

April
Newsletter
2016



FRIENDS OF FLORIDA STATE PARKS

Breathing New Life into Our Florida State Parks

This month we continue to focus on the LIFE program which Friends of Florida State Parks is proud to be running on behalf of the Florida Park Service and the Department of Environmental Protection. Since announcing that we were taking over the reins of this very worthwhile environmental education program we have had a tremendous reaction statewide.

We have heard from educators wanting to participate in the LIFE program, parents wanting to know which is the nearest park to them offering LIFE programs and we have heard from many other people wanting to help in any way we can.

As a result, we are determined to grow this program as quickly as we can so that many more parks can participate and thousands more school children can experience the LIFE program.

Getting children into our state parks and giving them the opportunity for real time, hands-on, curriculum-based scientific programs is crucial if we want to encourage them to become the next generation of scientists, technicians and engineers.

It is also crucial if we want to educate these children about the benefits of our wonderful state parks and the need to protect and preserve them.

If you would like more information about the LIFE program, would like to get involved or know of others who would, please let us know. Together we can literally make the LIFE program life changing.

Friends of Florida State Parks is embarking on an exciting adventure and we would like you all to be part of it. As mentioned in previous newsletters we have agreed to take over the reins of the LIFE program throughout the state.

LIFE stands for Learning in Florida's Environment and it served many purposes. First of all, it is a model for science-based education on public conservation lands. Each program represents a partnership between FFSP, the Department of Environmental Protection and a school district to bring students outdoors to learn science.

The goal of each LIFE Program is increased student achievement and teach professional development I science education. The LIFE program is not a curriculum, but a process for reinforcing and enriching the existing curriculum through hands-on, field labs facilitated by educators, scientists, rangers and trained volunteers.

Each LIFE site is tailored to address local priorities and unique environmental issues. This is done in

consultation with the school board and science teachers from the participating schools. Students participate in multiple field experiences each year and are exposed to real-world technology careers.

Another benefit is that most of the students have never been to a state park before and, hopefully, they will persuade their parents to come out and visit as well. We have to engage these young people and help them understand the importance of protecting and preserving our public lands. After all, they will be the next custodians of these precious places.

Until now the LIFE program has focused on children from middle schools but our aim is to eventually expand it to cover all grades and to introduce programs targeting adults and families that can be held at weekends. Ideally, we would live every state park to become an open-air classroom offering LIFE programs.

There are many ways that you can help. You can become a partner educator and assist at existing LIFE program sites. You can help support travel costs to bring students to the field. You can support professional development activities for teachers and you could sponsor a field lab activity.

Above all, if you are a parent or a teacher, you can encourage participation in the LIFE program at a park near you. For more information please contact ffspinc@gmail.com

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