

**UPDATE IN BRIEF**

- Over 450 participated in January’s 24th Annual Scrub Jay 5K and Scramble 10K.
- Join the Park’s 35th Annual Earth Day Celebration from 10:00 to 3:00 on Saturday, April 20th.
- Please support the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park in the Sarasota Giving Challenge on April 9th and 10th.
- 2 additional glamping sites will be added in April.
- The replacement of Campground Bathhouse #2 is underway and should be completed in August.
- Friends director and volunteer Joel Robbins has received the 2023 Citizen Support Organization of the Year Award.

**Did you know...**

Manatees have the special ability to move between bodies of fresh and salt water, making them right at home in the brackish waters of South Creek. Surprisingly, these large aquatic mammals have very little body fat and therefore seek out water where the temperature is 68 degrees Fahrenheit or warmer.



Have you seen a manatee in the wild (or in captivity)? Did you notice any injuries on the manatee’s body? The innate curiosity of manatees paired with the carelessness of people can often lead to poor outcomes. It is easy to see how the animal in this picture could have been gravely wounded if the boat driver was not operating cautiously. Watercraft can cause both impact (blunt force) and sharp (deep cut) trauma. This is one of the reasons it is illegal to give food (or water) to a manatee.

Entanglement with fishing gear and other man-made items is another major cause of serious injury to manatees. Whether you are at Oscar Scherer State Park or another natural area, think about these gentle giants and the other animals who share the land with us and “take only pictures; leave only footprints!”

Places at Oscar Scherer where you may spot a manatee include the canoe launch area at the Ranger Station, the fishing dock on the Lester Finley trail, the campsites along South Creek, and the bridge connecting the Nature Center to the Campground. Look for little bubbles on the water’s surface which could indicate a manatee breathing below. Also keep an eye out for the snout, back, or tail of a manatee protruding from the water. Listen for the distinct sound of a manatee taking a deep breath at the water’s surface. If you are lucky, you may spot a manatee (or two) leisurely swimming down South Creek and enjoying the park as much as you are!

## Manager's Message



**Matt Kruse**  
Park Manager

Hello Friends of Oscar Scherer Park

Thank you for making Oscar Scherer State Park a wonderful place to work and visit. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Spring is here and there is no better way to welcome the season than with a visit out to the park. Florida Scrub-Jays are busy constructing their nests, while wildflowers are starting to bloom. A short walk down almost any trail will provide opportunities to view Pawpaws, Coral Beans and Blue Lupine flowers. The Green Trail Bald Eagles have produced two young fledglings that are testing their wings. Be sure to catch a view before they leave for the summer. Please be careful as you drive through the park. Gopher Tortoises are on the move in search of a mate or can be seen foraging on the new growth throughout the park. If you're lucky maybe you will be able to spot a mother deer with her fawn. For those of you who enjoy fishing, consider trying your luck with a rod and reel on the Lake Osprey fishing Pier. Recently stocked with Large Mouth Bass, Bluegill, and Red-Eared Sunfish, Lake Osprey may prove to be an entertaining afternoon. If you're not successful at the lake you can always take a short walk over to South Creek where both fresh water and saltwater opportunities exist.

As you're traveling through the park, you may notice the vegetation in some areas has been cut and laid low. At first sight, it may look concerning; however, it is the result of a resource management project that will benefit populations of threatened Scrub-Jays and other imperiled species within the park. Mechanical treatment is used in areas of the park that have become too

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## VOLUNTEER

Winter days are turning into warm spring days, many of our snowbirds travel north to their homelands and the days grow longer. Seasonal programs at the park come to an end, and we begin to prepare for the new event season.



Volunteer opportunities open up for many positions. Resident positions give volunteers a campsite in exchange for their volunteer service while meeting the state required weekly hours.

There is an exciting opportunity to give back: Oscar Scherer is currently seeking volunteers to cover Nature Center shifts. We try to keep the Nature Center open each day of the week but without a volunteer to cover a shift those doors will remain closed. We need your help to keep the Nature Center open for visitors. The month of February brought 1,723 visitors through the doors. This would not be possible without a volunteer to open those doors to the public. If you can cover 1 day per week for 4 hours, **WE WANT YOU.**

We have a group of field volunteers who work strictly on Mondays and/or Wednesdays from 8 am to noon on various different tasks. They work on trails, do carpentry, mowing, trimming, and whatever else needs to be done for the day. With the spring season upon us what's better than to have a campfire while you are camping at Oscar Scherer. The park has firewood available for campers to purchase. Sales from the wood go directly to the park through Friends of Oscar Scherer. We are currently looking for volunteers to split wood and refill the woodshed. These Monday/Wednesday volunteers are looking for your help.

Other examples of volunteer opportunities include: Ranger Station assistant, field worker, trail maintenance, butterfly gardening, Park maintenance, specialty skills worker, and much more. With something for everyone, all skill levels and abilities are welcomed and encouraged. Volunteering is a great way to meet new friends!

If you are interested in volunteering to help out and give back, please complete a volunteer application and submit it. To obtain an application, click [here](#), or visit <https://floridastateparks.org/get-involved>.

If you would like more information on volunteer opportunities, please feel free to contact Diana Stinson, Park Service Specialist, at (941) 882-7219 or e-mail at [Diana.Stinson@floridadep.gov](mailto:Diana.Stinson@floridadep.gov).

**"Volunteers do not get paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are PRICELESS!"**

**Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers for all you do at Oscar Scherer State Park!**

## PROGRAMS AND EVENTS



Our New Year's 1<sup>st</sup> **Day Hike & Scavenger Hunt** was a huge hit again this year. 191 visitors came to participate in the statewide event. Oscar Scherer offers a scavenger hunt to get people out hiking on the trails in the park, looking for clues and returning to claim their prize. Of course everyone was a winner. We saw first-time park visitors, people that come on a regular basis, and the ones that have returned every year just for this event.

This year's 24<sup>th</sup> **Annual Scrub Jay 5K & Scramble 10K** was all in the luck of the weather. Florida has seen several days of rain and cold weather this winter. We had relief from the rain that seemed to be a constant weekend event this winter. Though it was under chilly temperatures everyone bundled up and endured the cold. Runners heated up quickly after the sound of the horn. The race had over 450 registrants, plenty of after-the-race snacks and of course Oscar's famous hot dogs straight from the grill. Next year's planning is already in the works. Our Silver 25<sup>th</sup> Scrub Jay Race will be a special event. Mark your calendars and celebrate with us. The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Scrub Jay 5K & Scramble 10K will be on January 25, 2025.



The **Tom Faling Kid's Kiwanis Fish-A-Thon** is a family friendly time hosted by Kiwanis Club of Venice and Florida Fish & Wildlife Fisheries. On Saturday, April 6th from 8:00 a.m. to noon. Kids ages 4-11 can learn to bait a hook, cast a line and learn the safety of fishing. The Kiwanis Club awards trophies in some fun categories. The entire family gets a hot dog lunch afterwards. Park entrance is free for this event, but kids need to register for the event.

**Oscar Scherer's 35th Annual Earth Day Festival from 10:00 to 3:00 on Saturday, April 20th** will be welcoming visitors to celebrate a day to honor the earth and learn ways to protect nature. This event strives to bring awareness to the conservation, preservation and the importance of protecting what we have. This year's Global Earth Day Theme is "Planet vs. Plastics." Guided tram tours will be available with knowledgeable interpreters. Guided hikes will be offered where you can learn about scrub habitat and other habitats that make up Oscar Scherer State Park. Live music during the festival will be on the park stage. The photo contest exhibit will be on display and "People's Choice" will be open for voting in the Nature Center. Plenty of kids activities and games will be offered. Plenty of family friendly booths and exhibitors and food vendors. OneBlood donation mobile will also be on site. A scavenger hunt will be a fun activity based on the Earth Day theme.



## MEET FRIENDS DIRECTOR CHRIS BAUM



In December of 2022, Chris Baum was selected for the Membership Chair by the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park (FOSP) Board of Directors. Chris is originally from Cincinnati, Ohio. She graduated from Mt. St. Joseph College, with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration.

Professionally, her working life was in Logistics - Supply Chain and data analysis. She moved from Cincinnati for a job opportunity in Phoenix, Arizona where she enjoyed hiking, the desert and mountains for 18 years..

In early 2022, Chris received a call from family needing support with a family member with late stage Alzheimer's. Needless to say, she dropped everything and moved from Phoenix to Venice, to help care for her brother-in-law. It has been a great move for her, and she couldn't be happier.

Chris's brother, Gary, suggested she volunteer for FOSP to meet people and to get involved in the community. Her 40 plus years in logistics, budgeting, tracking, data analysis and customer service have prepared her for the duties of the Membership Chair. It has been a wonderful experience, and she is looking forward to the many opportunities ahead with FOSP.

### *Manager's Message (continued from page 2)*

overgrown to safely apply prescribed fire. Treated areas will provide suitable habitat for Jays to nest and feed.

We are excited to announce 2 additional glamping sites in the campground. Starting in April, Timberline Glamping will begin transitioning campsites 19 and 20 into glamping sites. Once the sites are complete, the park will be able to offer 4 glamping sites, each complete with a beautiful canvas tent, comfortable bed, air conditioning and many other features. The additional services will accommodate those seeking a little retreat in nature without foregoing any of life's comforts.

The campground bathhouse replacement project continues to move forward. The old building has been demolished, with new construction expected to start any day with a completion date expected in August 2024.

Although programs for the season are slowing down, it's not too late to attend a program or guided tour. Please pick up a program guide at the ranger station. There are plenty of selections to spark your interest. If you haven't made plans yet, be sure to mark your calendars for Saturday, April 20th for our Earth Day Celebration. There will be lots of food, fun, and activities for the entire family.

It's a privilege to serve as your park manager. Hope to see you soon.

# Volunteer Spotlight

## MEET THE CURMUDGEONS



We are spotlighting all the Monday/Wednesday volunteers. AKA curmudgeons. This group is dedicated to helping the park with trail clearing, tree removal, digging holes, repairs, splitting firewood, restocking the woodsheds, and whatever the park might need help with. During the winter season the group multiplies. But there is a core group that keeps the park going all year long. These volunteers all come from different backgrounds and levels of experience. Two of these volunteers have been volunteering at Oscar Scherer for over 20 years. Park staff joined in this day to celebrate & recognize some of the milestones in this group of volunteers.

Oscar Scherer just celebrated our volunteers this week with a volunteer appreciation potluck picnic. I have to say I believe we have the best volunteers in the state. Staff gets together and coordinates two picnics a year dedicated to the volunteers. Park staff cook and serve the volunteers. The theme for the picnic was for volunteers to decorate something they use as a volunteer. We have some very creative volunteers. They went all out. Everyone voted on their favorite and a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> place was awarded. Best of all was great food, good friends, and a fun time.



## VOLUNTEER AND DIRECTOR JOEL ROBBINS RECEIVES 2023 PARK SERVICE AWARD



Recently, Friends of Oscar Scherer Park (FOSP) board member Joel Robbins was awarded the 2023 Citizen Support Organization of the Year award for Exceptional Accomplishment for Cultural Resources. The award states that the plaque was presented for “Passionate and Dedicated Service to the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, Inc.”

Robbins has been a year-round volunteer at Oscar Scherer State Park for more than a decade, mostly in the nature center, promoting the Junior Ranger program, teaching critter crafts, and greeting visitors. There he has helped remodel the turpentine display, build the Kids’ Corner, create a display for shells and sharks teeth, add PowerPoint presentations to the main video player, order and assemble display cases donated by board president Ron Newton, acquire a live snake and display, buy and install a new monitor for the secondary video player, aid his wife Nancy with reviving the wildflower/butterfly garden outside the nature center, and lead the way to turn a screened-in pavilion into a four-season area.

He has been active with guided flora walks for adult groups, presentations on fossils and other nature subjects for church, scout and school groups, and buying or acquiring donations of artifacts displayed in the nature center.

When asked about the award, Robbins said: “We have dozens of volunteers that deserve this as much as I do. Credit goes to all of them for donating thousands of hours to make the park a wonderful place to visit. This is an amazing place to volunteer, thanks to park manager Matt Kruse and all the rangers and AmeriCorps volunteers.”

## THE PARK HOSTS THREE PAIRS OF EAGLETS THIS SEASON

All three of Oscar Scherer State Park’s bald eagle nests have pairs of eaglets this season. Then two most accessible nests can be viewed from the Green Trail and the Red Trail. The most advanced pair of eaglets is in the nest west of the northwestern corner of the Green Trail near Bench 15. They are nearly the size of the adults and can be expected to fledge in the next few weeks. The pair on the Red Trail can be viewed toward the north from Bench 12 and along the trail to the north to Bench 12A, which offers an excellent view of the nest.

Eaglets fledge, or fly to another tree, about 10 to 14 weeks after they hatch. As they get ready to fly, eaglets exercise their flight muscles by flapping and jumping on the nest. Once the eaglets fledge, their parents will continue to feed them for up to 10 weeks. Juveniles migrate north until 5 years old, when they become sexually mature and settle down. They can travel as far north as Canada. Unpaired adults also migrate. Pairs don't migrate far. It takes five years for juvenile bald eagles to obtain the signature white head and tail.



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

MARK THE DATE, Tuesday April 9 starting at 12:00PM to Wednesday April 10 at 12:00PM. The Giving Challenge will be conducted over the internet. Go to : [givingchallenge.org](http://givingchallenge.org) and donate to the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park. Minimum donation is \$25.00. Any donation from \$25.00 to \$100.00 will be matched. So giving \$25 to us will turn into a \$50 donation. These donation help us to help the park stay in a pristine condition and a beautiful place to relax and breath a breath of fresh air. Thank you

## PLEASE USE THE PARK'S NEW LITTER STATIONS

Be a Litter Picker Upper. Help keep Oscar Scherer State Park beautiful. See trash on the ground, please utilize the newly installed Litter Picker stations located at South Creek and Lake Osprey Picnic areas. Stations provided by Eagle Scout Ethan Stocker Troop-1001.



## Meet the Friends' Directors and Officers

President—Ron Newton

Vice President and Nature Center Manager—Carolyn Morgan

Treasurer—Anne Heuer

Secretary—Oliver Janney

Membership Chair—Christine Baum

Dylan Murphy

Jim Rogers

Joel Robbins

## Meet the Staff

Park Manager – Matt Kruse

Assistant Park Manager – Chris Tretter

Administrative Assistant – Alyssa Rothstein

Park Service Specialist – Diana Stinson

Park Service Specialist – Jonathan Hunter

Park Ranger – Donnie Berube

Park Ranger – Deanna Lamont

Park Ranger—Glenn Mitchell

Park Ranger – Colin Ott

Park Ranger – Jamie Butler

OPS Park Ranger—open

OPS Park Ranger – Jerry Bodnar

OPS Park Ranger— Dave Wankowski

District ROAR AmeriCorps— open

Super Star – Francis Folkers