

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

THE NEWSLETTER OF STEPHEN FOSTER FOLK CULTURE CENTER STATE PARK

September / October 2020

Volume 2020 Issue 5

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UPCOMING CSO MEETINGS

September 21, 2020

**6:30 p.m. at the
Tourism Center**

**Conference line:
1-888-585-9008**

**Conference room:
911-884-288#**

A Microsoft Teams link is also available. Please contact Jessica or Andrea for the link.

Contact info on back page

"Change is the law of life, and those who look only to the past and present are certain to miss the future" - *John F. Kennedy*

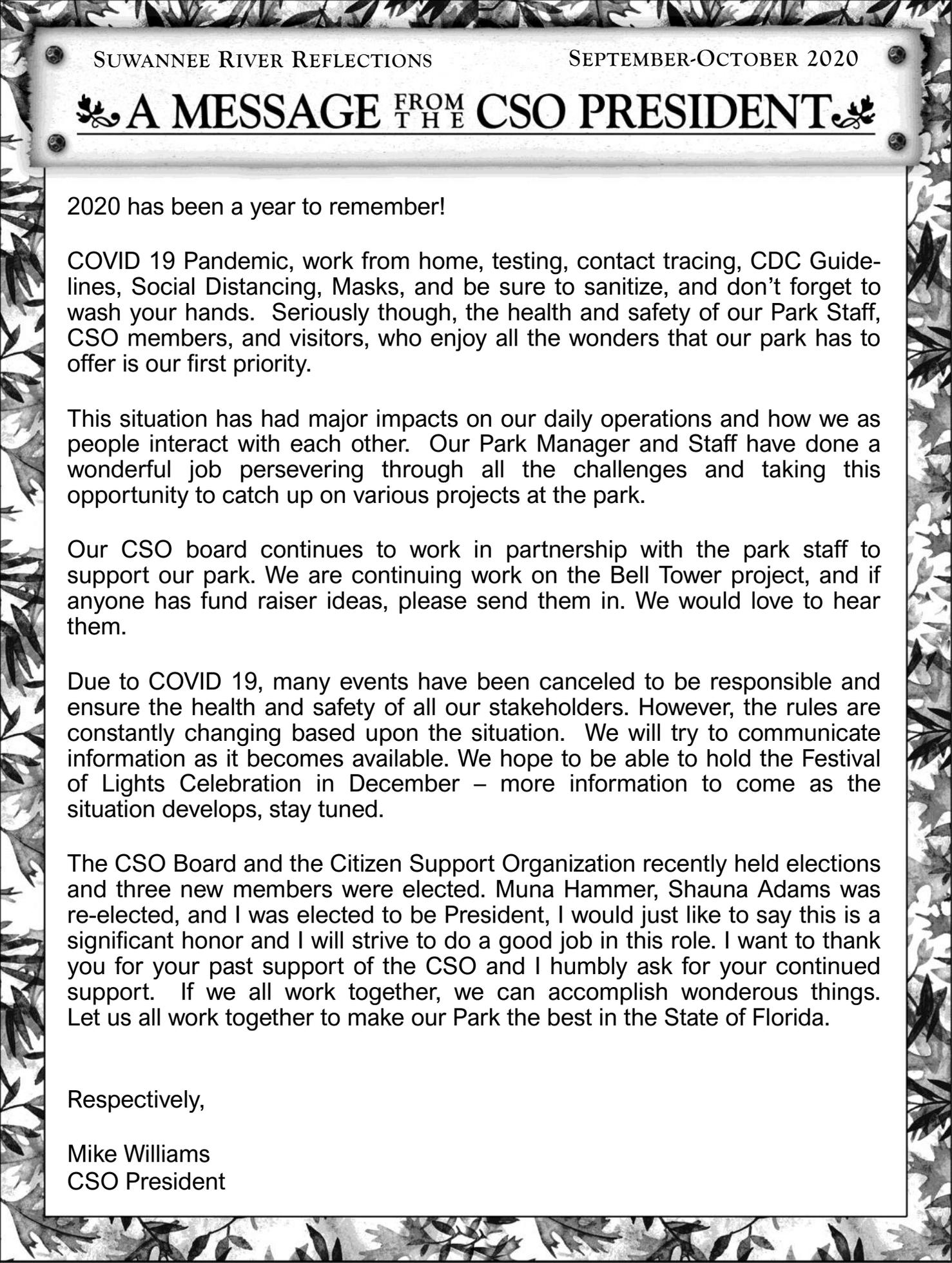
Welcome to our new CSO President, Mr. Mike Williams!



Mike Williams grew up in White Springs. He went to school in White Springs and graduated High School in Jasper. He went on to get many more degrees throughout his life at different schools and colleges. He joined the Army and retired after 24 years.

But the passion doesn't come out in his voice until he starts talking about growing up at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park as a child. He was one of many boy scouts that volunteered their time working on projects within the park. The memories Mike has of visiting Stephen Foster has influenced him to be a supporter of our Stephen Foster CSO for many years now. He loves the park and the Florida Folk Festival.

Mike and his wife, Laurie, have a passion for nature and kayaking. They have kayaked many rivers but one of Mike's favorite is the Suwannee River. We are extremely excited to work with Mr. Williams!

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CSO PRESIDENT

2020 has been a year to remember!

COVID 19 Pandemic, work from home, testing, contact tracing, CDC Guidelines, Social Distancing, Masks, and be sure to sanitize, and don't forget to wash your hands. Seriously though, the health and safety of our Park Staff, CSO members, and visitors, who enjoy all the wonders that our park has to offer is our first priority.

This situation has had major impacts on our daily operations and how we as people interact with each other. Our Park Manager and Staff have done a wonderful job persevering through all the challenges and taking this opportunity to catch up on various projects at the park.

Our CSO board continues to work in partnership with the park staff to support our park. We are continuing work on the Bell Tower project, and if anyone has fund raiser ideas, please send them in. We would love to hear them.

Due to COVID 19, many events have been canceled to be responsible and ensure the health and safety of all our stakeholders. However, the rules are constantly changing based upon the situation. We will try to communicate information as it becomes available. We hope to be able to hold the Festival of Lights Celebration in December – more information to come as the situation develops, stay tuned.

The CSO Board and the Citizen Support Organization recently held elections and three new members were elected. Muna Hammer, Shauna Adams was re-elected, and I was elected to be President, I would just like to say this is a significant honor and I will strive to do a good job in this role. I want to thank you for your past support of the CSO and I humbly ask for your continued support. If we all work together, we can accomplish wonderful things. Let us all work together to make our Park the best in the State of Florida.

Respectively,

Mike Williams
CSO President

MANNY'S MESSAGE

"In times of great stress or adversity, it's always best to keep busy, to plow your anger and your energy into something positive." – Lee Iacocca

I read that quote and thought, it applies to the summer we have had. Life has been challenging but we continue to overcome adversity, we definitely stay busy, and we strive for positive energy.

At this time our Museum, Tower, Gift Shop and Craft Square are still closed to the public, we are not renting out any of our facilities, or holding events, but we have many other activities that visitors can enjoy. Like fishing by the river, paddling the famous Suwannee River, take the family for a picnic under a shade tree, or just meandering down to the River Gazebo and enjoy the view.

Recently, we have had to make several changes to our park operations. We have two open staff positions that will not be filled anytime soon. The Ranger Station is now only manned from 2 until 5 p.m. This allows us to concentrate more time and energy on projects, as well as, assisting our campers and providing the great customer service we are known for.

I am very proud of the park staff and volunteers' projects that are being accomplished. We have a new honor box at the Ranger Station, we are getting ready to begin cleaning and repairing all our picnic tables, we are measuring and looking at paint samples for the administration building, tons of mowing and landscaping, continuing with the archival projects, the Gift Shop is reorganizing displays and cleaning out closets, lots of hard-working folks. We are hoping to expand and look for more help with landscaping, archival work, grant research and writing, craft demonstrators, and maintenance. Volunteer today!

I hope you have had a chance to look at the revamped CSO website at www.stephenfostercso.org/ The next web page that we are working on is directed at recruiting volunteers and organizations to assist the park.

We appreciate all the continued support from our CSO and area partners. Hope to see you in the park soon.

Manny Perez, Park Manager

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT STEPHEN FOSTER

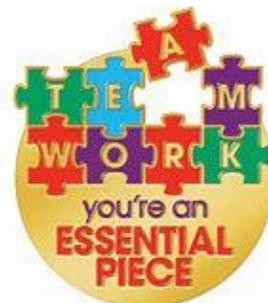
Due to some of the recent changes the Ranger Station will only be manned from 2 until 5p.m. daily. This allows us to concentrate more time and energy on projects, as well as, assisting our campers and providing the great customer service we are known for. One of the first projects to assist us when the Ranger Station is closed is our new Honor Box.

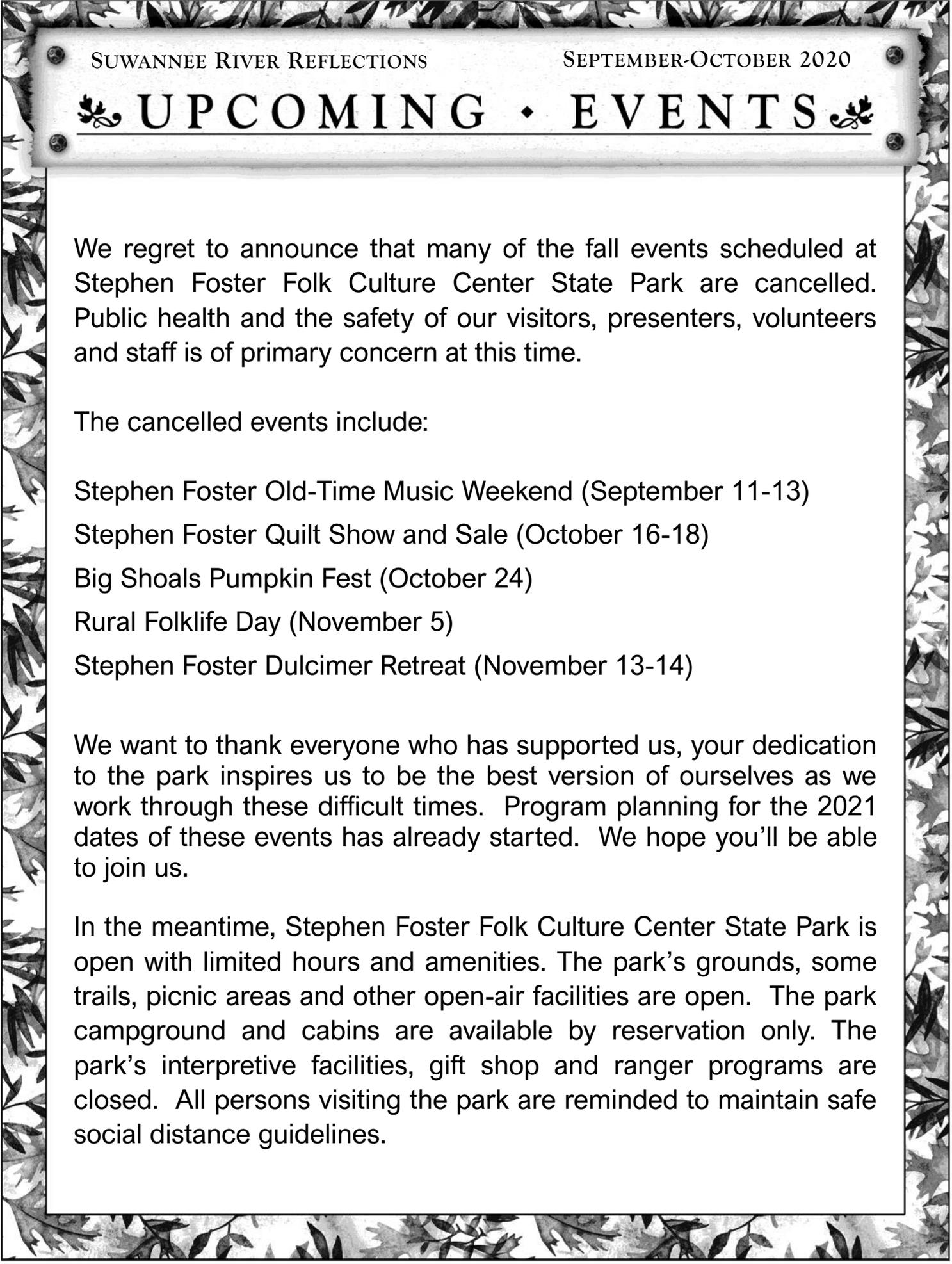
Teamwork Makes The Dream Work!

Ranger Kevin Pittman, Specialist Peter Shanks, and Maintenance Mechanic, Jeffrey Niehaus, installed the new honor box at the Ranger Station for visitors to use. Visitors place their entry fee into a blue envelope and detach the tag as proof of payment, then drop the sealed envelope into the box. Pittman and Shanks mixed and poured the concrete for the box installation.



*"Kevin and Pete were a great help!
I don't think I could have gotten it
done without them." - Jeff*



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UPCOMING • EVENTS

We regret to announce that many of the fall events scheduled at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park are cancelled. Public health and the safety of our visitors, presenters, volunteers and staff is of primary concern at this time.

The cancelled events include:

Stephen Foster Old-Time Music Weekend (September 11-13)

Stephen Foster Quilt Show and Sale (October 16-18)

Big Shoals Pumpkin Fest (October 24)

Rural Folklife Day (November 5)

Stephen Foster Dulcimer Retreat (November 13-14)

We want to thank everyone who has supported us, your dedication to the park inspires us to be the best version of ourselves as we work through these difficult times. Program planning for the 2021 dates of these events has already started. We hope you'll be able to join us.

In the meantime, Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park is open with limited hours and amenities. The park's grounds, some trails, picnic areas and other open-air facilities are open. The park campground and cabins are available by reservation only. The park's interpretive facilities, gift shop and ranger programs are closed. All persons visiting the park are reminded to maintain safe social distance guidelines.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Some say the Stephen Foster Carillon Tower was built around **Gary Erixton**. With more than 40 years at Big Shoals and Stephen Foster State Parks, there isn't much Ranger Erixton hasn't done. Gary is a Florida native and local historian. Growing up around Hamilton County, Gary has found a love for his local history. When Gary first started working, he was hired

at the Stephen Foster Memorial, not yet a state park, and he fell in love with working outdoors.

He loves his job because everything is always changing in nature. In his downtime, he builds 1/16 scale models for interpretive programs about turpentine and logging. His models are amazingly detailed and show his passion for the subject. We are extremely lucky to have such a versatile ranger!



Gary has been busy!!! Fox grapes and overgrowth have taken over areas within the park. Gary has been working hard on cleaning up those areas... one at a time. The aesthetic of the park is definitely looking much better!

Thank you, Gary, for all you do!

GIFT SHOP & CRAFT SQUARE HAPPENINGS



The Summer of 700 Masks Made!

Congratulations to the Craft Square stitching stars!

Volunteer fiber arts crafters, Chris Jacobs, Judith Oliveras, and Marie Longo have been harnessing their sewing abilities to sew masks all summer. The trio has missed their customary interaction with guests who learn about the ladies' unique skills and craft projects; but they have been far from idle. Their sewing has been strong and steady, with the number of adult and children's masks made reaching over 700 in August!

Farewell to Chris Jacobs and Judith Oliveras

Craft Square was so fortunate to have had volunteer stellar seamstresses, Chris Jacobs, and Judith Oliveras this summer. Their talents, contributions, and diligence are much appreciated.

It is Not Just a Sign

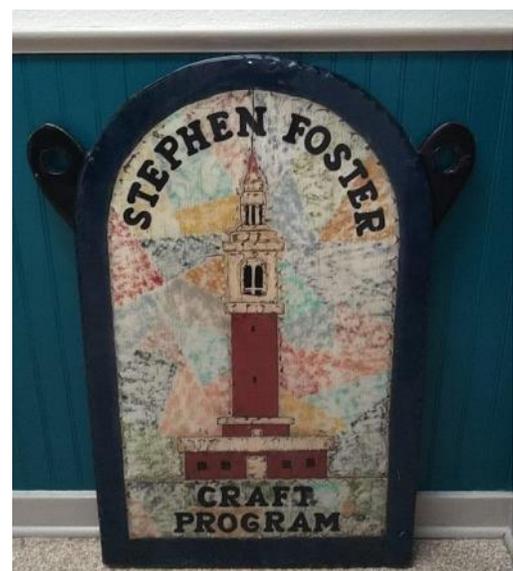
It is art.

It is a sign.

It's SignArt.

Volunteers Karl and Ginny Sault have donated 2 large and gorgeous signs to let visitors know they have arrived at our Craft Square. Talent shines through the glossy coating that protects their unique artwork.

Thank you so much, Karl and Ginny for your time and talent!



VOLUNTEER NEWS

August & AmeriCorps!



August 4th & 5th

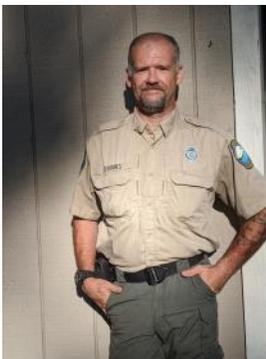
Members from AmeriCorps TREC team came out and helped clear an entry and exit pathway in one of our resource management zones. This was done to provide access points for park staff and future contractors to treat the infestation of Arrow Bamboo and other invasive plants in the zone.

August 5th & 6th

Members from AmeriCorps ANT team from 5 parks and 2 separate districts came out to assist the Stephen Foster staff with treating invasive plants in 2 of our resource management zones totaling 74 acres. The combined staff and resources completed a little over half of the park's treatment plan for 2020.



Denny Knisely, the Plant Man, from our District Office also came out and provided some training on plant identification and herbicide usage.



Park Specialist Peter Shanks is heading up the invasive plant removal projects in the park. If you are interested in volunteering in any of our plant projects please contact Specialist Shanks at (386) 397-2733.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Welcome Aboard!



Jim and BJ Roggow have been camping here and at other state parks for years.

On one of their camping trips here, they met one of our campground hosts and he

shared his knowledge and love for the host position with them and they decided to give it a shot.

They love it! Jim finds it fulfilling and likes to help people. He is also an amateur inventor. Both Jim and BJ love the early mornings with the birds, deer and squirrels... well anything that is nature related! One of their goals is to volunteer at a Beach Park in Florida. I would say they are well on their way to reaching their goal.

Welcome to our new Campground Hosts!

Thank you for your dedication to Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park!

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 or Renew your Membership today at
www.StephenFosterCSO.org**

A Microsoft Teams link is also available for the September 21 CSO Meeting.

Please contact Jessica or Andrea for the link.

Jessica.Watkins@dep.state.fl.us or Andrea.Thomas@dep.state.fl.us

Through our Reflections Newsletter, you have been getting to know the wonderful staff and volunteers here at Stephen Foster, as well as, our new and returning CSO Board Members.

We would like to get to know YOU! Our others members and volunteers! We would love to spotlight your favorite things and what you love about the park.



Please contact us!

Jessica loves short phone interviews with new friends!

Park Ranger Jessica Watkins
(386) 397-7005
Jessica.Watkins@dep.state.fl.us