponsor the event, visit BirchStatePark.org

