



APRIL 2020

Birch Bulletin

Promises Made... Promises Kept:

Marti's Meditation Garden Open



Pamela Huizenga Alexander and Tony Segretto, NBC Broadcaster



Last fall, we held the official opening of Marti's Meditation Garden; however, between the King tides and flooding from torrential downpours, we had to move the party inside the Fort Lauderdale Garden Club's center in the Park. Tony Segretto, the 40-year NBC broadcaster served as the emcee while our guest of honor was Marti's daughter, Lorraine Thomas, could not attend but she made sure the day was a fun celebration. So many

Pamela Huizenga Alexander. Our presenting sponsor and funder of the Garden's labyrinth, Lorraine Thomas, could not attend but she made sure the day was a fun celebration. So many long-time friends of Marti Huizenga, after whom the garden is named, enjoyed listening to stories about Wayne and Marti from Tony and Pam at the podium. As always, Auctioneer Gordon Latz, made the auction fun and helped raise funds for the upkeep of Marti's Meditation Garden.



From left: Scott Baynes, Steve Hudson, Jay and Pamela Alexander, Jim Ellis, Greg Slatner, Bryan Moser



Jim Ellis, Nikita and Olya Salehi

Florida Park Service Wins Gold Medal 4th Time



The Florida State Park Service is not only celebrating its 85th anniversary, but it also won the very prestigious National Gold Medal Award from the National Recreation and Park Association for the fourth time. **No other state has won it more than once!**

What's more, Hugh Taylor Birch State Park's staff was recognized by the State of Florida's Department of Environmental Protection as the winner of the 2019 OneDEP – Living Our Values Award. Kudos to Park Manager Kyle Easley and his staff for their outstanding service to our community.

From Left: Director of Florida State Park Service Eric Draper, Park Manager of Hugh Taylor Birch State Park Kyle Easley, and Assistant Bureau Chief Brian Addison





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BIRCH STATE PARK, INC.**

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Michelle Schmitz

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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.

Upcoming Events Dates TBA:

Camp Birch BBQ Elks' Youth Camp

A Garden Party Sonesta Hotel

Birdies 4 Birch Fort Lauderdale

Country Club

Terramar Holiday Reception

Shooter's on the Waterfront

An Evening by the Sea – To be Announced

Board President's Message

Christine Madsen, founder and head of Mad4Marketing, has stepped into the very big shoes of former President Jim Ellis.

I agreed to serve as President of the Friends of Birch State Park during this transition year when our amazing president of over 5 years has stepped back to turn his attention to other business and life projects. We are grateful for the time, talent, treasure and heart Jim put into this very special nature park, gifted to us by Hugh Taylor Birch over 75 years ago.

Without Jim Ellis, we would not be where we are today. Period. His "get it done" attitude coupled with his financial support made this park come back to life after years of neglect.

We also thank the park managers who worked with Jim over the years such as David Dearth, Jennifer Roberts and Kyle Easley. Jim made believers of the park managers who had to be "all in" or else none of the projects would have happened at all or at least, not as fast and successfully as they have. So, thank you Jim, David, Jennifer and Kyle!

Thank you to our board of directors – past and present. Thank you to you – our members and donors -- who have had faith in the Friends' organization to pull off a complete rebirth of this very special park we call our "Central Park". Finally, thank you Jim and board of directors for having faith in me to carry on the momentum you began here in the park. I'm excited to get going...once we hear the "all clear" that is!



Christine Madsen

Executive Director's Message



Gale M. Butler

In the midst of chaos, there is always a calm center. That calm center for the Park has been the park staff and volunteers. They have persevered through uncertain times with energy, courage, optimism and humor. You can't ask for any more than that! Please thank them the next time you drive through the Ranger Station... whenever that may be. They really are the best!

We thank our members and donors of course. We have appreciated your support every day. It made us smile when we'd see families paddling a canoe on Long Lake, or see children run, bucket in hand, toward the beach through our fun, colorful tunnel. Or see rollerbladers, bikers and walkers enjoy the loop road and getting exercise. We loved that picnickers could BBQ while watching boats glide by, and sometimes dock at our public floating boat dock, on the Intracoastal Waterway.

Our point is, we thank everyone who's ever cared about this park beginning with Hugh Taylor Birch on up to our newest members and visitors. It's taken 75 years to make this Park what it is today. We hope you visit as soon as we are open again, as often as you can and enjoy the legacy of a man who sailed into this area in 1893. A visionary who fell in love with the land enough to save it for future generations. For us.

Welcome to Michelle Schmitz!

In February, we welcomed our new Director of Membership and Development, Michelle Schmitz. Michelle is a graduate of Florida State University's Dedman School of Hospitality where she majored in Business Administration and minored in Communications. She previously managed membership, events and catering for both the Lauderdale Yacht Club and the Coral Ridge Country Club. Michelle and her husband, Patrick, have a nine month old baby girl named Parker.



From left: Kyle Easley, Michelle Schmitz, Gale Butler and David Dearth

Marti's Meditation Garden Opening Celebration

We thank our major sponsors who helped make the day special: Ellis Diversified, ACURE and the Hudson Family Foundation, JM Family, Ultimate Software, Merrimac Ventures, Bank of America, Akerman, Daoud's Fine Jewelry and Shooters. Thank you to all who supported and attended our Garden Party. Stay tuned for the date of the actual Ribbon Cutting and Champagne reception in Marti's Medication Garden.



Janet Jordan, Ellen Dalton, Julie Saumsiegle



Alice Jackson, Ramola Motwani



Lisa Kitei, Kim Bentley



Linda Carter, Lilia Ciciola, Lori Chevy



Pam and Michael Grimme



Jane Smith and Michelle Howland



Joe and Wini Amaturio



Mari and Joel Greenbaum, Tom and Ginny Miller



Kathy and Ted Drum



Sherry and Ed Mehan



Jody and Michael Weymouth



Barbara Castell, Nancy and Jim Blosser

Thank You!

Terramar Society Members

Banyan Level - \$5,000

Joe & Wini Amaturio
Jim Ellis
Steve & Jeannie Hudson
Ed & Sherry Meehan
Carlos & Lisa Rodriguez
S. Donald Sussman & Michelle Howland

Manatee Level - \$2,000

The Miniaci Family
Peggy Olin

Sea Turtle Level - \$1,000

John & Summer Barranco
Stephen & Kari Botek
Gale M. Butler
Andrew & Connie Caldwell
Tyler & Sarah Chappell
Michael & Mary Ellen Coen
Ed Cumisky & Amanda Hunt
Fran Custer
Dorian & Pat Damoorgian
Ted & Kathy Drum
Doug & Jane Eagon
Tim Elmes
Martin Lesser & Linda Groene
Jon & Elaine Krupnick
Lee McDonald
The Mastriana Family
Mark McGuire & Craig Wilson
Mari Mennel-Bell & Joel Greenbaum
Robert & Jennifer Roselli
Andrew & Lori Taubman
Paul Templer
Bill & Nancy Thies
E.C. Traver
Steve Walker & Karen Hooks

Marti's Garden Club - \$1,000

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

DEDICATED TO BRINGING BIRCH BACK FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Completed, Current and Future Projects: Thank you for your support!



FRIENDS OF BIRCH STATE PARK PROJECTS LEGEND

2-Mile Paved Loop Road

COMPLETED

1. Concessions and Restaurant
2. Terramar Visitors Center (Phase I)
3. Long Lake Cleanout
4. Marti's Meditation Garden
5. Children's Limitless Playground (North)
6. 1.2 mile Seawall Restoration/Raised height 18"
7. 230' Public Floating Boat Dock and Welcome Pavilion
8. Water Taxi Stop
9. 2-mile Loop Road Widening

CURRENT - FUNDED

1. Terramar Visitors Center (Phase 2)
2. Pedestrian Bridge and Gazebo Over Long Lake
3. Tunnel Upgrades (Added Mural and Mosaic)

FUTURE - FUNDING NEEDED

- A. Retro Sign at Sunrise and A1A
- B. Trackless Tram Program
- C. Park Perimeter Fence
- D. Elks Youth Camp Renovations/Repairs
- E. Mangrove Walkway
- F. Children's Limitless Playground (South)

Thanks to you, Hugh Taylor Birch State Park has been brought back to life. Currently, almost 500,000 visitors and residents walk, bike and drive into our park every year. Soon, we'll have Tai Chi and Qi Gong classes in Marti's Meditation Garden and sessions on walking the labyrinth. When we say in our ads, "It's All Right Here!" – we mean it!

A Walk in the Park **Stressed? Got 20 minutes?**

According to the International Journal of Environmental Health Research, the evidence shows that just 20 minutes outside in nature—even if you don't exercise – is enough to improve well-being.

A walk, either in a park or just on a shady tree-lined street, is one of the fastest ways to improve your mental and physical health. Being in nature, has been shown to lower your blood pressure and heart rate. Doctors are beginning to write prescriptions for patients with weight, diabetes or mental health issues, to spend time outdoors.

In Japan, there is a therapy called "Forest Bathing". They suggest when you walk in a forest you will breathe deeper and more slowly.

Beach Tunnel Mosaic Begins



Tunnel Artist Todd Michael Hanna and partner EMT Yanio Martinez



ELAINE KRUPNICK FUND
FOR THE ARTS
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF BROWARD

The Elaine
Krupnick Fund

for the Arts at the Community Foundation of Broward funded the Beach Tunnel Mosaic project. Artist Todd Michael Hanna, shown here with partner Yanio on site working on adhering the mosaic seascape and park sign to the front and side of the Beach Tunnel wall. It will be an artistic way of announcing the park to passersby. Thank you Elaine!

The Last Great Train Robbery



Photographer Dan McKinney, recently visited Birch Park and told us there was a train robbery here back in the '60s. According to Dan, he and a couple of his Fort Lauderdale High School football teammates, dressed up as cowboys and robbed the passengers on the small tourist train that used to run in the Park from the mid-60s through the mid-80s. The passengers, thinking it was part of the ride experience, gave the boys small change and even a couple dollars.

"Funniest part was, the conductor never let on that it wasn't part of the ride. He just drove off without saying a word," said Dan. "I always wondered what he was thinking. Of course, we couldn't stop laughing."

WHAT IS YOUR BIRCH PARK STORY? Share it with us!