

Inside this Edition	Page	Page
Garry Balogh Retires	1	River of Lakes 4
Day on FBBSB	1-2	Old Florida Heritage 4-5
DeLeon Springs	3	Central Florida Zoo Bear 5
Free Ride on Gator	3-4	
Keys Scenic Alliance	4	

Garry Balogh Retires



The Florida Scenic Highway Program and Byway advocates around the state offered best wishes to Garry Balogh as he retired from the FDOT in late June. Garry has been the District V Scenic Highway Coordinator for nearly 20 years.

In fact, Garry started when

the scenic highway program was in its infancy at the FDOT. Garry's retirement creates a huge hole in the state's byway community. He was fully engaged with the byway organizations in his district providing advice and expertise, and literally working side by side with byway volunteers at meetings and events. He served as a mentor to many of the other District Coordinators around the state and was always available to answer a question or offer a suggestion based on his years of experience. He enjoyed working with byway volunteers, driving the corridors and experiencing all that each byway had to offer. Garry was a good face for FDOT in the community and everyone in the byway community called him a friend.

His legacy is reflected in the fact that nearly half of the miles of designated scenic highways in the entire state are located in District V. These miles are part of District V's nine designated byways including four with national designation.

In gratitude for his service, the **Garry Balogh Inspiring Excellence Award** was created as the highest honor bestowed by the FSHP. The award recognizes leadership, innovation, stewardship and inspiring achievements of individuals and organizations that have

made a significant and lasting impact on the byway community. Our hats are off to Garry for his service to the byway community. He'll be missed.

◇ *Real Places*

A Day on Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway



State Road 40 Ocala National Forest

The Black Bear Scenic Byway offers an untouched natural landscape that provides visitors with an unique opportunity to experience real Florida as the first settlers did several centuries ago.

The town of Silver Springs is located at the western end of the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway where charming retro motels, campgrounds, restaurants and shopping provide a base for exploration of this 116 mile corridor.

Silver Springs State Park is the western gateway to the corridor and offers a little of everything for the outdoor enthusiasts, including hiking, biking, and much more.

Several events take place at the park in November: Ocala Days sponsored by the Silver River Museum on Nov 14th and 15th and the Critter Trail 5K on Nov 21st

The Critter Trail 5K is hosted by Friends of Silver Springs State Park a Non-Profit organization. This is a group of people and businesses that share a common thread: they care about the natural resources that are available at the park.

Whether you're a health and fitness pro or you just enjoy the great outdoors, come join Friends of Silver Springs State Park for their 2nd annual Critter Trail 5K family fun event. The course is well marked and is designed to have fun and work up a sweat on scenic trails within the Park.

A Day on Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway — Continued

Whether you run, walk, jog or stroll, it does not matter as long as we do it together. So grab your co-workers, friends, family and your best running shoes and join Friends of Silver Springs State Park on November 21, 2015 for the Critter Trail 5K family fun event. All profits from the 5K will go to beautifying and improving Silver Springs State Park.

November will be a fun month along the Black Bear Scenic byway. For more information on the Critter Trail 5k and Ocali Days check out Friends of [Silver Springs State Park](#) website for more information.



Happiness is a visit to Vilano Beach on A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway

Vilano Beach just east of St. Augustine, is an impressive beach-side community that offers water sports, shell hunting, all night fishing and the best views of downtown St. Augustine. Vilano Beach Pier is a favorite among the locals and residence of the famous "Bluebird of Happiness". Ask any local about the "Bluebird of Happiness" and the story might go like this:

"Newt Haley, a military man was passing through Vilano Beach after the war and decided to make his home here. He built most of the area's mom-and-pop stores and motels in the early 40's and 50's and resided in the area for over 50 years. When A1A was the main thoroughfare through Vilano Beach, the Bluebird served as the welcoming committee and roadside art. For years the Bluebird of Happiness a Vilano Beach Landmark, much like the Southernmost Point Buoy in Key West. Ah but this bird has a past.

Some years ago, the bird left Vilano Beach and ended up in a house on a marsh in North City. Fortunately the William Porter Family, which got the bird as part of the house



purchase, agreed to donate it to the Vilano Beach Main Street group. With the acquisition, the hope was for visitors to take pictures in front of the bird and remember their visit to Vilano Beach.

A "Bring Back the Bird" campaign was started in 2009 with a goal to raise \$4500 to complete the restoration that took four years to accomplish. Vilano Beach's "Bluebird of Happiness" -- wingless and caged near the Town Center -- stood for many months before Bob and Theda Bonner were enlisted to restore and "bring back the bird."

Today the sign at the base of the bird identifies all the community volunteers supporting "Bring Back the Bird" Campaign.

June 2015 marked the 3rd anniversary since the Bluebird of Happiness found its home on the Vilano Beach Pier.

You all come back and get your picture taken with the famous Bluebird of Happiness.

By the way rumor has it that the Bluebird of Happiness was once painted orange.



DeLeon Springs Community Association, Inc. PROJECT SPEAK HISTORY



DeLeon Springs photo by Florida State Parks

Decades before pancakes became synonymous with DeLeon Springs State Park, visitors were lured by the areas natural springs and their health-boosting benefits. Tourists flocked to this tiny community which boasted two recreational areas: The Springs, now the site of DeLeon Springs State Park, and its competitor, Burt's Park. Both were eventually acquired by the Florida State Park System.

While out-of-staters may have been taken in by promises of healing waters, locals knew better. They utilized both sites for family outings, summertime fun as an apparent antidote for boredom during July and August. Busloads of kids from DeLeon Springs and nearby DeLand enjoyed a swim in the cool waters.

For generations, The Springs and Burt's Park remain touchstones of childhood memories and many "firsts"---learning to swim, to dive or catch a fish. Family reunions or summer days spent with school friends can be traced to both parks. Before a certain mouse found his way to Central Florida, locals and tourists alike flocked to DeLeon Springs. Spring events included a waterskiing elephant, synchronized swimming, and a host of other activities.



In the early days of Burt's Park a full day of swimming, including a hot dog and soda costs a whopping nickel. By the 1960's inflation drove that sum to a dime. That was a bargain compared to its pricier neighbor, The Springs where you needed a quarter just for admission. Eventually Burt's Park and the Springs combined resulting in one park.

DeLeon Springs Community Association, Inc., in conjunction with DeLeon Springs State Park and the West Volusia Historic Society, is currently engaged in the collection of the oral histories of these two DeLeon Springs landmarks. If you would like to contribute your memories, anecdotes, photos or memorabilia to share, please contact DeLeon Springs Community Association, Inc., at dscainc@bellsouth.net. Please put "Project Speak History" in the subject line. All photos will be scanned and returned to owners.

DeLeon Springs State Park is located at 601 Ponce DeLeon Blvd., DeLeon Springs.

Free Ride on a Gator

The Ocala National Forest is unique and fascinating forest that offers recreating year round. Mild winters are fine for family camping/hiking, summers for canoe/ kayak trips down palm-lined streams.

You never know what photo opportunities one might encounter on the byway. While hiking at the Ocala National Forest along the Ocklawaha River Richard Jones and his family were watching the alligators when his son walked through some palm fronds to get a good picture of the gators.

Jones said "his son must have startled the raccoon, which stumbled toward the water and hopped on top of a nearby gator."



Free Ride on a Gator Continued

Jones snapped a lucky picture when the gator slipped into the water with the raccoon hitching a ride across the river. Jones said “Definitely a photo of a lifetime.”

◆ *News from Around the Byway*

Florida Keys Scenic Corridor Alliance

The Florida Keys Scenic Corridor Alliance was excited to receive a Monroe County Shared Asset Forfeiture Fund Grant for \$2,000. The grant request was for \$1,000 to help pay for promotional materials used at community



Alliance Members with Sheriff Ramsey

events, but when they received notification from Monroe County Sheriff Rick Ramsay it was twice the amount requested. When asked about the reward Sheriff Ramsay replied: “I am in full support of the Alliance’s efforts in the community and the positive image the group projects”. The Alliance has been very active in coastal clean-up events, Adopt-a-Highway and FDOT’s “Put it down/ Distracted Driving” campaign that targets texting while driving”. Gina Boilini, Alliance President says that they plan to spend a portion of the funds on stickers, baseball hats and visors that include the Alliance’s logo to hand out to their volunteers. For more information contact Gina at Gina.boilini@gmail.com

River of Lakes Heritage Corridor Scenic Highway



The River of Lakes Heritage Corridor (ROLHC) is pleased to announce that their byway video can now be viewed at the Barberville Pioneer Settlement located just north of DeLand in the town of Barberville.

As a part of the contract to produce their video the Friends of ROLHC also received a 40” HD TV, and media player. The Video will be located in the Bridge House, which is the entry building at the Pioneer Settlement.

The Bridge House has two “Byway Rooms”: one for the Florida Black Bear National Scenic Byway and one for the River of Lakes Heritage Corridor and both rooms contain information about their Byways.

The ROLHC display was opened to the public in late August.

The River of Lakes Heritage Corridor also has a second video display installation at the Daytona Beach International Airport.

Old Florida Heritage Highway

Autumn is always an exciting time along the Old Florida Heritage Highway, with lots of family-friendly activities and the return of the migrating sandhill cranes.

- The popular “Evinston Paintout” will bring 30 landscape artists to SE Alachua County from October 19-24, working outdoors along the byway. The event is centered around the “Wood and Swink Country Store and Post Office” (the oldest in Florida). Children’s art activities, a presentation by an art appraiser and the Gala Sale and Celebration will occur on October 24. For more information see www.woodandswink.org.

Old Florida Heritage Highway— Continued

- The Byway will also participate in the Annual Micanopy Fall Festival on Saturday October 31 and Sunday November 1. In addition to the tour and bicycle safety information and promos, this year there will be ‘corny dog toys.’ The event occurs along Cholakka Boulevard in the Micanopy Historic District.
- The sandhill cranes typically arrive around Paynes Prairie in late November, and can be seen from several of the State Park trails. Although the Parks Visitor Center is temporarily closed for renovations (funded by an NSB grant), park information is always available online at www.prairiefriends.org.
- For the active recreation crowd, a bicycling event happens October 25 (see info here- <http://gccfla.org/gcf/index.html>). Friends of Paynes Prairie will hold a Paynes Prairie 5K on November 21, and a 5K benefiting the local 4 H is happening there on December 5.

Whether your pace is slow walks while birdwatching, running, bicycling or scenic drives, there are lots of autumn opportunities along the Old Florida Heritage Highway. On the web- www.scenicus441.com.

River of Lakes Heritage Corridor Scenic Highway



With the number of Florida black bear sightings across Central Florida on the rise, especially near houses, the Central Florida Zoo is building a new Bear Habitat designed to teach you how to protect your family and pets.

This concept art shows a rendering of the under-construction Bear Habitat, including an exhibit which replicates a conventional Florida home pressed up against a bear's natural habitat. [More Information](#)

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