

SWANNEE • RIVERS REFLECTIONS

THE NEWSLETTER OF STEPHEN FOSTER FOLK CULTURE CENTER STATE PARK

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UPCOMING CSO MEETINGS

**NOVEMBER
15TH**

6:30PM

**PICNIC AREA
PAVILION**

*See page 9
for details!*



The Stephen Foster Festival of Lights is officially back in its family favorite format this year. Scheduled for December 10 through December 23, the event will again include marshmallow roasting, hot chocolate and popcorn. We'll also be open December 24, but without all the extras.

Can you hang lights? Are you Creative? Do you love holiday décor? Ever want to recreate your favorite holiday memory in lights? Now's your opportunity!

We need volunteers and organizations that would like to work alongside park staff or to work alone if you wish, to help make the Festival of Lights come to life. We need scene designers, light hangers, light checkers, artists, painters, carpenters, electricians and just extra sets of hands to help out now.

Smiling faces are also needed to be hot chocolatiers, marshmallow fluffers, bonfire managers, popcorn poppers, Santa's elves, ticket takers and to be extra sets of hands to help out during the event.

The Festival of Lights won't happen without volunteers.

We need you!

If you're interested in any of these volunteer positions or know of an organization that might want to help out, please contact the park by email at Volunteer.StephenFoster@dep.state.fl.us or give us a call at (386) 397-2733.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CSO PRESIDENT

Greetings Fellow Park Lovers,

Fall is here and for those of us who love the outdoors in Florida, that means we can stay outdoors longer because it is cooling off. This is a wonderful time to walk, bike and hike. We are so fortunate to be surrounded by three great spaces to get out and enjoy the wonderful flora, fauna, and fawns (see what I did there, haha) that are in our state parks. Stephen Foster, Big Shoals, and Little Shoals have paved and natural trails that are perfect for any age and ability.



We returned to our Meet and Eat and they have been the fun that we all missed and needed. It has been great seeing familiar faces and having a great meal. Conducting the business of the CSO is very important to all of us, as shown by the commitment of our volunteers. We have taken safety precautions, such as moving the meeting to the auditorium to accommodate socially distancing. We are fully catering the meeting so that each meal can be individually packaged which also helps reduce traffic flow. We look forward to seeing you all at the next meeting.

We have in-person events coming up!!!! The Festival of Lights and the Folk Festival, plus more to be announced are going to be held with safety precautions in place. We will be sending out more info on events so stay tuned. We need volunteers for a variety of different roles to carry off these events. The pandemic has prevented many of our dedicated campers from making their regular trips. Please contact the park if you can volunteer for the Festival of Lights set up and any future events. With in-person events coming back we need and love the spirit of volunteerism that has made our park stand out amongst the state.

Shauna-Adams-Farries, Vice President

MANNY'S MESSAGE



Preparing For Prescribed Fire

Park Manager Manny Perez, Assistant Park Manager Jennifer Miller, Park Rangers Jim Ellis and Kevin Pittman met with the new District 2 Fire Coordinator, former Stephen Foster Park Manager Gabby Paxton to discuss plans for prescribed fires at Stephen Foster and Big Shoals.

Prescribed fires are well planned and controlled by trained professionals and are used to remove underbrush, to maintain healthy forests, to restore plant communities, as well as to prevent wild fires. Keep an eye on each park's website at www.floridastateparks.org for any trail closures that might occur in anticipation of good fire weather.



STAFF MILESTONES



After 43 years of service, **Park Ranger Gary Erixton** worked his final day at Big Shoals and Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park in August. Congratulations Gary! We wish you the best on your adventures in your retirement!



Congratulations!

Ranger Flozell Redic

for your 20 years of service to
the Florida Park Service at
Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center
State Park!

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT STEPHEN FOSTER STATE PARK

The Amphitheater has a new look!

The original awning on the amphitheater stage building had seen better days and was recently replaced. We're excited to have the next Florida Folk Festival, scheduled for May 27- 29, 2022, under the new beautiful green awning.



Morning walkers in the park

Stephen Foster is a great place for your morning, noon or evening walk. Hearing the mockingbirds sing in the early morning from the treetops is like music to your ears as you walk around in the mornings. Seeing deer graze on grass with their young fawns is a breath-taking experience as you encounter them throughout the park. The next time you're looking to get out and take a walk, come on out to Stephen Foster and enjoy the wildlife.



Things that come up in the park

When you come to work as a park ranger each day, you plan what you think you'll do, but you never really know what may happen. The one thing you can count on is that something unexpected always comes up.

Sometimes those unexpected things come in the form of little gray rat snakes who decide they want to take up residence on one of the park's golf carts. Thanks to our fearless **Assistant Park Manager, Jennifer Miller** for safely rehoming the little fella to a more appropriate location in the park.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT STEPHEN FOSTER STATE PARK



The playground in the campground has a fresh layer of mulch!

Park Rangers **Kevin Pittman**, **Jim Ellis**, Park Services Specialist **Peter Shanks** and volunteer **Kevin Starling** worked for several days to spread mulch in the playground area in the campground. The mulch gives added protection during falls. We appreciate how hard park staff and volunteers work to make the playground area safe for young visitors.



Project WILD workshop in the park

On September 18th a Project WILD workshop was held at the park auditorium. Students enjoyed a day filled with fun activities from FWC's Project WILD and Aquatic WILD workbooks.

While these activities were fun for the students to participate in, the objective of the workshop was to provide educators with methods to help young children and young adults appreciate and to think more about nature and the environment.

The day-long workshop was conducted by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission with the assistance of Park Ranger **Jessica Watkins**.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT STEPHEN FOSTER STATE PARK

Trail Tales

Park Services Specialist Andrea Thomas and **Park Ranger Jessica Watkins** have spent time ground-truthing hiking trails at Big Shoals State Park and Stephen Foster to help improve the accuracy of trail maps for the two parks.



Stephen Foster's trail maps are complete and waiting on final approval, while the Big Shoals trail mapping has been temporarily put on hold until the flooded areas become more accessible. You never know what wildlife you may see or who you might meet on a trail.



It's All About Safety!

Look up the next time your visit. Using a lift rented by the park, **Park Rangers Jim Ellis** from Olustee Battlefield and **Kevin Pittman** from Stephen Foster have been working diligently to remove dead and dying trees and to trim low hanging limbs in the campground.

They're also taking the opportunity to trim low hanging branches around park roofs, to

remove any dangerous limbs and trees and to prepare areas of the park for light hanging for the Festival of Lights.

New Junior Rangers

Park Ranger Jessica Watkins and **Park Services Specialist Andrea Thomas** attended The Great Homeschool Convention in Jacksonville, where over 60 new Junior Rangers pledged to protect our parks!



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHTS



Marie Longo

Marie Longo and her husband came to Stephen Foster to camp years ago. On one of those trips, Marie spoke with a staff member and decided that she wanted to become a volunteer for the craft shop. This was the beginning of her volunteer career at Stephen Foster and 9 years later she's still volunteering with us!

Marie likes weaving but loves quilting, and that's one of the crafts she shares with others when they come to volunteer. When visitors come into the gift shop, Marie teaches them how to sew small pre-cut blocks together. Using the blocks sewn together by the visitor, she makes a small pillow they can take home.

Marie helps in other ways, like the never-ending job of blowing debris off sidewalks and picking up limbs in the craft square after summer storms. Having volunteers who are willing to work at what needs to be done is invaluable.

Thank you for being a great volunteer!



Becky Winans

Stepping onto the museum lawn you will spot **Becky Winans** right away! Wherever you see activity, you will see her hard at work.

Between watering flowers, pulling plants, trimming bushes and weeding flowerbeds she keeps busy.

Becky enjoys working with students from Oak Grove Academy who volunteer at the park most weeks. She teaches them about plants, plant care and more importantly she teaches them about the importance of removal of invasive plants like the rattlesnake weed growing in the museum flower beds.

Thank you for all your hard work and for being such a positive team player!



PLEASE JOIN US



THE STEPHEN FOSTER CITIZEN SUPPORT ORGANIZATION
invites you and your family to the 2021

Staff & Volunteer Appreciation BBQ

Monday, November 15th at 6:30 p.m.

Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park Picnic Area Pavilion

Bring your own chairs and your appetite!

BBQ meal with all the fixin's will be individually boxed for your
safety and convenience!

Please R.S.V.P. by November 5th (386) 397-2733

RANGER JESSICA'S REFLECTIONS



Do you know any youths that need volunteer hours for Bright Futures Scholarship?

They can volunteer here with a parent or guardian.

Reach out to me for more information!

Jessica.Watkins@dep.state.fl.us

386-397-7005

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE STEPHEN FOSTER CITIZEN SUPPORT ORGANIZATION (CSO)

The CSO is an organization dedicated to helping the park succeed in all of its endeavors and to increase the park's participation in the local community. The CSO uses its membership funds to:

- ◆ *Help maintain and expand park facilities and exhibits;*
- ◆ *Help manage, preserve and protect the natural communities in the park;*
- ◆ *Provide educational activities for children and adults;*
- ◆ *Make the park an integral part of community life in White Springs and North Florida.*

Your membership to the CSO includes free admission to the park on the second Saturday of each month, a free bimonthly newsletter with park news and events and attendance to the bimonthly meetings where you can have your ideas on the park heard by fellow CSO member and the board. Please join today in order to keep receiving your newsletter and help support your park.

**Join us or renew your membership online at
www.stephenfostercso.org**

If you are already a CSO member, login with your email and create your account to access the members only section.

If you are not a current CSO member, create your account and join us today!