**Carver Foundation hosts Spring events**

The George Washington Carver Foundation has two upcoming events – the auction, which has become an annual tradition, and a new supper club called Motown Madness.

Tickets are still available for Motown Madness, which will be held from 6 to 10 p.m. March 26 at the George Washington Carver Community Center, 201 East Drain Street, Bunnell. The cost is $50 per person.

“The Flagler community has embraced the preservation and expansion of programs at the G.W. Carver Center,” said Flagler County Commission Chair Barbara Revels. “It is a jewel sitting within a community that can and will prosper from a facility that cares, is safe and offers opportunities.”

Revels is a founding member of the George Washington Carver Foundation and was part of a team instrumental in bringing the center up to sustainable level, saving the center from an uncertain fate.

The George Washington Carver Foundation’s online auction goes live Wednesday, April 6 and closes on at 7 p.m. on April 27. The goal of this year’s auction is to raise $5,000. Donations are always welcomed.

All of the proceeds from these two events benefit the George Washington Carver Foundation, a 501c3 designated to raising money for the Carver Community Center.

“The Foundation just bought new backboards for the basketball hoops in the gym, and purchased new uniforms for a Carver middle school basketball team,” Revels said. “We will be awarding three high school scholarships to Flagler County Seniors.”

For more information about Motown Madness or to make a donation for the Carver Online Auction, please contact Cheryl Massaro at 386-437-7540, ext. 5101.

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**Flagler County has two successful prescribed fires**

Flagler County conducted two successful prescribed fires last month – one in Bulow Park and a second in Princess Place Preserve of about 190 acres in total. The goal was to reduce the potential for the destructive fires that are often a result hazardous fuel loads.

“Excess fuel causes wildfires to burn hotter and move faster, which can cause unpredictable results,” said Tim Telfer, Public Lands and Natural Resources Manager. “Wildfires can cause immense economic damage and result in the loss of habitat for wildlife.”

Another benefit of the prescribed fires is the restoration of native Longleaf Pines. Only 3 percent of Longleaf Pine Forests remain, miniscule when compared to other threatened ecosystems like the Wetlands in the southeastern United States (65 percent remain), and Rainforests worldwide (43 percent remain).

“Openness of the longleaf forest allows more sunlight to reach the forest floor, stimulating the growth of many grasses and legumes and reducing chances of fire that can devastate wildlife,” Telfer said. “More than 30 endangered and threatened species rely on longleaf pine ecosystems for habitat, including the red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise and the eastern indigo snake.”

In Princess Place, Bulow, Haw Creek and Pellicer Flats alone, there are 2,356 acres of pyrogenic land, more than half of which – 1,435 acres – has been identified as a department priority to return to a natural burn cycle of two to three years.

“This will maintain the remnant pine overstory, reduce the hardwood midstory, and enhance or re-establish native plants and animals,” Telfer said.
Matanzas Woods construction zone to close over Spring Break

Matanzas Woods Parkway will be closed temporarily between Bird of Paradise Drive and Old Kings Road beginning on March 12 while Matanzas High School is closed for Spring Break to accommodate the completion of the Interstate 95 interchange.

“The contractor has requested the road closure so they can complete this portion of the road work in a safe manner,” said County Engineer Faith Alkhatib. “There are many moving operations required to complete the work. This closure will enhance worker safety and will facilitate the completion of the project.”

The roadway will be closed beginning at 8 a.m. March 12 through March 20. Motorists will be required to use a detour around the area using Old Kings Road and U.S. 1.

A ribbon-cutting event for the interchange is scheduled at 3:30 p.m. on March 28. Additional details about the event will be released soon.

“This $9 million project has been in the works for more than a decade,” County Administrator Craig Coffey said. “We are very excited to be so near completion.”

Native American arts delight crowds

Families and friends flocked to Princess Place Preserve on Saturday and Sunday to take in Native American dancing, arts and history, as well as sunshine and nice weather.

It was the second annual Native American Festival organized by the Flagler County Parks and Recreation Department and the Deep Forest Native American Experience. The weekend included dancing, weapons demonstrations, wildlife exhibits, encampments, displays and vendors selling authentic Native American art, jewelry and clothing representing more than 50 tribes.

“More than 7,000 people came out for this event,” said Frank Barbuti, Flagler County Parks and Recreation manager. “It exceeded our expectations in terms of the turnout. It was a great weekend all the way around.”

Veterans were honored during the opening ceremony. Between traditional dances, children were invited into the “pow wow arena” for the candy dance.

Cody Boettner, Deep Forest Native American Experience, presented information about the primitive skills and culture of the Southeastern Native American tribes. It also covered advanced survival skills and fire making.

Cody Boettner – recently named as one of the top 10 hoop dancers in the nation during a competition held at the Heard Museum of American Art and History in Phoenix, Ariz. – wowed crowds as he danced with more than a dozen hoops that he spun into wings and other sculptural shapes.

Besides Flagler County and Deep Forest Native American Experience, this year’s sponsors include Waste Pro, Palm Coast Signs, Site One Landscaping Supply, Acme Trophies, Kompan Playground Solutions, Ripple Effect, Class A Printing, WNZF Radio and Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches.
Todd Whaley trained to fight fire from the air

Flagler County’s helicopter pilot, Todd Whaley, has wanted to be airborne his whole life. But it wasn’t until the first time he fought fire from a helicopter that he knew what he was destined to be.

“My first job out of flight school was with a small company out of Logan, West Virginia fighting fire and I fell in love with it,” Whaley said. “Firefighting from a helicopter is one of the most exhilarating things I’ve ever done. You’re low and in the smoke, and you get to see the progress when you hit it directly with a bucket of water.”

Whaley, whose first name is actually Steven though he goes by Todd, entered the Navy and later used the G.I. Bill to become an A&P (airframe and power plant) certified maintenance technician through the Federal Aviation Administration. He began flying airplanes in 1999 and helicopters in 2001. He has since accumulated more than 4,000 flight hours.

“I’ve been around aviation my entire life. My grandfather worked on Navy and Marine Corps F4U Corsairs during World War II, and went on to work for McDonnell Douglas,” Whaley said. “My father went to work as an apprentice mechanic and worked his way up to a quality assurance aircraft inspector at the Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, North Carolina before I was born and retired 38 years later. It’s definitely been bred into me.”

When Whaley left West Virginia, he took a job working for Volusia County Sheriff’s Office where he worked for nearly eight years as a law enforcement line pilot of its helicopter, Air One.

As an aside, Whaley was recently awarded with a Medal of Merit from Sheriff Ben Johnson for his assistance with an October 2015 plane crash in Seville. He had been flying relief for the Sheriff’s Office when it was short staffed and had to guide responders to the crash site off of County Road 305, and then fly the most critical of patients to Halifax with just enough fuel to make it back to DeLand.

“It (Volusia County Sheriff’s Office) was a good job, and I still fly relief for them, but it just wasn’t the same,” Whaley said in the same breath while retelling his harrowing ordeal. “I took a pay cut to take a job with the Florida Forest Service in Ocala. I wanted to fight fire.”

Whaley worked for the Florida Forest Service for about 14 months when he was approached by Dana Morris, Flagler County Flight Operations Chief, about coming to work for Flagler County.

“I was impressed by his record of duty with Volusia County and the (Florida) Forest Service,” Morris said. “We strive to get a high level of professionalism, and it is very unusual to get a pilot with all the other credentials he has.”

Whaley is an FAA-certified commercial helicopter pilot with a helicopter instrument rating, as well as a certified flight and instrument instructor. In addition to his A&P certification, he has inspection authorization. He is a Florida certified Wild-Land Firefighter, Structural Firefighter 1, First Responder and a member of the Airborne Law Enforcement Association.

Whaley calls the job with Flagler County his “dream job” – fighting fire, air ambulance, marine rescue, as well as search and rescue. He has worked for the county just over two years.

“Fighting fire from a helicopter is concentration intensive because you are doing both: flying and aircraft and fighting a fire,” Whaley said. “I absolutely love coming to work. I love being here every day. We work together as a team to get things accomplished.”
NO-COST WIND-MITIGATION GRANTS IN BUNNELL, FLAGLER BEACH, FLAGLER COUNTY

Those living in houses built before 2002 may be eligible for no-cost wind-mitigation retrofits through the Residential Construction Mitigation Program that is administered through Flagler County Emergency Management.

“Applications are being accepted, for Bunnell, Flagler Beach, and Flagler County homeowners,” said Heather Wilson, mitigation planner for Flagler County.

Bunnell, Flagler Beach and Flagler County were each granted $194,000 through the Florida Division of Emergency Management to increase the wind resistance of homes. The program addresses the exterior aspects of the home that impact wind resistance, such as: roofing, shutters, impact resistant windows and doors – including garage doors – and gable end bracing among other wind mitigation retrofits.

“These measures will protect homes from the damages of future wind events,” Wilson said. “Another potential benefit for program participants is in the form of yearly homeowner insurance premium credits or discounts.”

Eligible homes must be single-family, site built homes constructed before 2002 – the year the Florida Building code changed because of the extensive damage caused by Hurricane Andrew.

Additionally homes must not have any outstanding liens, judgments or unpermitted work. Mortgage and property taxes must be up to date. Homes must be homesteaded residences with current homeowner insurance policies.

“This is a comprehensive program that addresses all of the wind mitigation retrofits,” Wilson said. “This means that either everything will be done wind mitigate the home, or nothing will be done.”

There is no maximum award and, to date, mitigation costs have varied from $4,000 to $30,000 per house. However, the monetary benefit provided by the mitigation measure must meet or exceed its cost. Preference is given to low and moderate income households, as defined by HUD guidelines, but there is no income limit.

“This is a really good program,” said County Administrator Craig Coffey. “Residents should take advantage of it.”

For additional information or an application contact Wilson at 386-313-4265, or by email at hwilson@flaglercounty.org.

The Flagler Baseball League is a program of service to youth. It is geared to provide an outlet of healthful activity and training under good leadership in the atmosphere of good moral fiber and wholesome community participation.

For more information, call 386-313-4132, or click here.

VETERAN INFUSED EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOP

SEE YOUR FUTURE FROM A NEW PERSPECTIVE

The Orlando VA Medical Center is offering a series of Veteran Employment Seminars aimed specifically at the needs of Veterans who are seeking jobs in the Central Florida area.

**Seminars will be held in Flagler County March 29-31, 2016** at the Emergency Operations Center, 1769 E. Moody Blvd., Building 3, Bunnell, Florida

March 29  10 a.m. to 2 p.m.  Creating Your Job Search Tactics and Network
March 30  10 a.m. to 2 p.m.  Goals, Resumes and Interviewing
March 31    9 a.m. to 2 p.m.  Performance Excellence, Mock Interviews and Graduation

Contact: Annie Artis
vhaorlhvces@va.gov or 407-629-1599, ext. 28846
http://veteraninfusedemploymentworkshopsorlando.eventbrite.com