

Keep 'hood strong: Send in dues (please!)

Need your support, neighbors.

It's time for our annual membership drive, and it's our most important call to action, as dues are by far our neighborhood association's primary source of revenue.

We keep dues inexpensive to encourage participation – only \$15 for a single person, \$20 for a household or business.

We make it easy, too. Inside is a self-addressed membership envelope.

See our story on page 3 with more details about the membership drive, and what activities your dues help cover. That's also where the membership envelope is.

Thanks in advance, neighbors!



January - March 2009

Volume 6 issue 1

BANYANbanter

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CRESCENT LAKE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Informing residents of issues and events in and around our neighborhood



Photo by Emily Hall

LIGHTING THE WAY

For our neighborhood's popular Luminary Walk, held in December, CLNA pulled out the heavy equipment to expedite event logistics. In the tractor's driver's seat is Jeff Voight, who brings out his tractor for "urban hayrides" for other neighborhood events. With Kathy Donohue, Rich Wall (center) and Phil Celli on board, they set up 300 candles and bags of sand around the lake. Afterward, fellow neighbors deployed to light the candles, forming a glowing ring of luminaries around Crescent Lake. The event was again a big success, with about 300 people strolling the lake on a chilly December evening, enjoying the spirit of the occasion and performers providing complimentary entertainment. We are now looking for neighbors to help plan next year's Luminary Walk – see story on page 6 for more details.

President's Perspective

Happy to be your president, hope you'll get involved, too



**By Jason Diviki,
President, Crescent Lake
Neighborhood Association**

As this is my first column as president of CLNA, let me start by saying what an honor and pleasure it is to be elected to lead our association this year.

I am a native of St. Petersburg and have lived here in the Crescent Lake neighborhood most of my life. I've seen the neighborhood change and grow over the years and I'm proud that I am helping continue this positive momentum through my position in our neighborhood association.

With initiatives that range from the very big, such as our award-winning Crescent Lake Restoration and Beautification Project, and to the very grassroots, such as our Easter Egg Hunt, July 4th celebration, Harvest Fall Festival and Luminary Walk, we would love to have more neighbors involved.

So, as part of my first column, I have a painless request. If you aren't already involved, will you consider it?

It is a wonderful way to connect with folks right in our neighborhood who you might otherwise never get a chance to meet and know. So it's a great way to make new friends while also doing community service that can make a difference in your neighborhood.

And, yes, we know how busy everybody is, but don't let that scare you off. We make it clear to anyone who wants to be involved: You can do so as your schedule allows. It's that simple. If that means you can only volunteer a couple hours a month, that's okay. A lot of people doing a little is usually much better than a handful of people having to do a lot.

By the way, for those of you with families, if you are interested in instilling the value of community service, getting involved in a neighborhood effort is a great way to meet that goal. We welcome volunteers of all ages!

Thanks for considering my request. If you have any interest, please feel free to contact me by phone or email, or any of our board members. Our contact information is on the last page of the *Banter*.

On a related note, I am happy to report our 2009 board of directors is our largest ever. I am also pleased to report that all of last year's board members returned for another year, although most of the officers have changed.

**JOIN US – MONDAY, FEB. 16, 7:30 PM
AT QUARTERLY NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING**

Hear about 4th Street pedestrian crossing at neighborhood meeting

City Council member Leslie Curran will be the featured speaker at the next general meeting of the Crescent Lake Neighborhood association.

She will discuss a variety of projects affecting our neighborhood, including the pending crosswalk that will link the Crescent Lake and Old Northeast neighborhoods across 4th Street.

The meeting is scheduled for Monday, Feb. 16, at 7:30 p.m., at the Huggins-Stengel Clubhouse, located at 1320 5th Street North.

As usual, the meeting will also include general neighborhood updates, along with a crime report from one of our community police officers.

We will also entertain any questions or other topics of interest from attendees.

So walk — don't run — over to the next Crescent Lake Neighborhood Association general meeting. See you there!

Alongside me we have my next-door neighbor and friend James McGee as vice president, and his wife Megan as our secretary.

Past president, and last year's treasurer, Gary Crosby, has returned to serve as our treasurer again this year. Gary does double duty, as he heads up the Crescent Lake project with a highly motivated team of fellow leaders.

New members this year include Rick Giglio, who has returned after an absence of seven years; Andy Smith, who will be heading up a special committee for our association; and Brian Overcast, our new co-editor for the *Banyan Banter*, with lots of great support from Mike Flanagan, who has served as editor for the past two-plus years.

Our board of directors is made up of regular people with regular jobs and schedules like everyone else, but they have taken on the added responsibility and time for service to our beautiful neighborhood.

For all of the board's hard work in nurturing our lake and making our neighborhood a better place, I thank them, and I look forward to partnering with all our other neighborhood volunteers in the New Year.

- **CHEAP DUES: \$15 FOR ONE, \$20 FOR HOUSEHOLD**
- **USE ENVELOPE TO SEND DUES**

Keep our 'hood strong: Send annual dues (please!), you could win Rays tickets

It's easy. It's cheap. Most of all, it's one of the most important ways you and your fellow Crescent Lake neighbors can support our neighborhood.

To get our great neighborhood off to a great start in the New Year, we are launching our 2009 annual membership drive. And, yes, we again are offering a special incentive (Rays tickets!) that a couple of you lucky neighbors are sure to enjoy. Read on for details.

But first, can you help us, and our great neighborhood, maintain the momentum we have built over the past several years?

Our neighborhood association, supported solely by Crescent Lake neighbors volunteering their time to keep our neighborhood vibrant, depends almost entirely on membership dues.

That makes this is an important call to action. You responded in force last year: a total of 115 of you became members.

If you joined last year, will you please join again?

If you were not a member last year, will you become a member this year?

When we say it's cheap and easy, we mean it.

Dues are only \$15 for a single person, or \$20 for a household or business.

We also make it easy for you to pay your dues.

Inside our newsletter is a self-addressed envelope. All you have to do is complete the information, put in a check for \$15 or \$20, stick on a stamp and mail it.

Your dues help our neighborhood volunteers organize our popular annual activities including:

- Easter Egg Hunt
- Fourth of July Celebration
- Fall Harvest Festival
- Holiday Luminary Walk



Photo by Phil Celli

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE

Neighborhood events for all ages – including for our neighborhood's children, as shown in this March 2008 photo from our annual Easter Egg Hunt – are covered by neighbors paying annual dues to the Crescent Lake Neighborhood Association. Other popular events include the July 4th Celebration in the Park, Harvest Fall Festival and Holiday Luminary Walk. So, please, use the enclosed envelope to submit your dues today. Your support helps keep our neighborhood one of the best in the city!

In addition, during the year, various neighbors typically host events such as a Mardi Gras celebration, the no-special-occasion Porch Party and Florida-Florida State football gathering.

As many of you know, we are now in our third year of the Crescent Lake Restoration Project, honored as the city's Project of the Year in 2007. The volunteer leaders heading up that award-winning effort have excelled at applying and receiving grant funds to cover expenses. So while dues have not covered costs for the lake project, it is worth mentioning that the project continues to have solid support and momentum. It is a volunteer effort for which we can all be proud.

Now, about that incentive.

Submit your dues before March 31 and you're eligible to win seats in the city's luxury suite for a Tampa Bay Rays game this summer. We'll choose six lucky winners, meaning your chances of winning are pretty good. That's a hot ticket, getting to check out the American League champion Rays in a fancy suite.

Again, thanks for making Crescent Lake such a great neighborhood, and thanks ahead of time for paying your dues. We look forward to seeing you 'round the lake!

Looking ahead at 2009: Will be big year in our city

Dealing with budget issues in a recession is key priority. But also on tap are city elections, curbside recycling and new crossing for 4th Street.



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

This year is going to be an exciting year for the city. At the same time, it will also be difficult as we tackle the budgeting process in this challenging time.

As you are likely aware, the city will be holding its mayoral election this year, as well as elections for four City Council seats. Those include District 2 (Jim Kennedy), District 4 (Leslie Curran, or me), District 6 (Karl Nurse) and District 8 (Jeff Danner).

It should be a very lively campaign season. I encourage all of you to get involved in any manner that you can. I am hopeful this election will bring out more voters than in recent city elections.

Many questions have been asked about recycling, so let me provide you with an update.

The city has sent a letter to Pinellas County indicating its intent to utilize their vendor(s) in residential curbside collection with the city. The county is scheduled to begin the program a year from now.

Our City Council will be considering a request of the county to enhance recycling efforts associated with hazwaste and yard waste, in addition to the recommendation to employ a carbon-neutral curbside program that utilizes compressed natural gas or low-sulfur-fueled vehicles with the CO2 emitted to be offset with the planting of trees. I will keep you updated on the progress of this plan.

Another important issue for your neighborhood is the pedestrian crossing on 4th street.

I am pleased to report that the designs were completed and submitted to the Department of Transportation (DOT) on Jan. 20. The DOT has 60 days for review, and then upon that approval work will begin.

The plan calls for a crossing at 18th Avenue North and 4th Street. The beacons will be on the sides and center of the road. A median will be installed in the middle of the road with a "refuge island" so that pedestrians will be able to stop and push a button halfway across, making the crossing easier and safer. Landscaping will be installed to make the crossing attractive to both pedestrians and commuters.

The last phase will be the installation of the mastheads at the intersections on 4th between 5th Avenue North and 30th Avenue North.

This project has taken a long time to get to this point, and I thank all of you who have assisted in this effort. It would not be a reality without your assistance (and persistence!).

Lastly, Council has been meeting to discuss the Pier visioning. A task force will be formed to look at all aspects of the Pier, not just renovation of the Pier approach, but any other possibilities brought forward by the community.

Lastly, I would ask all of you assist with the revitalization of Williams Park by attending ART in the PARK on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and the Last Friday Concert series, which takes place the last Friday evening of every month at 6 p.m.

Thanks again for all of your support, and keep up the good work in your neighborhood.



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Dinner: M-Th 5 pm - 10 pm

Fri & Sat 5 pm - 11 pm

Treasurer's Report

By Gary Crosby

Treasurer & Board Member, CLNA

The following is a summary of the financial activity of Crescent Lake Neighborhood Association (CLNA) for 2008.

All the events and services offered by the association are made possible by membership dues, advertising revenue from the *Banyan Banter*, donations and, in the case of the Lake Project, grant funding. The most important source of revenue by far are membership dues, so with our 2009 membership drive under way, we are hopeful as many neighbors as possible renew their membership or become first-time members (see related story and membership envelope in this issue of the *Banter*).

All monies collected (receipts) or dispersed (expenses) by CLNA are transacted through a commercial bank account at the Mercantile Bank in the name of the CLNA.

An exception to this was the funding last year of the new overlook at the north end of Crescent Lake Park. This is not included in the summary below as the funding for that project came from monies collected and held by the city of St. Petersburg through a Special Assessment action initiated previously for various improvement projects approved by CLNA.

In regards to the Lake Project, grant funding from the Tampa Bay Estuary Program was awarded for the project in 2007 and 2008. Expenses are reimbursed periodically as approved components of the project are completed. The project is self-funding. To maintain transparency, expenses and reimbursements are transacted through CLNA's bank account.

If you have questions regarding the association's financial status or the accounting of a CLNA financial matter, please feel free to contact me or any other member of your Board of Directors.

Thank you in advance for your financial and overall support for our neighborhood.

Treasury Balance as of January 1, 2008		\$230.78
2008 Financial Activity	Expenses	Receipts
Dues and Donations	---	\$2,414.00
Newsletter	\$1,441.13	\$958.00
Neighborhood Events	\$1,562.36	\$344.11
Misc. Expenses	\$420.60	---
Subtotal	\$3,424.09	\$3,716.11
Lake Project	\$7,144.39	\$8,340.85
Subtotal	\$10,568.48	\$12,056.96
Treasury Balance as of January 15, 2009		\$1,719.26



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NOW SEEKING VOLUNTEERS: **Help organize Luminary Walk,** **catch the holiday spirit early**

Here's a chance to get into the holiday spirit early in the year. And to be a part of one of the city's special holiday events.

CLNA is looking for volunteers to help with this December's Holiday Luminary Walk. Volunteers can provide support as their time allows. A good part of the effort involves making calls and sending emails to arrange for local performers to confirm their participation. The earlier those efforts take place, the more likely performers can commit to being part of our event.

Again, it's a great event, and if you can only volunteer a small amount of time, that's okay. Every little bit helps.

For more information, please contact Michelle Crosby at mgmcrosby@tampabay.rr.com.



2008 Luminary Walk
photos by Emily Hall

Not your ordinary walk in the park

CLNA's Holiday Luminary Walk is another big hit with neighbors and friends. Check out the list below of the local performers who donated time and talent to make the event such a success.

CLNA hosted its third annual Holiday Luminary Walk on a chilly but beautiful December 2008 evening around the lake to the delight of an estimated 300 friends and neighbors.

A ring of 300 luminary lights surrounded the lake trail, making it a magical beginning to the holiday season. Along the way, a talented group of musical performers entertained neighbors and friends as they walked around the lake. It was a special evening.

We wish to thank all the volunteer performers who helped to make our Holiday Luminary Walk so memorable.

We would also like to recognize them for donating their time, energy and talent to our event. Performers, you made our event sing!

While recognizing neighbors for their wonderful leadership and community service, we also want to extend a big thank you to the event's coordinators — Nancy and Rich Wall, Michelle and Gary Crosby, Jeff Voigt and Carolyn Fries.

With no further ado, a special shout-out to our performers:

Taoist Tai Chi Society
Jessica Tomlinson - Keyboard
USF St. Pete Singers
St. Petersburg Pipes and Drums
John Land - Guitar
"Lorris" - Steel Drum
George Wood - Harmonica and Guitar
Deanna Kilbourne - Classical Flutist
Steve Church - Hammer Dulcimer
Ruth Klukoff - Suzuki Violin Studio
Gene Stone - Keyboard
Richard Kookan - Guitar
St. Pete High School SGA - Tracey Kiem, Coordinator
Rob and Ritchie Realty
Starbucks Coffee
Santa: Mike Kelzer

Crescent Lake Calendar of Events February to April 2009

Monday, February 16, 7:30 p.m.

General Meeting
Huggins-Stengel Clubhouse/ 1320 Fifth St. N.

Saturday, February 28, 9 a.m. to 12 noon

Crescent Lake Work Day
Crescent Lake

Monday, March 2, 7 p.m.

CLNA Board Meeting
Panera Bread/ 1914 Fourth St. N.

Saturday, March 14, 6:30 p.m. - 11 p.m.

St. Patrick's Day Party

Hosted by: Gary and Michelle Crosby/ 860 20th Avenue North
RSVP: 823-8014 or mgmcrosby@tampabay.rr.com
BYOB and bring a dish to share. Come to celebrate your Irish roots and /or the Irish in others! Outdoor Irish entertainment will include big screen Irish videos, live fiddle music and encore performance of Crescent Lake's very own Irish tenor, Phil Celli.

Saturday, March 28, 9 a.m. to 12 noon

Crescent Lake Work Day
Crescent Lake

Saturday, April 4, 10 a.m.

CLNA Annual Easter Egg Hunt
Crescent Lake Park, East of Playground

Monday, April 6, 7 p.m.

CLNA Board Meeting
Panera Bread/ 1914 Fourth St. N.

Saturday, April 11,

TASCO Family Fun Day & Yard Sale
Crescent Lake Park

Neighbors are encouraged to hold yard sales on the same day as TASCO's event to take advantage of the increase of people who will be at the park.

Saturday, April 25, 9 a.m. to 12 noon

Crescent Lake Work Day
Crescent Lake

When not hiking, Hancocks take a great liking to being home

By Nancy Wall

Ralph and Kathy Hancock, long-time residents of Crescent Lake, bought their late 1920s Tudor-style home at 1925 8th Street N in 1987, when their two sons were in junior high and high school.

Much work was needed. The one thing that stood out the most — and was the first to go — was a huge clock that hung over the front door. Another interesting item they found in a back yard full of dead fruit trees and sandspurs was ... a tombstone! As you can imagine, this caused them to think twice when it came time to dig.

Years have passed and their home has recently gone through extensive renovations, inside and out.

When Ralph retired three years ago and realized he would be spending more time at home, he and Kathy decided to move forward with the improvements they had been planning.

First they had the entire house re-wired, which involved many holes in the walls and ceilings.

That led to plaster repair and new ceilings upstairs. They added crown moulding and painted the entire interior of the house.

Then they decided to finally tackle “that last room” — a family room that was formerly a screened porch.



Photo by Rich Wall

Now that they've renovated their 1920s Tudor-style home inside and out, Kathy and Ralph Hancock, along with Tinker, plan on staying in their beautiful home and our great neighborhood for a long time.

Neighbors, nominate a home!

Neighbors, we need your input, not to mention your astute observations of the homes in our neighborhood.

We're looking for candidates for our neighborhood's popular Home Beautiful Award. We're hoping you will help us.

It's easy. You know our neighborhood, you check out the homes. You probably have a couple of homes you have seen undergo a transformation, and you've been impressed. Now you have a way to appreciate what you've seen.

So c'mon, help us out. **Just get in touch with Nancy Wall at 823-2835 or njw@fcpinvestors.com.** We'll give every home the consideration it deserves, and we thank you ahead of time for sending along your nomination.

They removed paneling, added windows and installed a beautiful wall of built-in cabinets and bookshelves filled with favorite books and family photos. They replaced linoleum flooring with hardwood floors, giving the room that cozy feel they were looking for. They are happy to report it is now their favorite room in the house.

On the outside, they replaced gray T-111 siding with all-new Hardi-plank siding, which changed the whole look of the house. They enhanced the look further with a new paint scheme of beige and green. To top off the exterior, they installed a new front stoop with tile and wood railings, put on a new dimensional shingle roof and added all-new landscaping.

Even though the heavy lifting is done, they are staying busier than ever.

As a member of the Florida Trail Association, Ralph spends one to two weekends a month clearing trails around the state.

Kathy is involved with the Alter Guild at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, where she and Ralph married 41 years ago. She spends as much time as possible with her grandchildren and loves to garden, as evidenced by the beautiful oasis she has created in their backyard.

The couple also enjoys backpacking and is in the midst of section hiking the Appalachian Trail. So far, they have made it all the way to the Pennsylvania-New Jersey border.

When they first bought their house, they didn't think it would be their last.

Now that they have it just the way they want it, they said they can't imagine leaving the neighborhood they have come to love so much. They plan to stay “until they can no longer climb the stairs!”

Got weeds? Ha! Our lake takes the cake

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

For a lake that has long been modified by drainage and development, Crescent Lake remains full of life of all sizes and types.

Microscopic algae and the plankton that eat them thrive in our lake. These organisms are then eaten by fish such as catfish, bream and bass. In turn, these animals are eaten by mammals such as otters, and birds such as the Great Blue Heron, Snowy Egret and even a raptor, the Osprey.

We enjoy these animals for their natural beauty and their interesting behaviors. Their presence tells us that we can live in harmony with our environment if we manage our natural resources appropriately.

With this in mind, it is easy to understand what motivates the volunteers contributing their time and energy toward restoring and improving Crescent Lake.

By creating a habitat for wildlife that is safe for humans and animals alike, as well as beautiful to contemplate, we are making a unique contribution toward a better city and a better environment.

It's rewarding when people stop us when we are working in the lake and point to the re-vegetation areas at the north and south ends, or the various litter traps (also known as "water goats") now on all the inflow culverts, and comment on the lake's improved look and health.

As part of our beautification efforts in our second year of the lake project in 2008, most of the energy and time invested was in the periodic removal of a variety of invasive, non-native aquatic plants.

If neglected, they will overgrow the beneficial wetland plants so carefully nurtured over the past months of our lake project effort. At a minimum, nuisance plants physically impede the growth and spread of the beneficial plants, and if unchecked, they will literally "go to seed" and create a recurring legacy of nuisance growth.



Photo by Gary Crosby

Native plants, such as ones volunteers have planted on the north and south ends of Crescent Lake, provide for a much healthier environment. Meantime, invasive, non-native aquatic plants have a major negative impact on our lake, and remain a primary focus for the volunteers working to make Crescent Lake healthy and clean.

There is no shortage of non-native plants invading Florida's lakes and wetlands. With Crescent Lake, we are primarily concerned with three emergent or above water plants: water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*), alligatorweed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*) and creeping water primrose (*Ludwigia grandiflora*).

Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*), another non-native plant of concern, is a submersed aquatic plant that was prevalent in the lake in 2007 but less so in 2008, likely in response to the city's lake maintenance efforts in 2007 and spring 2008.

This article focuses on "the 'big' three" plants mentioned above, because those are the three species with the greatest impact to the progress of the lake beautification project. A future article will focus on the environmental aspects of Hydrilla management.

Water lettuce

Water lettuce resembles a floating open head of lettuce and occurs singly or in a mass connected by short brittle stems called stolons.

The leaves are light green, with parallel veins and wavy margins, and are lightly covered by short hairs that form basket-like structures designed to trap air bubbles, increasing the plant's buoyancy.

A mass of roots is suspended below the plant in the water. It can be found usually floating in dense mats against the shore line or wedged between other plants.

An interesting fact about water lettuce is that the best biological evidence places its origin in South America, and it is thought to have been introduced into Florida in the ballast of early explorer's sailing ships prior to the settling and colonization of the state.

Famous Florida naturalist William Bartram noted the abundance of the plant on the St. Johns River in 1765 and included it in his paintings of native flora from that time.

Now, though, it is listed as a noxious aquatic plant in Arizona, Florida, Puerto Rico and South Carolina.

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Got weeds? Our lake takes the cake

continued from page 9

In Florida, it is on the Florida Prohibited Plants list of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and on the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council list as a Category I for “plants invading and disrupting native plant communities in Florida.” The plant has now spread to tropical and subtropical Africa, Asia and the Americas.

Although the leaves and particularly the root mat of the plant are known to be a rich habitat for aquatic insects, water lettuce is undesirable because of its strong potential to shade the water, thereby lowering dissolved oxygen content and reducing habitat quality of the lake, as well as physically impeding the growth of desirable plants.

Another key fact about this plant, and others on our list, is that natural “biocontrol” agents have been introduced into Florida to help reduce and manage the spread of this plant.

One insect is a South American weevil, released in Florida in 1987 after testing, whose adults feed on the leaf while the larvae mine the leaf.

The weevil has a 30-day life cycle that allows a rapid population to develop, and it can effectively control water lettuce. Biocontrol weevils continue to spread in Florida.

Another insect is a moth from Thailand released in the U.S. whose larvae feed on the plant. Ideally, we can hope that a population of these natural and beneficial beetles will become established in our lake, with the expectation that they will exert a natural and continuous pressure against the spread of water lettuce.

Alligatorweed

Alligatorweed is an emergent plant usually found growing as a sprawling mat over water.

It has opposite leaves and small white papery flowers growing on stalks. Plants have hollow stems, which allow it to float on the water surface, and can grow up to three feet tall.

The plants root in moist or shallowly inundated soil and expand in floating mats along the surface. Roots can develop at leaf nodes.

First recorded in Florida in 1897, it has spread from its native habitat in South America to wide distribution in aquatic habitats throughout the southern U.S. As with water lettuce, alligatorweed is thought to have been transported between countries in ship's ballast water.

Submersed plant parts such as roots and stems can provide habitat for aquatic insects and support the aquatic food chain, but as with water lettuce, the thick mats can displace native vegetation, clog waterways, restrict oxygen levels of water, increase sedimentation, interfere with irrigation and prevent drainage.

Three types of insect biocontrol have been tested and applied in Florida dating to the 1960s: the alligatorweed flea beetle, the alligatorweed stem borer moth and the alligatorweed thrips.

Of the three, the greatest success in Florida has been reported with the flea beetle, but greater control is reported when the beetle and stem borer attack the plant in combination.

The flea beetle still occurs in Pinellas County. I have yet to see the beetle on the plants in Crescent Lake, although I have seen evidence of bug damage to alligatorweed leaves that seem similar to what is expected.

The presence of biocontrol agents such as the alligatorweed flea beetle offer hope that long-term management will be performed more by insects than humans, and we can focus our energies on other emerged plants.

Creeping Water Primrose

Creeping Water Primrose is an exotic, perennial emergent to free-floating plant that is native to Central and South America.

It is highly invasive, occurring commonly in marshes, swamps, ditches, ponds and around lake margins, where it forms dense floating mats up to three feet tall, crowding and shading out native species.

Creeping water primrose grows in two forms, with light green, floating stems early in the season with rosettes of smooth, shiny, slightly oval leaves; and, later in the season, with erect, reddish-brown stems that are very woody.

Roots can form at the leaf nodes, and are characterized as soft, white and fleshy when growing in mud or dense vegetative mats.

The plant originates from South America, but now ranges in the U.S. from New York to Florida, west to Texas, and along the west coast.

The plant disperses vegetatively through stem fragmentation, but also can reproduce from seed.

Because of the potential for vegetative reproduction, effective control of creeping water primrose must minimize the generation of plant fragments.

This is why hand pulling of the entire plant is most effective. Selective application of herbicides to floating mats can also be effective.

The water primrose flea beetle has received preliminary investigation as a biological control agent to promising effect but has not been implemented state-wide to my knowledge. No long-term control method has been developed for this plant. If the growth of the plant is tracked, and mats removed manually from our planting areas, or sprayed with herbicide elsewhere, then it can be kept in check.

In summary, we want to weed these plants out of our lake, but we are unlikely to ever completely eradicate these plant pests as they are well-established in Florida waters and in Pinellas County.

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everlasting imagery - everlasting love



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Got weeds? Our lake takes the cake

continued from page 10

Our approach should remain adaptive in that we keep an eye on the plant growth in the lake, and remove these nuisance plants periodically until our native plants achieve a cover and density that minimizes the adverse effect of the non-native, nuisance plant species.

We continue to look for volunteers willing to spend a few hours on a weekend morning helping to sustain the Crescent Lake beautification and habitat restoration project. We have a great group of volunteers, and we hope you can join us at our lake workdays.

To learn more about these plants, and to review the source materials for this article, go to:

<http://aquat1.ifas.ufl.edu/ie6/index.html>

<http://www.apms.org/>

http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=LUGRG2&photoID=luur_001_ahp.tif

Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants <http://aquat1.ifas.ufl.edu/welcome.html>



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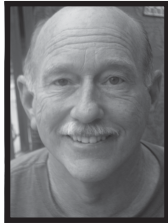
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With much achieved in 2008, let's keep momentum strong

The grassroots effort to keep Crescent Lake clean and healthy continues in earnest. Help support this special project: Workdays are 9 to noon the last Saturday of every month.

We're heading into our third year of the Restoration and Beautification Project at Crescent Lake, and we should all feel proud of what we have accomplished.



By Gary Crosby

So, as we look ahead for what we believe will be another year of great progress, I first wanted to take a moment to go over a few highlights of what we've achieved, and to recognize all of the wonderful people who believe in this unique project by investing their time, energy and enthusiasm into the effort.

First, I am grateful for the countless volunteers who have supported the project in 2008. Over 20 workdays occurred at the lake last year with neighbors and local residents from all over the city contributing more than 800 volunteer hours, an impressive number. That is on top of the 1,000 of volunteer hours contributed in 2007. This is truly a grassroots effort made possible by so many people wanting to help make and keep our lake clean and healthy. It is one of the primary reasons the city recognized our effort as the best neighborhood project of the year in 2007.

So, a big *thank you* goes out to all the volunteers in our neighborhood and surrounding community who attended the weekend events and to the others who are routinely monitoring and picking up the trash in and around our lake and park.

A special thanks to those who join me on the project team: Lucy Trimarco, Tracey Herman, Kathleen O'Keefe, Jim Bays, James Kostka and his students at Lakewood High School, and Mark Maksimowicz and his fellow co-workers at New Earth Industries, Inc.

Funding for this project is provided by a grant awarded by the Tampa Bay Estuary Program. In addition, a number of supportive employees with the city of St. Petersburg continue to provide the project with tools, equipment and administrative assistance. It is easy to see that without all the financial and volunteer support for this project, the tremendous accomplishments achieved thus far would not have been possible.

Now, let's take a look at some recent highlights and upcoming plans.

In 2008, additional Florida native plants were placed in the lake and along the north shoreline. Jim, Kathleen, Lucy and Tracey were key to this aspect of the project.

New species were planted, already established plants were relocated to expand the planting areas, and lots of effort went into the control and removal of the unwanted invasive plants. The native plants are providing food and safe refuge for a growing number of lake animals and serve to filter environmentally harmful chemicals and substances from the lake's water.



Photo by Gary Crosby

Volunteers from Crescent Lake neighborhood and around city, wanting to be part of the lake restoration project, donated over 800 volunteer hours on over 20 workdays in 2008. So dig in, neighbors, and join the cause. You'll be sure to dig the project, and the friendship with other volunteers.

Recently, floating containment devices were placed around the perimeter of the north and south lake planting sites in an effort to reduce the intrusion of the pest plants from other areas of the lake. In addition, waterfowl perches were constructed and placed in the lake to attract more wildlife.

Scheduled for installment in 2009 are floating turtle platforms designed to provide a safe, dry place for the turtles to congregate. As the animals become accustomed to these enhancements, the structures should prove to be another great focal point for visitors to observe the wildlife that inhabits the lake.

Litter containment devices (officially named Water Goats) were installed at the stormwater culverts that drain into the lake. These devices collect floatable debris such as cans, paper and other trash that would otherwise be dispersed into the lake from the numerous roadside drains that collect stormwater from as far away as St. Anthony's Hospital.

The Water Goats are periodically cleaned and maintained by Mark and his crew, who also designed and installed the devices. A very special thanks to Mark and his crew for their enthusiasm for and dedication to our lake project.

An important and ongoing aspect of the lake project features students in the Environmental Studies Program at Lakewood High School and their teacher, James, who take monthly water samples and gather other lake data. These samples are regularly submitted to the LAKEWATCH program at the University of Florida.

This process has been ongoing since the lake project began in 2007. As a result, we have a better understanding of the chemical and physical characteristics of the lake. With this knowledge, we continue to direct our efforts toward the improvement of the water quality and natural environment of the lake.

Despite our success in improving and maintaining the health of the lake, we remain dependent on our volunteers to continue our success. To simplify our schedule and encourage volunteerism, we have scheduled future lake workdays to occur on the last Saturday of each month from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., starting with Saturday, Feb. 28. Please check the *Banyan Banter's* Calendar of Events for specific dates.

continued on page 14



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Keep lake project strong

Continued from page 13

With all that has been accomplished in the past two years, there is more to be done to maintain the tremendous momentum we have built, and to continue making Crescent Lake a healthy, clean and vibrant environment.

Tampa Bay Estuary Programs has awarded the project grant funding for 2009, which is great news for the New Year.

Now, all we need now is your help.

Please join us on lake workdays. Please encourage your neighbors and friends to participate.

Need volunteer hours? Want to get your children off the couch?

Come join us at the lake and feel pride in seeing the positive changes you can make right here in your own neighborhood. The folks who volunteer have a good time, enjoy each other's company, and feel good about being involved in such a worthwhile effort.

Visit our neighborhood website at www.neighborhoodlink.com/stpetersburg/clna/ and then go to the Crescent Lake Restoration Project link (found under *Community Pages*) to find information about the project. You may also contact me at 823-8014 and mngmcrosby@tampabay.rr.com or Lucy at 821-2133 and lucyt@ij.net for more information.

See you at the lake!



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President, Jason Diviki

320-6459 / jdiviki@hotmail.com

Vice President/James McGee

mmcgee9@tampabay.rr.com

Treasurer/Lake Project, Gary Crosby

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Secretary/Megan McGee

mmcgee9@tampabay.rr.com

Board Member/Newsletter Co-Editor,

Brian Overcast, bovercast@gmail.com

Board Member/Newsletter Co-Editor,

Mike Flanagan

mtflanagan_2000@yahoo.com

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Advertising, Rich Wall

patriotcom@aol.com

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phil@profocusvideo.com

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Photo by Elaine Larimer

Welcome Cressie, our newest neighbor!

Alert residents of Crescent Lake first noticed the colorful iguana in the fall and promptly dubbed her "Cressie." When photographer Elaine Larimer snapped this photo of Cressie, she was taking a break from feeding on the invasive taro plant along the shoreline of Crescent Lake. Cressie is not a native reptile, and like all wild animals, should be treated with respect and caution. If you see Cressie, please feel free to admire her from a safe distance.