



April - June 2008

Volume 5 issue 2

# BANYANbanter

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CRESCENT LAKE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Informing residents of issues and events in and around our neighborhood

## Halfway there!

We owe you a big thank you, neighbors.

Once again, you came through big time with our annual membership drive. As of March 31, we have 94 paid members. To those of you who paid, we say *thank you!*

But we're also not quite done. Our goal was to double last year's membership, which was just over 100 paid members. So if you haven't paid your annual dues, will you please do so?

We intentionally keep the dues cheap – only \$15 per person or \$20 per household.

While it may not seem like much, the more of you who contribute, the more it adds up.

*With 98 members paying dues, drive to double membership continues. Your donation – only \$15 or \$20 — makes difference to neighborhood.*

Since annual dues are by far our key source of revenue, your contribution helps us fund our various neighborhood activities, such as porch parties, Easter Egg Hunt, July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration in the park, Harvest Fall Festival, Holiday Luminary Walk and more.

Just send your check – made out to Crescent Lake Neighborhood Association – to CLNA, P.O. Box 76065, St. Petersburg, FL 33734.

Your support of our great neighborhood does make a big difference. Thanks in advance for your donation, and for helping the best neighborhood in the city stay vibrant.

## Easter baskets of fun

*On a beautiful Saturday morning in March at Crescent Lake Park, neighborhood children – most with full intentions of completely filling their baskets – had great fun at our annual Easter egg hunt. Once the excitement was over, and the baskets were at least mostly full, the kids – some of whom were still checking their haul – stood still long enough for a post-hunt photograph.*



Photo by Phil Celli

# President's Perspective

## Make an impact: Please consider joining our neighborhood board

*If you want to "test things out" before making a commitment, that's okay. As a first step, give me a call to discuss. Or join us at a board meeting the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at Panera Bread. It's a great way to do grassroots community service, and to make friends with your neighbors.*



**By Carolyn Fries  
President, Crescent  
Lake Neighborhood  
Association**

Can you believe April is already here? Spring has sprung and the neighborhood has been bustling with activity.

At our Feb. 18 general neighborhood association meeting, we heard from Bernie Campbell of the Tampa Bay Rays regarding the proposal for a new stadium and Tropicana Field redevelopment. We'll be hearing the other side of the coin at the May 19 general meeting, as our scheduled speakers are Niel Allen and Steve Lange of Preserve Our Wallets & Waterfront (POWW).

The TASCO-sponsored Yard Sale & Family Fun Day March 15 was well attended, safer for pedestrians and generated new memberships for our association.

Gary and Michelle Crosby hosted a great porch party at their home that same evening, where a good time was had by all.

We had a fantastic turnout for the annual Easter Egg Hunt held March 22 (see page X for photos of that event).

The Friends of Crescent Lake (FOCL) had another lake cleanup and planting day Sat., April 19, at the park. We thank all of you who pitched in for our beautiful lake, and help us continue the momentum for this award-winning project.

Our neighborhood association is seeking a host home for our May 3 Kentucky Derby Porch Party. Let me know if you'd like to entertain some of your fellow neighbors.

We're taking steps to further improve pedestrian safety around the park by recommending a speed limit reduction on 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Crescent Lake Drive.

Thanks to the efforts of Vice President/Advertising Chair Rich Wall, the *Banyan Banter* has a new crop of (and many renewal) advertisers. Please support our advertisers, as they make this publication possible.

The dog days of summer are just around the corner and pre-planning has begun for our 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration in the park.

In October, we'll have the annual Fall Harvest Festival, followed shortly by families roaming the neighborhood streets on Halloween night.

November will be here before we know it, bringing with it our 2009 neighborhood elections.

After serving one year as vice president and two as president, I anticipate and look forward to new leadership taking over and continuing the neighborhood activity we've been able to rekindle.

**We are in desperate need of additional board members for 2008 to ensure leadership continuity for next year. If you have ever considered community service or simply don't want to see the neighborhood momentum slow down, please consider a position on the board and contact me at 823-0050 or a fellow board member ... now!**

The board meets at Panera Bread the first Monday of each month from 7 to 9 p.m. So, please, if you are curious and want to check out a board meeting without making a commitment, that is okay with us.

In addition to board meeting attendance, board members typically serve in an executive position, such as President, Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer.

Board members typically select an activity or event of interest to them – such as FOCL/lake project, newsletter editor, newsletter layout, newsletter advertising, membership, neighborhood events, CONA representative and neighborhood recycling — and see it through as chairperson.

We also have non-board members serving as committee chairs. These include the Luminary Walk (Michelle Crosby), Easter Egg Hunt (Robin Hailer) and Park Event Liaison Carol Henderson.

We encourage neighbors who cannot make the monthly board meetings to sign up to chair an event or committee, as getting involved provides a valuable service to our neighborhood and community at large, and is a great way to get to know fellow neighbors and make friends.

Membership in the neighborhood association is at an all-time high. Please help us continue the momentum. Contact a board member today or attend the next neighborhood association board or general meeting and say you'll participate.



**JOIN US – MONDAY, MAY 19, 7:30**

## Other side to take its swings in ballpark debate

*Meeting will include vote on reducing speed limit to 20 mph on 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets, as well as adding speed humps to 5<sup>th</sup> Street, plus updates from City Council member Leslie Curran, community police and on our lake project.*

The debate continues, right in our neighborhood. .

In February we heard from the Tampa Bay Rays about their proposal to build a waterfront ballpark in downtown St. Petersburg.

Now, for our next neighborhood meeting, we'll hear from fellow residents who have an opposing point of view. The meeting is set for Monday, May 19, at 7:30 p.m. at the Huggins-Stengel Clubhouse at 1320 5<sup>th</sup> St North.

Presenting will be Niel Allen and Steve Lange. They represent POWW!, which stands for Preserve Our Wallets & Waterfront!. They describe themselves as a group of concerned citizens and civic leaders who want to involve everyone in understanding the true impact of the Rays' proposal. For information about POWW!, visit [www.stpetepoww.com](http://www.stpetepoww.com).

Also presenting will be Leslie Curran, our neighborhood's City Council member, along with one of our community police officers. We'll also have an update on the ongoing volunteer effort for our project to restore Crescent Lake.

### **Meeting will discuss vote on speed limit, speed humps on 5<sup>th</sup> Street**

At the March CLNA Board meeting, the board voted to investigate and seek a reduction in speed limit from 25 mph to 15mph on 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Crescent Lake Drive (7<sup>th</sup> Street).

Michael Frederick, manager of neighborhood transportation for the city of St Petersburg, was then asked to provide details on the process for reducing the speed limit.

His response: "Thank you for taking the time to review this issue on 5th Street. Unfortunately, the city is restricted in using 15 mph speed zones to school frontages or school crosswalk locations. The city, however, can implement a 20 mph speed zone through the frontages of parks. We have done this on a limited basis. If you would be interested in pursuing this, please let me know and I will run it past the director for approval."

*Story continues on page 12*



*Photo by Chasmere*

## Got interesting story about banyan tree?

### Share with us — we want to hear about it!

It is an icon of our park. It is time to tell its story. Can you, or someone you know, help us?

The banyan tree on the east side of Crescent Lake Park is a signature element of our neighborhood park. It draws neighbors and visitors of all ages, as much for its massive size as for the amazing root structure that creates a maze of nooks and crannies. It also provides a haven for many of our lake animals, who naturally gravitate to the great tree.

We'll be writing about the tree in our July issue of the *Banyan Banter*, so we're now actively looking for stories about the banyan tree.

We're looking for people who may have some history about the tree, or have otherwise interesting stories involving the tree. We've heard locals talk about playing on the tree some 50 or so years ago, and how there was a small beach, and a tree swing, and all kinds of related anecdotes.

We'd love to hear those stories Or, if you or your kids love visiting the tree, perhaps you have a simple but endearing story about the tree that you'd like to share. We're interested in those stories, too.

Can you help us? Do you know someone who might be able to? If so, it would be a big help to us. **Just email Andy Smith at [andymcblmg@aol.com](mailto:andymcblmg@aol.com).** Any leads you can provide will be a big help to Andy, a fellow neighbor who will be writing the story.

On a related note, one of the most famous banyan trees was planted in Kabirvad, Gujarat. Records show the Kabirvad tree is more than 300 years old. Another famous banyan tree was planted in 1873 in Lahaina's Courthouse Square in Hawaii, and has grown to cover two-thirds of an acre.

With your help, we hope to document some of our great banyan tree's history, and what it means to local St. Pete residents, both young and old.

# Motherless ducks find duck heaven on neighbor's porch

*Editor's Note: Pat and Dan Finn, who live on the south end of 5<sup>th</sup> Street North, couldn't bear to see a family of newborn ducks fend for themselves at Crescent Lake. So they rescued them, gave them a safe home to grow strong enough to fend for themselves and released them back to the lake. This is Pat's account of their compassionate effort.*

**By Pat Finn**

On the morning of Feb. 21, I was walking Humphrey, our puppy dog that we rescued several years ago, when I noticed eight tiny, tiny baby ducks being "herded" around by two of our lake geese.

They weren't very nice to the babies – pecking at them and making it miserable for them. The babies tried several times to find their "mama," but the grown ducks ignored them completely and tried to run away from them.

It seemed their mama was nowhere to be found. I went home and told my husband, Dan, about the babies. Of course, Dan being Dan, he was on his way to the lake to see what exactly was going on.

Dan also discovered that "mama" was nowhere around and the babies were frantic. I arrived at the lake with a big box and blanket to see what could be done.

Eventually one of the park supervisors arrived to see what we were up to. Once the story was told, they were very helpful and called in the troops.

One of the city workers actually put on his waders to help our effort. Finally, after about 30 minutes, several of us armed with nets and reflexes not nearly as fast as those baby ducks, were able to get them into the box.

During our rescue, a crane scooped up one of the babies. We were sad to lose the baby, but we were happy to have caught the baby's seven brothers and sisters.

We brought the babies home and they ended up on our screened-in porch off our master bedroom. We went to the feed store and got the correct food for them. We gave them water and blankets to "hang out" on.

Eventually we "installed" their own swimming pool. It was actually a big plastic tub. They eventually realized they could swim ... eat ... drink ... sleep ... and, oh yes ... *poop a lot!* We made sure to clean the babies' "hotel" room several times a day. While they didn't say much more than "peep," we got the feeling they were in baby duck heaven!

They were a riot to watch – so much like brothers and sisters! Unfortunately, we did lose one baby, which left us with six. As you can see by the photos with this story, they grew fast.

We decided that March 29 would be "moving" day for the babies.

*Story continued on page 18*

**4 - Banyan Banter - April - June 2008**





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# Take a bow, Crescent Lake: Lake project's a city success



By Leslie Curran  
Council Member, District 4  
St. Petersburg City Council

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide a District 4 update, along with City Council-related information concerning our community at large.

Allow me to extend my sincere thanks to the residents of Crescent Lake who have participated in neighborhood improvements. Tremendous progress has been made to enhance the area to include the upgrading and beautification of the lake.

Many neighborhoods have approached me to inquire how they can accomplish the same results. Without hesitation, I refer them to the residents of Crescent Lake.

Monies from your special tax district will be reallocated by the city to move forward with the overlook plan at the lake. Overall, the project at Crescent Lake has truly become a shining example for the entire city. Perhaps Round Lake and Mirror Lake will be next.

They had grown so much and were ready to be re-introduced to the lake. Dan, along with the help of our neighbor, Mike Flanagan, managed to get the babies into a large box and carried them to the area by the banyan tree.

We released them and they took off immediately to the water's edge. Along with several of our friends – the Flanagans, Janet Wuske and Jennifer Silva – we are keeping a close eye on them. Unfortunately, sometime during that first Saturday night, one of the babies disappeared, leaving us with five.

They seem to be thriving and enjoying their new home, with lots of new things to see and experience – much more entertaining than our upstairs porch, I'm sure. We all continue to feed and watch for them as we take our walks, so they're not completely on their own.

For Dan and me, it is rewarding knowing we did our small part to help these baby ducks survive their first scary days without their mom, and to go on to lead what we hope will be a long and happy life at Crescent Lake.

And if any neighbors want advice on how to set up a pool for baby ducks, we'll be glad to share some pointers.

This budget year will be yet another difficult one for the city as we deal with the passage of Amendment 1. Loss in revenue is estimated at approximately \$8 million, with further reductions on the table. The Budget Public Hearings are scheduled for Aug. 28 and Sept. 11. I would encourage you all to participate in this very important process.

If you are unable to attend the Budget Public Hearings, please e-mail your priorities to [council@stpete.org](mailto:council@stpete.org), as it is very important for me to hear from my constituents. My focus will remain public safety, economic development, the Midtown initiative, neighborhoods, housing and recreational activities for our youth. I also understand the importance of a healthy and vibrant arts and cultural community, both for our economic vitality and the quality of life for all segments of the community.

City Council will appoint a new council member to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Council member Earnest Williams, District 6. The public will have an opportunity to ask questions during a District 6 Candidate Forum on April 21 at 6 p.m. at City Hall, 175 5<sup>th</sup> Street North. You're welcome to join us and take an active role in your local government.

Again, thank you, Crescent Lake neighbors, for the wonderful service you render to the community. I look forward to working with you to continually improve St. Petersburg!



## CRESCENT LAKE DEALS ON WHEELS



Need a car, SUV, crossover, van or truck of any kind? Whom are you going to call? For VIP service, \$300 neighborhood discounts and even \$100

referral rewards, set an appointment with your car guy in Crescent Lake: MATT LORENZ of AutoWay Ford, west on 22nd Ave. at 2525 34th St. N.

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• USED, non-Ford new: [autoway.com](http://autoway.com)



**AutoWay Ford**



# Q&A with Rays: Team addresses questions on new ballpark proposal

In February at the Crescent Lake Neighborhood Association meeting, Bernie Campbell of the Tampa Bay Rays made a presentation on the team's proposal to build a waterfront ballpark in downtown St. Petersburg, on the site of Al Lang Field. After his presentation, he responded to questions from neighbors.

For those of you unable to attend the meeting, below are the questions fellow neighbors raised, with the Rays providing their answers in a Q&A format.

## **Q. How will the new ballpark be built?**

**A.** The new ballpark will be built in a sustainable, environmentally-friendly manner. The Rays will seek LEED certification for the new ballpark, and anticipate being one of the first LEED-certified professional sports venues in the country. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ encourages and accelerates global adoption of sustainable green building and development practices through the creation and implementation of universally understood and accepted tools and performance criteria.

LEED is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings. LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

## **Q. Will parking be a problem?**

**A.** We would not have proposed this plan if we were not confident that fans would be able to access the downtown ballpark comfortably and conveniently. A detailed parking and traffic management study has recently been completed, and has concluded that the Rays proposed waterfront ballpark can be successfully accommodated in downtown St. Petersburg without causing significant disruptions to the traffic and parking infrastructure.

Nearly 14,000 parking spaces that are likely to be available for the majority of ballpark events have been identified. This does not include the nearly 7,000 on-street parking spaces located in downtown St. Petersburg, none of which were counted for the purposes of the study, which assumed they would be reserved by use by existing residents and businesses. For 32 key intersections analyzed in the downtown area, only one minor physical intersection improvement would be needed to accommodate the flow of inbound and outbound traffic before and after baseball games.

The Rays have begun discussion with potential parking partners like All Children's Hospital, Bayfront Medical Center and USF-St Petersburg and are committed to ongoing coordination with the city of St. Petersburg to minimize impacts to the limited number of downtown special events that may overlap with ballpark events, to promoting transit usage to reduce the reliance on the automobile for traveling to ballgames, and providing a ballpark which is accessible to all fans.

## **Q. Will parking preclude being able to park for other events taking place on the same day as a Rays game?**

**A.** The parking and transportation study included a detailed analysis of potential overlapping events, and it has been concluded that there is sufficient parking to accommodate both our games and the vast majority of other events that take place downtown.

It is important to note that most large events downtown actually take place during the baseball offseason. For those extremely rare times when large events conflict with a sell-out baseball game downtown, other cities throughout the country that have this same issue offer numerous best practices for reducing parking demand and congestion, including the aggressive promotion of mass transit, cross promotions, staggering event start times, remote shuttle service and more.

## **Q. Won't an open-air ballpark be too hot in Florida's summer?**

**A.** A truly open-air ballpark would indeed be too hot in Florida's summer; however, that is not what we are proposing to build. We will be able to overcome the Florida heat and humidity in a number of ways – by air-conditioning the concourses, facilitating air circulation throughout the seating bowl, deploying the roof to shade the ballpark during the day and prevent the buildup of radiant heat, and simply playing more night games. Through the combination of these techniques, we believe we can provide a comfortable environment for our fans that will be equal to or better than summertime conditions in the vast majority of Major League Baseball ballparks.

## **Q. When will know if the stadium will be funded impacting our taxes?**

**A.** We will begin working on a detailed financing plan for the ballpark once the responses to the Request for Proposals (RFP) for developing the Tropicana Field site are received and evaluated. While it is too soon to talk specifically about the elements of the financing plan (which we expect to have completed soon), we believe that the ballpark can be funded through a combination of the Rays' private contribution and the value created by the redevelopment of the Tropicana Field site. Moreover, we have very publicly stated that *we will not go forward with a plan that requires the imposition of new taxes or the diversion of existing taxes from local programs and services*. In fact, we believe that the development of the Tropicana Field site will generate tens of millions of dollars in new property, school and sales taxes, only a portion of which will go towards helping to finance the ballpark.



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**Q. How do the Rays rationalize promoting the sale of existing land at the Tropicana Field site to finance a downtown ballpark?**

**A.** The Tropicana Field site can only be developed if we vacate it. And we can only vacate it if we have somewhere else to play. If we do nothing, we would certainly be in a less advantageous position as a ballclub. But more importantly, the city and county would lose out on tens of millions of dollars in new annual tax revenue that would come from developing the site. What we are suggesting is a win-win, in which we work together to unlock the value of a site that would otherwise lie dormant for the next two decades.

**Q. How do the Rays get property taxes from the development of a mixed-use site to fund a new downtown ballpark?**

**A.** Both the Tropicana Field site and Al Lang Field lie within the Intown Redevelopment Plan (IRP) area. City and county property taxes collected in this area cannot be used to fund general programs in services. In fact, they must be reinvested back into projects within the district boundaries.

**Q. Have the Rays ever considered building a new ballpark in the Gandy Boulevard area?**

**A.** We initially looked at a number of potential ballpark sites. We ultimately rejected the Gandy Boulevard area for a number of reasons, including lack of available land, the cost of potential highway improvements and environmental concerns at the Toytown site. Moreover, we have witnessed the tremendous success of downtown ballparks in cities across the country (Baltimore, Denver, Phoenix, Cleveland and San Diego, to name a few) and feel strongly that an urban site will be crucial to the success of the new ballpark.

**Q. Doesn't it seem counter-intuitive to expanding the Rays' brand to want to trade a bigger, existing ballpark for a smaller ballpark on less land?**

**A.** No. The success of our brand will be much less dependent on the size of our ballpark than on the overall quality of the fan experience and the product we put on the field. We believe an iconic new ballpark at the Al Lang site will enable us to dramatically improve both.

**Q. If the Rays stay at Tropicana Field for 22 years, and if at that point the Rays and the city are happy, would the Rays renew their contract to stay at Tropicana Field?**

**A.** It is always difficult to speculate about events that are more than two decades away; however, our owner, Stuart Sternberg, has been very clear that he does not think that Tropicana Field is a viable building for the long-term future of the team, so a lease renewal is unlikely.

**Q. Isn't winning more games the best way to expand the team's fan base?**

**A.** Of course, but winning more games on a consistent basis also takes substantial financial resources. We believe that a new ballpark will help us generate these resources and build a great tradition of winning baseball for years to come.

**Q. What happens if a new downtown ballpark is built and then the Rays don't do well on the field?**

**A.** Even with a new ballpark, we undoubtedly will have good years and bad years. The chief advantage of a new facility is that it will provide a great experience for fans regardless of what is happening on the field. Of course, more fans will always show up if we are winning. But the new ballpark will allow us to more effectively manage during the down years and build a more sustainable business for the long term.

**Q. What about environmental issues involved with having to do some construction in the bay? And is there any wiggle room for the ballpark to not to be so close to the water?**

**A.** Unfortunately, construction of a Major League Baseball stadium on the Al Lang site will require limited intrusion (less than an acre) into the bay. The site simply cannot accommodate a major league playing field without it; however, we are working to minimize that intrusion as much as possible and will be proposing a number of mitigation strategies to compensate for any environmental disruption.

*Story continued on page 18*

## partnership leads to student photos in Banter

While we don't have a school in the Crescent Lake neighborhood, a little-known fact is that our community is home to TASCO, a city-run education and leadership program for local teenagers. And now, thanks to the support of Robert Norton, who runs the TASCO program, our neighborhood association is beginning to form what is hoped will be an ongoing partnership to support each other's causes. It is, after all, what good neighbors do.

Based at the Huggins-Stengel clubhouse at 1320 5<sup>th</sup> St. N, TASCO runs year-round educational programs for teens in grades six through 12. Classes include a 15-week Digital Video Program, a 15-week Digital Photography and Graphic Arts Program, and an intense 10-week (400-plus hours) Summer Technology Camp.

Most recently, 42 teens have been enrolled in the Digital Photography and Graphic Arts Program, and several of them took on the assignment to make Crescent Lake park the subject of a photo shoot using *Composition Techniques*.

## Have a teen? Consider TASCO technology camp

If you have a teenager looking to get involved in a fun, popular *and* educational program this summer, an option is the technology camp run by the city's Teen Arts, Sports and Cultural Opportunities (TASCO), based in our neighborhood at 1320 5<sup>th</sup> Street North.

Registration is now open for the camp, which will accept the first 26 applicants. The camp runs 10 weeks, from June 9 to Aug. 15, and costs \$600, with a limited number of partial and full scholarships available.

The camp's focus on technology includes digital photography, computer layout and design, digital video, creating a photo essay, shooting and editing a video project, learning how to use Microsoft Powerpoint, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe InDesign and Premiere Pro.

Also included are TASCO Summer Extreme events every Thursday – including mud wars, Treasure Island beach bash and arena of games – and Friday field trips to local TV stations, photo studios and graphic design studios.

For information call the TASCO office at 892-5877 or 892-5060.

Upon learning through Robert of the assignment, we agreed to publish a few of the students' photos – complete with photo credits — in the *Banyan Banter*, our quarterly newsletter.

The photos published in this issue of the *Banter* represent the overall quality of the students' work. If space allowed, each of their photos was worthy of being published. The techniques the students used in their assignment included Rule of Thirds, Balance, Mirroring, Framing, Simplicity, Lines and Shapes, Color and Light, and more.

We are happy to publish their photos and give them credit for their impressive work, and we thank them for sharing their creative energy on the pages of the *Banters*. We hope to continue partnering with Robert and the students in his program on an ongoing basis.

For information on TASCO or its technology programs, call Robert at 892-5877.

Meantime, below we recognize the students who contributed their talents to the photo assignment, and we wish them well in their future endeavors. They're also welcome at any time to take photos for the *Banter*.

Ahmed Evans  
Cashmere Fudge  
Chandler Houston  
Curtis Crosley  
Daneia Gray  
Iesha Sherrod  
Gabriel Pla  
James Christiano  
Lamontez Sanders  
Lankaya Charlery  
Lashae Hightower  
Robert Lambert  
Savannah Floystad  
Sean Bittner



photo by Lankaya Charlery



photo by Robert Lambert





photo by Chandler Houston



photo by Curtis Crosley



photo by James Christiano



photo by Iesha Sherrod

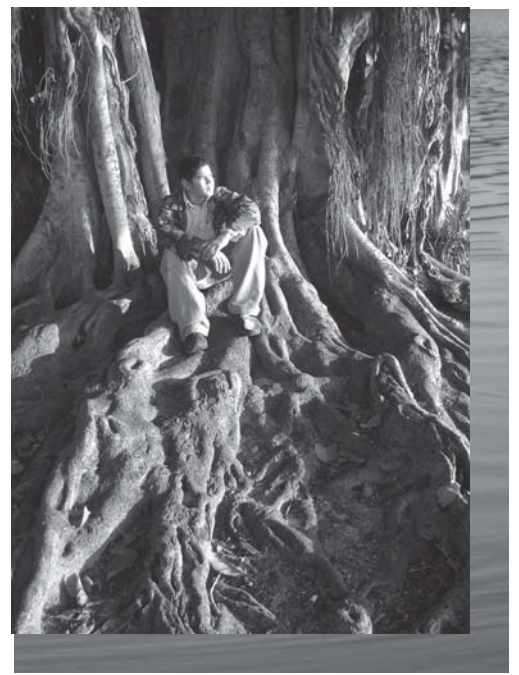


photo by Savannah Floystad



photo by Sean Bittner



photo by Lankaya Charlery



# Take it from a local scientist: Lake's progress a scientific fact

**To a local ecologist volunteering time and expertise to support our award-winning Crescent Lake project, our efforts in the past year have created a more diverse and valuable wildlife habitat where none existed. Notably, the quality of the lake's water has almost doubled, improving from a poor to good rating.**

*Editor's Note: Jim Bays, a consulting ecologist with more than 30 years of experience worldwide studying lakes, wetlands and wildlife, has volunteered his time to support our effort to improve the appearance and water quality of Crescent Lake. A resident of Crescent Heights on 24th Avenue North, Jim has graciously agreed to provide us with a scientist's point of view on the progress and challenges of our lake project. Look for more perspectives from Jim in future issues of the Banyan Banter.*

**By Jim Bays**

Crescent Lake, a 20-acre lake located within Crescent Lake Park in northeast St. Petersburg, is a beautiful centerpiece to a wonderful park that the city operates to provide a high-quality experience for all park users. As a Crescent Heights resident, I feel fortunate to have such an extraordinary, safe and accessible recreational amenity in our neighborhood.

Crescent Lake as we now know it exists as a balance between nature and society. With a shoreline and watershed altered extensively over the past century of development, the lake now receives and detains water from 12 stormwater drains before discharging into a pipe that drains to Coffee Pot Bayou and eventually into Tampa Bay. So while we enjoy having the beauty of the lake a part of our neighborhood, the fact that the lake eventually empties water into the bay makes it an important part of our region's ecosystem.

Nutrients in stormwater important to the growth of algae and plants, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, now flow into the lake at rates much greater than has historically been the case. Because of this excessive "nutrient loading," the lake exhibits symptoms of nutrient enrichment, or what lake scientists term "eutrophication."

To the scientist, this condition is indicated by elevated concentrations in the water of nitrogen, phosphorus, bacteria, and other contaminants, compared to the water of more pristine lakes without extensive pollution.

These indicators are reduced to a "Trophic State Index," or TSI, which places the lake on a scale from 1 to 100. Low values indicate good water quality; high values indicate poor water quality. In February 2007, for example, the Crescent Lake TSI was 81, indicating poor water quality. In other words, in a layperson's terms, the lake was highly polluted.



In fact, though, the layperson doesn't need a laboratory or a number system to important indicators of unnatural pollutant loading to Crescent Lake.

For example, floating trash after a storm can escape the litter traps along the lake inflow and create hazards to wildlife and an eyesore to the public.

Also, what some consider to be a floating "scum" is actually mats of microscopic algae or small floating and aquatic plants such as duckweed that serve as a source of food for ducks and other lake animals. These mats can create a visual nuisance, as well as reduce the oxygen content and natural diversity of the underlying water.

Non-native floating aquatic plants such as ludwigia and water lettuce and a lake-wide infestation of the noxious, submerged aquatic plant hydrilla can create a visual nuisance. Cloudy water and "fishy" odors at the outlet also point to nuisance blooms of algae.

Other measures can be defined. These common-sense indicators point to an imbalance in nature that offends our sensibilities, leading to the question, "What can be done to improve the lake?" and most importantly, "What can I do to help?"

In April 2007, with the help of a \$7,500 Tampa Bay Estuary Grant, the Crescent Lake Neighborhood Association, under the leadership of Crescent Lake resident and former CLNA president Gary Crosby, initiated a project to respond to these questions directly, with a goal of creating a healthier and more diverse lake environment.

Native plants were installed in the shallow lake edge near the southern inlet and the outlet at the north end to passively improve the lake water quality by naturally assimilating nutrients entering the lake before they can contribute to nuisance growth by plants and algae.



Known as “wetlands,” these have created a more diverse and valuable wildlife habitat where none existed, and through selective planting, our effort has created a more attractive and beautiful lake to enjoy.

Other improvements were made, with trash clean-ups conducted in the spring and fall of 2007 (continuing into 2008), and a web site for the “Friends of Crescent Lake” was added to the CLNA’s portal to help inform the public of our efforts and progress. By relying on the community, the project provides a model for other associations to accomplish similar goals in other city lakes at low cost.

The total area of the restoration project to date is on the order of one-half acre, which is certainly modest in proportion to the total lake area.

Despite the relatively small area that has been our focus, the project has accomplished many important objectives.

Specifically, we know we can grow many species of desirable aquatic plants in the shallow lake edge, including many flowering plants, such as yellow canna lily, pickerelweed, duck-potato, fireflag, water lily, spatterdock and blue iris, along with less colorful but no less valuable species such as bulrush, spike-rush and soft-rush.

Together, these species can be planted and managed to create a beautiful, productive water garden along the lake shoreline, where water depths allow.

We also know that the continued revegetation of the lake shoreline will yield additional benefits in terms of reducing the potential for non-native aquatic plants to proliferate.

Increasing the cover of desirable native plants to their maximum extent will tend to out-compete non-native plants, thereby reducing the current reliance on aquatic herbicides as the preferred method of nuisance plant control. That is a goal we would like to achieve, as it would be a way to enhance the quality of water for the fish and animals that call our lake home.

However, at the current rate of planting and growth, it will take several years to achieve a coverage that might have a lake-wide benefit of controlling plant growth.

More progress could be made more rapidly if more financial resources were available, and we are always actively looking for grants. We also welcome donations or suggestions from neighbors and local residents that could help fund our volunteer project.

In any event, there will be a continuing need to coordinate project activities with the city to minimize conflict with its existing program to use herbicides to manage lake vegetation. We owe a big thank you to the city, which has been helpful and accommodating in this project, just as we owe our gratitude to the many agencies, organizations and members of the community who have participated over the past year.

Most importantly, there has been a significant improvement in water quality in Crescent Lake, with our restoration efforts certainly playing a key role.

*story continues on page 17*





## Home Beautiful Award

# 'Twas a home in foreclosure, and now it's a sight to see

By Doug Mason

Back in 2002 Randall Bridges and Thomas Joseph were introduced to the Crescent Lake neighborhood by family members living in St Petersburg.

They traveled from Fort.Lauderdale in search of a perfect home, but found nothing. The day before heading back across the state, they stumbled upon a 1926, two-story framed vernacular home at 820 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, newly on the market and in foreclosure.

Basically it felt right, and they had it under contract within one day. As with any foreclosure, you have to act fast and be ready for surprises.

Randall and Tom closed the deal and next found that their insurance would not be approved unless the original knob and tube wiring was removed within a month. They did what they do best as project managers and set their plan in place.

Both Randall and Tom work from home, so the first step was wiring their new home to accommodate future needs for computers, servers and home automation equipment. Another immediate need was to replace all windows, as the old sash windows were falling apart. They installed new vinyl-clad, insulated, 6 over 6, double-hung windows to retain the original look while being much more energy efficient.

Down the road, their plan included installing a new dimensional shingle roof, refinishing floors, converting the fireplace to gas and much more. All of the original doors were restored along with their antique hardware.

The main living room has French doors that lead to a formal dining room with a built-in arched corner china cabinet. Their round pineapple base dining table has a neat accent light at it base to enhance the dining experience.

The final phase of the project was to enlarge the kitchen with an addition that also incorporated a bathroom and home theater area.

The bathroom was designed with white subway tiles accented with grey and black glass inserts. The entire bathroom was pulled together nicely with a refinished antique princess tub that was original to the home.

The kitchen features stainless steel appliances with antique white cabinets and moldings. A big favorite is an inset panel that contains magnetic spice canisters, very practical not just for decoration. The updated countertops are Silestone, which consists of various patterns of crushed blue quartz. The kitchen countertop makes a seamless transition into the open family room that overlooks the pool.



photos by Doug Mason

The addition included a second floor, which made room for Randall and Tom's new deluxe office. The room has a screened balcony which overlooks the pool and nicely landscaped backyard. Brick columns were incorporated into the side of the addition to match the front façade in keeping with the original look of the house. Every exterior designed element of the addition was considered to match the 1920s style.

The landscaping around the pool consists of Foxtail and Montgomery palms as well as white birds of paradise. Jasmine and bougainvillea climb a trellis in the backyard and bleeding hearts cover a trellis over the garage, which can also be seen from the new addition.

So, this month's Home Beautiful Award goes to Randall and Tom for a job well done. With their attention to detail and their exquisite taste, this home is truly remarkable inside and out. .



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# Recycling's easy in our neighborhood: Just go to baseball field for drop off

By James McGee

Have you ever tried to throw away household garbage into the big black dumpster and found that it was full of cardboard boxes, glass and plastics that don't belong there?

Is the dumpster so full with these items that it is nearly impossible to find room for your trash — and garbage pick-up day is still two days away?

This is not an uncommon scenario, but there are solutions.

Currently, there is no curbside recycling program in St. Petersburg. Luckily, in the Crescent Lake neighborhood we have a local recycling drop-off site right by the water tower (1325 5<sup>th</sup> Street North) in the parking lot by the baseball field and clubhouse.

There are large receptacles for cardboard boxes, newspapers, junk mail, aluminum cans, plastics, and clear, brown and green glass. This site is close enough that there is no good excuse to not bring your recyclables there!

We are not fortunate enough to have city-sponsored curbside recycling at this time, so we must take matters into our own hands. Although the above mentioned site is the most convenient to the neighborhood, there are other city recycling centers. This web link provides those locations: <http://www.stpete.org/recmap.htm>

Another question: Have you ever gone to your big black dumpster and found that it was full of electronic equipment — such as computer terminals, printers, etc. — that you suspect shouldn't be in there?

You're right. There are proper ways to dispose of or recycle electronics, chemicals and other dangerous household items.

These items should not be placed in the dumpsters, as they are potentially hazardous to our environment. To report illegal dumping, call the city of St. Petersburg police tip line at 727-892-5000.

Many of you may have seen that CLNA President Carolyn Fries sent an e-mail reminder of the March 1 Mobile Collection of Household/Business Electronic and Chemicals at the Home Depot on 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North. The Mobile Collection is free for residents of Pinellas County and businesses pay a reduced fee.

If you missed this collection, don't panic. There are collection events at locations in Pinellas County this year (and probably in the years to come). This link provides the schedule: [http://www.pinellascounty.org/utilities/PDF/mobile\\_collection\\_schedule.pdf](http://www.pinellascounty.org/utilities/PDF/mobile_collection_schedule.pdf).

If you would like more information about recycling, please go to [www.pinellascounty.org/utilities](http://www.pinellascounty.org/utilities) or call 727-464-7500. Another useful city of St. Petersburg website is [www.stpete.org/recycle.htm](http://www.stpete.org/recycle.htm)

There have been recent newspaper articles about local vendors looking into the possibility of private curbside recycling programs. Stay tuned for more information on this subject. In the meantime, we must all do our part to be a part of the recycling solution.



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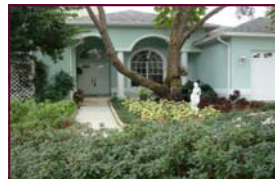
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# First workday of year chilly but productive

*Volunteers removed vegetation and trash at workday on cool March morning. More workdays will be announced to continue enhancing Crescent Lake. Join us! Helping make our lake healthier and cleaner is rewarding and contributes to our neighborhood. It's also a fun way to do volunteer service.*

**By Gary Crosby**

Understandably, cooler weather and a windy morning discouraged some to participate in this year's first workday at Crescent Lake on March 8.

Fortunately, 15 adventurous souls were not deterred by what appeared to be a less than ideal morning to do work at the Lake. As the morning weather quickly improved, so did everyone's enthusiasm.

During our March workday, individuals and pairs of volunteers walked the shoreline to pick up trash and debris. Others ventured into the lake to tend to the lake plantings.

Rakes were used to "weed and clean" the lake planting areas. The purpose of the weeding was to remove the invasive ludwigia, water lettuce and hydracotyl growing within and around the stands of bulrush, pickerelweed, soft rush and canna lilies.



By removing the undesired vegetation, the growth of the native plants will be less restricted as they enter into the spring growth season. The weeding effort also allows for increased surface water flow through the plantings and gives a pleasing aesthetic value to the lake plantings.

Spring is here as evidenced by the recent new growth and flowering of the lake plants. The blue-flag iris are beginning to bud and bloom along the shoreline at the north end. Within the lake at the north and south ends, yellow canna lilies, white duck potato and blue pickerel weed flowers can be viewed.

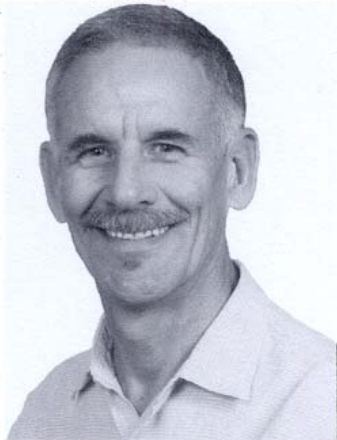
In celebration of Earth Day, the most recent workday at Crescent Lake, held on April 19, focused on planting additional Florida Native plants.



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## May 19th General Meeting

*Continued from page 3*

Two 5<sup>th</sup> Street residents attended the March board meeting and requested new speed humps in addition to speed limit reduction on 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

Speaking for the city, Frederick said the following regarding approval for installation of new speed humps: "In order for additional speed hump(s) to be considered, we would first of all require that a petition be signed by the residents on 5<sup>th</sup> Street in this immediate area. If we are able to obtain at least two thirds of them to sign in favor, we could proceed to approve an amendment to your traffic plan. This can be done in one of two ways — the traditional neighborhood-wide vote, or the board could recommend the city amend, after a neighborhood-advertised meeting."

At the May 19 neighborhood meeting, the neighborhood association will hold a discussion and vote regarding issuing a formal request to the city to reduce the speed limit along 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets to 20mph and changing the traffic plan to add additional speed humps (provided the necessary 2/3 petition signatures have been obtained).



### Sign along park raises questions

The city recently posted new signage at the edge of Crescent Lake Park on the south side of 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North between 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Crescent Lake Drive. The sign includes a message to encourage recycling, as well as an advertiser's message. At our May 19 neighborhood meeting, our discussion will include obtaining feedback on the signage, both positive and constructive, from Crescent Lake neighbors. The signage is provided by a supplier that shares with the city revenues derived from the sign's advertiser.

### Mircle-Gro freebies at May 19 meeting

Neighbors attending the May 19 meeting will receive a \$1 off coupon and free sample of Miracle-Gro Watering Can Singles. Attendees will also have a chance to win a Miracle-Gro LiqueFeed Starter Kit, which includes two refill bottles and a Garden Feeder hose attachment. The door prizes are provided to CLNA free of charge by TALK Marketing.

## Lake Update continued from page 15

As always, as we continue to have workdays at the lake, you and your family members and friends are invited to join us as the lake project continues through 2008.

### How can you help now?

James Kostka, our LAKEWATCH volunteer this year, is looking for additional volunteers to join him at the lake during his monthly water sampling. He is at the lake around the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month, in a canoe or kayak. It takes one to two hours to perform the necessary tasks. Contact Lucy below to coordinate with James and receive additional information.

Find out more about the restoration and beautification project at the lake by clicking on the Crescent Lake Restoration Project hyperlink found on the homepage of the neighborhood association's website at [www.neighborhoodlink.com/stpetersburg/clna](http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/stpetersburg/clna). You can also contact Lucy Trimarco at 821-2133 or [lucyt@ij.net](mailto:lucyt@ij.net) for more information.

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## Our Healthy Lake

continued from page 11

Recent Lakewatch data indicates that concentrations of nitrogen, phosphorus and algae have decreased and water clarity has increased significantly since March 2007. The TSI was 54 as of July 2007, indicating "good" water quality, and recent data indicate that the lake remains in this range.

While it is premature to assign the full cause of that helpful improvement completely to the restoration project, the trend points to real improvements in lake water quality caused by the total growth of floating, submerged and emergent aquatic macrophytes in the lake last year.

Increased use of the vegetated areas by ducks, wading birds and other aquatic waterfowl has been noticed widely, and it is likely that this trend will continue.

We have observed nesting by Common Moorhens in the revegetation areas within a month of initial planting, and the endangered Wood Stork is a frequent visitor to the new habitat at the north end.

The presence of these animals indicates that the lake's prey base for wetland birds (such as minnows, larger fish, aquatic insects and other animals) is productive and diverse, and greater nesting habitat is now available.

Finally, but no less importantly, the Crescent Lake Neighborhood Association should be proud that the project won the city's Best Neighborhood Project last year. This pleasant recognition points to the fact that the CLNA is on the right track in fostering greater awareness of the potential for lake revegetation to benefit the public, and the reciprocal value this effort can bring to the neighborhood and the city.

Either as a result or an indicator of the success of efforts in 2007, the CLNA received a second year of grant funding from the Tampa Bay NEP, which is planned to be used to construct more floating litter-catchers, similar to the one now located at the south end of the lake, while building perches and floating platforms for wildlife to use, along with additional plantings to increase the extent of revegetated shoreline.

A community work day is planned on Sat., April 19, from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. We invite everyone to participate and take part in contributing to the tangible improvement and beautification of Crescent Lake, and become a "Friend of Crescent Lake."



Those desiring to learn more about the water quality of Crescent Lake can visit the Pinellas County Water Atlas, which tracks the water quality data collected by volunteers on the lake (<http://www.pinellas.wateratlas.usf.edu>).

To learn more about the condition of Florida's lakes state-wide and the Lakewatch program, visit the Lakewatch web site (<http://lakewatch.ifas.ufl.edu/>).

To learn more about aquatic plants in general, the University of Florida Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants maintains an informative web site on the management of Florida lakes (<http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/ie6/index.html>).

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# Wanted: Editor for *Banyan Banter*

## Also wanted: Support for layout and design of Banter

We are now seeking a neighbor with editing and writing skills to be editor of the *Banyan Banter* starting with the 2009 issue. We are also looking for a neighbor with skills in desktop publishing and layout/design to assist fellow neighbor Jason Diviki, who currently handles layout and design of the Banter.

The current editor, Mike Flanagan, will step down as editor at the end of this year. To make sure there is a smooth transition to a new editor, we are looking now for neighbors interested in volunteering time to oversee the newsletter.

The *Banter*, the official publication of the Crescent Lake Neighborhood Association, is published once every three months. It serves as the primary way for the association to communicate with neighbors living in the nearly 600 households comprising the Crescent Lake neighborhood. The *Banter* has earned an honorable mention in the newsletter category the past two years in the city St. Petersburg's annual citywide contest.

"Being editor of the *Banter* is a fun way to give back to our great neighborhood and community," Flanagan says. "It helps you stay on top of what's going on, and introduces you to lots of the wonderful people who live in our neighborhood."

If you have an interest in simply exploring the possibility of serving as editor, or working with Jason on the design and layout of the *Banter*, call or email Mike at 727-452-4538 or [mtflanagan\\_2000@yahoo.com](mailto:mtflanagan_2000@yahoo.com).

### *Rays Q&A*

*Continued from page 5*

#### **Q. What happens financially if projections for the multi-use project don't pan out?**

**A.** The financing plan for the ballpark will address which parties assume what risks, including the risk that development at the Tropicana Field site does not happen as quickly as anticipated or that the costs of the ballpark construction is greater than expected. On the latter, we have already agreed to assume any cost overruns on the project. And the former will undoubtedly be a factor in the city's decision about which developer it chooses to work with after the RFP submissions are evaluated.

#### **Q. If the new ballpark is built, will the city receive revenue from other events that might be held at the ballpark?**

**A.** We have not had any discussions to date with the city about revenue-sharing from other events at the ballpark; however, depending on how the overall financing arrangement for the ballpark takes shape, we would certainly be open to it.

#### **Q. Is using the sail concept to protect the field from weather a proven concept? How good of a job will the sail roof protect the field, players and fans from rain?**

**A.** Fabric roof canopies that can be deployed as a rain shield have been used effectively in a number of sports facilities, most prominently in European soccer stadiums. We are confident that it will work here and do an excellent job of protecting both players and fans from rain in all but the most unusual of circumstances.



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