

# S U W A N N E E • R I V E R S REFLECTIONS

THE NEWSLETTER OF STEPHEN FOSTER FOLK CULTURE CENTER STATE PARK

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Volume 2021 Issue 2

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## UPCOMING CSO MEETINGS

**July 19, 2021**

**At 6:30PM**

**In the Auditorium**

**It's a potluck!**

**Bring a side dish**

## Bell Restoration continues...



New Striker covers

## The Bells Striker covers have arrived!



Bell Striker Body

Installation of new striker covers for the Stephen Foster Carillon was completed on April 14<sup>th</sup>.

These 97, mailbox-shaped, custom-made, fiberglass covers replaced the original metal boxes that were lined with a flame resistant material.

The replacement of the striker covers was made possible by a Partnership in Parks agreement between the Florida Park Service and the Stephen Foster Citizens Support Organization.



Verdin installing the Striker covers



Jeff and Gary on delivery day!

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CSO PRESIDENT

Summer is here once again! I hope that all are enjoying the warm weather and taking the appropriate safety measures. Such as hydration, sunscreen, and hats to protect from the sun while enjoying all the great outdoor activities. My thanks to all who participated in the last workday. It was a good turnout and great fellowship.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all our board members, especially Kerry Waldron, who is leaving the CSO Board this month, for their service to the CSO. I also want to welcome newly arriving Board members and ask that you strive to improve the CSO and its mission to the Park.

The past year has been challenging for us all; COVID, all the required safety precautions, and numerous other issues.

**Now for some good news! In July, we will start back to having our general membership meetings and our potluck dinners.**

**I will provide the meat for the meal and ask that everyone who can bring a side dish.**

I look forward to great fellowship and a meal with our CSO family. Please tell everyone and join us on July 19.

Now that COVID restrictions have been lifted, we have lots of work to do to energize our CSO and Park to be better than ever.

I look forward to seeing you all in July!

- Mike Williams

## MANNY'S MESSAGE

It has been a busy couple of months. As you will see in this issue, the adage, *a picture is worth a thousand words*, is a truism.

I want to thank a friend of mine, Walter, for his input and assistance. Walter, like many of you, felt frustrated and out of the loop. He shared his appreciation of the newsletter with me, said that the newsletter and photos helped him watch the progress the staff was making, and has helped him show others what is going on in the park. Walter has also been helping out by sending photos when something needs attention or catches his eye at the park. For example, he sent me a picture of a downed tree on the trail at Big Shoals. That helps me a lot because it lets me know what resources are needed. Thank you, Walter.

I welcome any one of you to contact me and send photos. Please share with us! The videos and pictures shared at the virtual 69<sup>th</sup> Annual Florida Folk Festival were awesome! It was great to see the Folk Family, even in a virtual way. I know we are all looking forward to being together in 2022!

See something that needs attention, like a tree down on the trail? Send it over. Find a pretty flower? Share it! It may be a new find that we can send to the biologist. Maybe we share on the park Facebook to let others know what a gem we have in Stephen Foster and Big Shoals. It could be an old photo from '*back in the day*'. We'd love to see it!

Feel free to send them to me at [manny.perez@floridadep.gov](mailto:manny.perez@floridadep.gov) or to [Volunteer.StephenFoster@dep.state.fl.us](mailto:Volunteer.StephenFoster@dep.state.fl.us)

Thanks!

Manny

# The Virtual 69<sup>th</sup> Annual Florida Folk Festival was a success!



Check out the virtual festival logo!



The three day Virtual 69<sup>th</sup> Annual Florida Folk Festival featured many performances of music, dance, stories and crafts that make Florida unique. If you didn't get the chance to watch Memorial Day weekend don't worry! You can still watch the festival on our YouTube Channel So take a moment to watch and listen to some of your favorite performers play a wide variety of music brought by some of Florida's oldest and newest cultural communities.

Check it out! [www.youtube.com/c/FloridaFolkFestival](http://www.youtube.com/c/FloridaFolkFestival)



WOOO! We reached over 60,000 people!!!

Doubled our Online Followers!



## The Joy of Mentoring....

By Park Ranger Kevin Pittman



Ranger Pittman

In 2005, I became the Cubmaster for Cub Scout Pack 408 in Live Oak, Florida. That is when I first met Joseph Sanderson, he was about 12 years old. Joseph quickly adapted and was an outstanding Scout, excelling at every turn. He enjoyed outdoor activities, especially hiking and camping.

Eventually, the time came for Joseph to cross over into Boy Scouts. A rite of passage in the scouting world denoting the progression from youth to adult. The program progressed from an adult-led program to a youth-led one (with adult supervision).

I had decided that it was time for me to step down from my Leader position in scouting and to leave scouting altogether. I joined to participate with my own son and once he moved away, I felt my time in Scouts was finished. I was wrong. Joseph, along with 10 other boys, decided to form their own Boy Scout Troop, they completed all the necessary paperwork and submitted everything themselves. They formed - You guessed it! - Boy Scout Troop 408.

The boys asked me to stay, to help them along and help guide the way. I was moved to say the least and agreed to stay on with them, I had 2 conditions. They had to promise to become Eagle Scouts and the second condition was that they give it their all, to be the best they could at whatever they did or tried to do. So, my mentorship continued with Troop 408 for another 6 years.

Joseph proved himself once again to be a born leader and excelled even more in outdoor activities. His love for the outdoors grew even stronger the older he got.

As Troop 408, we were constantly seeking new outdoor adventures; hiking, backpacking, camping, canoeing, etc. All the boys earned multiple merit badges, they even earned the coveted 50-miler patches for canoeing and hiking. *Continued on page 6...*



Cubmaster Pittman with Cubs  
(2010)

## The Joy of Mentoring Continued....

Through the ups and downs of the tumultuous teenage years, 9 boys, including Joseph, succeeded in making it to the next step, the Trail to Eagle Scout. I am extremely proud to say all of them accomplished this feat.

After their Eagle Scout accomplishment and their high school graduation most of my scouts, including Joseph, enlisted in the service. In a bid to get away and seek new adventures in life. I figured this was the last I would see of any of them.

I, as well, began a new chapter in life once my scouts were grown. I moved on from my career as a full-time Firefighter/Paramedic with a county service onto a new adventure with the Florida Park Service as a Park Ranger and a Wildland Firefighter. So, imagine my surprise when I showed up for a prescribed fire at Crystal River State Park and found my young friend, Joseph, now 22 years old, on the same burn as a Wildland Firefighter as well.

Joseph started a new career after the service as an OPS Ranger at Fort Cooper State Park in Inverness, Florida. Seems he liked the idea of being a Ranger and through the years of us corresponding he had decided to give it try. He hopes to become a full-time Ranger one day, either with the Park Service or with Florida Forestry. I learned from Joseph that another one of my Eagle Scouts chose a career in the great outdoors working for the Forest Service.

With the constant outdoor activities in scouting like hiking, camping, fishing, paddling, and astronomy it's no real surprise that he chose a career doing something he's passionate about. I am proud of the man Joseph has become and wish him luck in all his future endeavors. I greatly enjoyed my years in Scouting and as one of his mentors and would like to think I helped influence the young man, even in a small way, through my mentorship.



Ranger Pittman at the Crystal River prescribed burn in 2021

# WHAT'S HAPPENING AT STEPHEN FOSTER

There are always projects going on at Stephen Foster!



Ranger Kevin surveying a tree



Staff working together cutting trees



Ranger Andrew traveling through the park



Ranger Angela using the chainsaw



Felled trees cut for transport



Ranger Jim after felling a tree



Ranger Andrew pressure washing cabins



Loading up to haul to the dump



Rangers Jim and Gary discussing tree logistics



Loading the logs for transport



Jeff and Pete cleaning up the shop compound



# Nature is everywhere!

Share your Lens Poetry with us!



Florida Sand Plum (*Hog Plum*)



White-tailed Deer

**We are looking for photos of the park to use on our website, social media and newsletter.**

Have you explored lately? Do you have anything to share? Email us any photos you have taken in the park, Stephen Foster or Big Shoals, and your permission to share.

Send photos to [Jessica.Watkins@dep.state.fl.us](mailto:Jessica.Watkins@dep.state.fl.us)



Column Stinkhorn Mushroom



Plantago (*Fleawort*)



Brown Garden Snail



Wild Azalea

*"Keep close to Nature's heart... and break clear away, once in a while, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean." – John Muir*



Black Swallowtail Caterpillar



Juvenile Gopher Tortoise



Oak or Veiled Oyster Mushroom

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Jeff enjoys nature

## Jeffrey Niehaus

Jeff joined the staff here at Stephen Foster eighteen years ago as the park Maintenance Mechanic. Jeff is now starting a new journey here at the park as the Maintenance Supervisor!

Before coming to the park, Jeff worked for seven years at the Boys Ranch in Live Oak.

One of his favorite projects at Stephen Foster was remodeling Nelly Bly's Kitchen with two volunteers, Carl and Larry.

We know how difficult it is to find a working vehicle here in the park, so he is happy to have a working truck that he loves. Florida Folk Festival, Olustee Battle Reenactment, and Antique Tractor & Engine Show are his favorite events.

Jeff has been married to his wife for 32 years with one daughter, Sarah. He and his family really enjoy helping out with Big Shoals Pumpkin Fest every year. In his off time, Jeff enjoys working on a variety of projects, especially woodworking, and fishing.



Relocating Gift Shop sign to shop compound

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHTS

## **James Thompson of Lakeland, Florida**

James has been volunteering with Florida State Parks for 5 years. A year and a half ago he and his wife decided to sell their house and continue their volunteering adventure.



“I enjoy volunteering at state parks because of their love of the outdoors and because it gives me a purpose as a veteran. While volunteering here at Stephen Foster I have worked on a number of different projects.”

James helped replace cabin flooring, repaired and rebuilt porches on two of the craft cabins. “I enjoy using my carpentry skills to help make a difference at the parks I volunteer at. When they need help with any project I jump right in any way possible.” Currently, James and his family are the Campground Hosts, helping maintain the campground, cleaning the bathhouses and mowing. “I make sure the campground is up to par for the guests to come here and make memories and enjoy a safe clean environment. I look forward to coming back here because everyone is like family here!”

James’ favorite hobbies are carpentry, pool, camping, fishing and family time. He also enjoys an assortment of food, but some of his favorites are Italian and German cuisine.

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## **Volunteers Pete and Jan stopped in for a visit!**



While visiting us, they decided to jump in and help us with the cleaning of campsites and bathhouses for our campers! On top of that, they fixed the gutters at the new shop. And helped lift and secure the Girl Scout Marker for an upcoming scout project.

**Thank you for being great team players!**

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHTS



## **Thank you Oak Grove Academy for volunteering your time!**

Oak Grove Academy, Jasper, Florida makes a weekly trip to the Park every Thursday to volunteer their time. The group arrives eager and willing to learn and work. They have been busy helping Museum Guide, Pat Cromer with garden restoration projects.

The group, armed with a variety of landscaping tools and plenty of water, know how to divide and conquer! By splitting into 3 smaller groups they accomplished so much! In just one day, along the greenway between the Museum and Tower, the azaleas and oaks were trimmed, palmettos groomed, leaves were raked and sorted, beds around the trees and shrubs were cleaned and/or created, they removed existing debris and carefully unwound the vines that were destroying the azaleas. Then they hand dug up vines and other weeds. At the end of the day the trailer was filled and they even had a garbage bag half full of vine roots alone! Mrs. Pat is *'pleased as punch'* and says "They are a hard-working and well-mannered group of young lads. I greatly enjoy working with them."



# WHAT'S HAPPENING AT STEPHEN FOSTER



## Great job beautifying the park's Girl Scout Monument!



Scouts Harmony, Skylar and Ryleigh posing with their hard work!

Scouts Skylar, Harmony, and Ryleigh from Lake City Troop 9085 volunteered at the park for a service project. The project even helped Cub Scout, Ryleigh, complete her Arrow of Light! Ryleigh can now advance past the Webelos rank and officially join Scout Troop 9085.

The girls helped to beautify the park's Girl Scout monument. The monument commemorates the organization of the second Girl Scout Troop in America by

Girl Scout Founder, Juliette Gordon Low, in White Springs, March 1912. Juliette Gordon Low founded Girl Scouts with an emphasis on inclusiveness, the outdoors, self-reliance, and service.



Rangers Andrea and Gary showing the Scouts how to read the level

*Continued on page 13...*

## Scouts: Monument Beautification continued...



Leveling and prepping the area

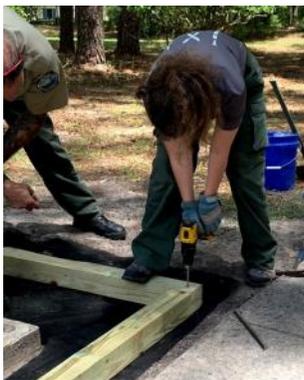


Stretching the landscape fabric



Fitting the pieces together. Thank you Jeff and Pete for cutting the sections!

The 3 Scouts measured, leveled, and prepped the area, laid landscape fabric, installed a border, and finished the project off with marble chips around the monument. After they finished and cleaned the area up, they had a bit of fun hunting for geocaches in the park!



Skylar drilling the holes



Harmony checking the level



Ryleigh and Harmony, both assisted by Ranger Pete, securing the frame pieces with rebar. Each Scout secured a corner, Ryleigh did 2!



Adding the marble chips!



Finishing touches!



Finished! Great work Scouts!

## RANGER JESSICA'S REFLECTIONS



Good Day to you!

I hope you have been enjoying our Reflections newsletter for the past year and a half. I have had the pleasure of putting the Suwannee River Reflections Newsletter together and I am always looking for new ideas to write about.

Do you have a special talent or skill?

Do you enjoy fixing and building things?

Do you like working with people?

If so, we are looking for a few good volunteers. There's a lot of benefits to volunteering such as a free park pass after 250 volunteers hours, making new friends, and sharing your special skills with others. If you are interested in volunteering, contact me.

Ranger Jessica Watkins

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