

# Scenic Watch



News  
April 2023

"Tampa man started as a tree planting vigilante. Now he's planted 30,000."



Photo: Jefferee Woo, Times - *From left, Lauren Mones of St. Petersburg, Florida Urban Forestry Council executive director Deborah Hilbert and Tampa Bay Reforestation and Environmental Effort president Will Moriarty plant an Olympian fig tree at the 22nd Street South Community Garden in St. Petersburg on April 13, 2023.*

"Tampa man started as a tree planting vigilante. Now he's planted 30,000."

William Moriarty founded the Tampa Bay Reforestation and Environmental Effort 40 years ago.

A mysterious phenomenon occurred all around Tampa Bay in the late 1970s and early 1980s. When the sun went down and the streets were empty, someone clandestinely planted trees in parks, thoroughfare and empty lots.

'People had no idea where they were coming from,' William Moriarty laughed.



Photo: Will Moriarty, 1973

"Moriarty eventually admitted he was the culprit leading a group of volunteers in the rogue plantings. In 1983, he went legit by forming the Tampa Bay Reforestation and Environmental Effort.

In the 40 years since then, the organization has planted 30,742 trees, according to Moriarty, who still helms the nonprofit. He's been nicknamed the Johnny Appleseed of Tampa Bay due to his efforts.

Moriarty considers it the highest compliment to be compared to the pioneer nurseryman who planted apple trees throughout Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and West Virginia. But the nickname also does not give proper credit to the scope of the nonprofit's work.

Yes, Moriarty's group has planted apple trees — Anna and Dorsett Gold, which he said can be grown in Central Florida.

But the group's 40 members don't limit themselves to apple trees.

'If it is native to this area, we have planted it,' said the 68-year-old, who lives in (we can't make this stuff up) Plant City.

In all, the Tampa Bay Reforestation and Environmental Effort, which Moriarty calls 'T.R.E.E.' because 'Bay' was only recently added to its name, has planted 266 different types of trees at 619 locations throughout the area..."

-- Paul Guzzo, Tampa Bay Times

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## Officials see changes in code enforcement calls following new Florida law



Video: WEAR News ABC 3

"For years, Floridians could call in code enforcement complaints in their neighborhood -- and do so anonymously.

But that changed two years ago.

Some say the number of calls have changed, while others say it's the kind of calls they're getting that's different.

A state law changed requiring callers to leave their name and address with their complaint. Anyone can now see the contact information of the caller when they request the public record.

The law took effect in July 2021 with the goal to stop frivolous complaints.

Escambia County Deputy Director of Natural Resources Tim Day says their calls dropped by about 25 percent since the change.

Officials with the City of Pensacola say they've not seen a noticeable drop in calls, with the number of calls also not dropping in Santa Rosa County.

But Santa Rosa County code enforcement manager Bobby Burkett says the nature of the calls has changed.

'It's reduced some of the what we call frivolous calls when neighbors get mad at each other and we go out there and it's really no violation,' he said...

Code enforcement officers in Santa Rosa County say when the law changed, there were concerns about people not calling because of fear of retaliation. But now most of the people who call are willing to share their name and address."

-- Sha'de Ray, WEAR News ABC 3

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## "Bill Expanding Access to Florida's Wildlife Corridor Signed Into Law"





Photo: Trail Camera in Wildlife Corridor

"A bill expanding access to Florida's Wildlife Corridor, was signed into law Tuesday by Governor DeSantis. Senate Bill 106, the Florida Shared-Use Nonmotorized Trail Network, was introduced by Senator Jason Brodeur (R-Sanford).

The new law connects the corridor to Florida's Greenways and Trails System and the SUN Trail Network, as well as recreational pathways to heritage small towns across Florida. Passage of the measure was a top priority for Florida Senate President Kathleen Passidomo (R-Naples),

'Our wildlife corridor provides a unique opportunity to experience the wonder and beauty of Florida's heartland. With this legislation we have the chance not only to preserve this natural resource for future generations, but to expand access so more Floridians can walk, run, and bike from trail town to trail town, taking in all our great state has to offer,' said Senate President Kathleen Passidomo (R-Naples) 'I envision Florida's Wildlife Corridor as a top destination for recreational tourists from across the country and around the world. As I have said before, I believe this will be Florida's Central Park - a legacy we can be proud to leave for future generations of Floridians and visitors to enjoy...'

Florida's Wildlife Corridor encompasses approximately 17.7 million acres, including almost 10 million acres of conservation lands. The corridor is being created through the state's purchase of development rights of farmers, ranchers, and other landowners who will be able to continue their operations in perpetuity and

the lands will never be developed. From 2020-2022, under the leadership of Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture, former Senate President Wilton Simpson (R-Trilby), the Legislature appropriated \$600 million in funding available to expand the Wildlife Corridor..."

-- WQCS

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## "Ocala to Osceola - Exploring the healing power of nature"



Photo: Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation Operation Connect Page

"The O2O Expedition featured three veterans from three branches of military who undertook a 57-mile exploration of the Florida Wildlife Corridor from the Ocala to the Osceola National Forests. The core of the Expedition involved a 4-day journey which included paddling a section of the Ocklawaha River as well as biking/hiking segments through the Florida National Scenic Trail. The Expedition highlights the health and wellness opportunities of the Corridor as well as the importance of working lands, state lands and military installations to statewide connectivity..."

O2O Wildlife Corridor is a 100 mile long, 1.6-million-acre landscape of public and private lands that connect the Ocala and Osceola National Forests."

-- Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation

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## "Amelia Tree Conservancy: Nassau group celebrates a decade of minding the maritime forest"



Photo: Amelia Tree Conservancy

"Deborah Arnold sits at the base of Kate's Tree, located in the middle of the road at Ash and Eighth streets in downtown Fernandina Beach. The ancient oak is named for Katherine Bailey, wife of a prominent businessman who lived one block away in the late 19th century. When the city planned to remove the tree in order to extend Ash Street, Bailey protested by sitting vigil on the porch of her home with shotgun in hand. Her persistence paid off, and the tree remains.

The Amelia Tree Conservancy came together 10 years ago to defend our maritime forest canopy, its most noble member being the southern live oak (*Quercus virginiana*). Our maritime forest designates Amelia Island to be an end member of the chain of forested barrier islands that extend south from the Carolinas. These



ancient forests provide a unique canopy that withstands strong winds, periodic flooding, salt spray and manages stormwater capture in their root systems and leaves.

Of utmost importance, it protects our shorelines from erosive forces and our groundwater from saltwater intrusion. Without a significant canopy our cooler microclimate will disappear as the globe warms, and the thousands of birds migrating here each spring to nest will fly elsewhere.

In 2013 the inspiration for the Amelia Tree Conservancy arrived on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Nassau County inspectors were home celebrating the holiday when a tactical unit of earth movers and backhoes descended onto the property east of the roundabout where South Fletcher Avenue meets First Coast Highway. Twenty-eight trees were destroyed, and all but three were live oaks. Dump trucks were at the ready to haul away the carcasses.

A few of those trees even predated the Revolutionary War. It wasn't necessary to destroy all of them.

With Lyn Pannone spearheading the newly formed board, and the help of mainstay Margaret Kirkland, the tree conservancy mounted tactics to protect our island from future carnage. Now, 10 years later, it boasts more than 500 supporters.

We are ultimately preservationists intent on protecting the island's remarkable ecosystem. You could call us political activists who are apolitical — tree planters; sponsors of education programs and scholarships; and guardians for future generations."

-- Deborah Arnold, Florida Times Union Guest

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## "Scenic Jacksonville welcomes 2023 Officers and New Board Members"

"Michael Kirwan named President; Melinda B. Powers and Rebecca Williams join the Board."

Michael Kirwan succeeds Susan Caven, who will continue to serve as an officer and immediate past president. Kirwan is a partner with the international law firm of Foley & Lardner and was recently awarded the firm's national community impact award, the Lynford Lardner Award, for his community contributions. He has been with Scenic Jacksonville for ten years, leading the Underground Committee and



the Great Cities Symposium. Caven was president of Scenic Jacksonville for two different terms spanning over eight years, and has been a longstanding civic advocate for trees, billboard removal, historic preservation, and scenic beauty.



Photo: Scenic Jacksonville

"Melinda B. Powers is the founder and manager of Intentional Professionals, LLC where she consults and coaches small business owners and corporate professionals. She is a member of the 2023 class of Leadership Jacksonville and has served on local nonprofit boards including the Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation Shircliff Society, River City Education Organization, Jax Chamber's Downtown Council and Junior League of Jacksonville. "



Photo: Scenic Jacksonville

"Rebecca E. Williams is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Fruit of Barren Trees, LLC, a neighborhood revitalization firm. After working for a number of years at Fannie Mae, she is focused on transforming communities through development, revitalization, and investment strategies.



Photo: Scenic Jacksonville

'We are very fortunate to have such talented community leaders joining Scenic Jacksonville's Board,' said Michael Kirwan. 'These new directors bring energy and enthusiasm to our already active and passionate board and will help us continue our mission of preserving, protecting and enhancing the scenic character of our city.'

-- Scenic Jacksonville

[Visit Scenic Jacksonville here](#)

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"Green gardening: Phipps Ocean Park redo will be model for sustainability"



Photo: Kim Frisbie





Photo: Kim Frisbie

"I was fortunate to have a recent tour of the wonderful Phipps Ocean Park. This exciting project will be a tremendous gift to the residents of Palm Beach.

The Preservation Foundation's plans for the renovation of this 18-acre area include educational facilities and native landscaping to promote and restore environmental sustainability. In 1948, the Phipps family donated 1,200 feet of ocean frontage for use as a public park to ensure the land remained open in perpetuity. The park has not been well-managed in the intervening 75 years, is grossly underutilized, and currently consists of just some random paths and picnic tables with a few cabanas. Plantings are infested with invasive species including Brazilian pepper and melaleuca, and it is not an inviting area to visit.

Enter the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach in 2019 with a master plan for the park, incorporating educational facilities with native landscaping to restore, protect and preserve the coastal and intracoastal vegetation. Unique, diverse, and extraordinary spaces will inspire visitors to understand and appreciate the importance of environmental sustainability. With Raymond Jungles' vision to promote the park as a nature preserve, it will be planted with only native species, capturing the original spirit of the land as the Phipps family knew it. Visitors will gain exceptional education and information on plants they can add to their own landscapes, seeing how different species grow on coastal and inland areas...



Phipps Ocean Park will also embody an important coastal restoration center dedicated to growing native species for the park and for the Town of Palm Beach. This nursery/propagation facility will provide hands-on activities for children and adults for restoring coastal ecosystems throughout the island or in their own landscapes...

The historic Little Red Schoolhouse, built in 1886 and recently restored to its one-room glory, will interact with a new outdoor classroom sponsored by the Garden Club of Palm Beach to provide additional educational opportunities for children in an engaging native setting..."

-- Kim Frisbie, Palm Beach Daily News

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Citizens for a Scenic Florida  
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