


Miami-Dade

ParkLife

INSPIRING YOU TO LIVE A PARK LIFE



Homestead Bayfront Park



CALLING ALL STUDENTS!

How would **YOU** make
Miami-Dade County more beautiful?

Neat Streets Miami challenges you to design a poster (grades 1-12) or create a 2 minute video (high school only) about your ideas on how to make our community more beautiful!

Entries will be
accepted beginning
Monday, January 8, 2018
and must be submitted by
Friday, February 2, 2018

Prizes for winning students
and their teachers!

For poster and video requirements
go to <http://bit.ly/2hkYxpV>

#CleanUpGreenUpMiami

 @NeatStreetMIA

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There is more than one way to be social at parks. Follow Miami-Dade Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. [@miamidadeparks](#)



Cover: Homestead Bayfront Park
by Ryan Holloway



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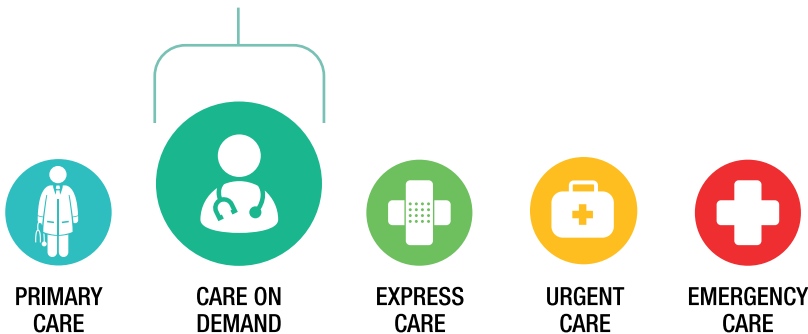
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Stronger Together

A lot has changed since Hurricane Irma made landfall in Florida — most notably, the landscape of our community. In this edition of *Park Life*, read about how Miami-Dade Parks came together to clear roadways, survey damages and get facilities up and running so that families would have a place to recharge and reconnect. The story also illustrates that the damage could have been much worse had it not been for the heroes of the storm: trees.

We also highlight one of our Heritage Parks, Homestead Bayfront Park, a gem in South Dade. Head south and explore this picturesque spot with the family for some time in and around the water. At Homestead Bayfront Park, you can kayak among the mangroves, bicycle through the grounds or relax on the shore.

For families with kids, Miami-Dade Parks wants to remind you that we are here for them — and for you. With convenient, safe and affordable afterschool and out-of-school program options, your child can spend their free time focusing on homework, health and wellness, as well as sports and leadership skills. According to the Harvard Family Research Project, afterschool programs not only help prevent risky behavior, they also promote academic achievement, social and emotional development and improvement in overall health and wellness among participants, so find an afterschool program today.

From extreme sports to competitive sports for people with disabilities, we feature all the possibilities Miami-Dade Parks has to get you to challenge yourself — so get out and try something new.

One of the most beautiful things to emerge from the rubble was and continues to be the strength of this community. We have watched neighbors helping one another, we have seen volunteers helping to clean up their beloved community parks and we have witnessed the power of what one person can do.

You + Miami-Dade Parks = Miami-Dade Strong.

Here's to living a park life!



Sunrise at Homestead Bayfront Park

outandabout

Park and Recreation Month Paddleboard Winner

In July, parks across the nation celebrated National Park & Recreation Month. It's a time to appreciate how parks add value to neighborhoods, improve health and just make you happier. To celebrate, Miami-Dade Parks hosted an online sweepstakes for the chance to win a paddleboard, and more than 2,000 people registered. Congratulations to lucky winner Jennifer Garcia. Here's to living a park life!



An Overnight Sensation

Did you miss last summer's overnight camp? If so, don't get left behind. Sign up to receive email announcements about the next Residential Overnight Camp at Camp Owaissa Bauer. To sign up, visit <http://bit.ly/campobnight>.

Dance and Cheer Camp Winners

Every summer, Miami-Dade Parks hosts a dance and cheer camp. These young ladies won first place in their respective divisions.



Tamiami Park (ages 12-14)
Danielle Aguado
Sarah Lacayo
Sophia Lacayo
Isabella Monzon
Denise Ortiz
Breana Pedrayes
Alexis Pineiro
Jenesis Rodriguez
Hanna Saavedra

MLK (ages 12-14)
Renaiya Bruce
Ty'eshia Ford
Genesis Garrett
Teliyah Johnson
Darrylnique Jordan
Tamia Kennedy
Joniaya Milton
Tamaiyah Moore
Laiya Sumpter
Zhamaiya Wright

Tamiami (Junior Teens)
Melissa Aguado
Mikaeyla Betancourt
Amaya Fernandez
Isabella Gonzalez
Damarys Najaro
Chloe Perez
Nicole Rodriguez
Rashel Villalonga

Learning A Lifesaving Skill

The Every Lesson Counts movement had a strong summer, with more than 200,000 swimming lessons taught. Given that drowning is the leading cause of death among children ages 4 and under, taking swimming lessons is an easy way to save lives. To find a location near you, visit www.drowningprevention.net.



Mark Your Calendar!

There are many events and festivals taking place throughout the year. For the most up-to-date information, visit <http://www.miamidade.gov/parks/calendar.asp>.

Not to Brag, But...

Miami New Times recently recognized several Miami-Dade parks in their Best Of publication, and here's a look at how we did:

- **Best Urban Bike Ride:** William Powell Bridge, Rickenbacker Causeway, Key Biscayne
- **Readers' Choice:** Haulover Beach Park, 10800 Collins Ave., Miami
- **Ten Best Beaches in Miami:**
 - #2. Haulover Beach Park, 10800 Collins Avenue, Sunny Isle Beach
 - #9. Crandon Park, 6747 Crandon Blvd., Key Biscayne
 - #10. Matheson Hammock Park, 9610 Old Cutler Rd., Coral Gables
- **Ten Most Underrated Architectural Sites in Metro Miami**
 - #8. Deering Estate, 16701 SW 72nd Ave., Palmetto Bay



Golf Discounts for Military

We salute all active and retired military with special discounts on greens fees at all Golf Miami-Dade locations. Contact the golf shop for details and visit www.golfmiamidade.com for locations.



Veterans Receive Designated Parking Spot at A.D. "Doug" Barnes Park

Miami-Dade County Commissioner Rebeca Sosa (District 6), along with the Miami-Dade County Military Affairs Board and Miami-Dade Parks, unveiled the first designated parking space for military veterans at a Miami-Dade County facility.



Tweet, Like, View

Follow us on social media to discover unforgettable park life adventures and find out what's happening at Miami-Dade Parks. [@miamidadeparks](https://twitter.com/miamidadeparks).



Cultivating Creativity in Kids

The Raíces Hispanic Heritage Cultural Arts Summer Camp program at Miller Drive Park helps kids get a hands-on appreciation of the art that surrounds them.

For many kids, a summer off from school relieves them of the pressures of the classroom, the dread of assignments and the boredom of long lectures. It's summer after all – a time to recharge and disconnect. But for the dozens of campers enrolled in the Raíces Hispanic Heritage Cultural Arts Summer Camp program at Miller Drive Park, the days were full of classroom activities, art assignments and rehearsals, all of which awakened their senses. Best of all, Park Manag-

er Natalie Prieto was far from dull or boring.

"Alright class, what form of art am I holding?" Prieto asks while holding one of the pieces of art the group had started working on the day before.

"Pop Art!" the 6- and 7-year-olds shout in unison.

"Who is one of the most relevant artists of this movement?" she asks.

"Andy Warhol!" they confidently proclaim.

"And where did Pop Art originate

from?" Prieto further tests.

"England," they declare.

The kids knew all the answers.

Prieto has created a setting that simulates a freshmen art history class. Instead of a classroom full of young adults, her students carry Wonder Woman lunchboxes and have to stand on their tippy toes to reach the water fountain.

The Raíces Hispanic Heritage Cultural Arts Program was developed to give kids exposure to the visual and



“The Raíces program embraces individuality and allows children to express themselves using various forms of creative media.”



performing arts, and Prieto is right at home leading the program.

“As human beings, we are surrounded by art – it’s everywhere – whether you’re aware of it or not,” she explains. “My role as an art instructor is to encourage them to absorb, analyze and explore; to be innovators and to demonstrate that art is not only beautiful, but functional. It’s in how you dress, the accessories you put together, even in the type of car you drive, which was designed by an artist. I want to share my passion for learning and my practical experience with children so they start seeing the world from a different viewpoint while putting their creativity to good use.”

At the start of summer, the children are divided into three groups so they can fully engage in each of the arts taught in the program by age and interest: Art, Dance, Drumming, Animation, Theater and Puppetry Arts. They also get time in the pool and the opportunity to enjoy field trips.

“I love it here,” says fourth grader

Natalie Perera. “I love singing and dancing and learning about art from Ms. Natalie.”

The Raíces experience sparks the mind, body and spirit. “We are a team of fully engaged artists and staff committed to enhancing the park experience by providing not only great art education, but also by encouraging physical activities,” Prieto says. “It is important to move because sometimes art can be sedentary, mainly visual arts. We value the physical and creative balance; therefore, we motivate children to live an active life. They get to play tennis, basketball, compete in Field Day and enjoy the outdoors.”

Prieto is an attorney by trade and an artist by birth. “I come from a family of writers, linguists, historians, architects, painters and classic ballet dancers,” she explains. Her paternal grandfather,

Alberto Prieto, was one of the most important architects in Cuba, who also happened to be related to artist Leopoldo Romañach.

Natasha Rodriguez, whose 6-year-old daughter Isabella attended the Raíces program, is a big fan of things the program does that kids may not even notice.

“The Raíces program embraces individuality and allows children to express themselves using various forms of creative media,” Rodriguez says. “My daughter has been exposed to genres that she otherwise would not have had the opportunity to explore, including the arts of animation and percussion. The staff and volunteers create a friendly, fun atmosphere where the children play games, engage in sports and have a fantastic summer experience.”

There’s no doubt this unique program



Off the Beaten Path explores the not-so-obvious side of parks that may inspire you to jump off the paved path and explore the uncharted one.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH



is very special, and it doesn't require superstar talent — just a desire. "I tell parents it's very important to take their children to places where their creative minds would be nurtured," Prieto says. "A person who creates is a builder, not someone who destroys, so if you teach your children to create, they will be good stewards of the world. Creative people keep wondering – let Raíces help them do that!" 🍀

—Victoria Galan

Want To Explore Your Artistic Side?

Raíces offers great year-round and out-of-school camp programs in the visual and performing arts. The first Friday of the month neighbors are invited to Meet Me at the Park – an evening of cultural arts where neighbors meet each other, parks staff, artists, guest speakers and others. Attendees enjoy story-telling, entertainment and spending quality time together.

Raíces at Miller Drive Park
5510 SW 94 Court, Miami • 305-271-0812



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Proud Partner

Helping Bus Stops Go Greener

Neat Streets Miami uses trees and some poetic touches to improve bus stops throughout the county.

When Lynne Norris, a resident of the West Kendall community Winston Park, retired eight years ago, she was looking forward to kicking back and exploring the city from a bus or train and away from the often-hectic Miami traffic. But the tough part was enduring the wait. “I would leave the house with my hair and makeup done, and by the time the bus arrived, I was a hot mess,” she recalls. “I didn’t think that waiting just a few minutes would be so tough, but being out in the direct heat really wears me out.”

Norris isn’t the only one getting worn out. Many Miami bus stops don’t provide adequate shade, and the hot sun can take its toll on transit riders. Through the 2016 Public Space Challenge, Neat Streets Miami launched the Growing Green Bus Stops initiative in the fall of 2017. The goal is to create micro-public spaces at bus stops that provide riders with a more comfortable and inviting environment.

Creating Cool, Poetic Touches

Neat Streets Miami created cooler waiting areas for bus riders by planting two canopy trees at 10 unsheltered bus stops throughout the county. It also added another cool touch: poetry. Neat Streets partnered with O, Miami to create a poetry contest, collecting nearly 700 haikus along the way. The top haikus about trees were stenciled into sidewalks adjacent to the bus stops, adding an artistic flair to the practical shade trees.

This simple initiative shows that with relatively small aesthetic and environmental investments, a community’s transit expe-



rience can be markedly improved. Norris approves the new look. “What a creative way to make a wait at the bus stop more enjoyable,” she remarks. “I look forward to standing under a canopy and not the hot sun.”

A Bigger Picture You Can Be Part Of

Neat Streets Miami hopes Growing Green Bus Stops will help foster a sense of community engagement by involving the public in solving a shared problem — the need to achieve a 30

percent tree canopy in Miami-Dade County by 2020. It’s been proven that adding trees to cities reduces the heat island effect, curbs pollution and helps with storm water remediation, not to mention sequestering carbon dioxide.

Neat Streets Miami and Million Trees Miami (Twitter handles @NeatStreetsMIA and @MillionTreesMIA, respectively) encourage residents to seek out these bus stops around Miami-Dade County and post selfies using the hashtags #GrowingGreenBusStops and #PublicSpaceChallenge. 🌿

Benefits For Commuters

- Canopy trees make the walk to wherever you are going more beautiful and green, and help with air pollution absorption, wind and sun protection, noise pollution reduction and storm water retention.
- Haikus were stenciled on sidewalks adjacent to bus stops to create a fun element that would help cultivate a love for trees among residents while highlighting local talent.



Neat Streets Miami is a multijurisdictional board dedicated to creating attractive gateways, corridors and connections. Through educational programs, tree plantings, roadway landscape projects, street tree and aesthetics planning and Metrorail station enhancements, Neat Streets Miami wants to make Miami-Dade even more beautiful.



The Real South Beach

Homestead Bayfront Park is a nearby pocket paradise you may have overlooked when planning the ideal beach getaway.

We've seen idyllic beach scenes on everything from travel shows and magazines to screen savers. And when we think of a beach escape in our city, Miami Beach or Crandon Park may be the obvious choices that come to mind. But Homestead? Not exactly.

It might be time to rethink that. With crystalline waters in an atoll tidal pool, delicious beachfront dining, watersports and activities, a full-service marina and tours of the stunning ecosystem, Homestead Bayfront Park gives us a different idea of what a beach paradise looks like.





Tucked away deep in Homestead, on Southwest 328th Street bordering Biscayne National Park, Homestead Bayfront Park is another precious jewel in the crown of Miami-Dade Parks' seven Heritage Parks.

Of course, it wasn't always like this. The land for Homestead Bayfront Park was originally deeded to Miami-Dade County in 1938 by James Sottile, owner of South Dade Farms, but development halted when World War II broke out. During the war, the entire park area was leased to the United States government for use by the Air Force, in connection with operations at the nearby Homestead Air Force Base. A few years after the war ended, a \$250,000 bond issue became available to construct the park so the Air Force moved out and the park's construction commenced.

An atoll tidal pool was excavated and an artificial beach was created. A two-story building for the park superintendent was built, as well as public restrooms and a picnic pavilion. In addition, a marina was built with boat ramps for launching boats, as well as wet and dry storage slips for convenient boat storage. With materials from the marina excavation, the entrance road and enlarged parking area was built and, lastly, power and water utilities were added. The park was officially dedicated on November 13, 1955.

Although Homestead Bayfront Park encompasses 1,200 acres, only 90 acres are accessible to patrons. The remaining acres are protected natural areas and coastal wetlands.

In fact, the road into the park is surrounded by wetlands with mangroves, acting as a wonderful welcome mat for your island escape. As you drive in, you may want to lower the windows and take in the bay breeze in anticipation for what's ahead — a picturesque destination that offers something for everyone.

The Beach

The atoll tidal pool is very similar to the one found in Matheon Hammock Park and works in the same way, with water flowing in and out of the atoll pool straight from Biscayne Bay. The deepest part of the pool is 10 feet, but buoys cross the length of the pool, denying access to swimmers for their protection. This doesn't stop access to fish and other marine creatures from coming close to shore. Swimmers delight in water that's always calm and clear. If you bring snorkel gear, you can see small barracuda, mullet and even mangrove snapper while you swim.

According to Rolonda Breckenridge, longtime head life-guard at Homestead Bayfront Park, "No matter what season it is, the water is always crystal-clear. Homestead Bayfront Park reminds me of a 'mini Florida Keys,' but with a much nicer and safer beach than you can find there, which is what attracts our patrons." Visitors range from German and French Canadian tourists to locals who prefer coming to the park over other South Florida beaches.

Fishing and strolling around the atoll tidal pool are just some of the many activities families enjoy at Homestead Bayfront Park.





"I love coming here because the beach is intimate, always calm and perfect for my son," says Homestead resident Nancy Clark. "My family and I come here at least once a month throughout the summer. We just love it."

Another quaint feature of the beach are the five lifeguard stands. Made of wood, each individual stand is painted with a unique motif. But one in particular stands out from the rest: the Romero Britto stand, painted by the famous Brazilian artist known for his bright colors and bold patterns that combine elements of Pop Art and Cubism.

Beachfront Dining

In 2010, La Playa Grill restaurant opened, a two-story, wheelchair-accessible facility that also houses meeting rooms, restrooms, showers, changing rooms and offices for lifeguards.

A destination all on its own, the restaurant offers screened indoor and outdoor seating overlooking the beachfront and Biscayne Bay. No matter where you choose to sit, you'll enjoy a beautiful view of the water while enjoying a delicious and eclectic menu offering American and Mexican fare at affordable prices.

Enjoy appetizers, sandwiches and entrees with seafood and fish options, as well as a full Mexican menu. Some favorite dishes include Blackened Snapper, Fish and Chips, Fried Shrimp Basket, Baja Fish Tacos with your choice of mango salsa or pico de gallo, enchiladas, tacos and burritos. There's also a kids menu that features chicken nuggets,

burgers and tacos. And don't forget to order a refreshing drink from a wide selection of beverages, beer and wine, as well as fruit smoothies.

In conjunction with Superstar Productions, La Playa Grill also hosts monthly, quarterly and annual events. Movies on the Bay provides family-friendly movies projected off a giant floatable screen in the middle of the atoll pool. Families can bring chairs and beach towels and snuggle up on the beach. Another popular event is Bands on the Sand, where local bands come out and perform a concert on the beach.

La Playa Grill sustained damages from Hurricane Irma and remains temporarily closed for repairs. At press time, a reopening date had not been announced. For more information, call 305-230-3033 or visit www.laplayagrill.com.

Active Pursuits

La Playa Grill also runs the beach concession where you can rent beach chairs, umbrellas, one- and two-person regular kayaks, and the only see-through kayak rental or guided tour in South Florida. In the winter, one of the most popular tours is the guided, lighted see-through kayak tour, where lights are placed off the side of the kayaks and marine life can be seen swimming below the surface. The tour ends with a campfire on the beach where patrons can roast marshmallows and make s'mores.

In addition to kayaking, there's a full-size beach volleyball court where you can challenge your friends to a game. You

Below: A group of friends relaxing and taking in the stunning views of Biscayne Bay. Left: Park manager Josiel Morera prepares to go kayaking with his daughter.





La Playa Grill's menu features delicious Mexican dishes, fresh seafood options and more.

can also rent bikes and ride on the trails within the park or enjoy the Biscayne Trail that runs just outside the entrance to Homestead Bayfront Park.

Events and Activities

The Park hosts a range of annual events, including the popular Classics by the Bay, which takes place in February and features classic cars, motorcycles, live music, food, and arts and crafts vendors. A new favorite is the annual Wacky Raft Race, which kicked off in January. Just like the name says, individuals and teams race their homemade rafts to see which is the fastest — and which ones actually float. Held in partnership with La Playa Grill, the Wacky Raft Race also features live music, food, arts and crafts vendors, and family-friendly activities like bounce houses and more.

In addition to the beautiful beach, Homestead Bayfront Park also features four picnic shelters, 57 barbecue grills and 48 picnic tables, as well as two open areas available for rent. Patrons can also fish all along the bay. With its coastal wet-

Hurricane Irma Update

Homestead Bayfront Park is now open and our staff looks forward to welcoming visitors back to our beautiful park. Since Hurricane Irma, we've planted 120 coconut palms along the beach to help increase the County's tree canopy.

lands and proximity to Biscayne Bay, Biscayne National Park, the Keys and the Everglades, it is a popular site to watch Florida native and sea birds.

Homestead Bayfront Park is also a popular venue to celebrate birthday parties, bar and bat mitzvahs, and weddings. Wedding planners have discovered this tropical paradise to plan beautiful and elaborate weddings. With entire sections of the park that can be rented for an intimate, picturesque scenery, Homestead Bayfront Park is an ideal destination wedding location.

Full-Service Marina

If you ask Josiel Morera, who has been the park and marina manager since 2001, if the beach side or marina side is more popular, he insists the numbers are almost equal. "Another reason I think Homestead Bayfront Park and Marina is so popular among boaters," says Morera, "is that it's the closest park and marina to the four popular islands: Boca Chita, Elliott Key, Caesar's Creek and Soldier Key, and it's also adjacent to Biscayne National Park and minutes from Everglades National Park, John Pennekamp and Flamingo State Park."

Each year, nearly 15,000 boats travel through the marina, which features 8 boat ramps, 176 wet slips and dry storage to accommodate 32 boats, as well as electricity up to 50 amps, a bait and tackle shop, fuel pumps, pump-out stations, restrooms and two fish cleaning stations. Future development plans include the addition of wet slips and floating ramps. Just like all other Miami-Dade Parks marinas during holidays

and ideal boating weather days, Homestead Bayfront Park closes boat traffic once it's full. Sign up to receive Marina Alerts on your cell phone at <http://miamidade.gov/wps/portal/main/marinaalerts>.

Productive Partnerships

Another benefit for visitors are the partnerships between Homestead Bayfront Park and other nearby parks and resources. Biscayne National Park has been a key partner for Homestead Bayfront Park for years. In fact, as you travel east on SW 328 Street, you'll come to a fork in the road directing you either to the left for Biscayne National Park or to the right to Homestead Bayfront Park. Not a lot of people know that some of the areas that make up Biscayne National Park once belonged to Homestead Bayfront Park.

During the era of segregation, Miami-Dade County built an entirely separate but smaller tidal atoll beach that included facilities like restrooms and its own entrance road located just north of the main entrance road to the beach. These days, that road is the entrance to Biscayne National Park. After the Civil Rights Act in 1964, the north side of the park fell into disuse. The abandoned buildings, which have since been replaced, the entrance road and something of the original shape of the northern atoll beach are part of what now make up Biscayne National Park.

The parks also have something in common besides the entrance. Each park has a cannon that serves as a memorial of how the site was used during World War II. In fact, the cannon monument was donated to Homestead Bayfront Park by Biscayne National Park.

Another shared partnership is the tour to Boca Chita Island on Miami-Dade Parks' Pelican Island Skipper. This popular tour is made possible thanks to a partnership with the City of Homestead, the National Parks Conservation Association, the Florida National Parks and Monuments Association, and the National Park Service. The family-friendly excursion departs from Biscayne National Park's Dante Fascell Visitor Center, located at Convoy Point, 9700 SW 328th Street. Departure times for the ADA-accessible Pelican Island Skipper are 10:30 a.m. and 1:45 p.m. Guests enjoy a guided 2.5-hour adven-



Photo by Depuhl

Young boys enjoy a day of fishing on a cool day.

ture aboard the comfortable 45-foot power catamaran that includes beautiful scenery, interesting facts about the island's history, ecosystems and wildlife, along with time to explore the iconic lighthouse and beach.

Call the Florida National Parks and Monuments Association at 786-335-3644 to make reservations. The boat tour calendar and schedule are available on the Biscayne National Park website.

Each boat trip ticket allows "same-day" free admission to Homestead Bayfront Park. Free trolley service to the park is provided by the City of Homestead from Losner Park in downtown Homestead. Trolley arrival and departure times are coordinated with the island boat tour schedule.

For more information about Biscayne National Park, visit nps.gov/bisc. For information about the National Park Service, visit www.nps.gov.

The next time you're planning a much-needed escape from the hustle and bustle of Miami life, check out these hidden treasures. You won't regret it. 🌿

— Edith Torres

Plan Your Visit

Homestead Bayfront Park • 9698 SW 328 Street

Open from sunrise to sunset
Office Hours: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Phone: 305-230-3033

www.miamidade.gov/parks/homestead-bayfront.asp

Entrance fees

Car: \$5 weekdays; \$7 weekends and holidays

Boat ramp launch trailer

\$13 weekdays; \$17 weekends (Friday-Sunday) and holidays
Bus/RV: \$15 every day

La Playa Grill (Currently Closed)

Phone: 305-257-6918
www.laplayagrill.com

Rentals* (Currently Closed)

Chairs and umbrella: \$5/all day
One-person kayak: \$20/hr.
Two-person kayak: \$25/hr.
Clear kayak: \$40/hr.
Bike rentals: \$10/hr.

*Rentals are only available on weekends during La Playa Grill business hours.



Nurturing Nature

Trees are valuable natural assets — not just during a storm but all the time. That’s why Parks works to keep them safe, beautiful and abundant.

The one thing you most definitely noticed the day after Irma swept through town was the destruction of the trees. Broken, battered and downed trees were everywhere, blocking streets and access points. The county’s beautiful tree-lined streets were practically unrecognizable, with trees piled so high that you could hardly see your neighbors’ homes. For those who may have suffered roof or car damage because of a downed tree or for those who bore the burden of cutting and clearing trees, it’s only natural to feel frustrated and aggravated at these leafy green creatures.

But as hard as it may be to believe, having those trees when Hurricane Irma came rushing through was a good thing. “Imagine the beating trees took during the storm. Now imagine if they weren’t there, the kind of damage we would have suffered,” says Gaby Lopez, the Community Image Manager for Neat Streets Miami/Million Trees Miami, a division of Miami-Dade Parks. If the trees weren’t there to absorb some of the power of the storm, it’s likely that the wind and rain would have done even more damage. And that’s not the only way trees step in to help out: “Even in Houston, with all the



After Hurricane Irma, crews cleared 20 miles of roadways and right-of-ways.



Downed trees could be seen all around the county's beautiful tree-lined neighborhoods.

damage Hurricane Harvey did, trees played an important role in absorbing and diverting water," says Lopez.

Beyond Being Bodyguards

Of course, trees don't just help mitigate the effects of storms. When the cone tracks are in our favor, trees are still contributing in ways we may not notice. They help keep a community cooler and in some instances can even lower air conditioning bills. Trees also clean the air and sequester carbon dioxide. In addition to those environmental benefits, they provide a sense of calm and comfort. "The intangible benefits of trees are integral to us as humans — we connect to trees," says Henry Mayer, Commercial Urban Horticulture Agent with the University of Florida IFAS Extension Office. "I cannot envision a park without trees. Through parks, trees provide us with a habitat to connect to the environment. If we lose trees, we lose that powerful and important connection."

Recovery and Restoration

Parks is well aware of the value of trees and their impact on the environment. Right after Irma, Parks' Right of Way and Natural Areas Management (NAM) crews cleared 20 miles of roadways and right-of-ways.

While this immediate work is part of what NAM does, its focus is actually broader in scope: since 1981 NAM has been working to preserve and protect Miami-Dade's natural landscape, which includes the pine rockland, hardwood hammock, mangrove forest and salt marshes.

"NAM works at restoring and maintaining the natural habitats and environmentally endangered lands in this region," NAM Manager Joe Maguire explains. "Our team of biologists preserve and inspect more than 100 natural areas. And following something like a hurricane, they assess damage and develop a plan of action for recovery. While homeowners attend to their properties, we are protecting these areas from invasive species like vines," says Maguire.

Caring for the Canopy

The challenge for NAM is preserving the tree canopy so that vines don't overgrow and create problems. Tree canopy is the layer of leaves, branches and stems of trees that cover the ground when viewed from above. A larger tree canopy not only benefits the environment, it may also help with quality of life and health issues, according to a report from the University of Florida and Florida International University on Miami-Dade tree canopies that was coordinated by Neat Streets Miami/

Restoring Trees After a Hurricane

- Get help with removing potential hazards
- Stand up and stake small fallen trees – provide irrigation as needed
- Clean tree canopies
- Allow for recovery



Parks staff and other volunteers worked hard to help clean up storm-ravaged areas.

Tips/tricks for pruning when preparing for a hurricane

- Never cut a branch flush with the trunk (also called a flush cut). This encourages decay and damages the tree.
- Avoid lion tailing/over lifting, which consists of removing side branches from a large branch, leaving only those at the distant end, resulting in limbs resembling a lion's tail. This can also damage a tree significantly.
- Never hat-rack/top a tree! It is illegal and potentially dangerous.
- Avoid root pruning and digging around tree roots, since this makes the tree more likely to fall during a storm.
- When pruning, use removal cuts (prune a branch back to the trunk or parent branch) or reduction cuts (these shorten the length of a stem by pruning back to a smaller limb).
- Don't remove more than 25% of the canopy in a single pruning event.
- Palms don't need hurricane pruning. Palms are adapted to wind storms. Removing fronds is of no benefit and is detrimental to the palm.

For more information, contact the University of Florida IFAS Extension Office at 305-248-3311.

Top Three Benefits of Trees

- **Community Life:** Trees can add up to 15% to the value of your home by making neighborhoods more attractive, quieter and cooler.
- **Clean Water and Air:** Miami-Dade's trees remove 5,425 tons of carbon from the air each year, improving air quality. Trees also reduce storm water runoff by making soil more absorbent.
- **Savings:** Trees provide essential shade and if placed properly, they can reduce home cooling costs by 15-30%.

Million Trees. "A priority for Neat Streets Miami/Million Trees Miami is for Miami-Dade to reach a 30% tree canopy," says Lopez. "Before the storm we were only at 20%. What makes matters worse is that what has been lost took more than 40 years to mature. In many of these cases, the trees were here longer than the homeowners — we have 10 to 20 years of restoration ahead of us," she explains.

Doing Your Part to Protect Trees

While Parks staff is working hard to clean up and reach its tree canopy goal, you can also do your part to preserve trees on your property to mitigate storm damage whenever possible.

Start off by picking a solid species to plant, such as a "Florida Fancy" or "Florida #1." These types have a single trunk and need little additional training to form a structurally sound tree.

Also, factor in the space you have available so that you pick the right-sized tree. This applies to both its trunk/branches and also its roots system, which can extend to 3 to 5 times the diameter of the canopy. Lastly, make sure the soil volume is right: insufficient soil volume increases the risk of trees toppling.

Of course, what truly makes the difference with trees — especially before storms — is putting in the regular work to care for them. "The number-one lesson for trees is maintenance; there is no such thing as a maintenance-free tree," explains Mayer. "Trees are very susceptible to hurricanes and tropical storms. There are best management practices that homeowners can implement to reduce potential damage to trees if a hurricane is a category 1-3 or is reduced to a tropical storm." However, Mayer cautions "if a hurricane is categorized as a 4 or 5, there is not much we can do to prepare trees for the event."

Special Thanks

Cleaning up after Irma was a big job, and here at Parks we've been grateful for the help, so we wanted to extend a great big thank you to Smoothie King employees who lent their hearts and hands by helping clean debris at Kendale Lakes Park. There were many volunteers that came together for the benefit of our community and we want to thank all the hands that helped after Hurricane Irma. We hope to see you in a park soon.

—Victoria Galan

Fight the bite!

Use insect repellent on skin and clothing to keep mosquitoes away while outdoors.

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  #DrainAndCoverMiami

 MIAMI-DADE COUNTY





Keeping the Coast Clean

Trash littering our beaches and oceans is everyone's problem. Fortunately, there's a lot you can do to help keep them clean.

The average person throws away five pounds of garbage each day, about one quarter of which is non-biodegradable. Imagine what it would look like if you didn't remove trash from your home every day or the garbage pickup didn't arrive to your neighborhood twice a week? What would your house, neighborhood and environment look like? It would all be filthy and unhealthy.

Now imagine what Miami-Dade's beaches and shorelines would look like if they didn't get cleaned up every day after being enjoyed by thousands of beachgoers. "Yuck" doesn't begin to cover it. But thankfully, our beaches are under the excellent care of Miami-Dade Parks' Beach Maintenance Unit, which conserves and preserves one of our region's largest and most prized resources.

At dawn every day, the Parks Beach Maintenance crew is out shifting and cleaning around 14 miles of beach, basically everything east of the dunes to the shoreline, from Government Cut up to Golden Beach.

The Cleaning Routine

On any given day there is a crew of 25 people working to keep the beach clean. The crew is tasked with pick sticking litter, emptying trashcans and grooming the beach with tractors. "My crew gets up between 3:45 a.m. and 4 a.m. to arrive on the beach by 5:30 a.m.," explains Andrew Cendan, Beach Operations Coordinator.

Cleaning the beaches is a 365-day-a-year job and is only modified during sea turtle nesting season. From March through the end of October, surveyors from the Parks' Sea Turtle and Resiliency Program begin their morning half an hour before sunrise looking for nests with sea turtle eggs, and later in the season looking for hatchlings. "Once the Turtle Surveyors have cleared the beach we can begin our job for the day," says Cendan. Ground crews are dropped off at different locations along the 14 miles of beach to pick up litter. Operators drive a tractor with a blade to roll seaweed so beachgoers do not have to walk through the

seaweed. Other operators drive a tractor with a sifter that will pick up micro debris from just under the beach surface. Micro debris refers to cigarette butts, bottle caps, shells, glass and more.

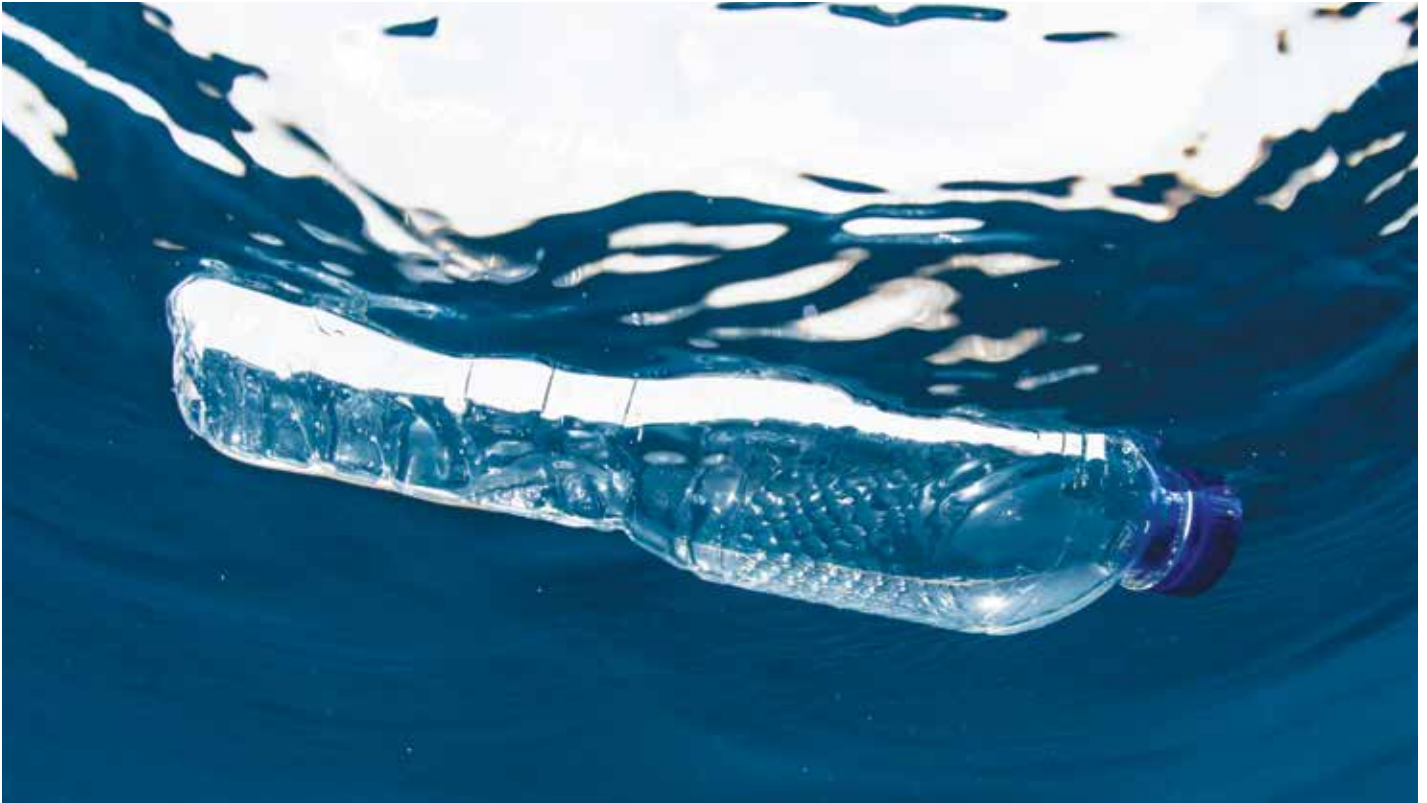
"This year has been especially difficult with Hurricane Irma and now the king tides. Both have affected the beach in different ways. Irma brought in around two feet of sand and seaweed and blanketed it over the entire 14-mile stretch. It also has been depositing a lot of debris, from buckets to trees to lobster pots. The king tides have also brought in an enormous amount of seaweed. Our operators and ground crews have been working endlessly using bulldozers, tractors, sifters and their hands to get the beach back to what patrons are used too," said Steve Sider, Acting Beach Maintenance and Operations Supervisor.

King tide is the non-scientific name given to an exceptionally high tide, typically occurring during the full or new moon cycle from September through November. October tides are usually the highest of the year. Sea level rise paired with king tides create a more complicated and widespread beach erosion. It becomes more of an issue to the population because the tides also penetrate the porous limestone that introduces salt water through our drainage systems and enters our freshwater aquifers.

Ocean trash ranks as one of the most serious pollution problems of our time. Much more than an eyesore, trash in the water and on the shore affects the health of people, wildlife and the economy. Trash in the water injures swimmers and beachgoers, harms wildlife that eats it or gets trapped in it, drives away tourists — and their wallets — and even ensnares boat propellers, creating a costly navigation hazard.

Step Up for the Shoreline

While beach crews do the heavy lifting, there are many ways for the rest of us to help. Every third Saturday, Crandon Park Beach hosts a beach cleanup. Call the Crandon Nature Center at 305-361-6767 for details. Last year, more than 900



volunteers took to the sand to pick up trash, which translates to 2,586 volunteer hours. Every April, Miami-Dade County's Regulatory and Economic Resources Department hosts Baynanza, where thousands of volunteers help clean up hundreds of thousands of pounds of trash along Biscayne Bay.

And each September, Miami Dade Parks organizes the International Coastal Cleanup, the world's largest volunteer beach and waterways clean up. The department also publicizes data that helps the public and global science community

The Problem With Plastics

- Sea turtles and other marine creatures mistake plastics and other garbage as food (such as jellyfish) and ingest it. This mistake causes blockages within their digestive system and their eventual deaths.
- According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Americans use more than 380 billion plastic bags and wraps each year. Plastic bags are petroleum-based and do not biodegrade. It takes 12 million barrels of oil to produce this many bags. Worldwide, as many as one trillion plastic bags are used each year. This equates to 100 million barrels of oil.
- In 2007, San Francisco was the first city in the United States to ban petroleum-based plastic bags in large markets and pharmacies.
- Plastic toxins end up in fish, which end up on our plates, which end up inside our bodies.
- Less than 5 percent of plastics are recycled worldwide.

more clearly understand the problem of ocean trash with a goal of building a movement that inspires all of us to stop trash before it starts and live cleaner, healthier lives.

Quick Changes to Keep Them Clean

This July, the department banned the use of polystyrene (Styrofoam), which is considered the nation's fifth largest creator of hazardous waste and a material that poses major issues to land and water. With so much trash and litter entering our ocean every year, the problem of preventing and reducing marine debris is an urgent issue we must address to preserve the health of the ocean. But by getting involved in cleanups, encouraging others to keep the beaches and oceans clean and the efforts of Miami-Dade Parks cleanup crews, we can help make the water cleaner and safer. Here are some other shifts you can make in your daily routine to keep beaches clean:

1. Bring your own reusable cup, but don't use Styrofoam. Every year, 25 billion Styrofoam coffee cups are thrown away. For that reason, Miami-Dade County has banned Styrofoam from its beaches.
2. Avoid products with excess packaging.
3. Invest in a reusable water bottle instead of single-use plastic bottles.
4. Bring a reusable bag to all stores to reduce use of paper and plastic bags.
5. Clean up your area after your trip to the beach.
6. After a hurricane or tropical storm, help environmental authorities clean up marine debris.
7. Volunteer for eco-action days — watch for Baynanza! 🌿

— Yasenny Camejo



Powering the Paralympic Experience

Parks promotes life-changing Paralympic sports programs to help athletes and educate the community.

Paralympic sports have gotten a lot of attention lately, thanks to the excitement surrounding last summer's World Para Athletics Championships in London, which hosted 1,300 athletes from 100 countries. Fans watched Team USA take home a whopping 59 medals overall: 20 gold, 19 silver and 20 bronze. It was Team USA's most successful performance at a World Para Athletics Championship.

"Spirit in Motion" is the Paralympic motto, and it expresses the inspirational character of the Paralympic Movement, which is the precursor to the Paralympic sports of today. The Paralympic

Movement started in 1948, when 16 wounded World War II veterans got together for an archery competition in southern England. This simple contest rapidly grew into what later became known as the Paralympic Games, coined from the Greek preposition "para" (meaning "beside or alongside") and the word "Olympic," conveying two movements existing side by side. The first official Paralympic games took place in Rome in 1960, with nearly 400 athletes from 23 countries. The World Para Athletic Championships started in Berlin in 1994.

These days, para athletics encompass major international multi-sports competitions for athletes with a wide range of physical disabilities (such as muscular dystrophy, amputations and spina bifida, among others), as well as visual and intellectual impairment. The games emphasize participation and personal achievement regardless of ability and athletes compete according to their sport-specific classification in each event. Athletes participate in wheelchairs, with prostheses and with a sighted guide if they are visually impaired.

Local Support

Of course, para athletics go way beyond these major events held around the world. What truly drives successful outcomes for people facing these physical challenges are the locally organized events. Through its Paralympic Sports Club, Miami-Dade Parks provides Paralympic sports programming in almost a dozen areas, including canoeing, kayaking, fencing, goalball, shooting, swimming, track and field, as well as wheelchair basketball. What's also helped Parks grow this program has been the Olympic Opportunity Fund grant from the United States Olympic Committee. This grant allows Miami-Dade Parks to connect with veterans and provides them with transportation from the local Veterans Administrative Hospital to club activities. The grant is crucial to the club's focus of helping disabled veterans live active lifestyles. In addition, Parks' collaboration with the Challenged Athletes Foundation helps provide equipment that many athletes





would not otherwise be able to afford. While getting veterans more involved in adaptive programs has been a longstanding initiative for the club, Miami-Dade Parks also focuses on providing opportunities to disabled youth.

Giving Them an Early Start

Through Paralympic Partners, the Parks department joins forces with local schools and organizations and other Paralympic sports clubs to expand its network and share resources so they can better target prospective participants and provide the best Paralympics sports experiences for people with disabilities. Athletes as young as six years old can join a Paralympic Sport Club, and once they are in the program, they can continue into adulthood. "Not everyone is going to be a Paralympian, but everyone needs to be active. Families and friends can help by encouraging their loved one to try a sport that sparks their interest," says Mary Palacios, manager for Miami-Dade Parks Disability Services. "Being physically active outdoors is one of the most important things that a person with disabilities should include in their daily routine. Good health practices like this better our lives," explains Palacios.

Educating Through Experience

Beyond the programs, the Parks Department also hosts the annual Paralympic Experience as a way to educate families

and children with disabilities about adaptive sports and their many health and wellness benefits. The event also serves to encourage families to sign up their children to participate in Parks' programs.

This year's Paralympic Experience was held in October at beautiful Tropical Park, packed with amenities, lakes and multi-sports facilities. The park served as the perfect backdrop for the Paralympic sports games, which included kayaking, canoeing, wheelchair basketball, rowing, hand cycling, boccia and wheelchair slalom. Paralympic coaches and athletes with physical disabilities and visual impairments turned out for this adapted sports event, which is open to people of all ages and ability levels, including military veterans.

Built into the course were obstacles that people using wheelchairs encounter every day, such as bumps in the roads and steps in places where wheelchair ramps aren't available. "Used in this fashion as a fast-paced and exciting Paralympic sports challenge, it's another great way for people using wheelchairs to improve core movement skills and stay fit and healthy," says Jody Cox, a Miami-Dade Parks recreational therapist who coordinated the event.

To find out more about Miami-Dade Parks programs for youth and adults with disabilities, call 305-755-7848 or visit <http://www.miamidade.gov/parks/accessibility.asp>.

—Laura Phillips

Miami-Dade County Animal Services

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Port to Park

Zoo Miami is an on-call ally of PortMiami when it comes to handling sticky situations involving wildlife.

PortMiami is the largest passenger port in the world and one of the largest cargo ports in the United States, so it's no surprise that a lot of different things arrive on its docks from all over the world — including wildlife. Because of their expertise and resources, Zoo Miami is sometimes asked to help agencies with special situations.

Most occurrences are fairly straightforward — people can be unaware of restrictions on plants and animals going through the port, or they don't file the correct paperwork or have the proper permits. Other cases can involve uninvited animal hitchhikers or even something more nefarious.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) established the Plant Rescue Center Program in 1978 to care for plants confiscated by the government due to non-compliance with import and export requirements. Since 1988 Zoo Miami has been part of the USFWS Plant Rescue Center Program.

In 2016, Zoo Miami's Horticulture Department became the temporary stewards of a large confiscation of rare and endangered orchids. The Zoo Miami staff cared for these imperiled and delicate species while authorities dug into the details of the case to determine the appropriate custody and destination of the plants. For the zoo's staff, it was an extra task in addition

to caring for their own botanical collection, which spans 340 acres. However, ensuring the survival of such a rare plant species is at the heart of their mission, so the staff was glad to help.

Zoo Miami's Departments of Animal Science and Animal Health have also quickly responded by housing, caring and providing appropriate nutritional, social and behavioral needs for various species they have been asked to assist with on short notice. They do this while still maintaining quarantine conditions to protect the other resident animals at Zoo Miami. Some examples in recent years have included parrots, toucans, marmosets, hyenas, lizards and hundreds of Amazonian fish. Although they often don't know the origin, current health condition or the amount of time that these animals have been in transit, animal experts ensure that they are provided with the highest standard of care and an environment that's as stress-free as possible.

As part of the Miami-Dade Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department, Zoo Miami takes its mission to encourage an appreciation of the world's wildlife and conserve it for future generations seriously and serves as a resource for the residents of Miami-Dade County and beyond. 🌿

—Dr. Frank Ridgley, Zoo Conservation and Veterinary Services Manager



MAKE THE MOST OUT OF YOUR CHILD'S AFTER SCHOOL TIME

WHETHER THE FOCUS IS ON PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS, OR HOMEWORK ASSISTANCE AND ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES, GET THEM INVOLVED IN ONE OF MIAMI-DADE PARKS FIT2PLAY™ OR FIT2LEAD™ AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS.



Health, Wellness and Physical Activity Program (ages 6 – 14)



Fit2Play™ is an evidence-based, outcome-oriented program that improves the quantity and quality of physical activity in its participants. Fit2Play™ incorporates exercise, health and nutritional education into fun and engaging group activities, such as obstacle courses and nutrition relay races. Visit <http://www.miamidade.gov/parks/activities-after-school.asp> for a location near you.



Youth Enrichment and Sports (Y.E.S.) Program (ages 12 – 14)



Y.E.S. is a **FREE** after school program that provides transportation from school to select Miami-Dade parks. Teens receive academic tutoring, sports and enrichment sessions to build leadership skills that empower them to achieve personal, academic, career and citizenship goals. For more, Fit2LeadYES@miamidade.gov or 305.755.5460.

www.miamidade.gov/parks



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Friendly Assistance

How friends groups help parks do more — with more.

The question, “How can we do more with less,” is often asked within park and recreation agencies. Operating under this auspice is the new normal. Happily, there exists an often-underutilized source of talent and support in every community — friends groups. Such citizen bodies prove particularly relevant when it comes to conservation in parks, where they are poised to help an agency do more, with more.

The list of needs that friends groups can help to address is practically endless. Many groups are equipped to support invasive plant removal, plant and maintain pollinator gardens, install bird and bat houses, maintain trails, build political and financial support for park enhancements, promote parks at public events and apply for grants.

Perhaps even more important are the less-tangible ways friends groups help a park and rec system succeed. Friends groups are able to bring forth a voice of the community that is

not bound by the municipal process — pushing forward issues that may not be possible from within the agency.

Friends groups form because people care. There exists a passion that can be stoked by a park and recreation agency toward benefit or burden. All friends groups, at some time or another, are at odds with the park and recreation agency. Concern with the condition of a park or an agency’s plans for a park are primary reasons friends groups are formed. However, the underlying motivations of individuals who assemble to support a park are almost always admirable.

Friends groups can, if empowered, provide a meaningful solution when an agency is tasked to do more with less. Engaging friends groups, like those detailed below, to support park needs should be the new, new normal.

FRIENDS OF CAMARILLO DOG PARKS organizes support for three dog parks within Camarillo, California. Formed in 2010 with the goal to educate, promote and support dog-related challenges and ideas, the group is a significant voice and collaborator in improving parks within the city. “The Friends of Camarillo Dog Parks has been one of our main supporters for park improvements,” says Michele Kostenuik, administrative analyst for Pleasant Valley Recreation and Park District. Agency staff members attend the group’s board meetings and work closely to provide project guidance. To help raise support, the friends group formed a number of partnerships and sponsorships with community organizations and businesses. Additionally, Friends of Camarillo Dog Parks sells branded shirts, hats and other wares during events to help raise funds and awareness. During the past five years, the group has raised more than \$60,000 to support the parks and has assisted with installation of benches, fencing, water fountains and signage. Furthermore, volunteers with the group recognize the contribution they can make to conservation needs by participating in National Trails Day events, tree plantings and pathway improvements.

FRIENDS OF VERNON PARK, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is one of more than 80 groups supporting parks in the city. These groups are the “eyes and ears who have the pulse on the com-



munity,” says Patty-Pat Kozlowski, director of stewardship and volunteers with Philadelphia Parks and Recreation. Managed by a core of volunteer officers, but made possible through the collective support of many, the group hosts park clean-up days, including their annual Love Your Park Day, and special events like the Fall Bazaar, oldies nights and The People’s Poetry and Jazz Festival. Highlighting the value of input from the Friends of Vernon Park, even beyond the park borders, the city invited the group to participate in stakeholder meetings for a nearby bus shelter redesign. Reflecting on the importance of partnerships with Philadelphia Parks and Recreation and Fairmount Park Conservancy, Friends of Vernon Park President Ruth Seeley writes in her annual update letter, “All these people are responsible for many parks in Philadelphia, but manage to make us feel special and supported in every way.”

FRIENDS OF BANSHEE REEKS, in Loudoun County, Virginia, helped shape the vision for Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve upon its opening in 2001. The friends group has a history of supporting citizen science projects, such as invasive plant removal and bird banding, as well as purchasing items needed for park upkeep. The group hosts a website and Facebook page and sets up a booth at community events with the aim of raising public awareness about the nature preserve. The Friends of Banshee Reeks board meets monthly with preserve manager, Ron Circe, to discuss upcoming activities and assess how it can support the preserve. When asked how the friends group has changed since its inception, Circe says, “The Friends of Banshee Reeks was formed by a group of passionate people who saw the opportunity to protect this unique property, not only for people, but more importantly for nature. Over time, the value of Banshee Reeks has been cemented and the group has been able to expand its focus to promotion of the preserve, while also helping fund special projects as they come up. I know the group is committed to what is best for the preserve, which helps make my job easier. It’s a great partnership.”

How an agency engages with a friends group depends on the group’s mission, its appetite for involvement and the agency’s needs. While friends groups should always be viewed as potential partners, it is the park and recreation agency — with background knowledge, professional expertise and a budget and mandate — that should set the stage for a relationship that mutually benefits both parties. The foundation for the relationship must be built on trust and transparency

Whether a community has dozens of friends groups or is on the cusp of forming its first, suggestions for embracing the pool of talent and resources within a friends group include:

1. Hold Regular Meetings

Meetings are great opportunities to discuss the status of projects, upcoming activities and specific issues. Some friends

How to Make Parks a Priority!

ADVOCATE

- DEMAND greater investment in parks and public spaces.
- CHAMPION the implementation of the Open Space Master Plan.
- ATTEND key community events, budget hearings and town hall meetings to get informed and help spread the word on the importance of parks.

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME AND RESOURCES

- GIVE your time to great revitalization and beautification projects that benefit our parks system and learn about our Parks Conservation Corps volunteer team.
- INQUIRE about how to support the work of the Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade and its membership program.

COMMUNICATE

- CALL, write or visit your elected officials. Tell them you want them to make parks funding a priority in your community.
- WRITE an editorial or share your ideas. Got a parks story? Share it with your local newspaper or other legislative and policy platforms.
- CONNECT with us and follow Miami-Dade Parks @Miamiidadeparks and find out how you can #liveaparklife!

groups include the park manager as a non-voting member of their board — a great way to signify the partnership.

2. Create Friends Groups Where None Exist

Many friends groups are formed by the nudging of a park and recreation agency. Given basic resources such as meeting space and staff time, community members are more likely to feel empowered to organize support for their neighborhood park.

3. Make a List of Needs (or Wants) and Share It with the Friends Group

Organize the list by those needs requiring only time and those with an additional financial cost. Don’t be afraid to discuss what you can realistically accomplish and what is likely going to need additional volunteers, money or political support from the friends group.

Encouraging positive relationships with friends groups and embracing practices that invite community participation not only result in better parks, but also more successful agencies. 🍀

— Jimmy O’Connor, Director of Conservation for the National Recreation and Park Association

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The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is the leading non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of public parks, recreation and conservation. Their work draws national focus to the far-reaching impact of successes generated at the local level. Leveraging their role in conservation, health and wellness, and social equity to improve their communities.

Homegrown Flavors

Learn how to grow edible plants, which can beautify your garden, spice up your dishes and maybe even save you some money.



Because of our subtropical climate, many different edible plants can be grown in South Florida.

For South Florida gardeners, the end of summer signals the start of planning for a springtime harvest of fresh vegetables. If you have ever dreamed of growing your very own mixed salad, mid-October is a great time to start your vegetable and herb garden. While you can grow vegetables in the summer, it's best to stick with tropical vegetables, and of course you can garden year-round with tropical fruit.

Many edible plants can serve several functions. They can be ornamental, give shade, provide food for wildlife, perfume the air and even serve as host plants for butterfly caterpillars.

What to Grow

Because of our subtropical climate, Miami has the luxury of growing plants that can't be grown elsewhere

in the United States, in addition to more traditional crops. Many different edible plants can be grown here: edible flowers, herbs, seeds and nuts, vegetable trees with edible leaves and fruiting vines, shrubs and trees. Here are some examples:

- Traditional crops such as tomatoes, beans, cabbage, squash, lettuce and peppers are grown during the dry season, which runs from October to April.
- Some favorite herbs you can grow include basil, cilantro, dill, fennel, lemongrass, oregano and rosemary.
- Consider planting the following edible flowers: marigold, butterfly pea, chives, cranberry hibiscus (Jamaican sorrel, roselle) and pansy.
- Grow seeds and nuts like sunflower, black pepper, cardamom, chia, sesame and the seeds of jackfruit.

- Feel like trying some tasty treats from trees? If so, try your hand at growing shrubs and trees with edible leaves: allspice, bay leaf, katuk (tropical asparagus), curry leaf, prickly pear (nopal) and cranberry hibiscus.
- Edible vines and shrubs include natal plum (carissa), chayote, monster (ceriman), mysore raspberry, passion fruit, pineapple and vanilla orchid..

Guidance for Good Growing

In general, full sun is best, but some plants such as herbs and leafy greens can be grown in somewhat shady areas. Even small spaces can be used for edible gardens. For small yards, choose plants that don't need much space. Fruit trees for small yards include "condo" mangos, carambola (star fruit), dragon fruit (pitaya) and

bananas. On balconies and patios, it's a good idea to grow your edibles in containers. Some small edible trees can be grown in pots, although they are more productive when planted in the ground.

If you live close to salt water, some edible plants tolerate salty conditions. These include tomatoes, yucca (Spanish bayonet), rosemary, kale, peppers, guava, pineapple, cocoplum, coconut and sea grape.

Because our soil is hard to dig and can have nematodes, grow your veggies in raised beds using compost and potting soil. But it has to be done right to be successful and very productive. The Miami-Dade Extension website has a fact sheet on how to build a raised

Check Out These Resources

- The Miami-Dade Extension offers gardening and compost classes.
- Master Gardener volunteers can answer your questions at 305-248-3311, ext. 228
- To learn more, visit the Miami-Dade Extension website: <http://miami-dade.ifas.ufl.edu/>
- Link to EDIS: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>
- Link to information on Fruitscapes: <http://trec.ifas.ufl.edu/fruitscapes>

bed garden, as well as videos showing you how it's done.

Edible gardening is not difficult once you learn the basics. It can be enjoyable, productive and nutritious. It may even save you some money. To get some inspiration, consider heading

to the Fruit & Spice Park in the Redland where many of these edible trees and herbs are on display. 🌿

— **Adrian Hunsberger, Urban Horticulture Agent at Miami-Dade Extension Office, and Courtney McColl, Master Gardener**



The University of Florida's Extension Office is part of the Miami-Dade Parks Department. The Extension is a partnership between state, federal and county governments to provide scientific knowledge and expertise to the public. Thousands of Extension faculty members, scientists, educators, administrative staff and volunteers help provide solutions for your life.

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UPS Makes Parks a Priority

The shipping company shows its commitment to the environment by teaming up with parks to help plant trees in Miami-Dade County.



Sea level is rising, summer temperatures are climbing and storms are raging — the effects of global warming are becoming more evident here in South Florida. But one company is doing its part to invest resources and sweat equity into greening Miami-Dade County by partnering with the Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade.

United Parcel Service (UPS) is a well-known global logistics and distribution company. Its Americas Region office is located here in Miami, and in October 2014 the company began its partnership with the Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade. Initially, UPS reached out to the Foundation for an employee-driven tree-planting volunteer project at Highland Oaks Park in northeast Miami-Dade. This volunteer project would help contribute to UPS' Global

Forestry initiative, which had the goal of planting 15 million trees by 2020. It would also help with Parks' Million Trees Miami initiative, whose goal was planting one million trees in Miami-Dade County by 2020. The Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade received a \$25,000 grant from The UPS Foundation, which supplied the trees for the first employee tree-planting project that brought out more than 50 UPS Americas employees.

Since that first tree-planting project in 2014, UPS has hosted four annual tree plantings, planting 176 trees at County parks and helped with two eco-restoration projects, logging in approximately 1,000 employee volunteer service hours and, as of October 2017, donating \$93,500 to the Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade.

The Parks Foundation works with

groups to adopt a park through volunteer and service projects, and also partners with organizations and donors to build landmark parks, facilities and provide programs for children, seniors, the disabled, and at-risk communities.

"We are grateful to The UPS Foundation and UPS Americas employees for their continued partnership with the Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade," says Raul A. Garcia, President of the Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade. "It's public/private partnerships such as this that help us in our mission to support Miami-Dade Parks, preserve, maintain and grow its beautiful parks and facilities, and provide quality recreational programs for all segments of society."

"UPS invests in causes that employees are passionate about, and the tree-plantings and the eco-restoration projects have been very well received by the employees," says Elizabeth Ibarra, Supervisor, Canada Enterprise Pricing at UPS Americas. "In addition to knowing the benefits of what these planted trees do to the environment and economy, like raise property values, attract businesses and tourists, UPS is also pleased to have found a partner that has the mutual goals of improving the place where we live and do business. We couldn't have found a better organization with which to partner."

For more information on the Adopt-A-Park program, Million Trees Miami Partnership/Sponsorship program or Donor program, call 305-755-7920 or visit www.liveaparklife.org.

— Edith Torres



The **Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade** helps to foster the recreational, educational, environmental and cultural life of the Miami-Dade County community by encouraging and soliciting support for Miami-Dade County's Parks. Their vision is to enhance the quality of life of residents and visitors by securing dedicated funding to preserve and promote parks and parks programming.

The Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade gratefully acknowledges the generosity of our donors and partners whose support ensures the preservation and enhancement of programs and facilities at Miami-Dade County Parks:

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Visit www.liveaparklife.org or call us at 305-755-7804.



The Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to support recreational, educational, environmental and cultural life experiences through the Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department.



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