

# UPDATE **St. Lucie**



A monthly update from the St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners

January 2019

## **ERD Secures \$1.9 Million in Grants for Environmental Lands**

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Florida Communities Trust (FCT) recently awarded St. Lucie County \$1.9 million in reimbursement checks for the purchase of more than 800 acres of environmentally sensitive lands. St. Lucie County's Environmental Resources Department will use these grant funds towards future land acquisitions and to unveil two new environmental preserves: the Myers-Stickel Preserve and the Cypress Creek Preserve.

Encompassing 33 acres along the North Fork of the St. Lucie River, the Myers-Stickel property is located near Kitterman Road and Oleander Avenue. Planned amenities include ADA boardwalks with hiking trails, a nature playground, an outdoor classroom and an ADA kayak launch. County staff are working to have this preserve open to the public by 2021.

The Cypress Creek Preserve spans 783 acres and features historic portions of Cypress Creek – a tributary to the St. Lucie River watershed with historic connections to the St. Johns River. Located in western St. Lucie County near the intersection of Bluefield Ranch Road and State Road 70, this site will be completed within three years with amenities such as a campground, ADA accessible trails and boardwalks, equestrian trails and connections to the State Road 70 Greenway Trail.

## **Volunteers Needed for Tax Season**

St. Lucie County Community Services, in collaboration with the United Way of St. Lucie County, is seeking volunteers for the upcoming tax season. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program provides free tax-preparation services for households with low to moderate incomes. Individuals may serve as greeters, tax preparers or site coordinators. All volunteers will receive training by an IRS-certified tax instructor. Volunteers must be willing to commit four hours weekly starting Feb. 2 to April 12. Afternoon, evening, weekday and weekend hours are available. Interested individuals must be at least 18 years of age and have basic computer skills. For more information on how to become an IRS-certified VITA volunteer, please contact Community Services at 772-462-2857 or via [allenk@stlucieco.org](mailto:allenk@stlucieco.org). Interested individuals can also complete a brief questionnaire and sign up at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SLCVITA>.

## **Events & Closings**

- St. Lucie County offices will be closed Monday, Jan. 21 in observance of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday.
- St. Lucie County will host a Wildland Fire Expo on Saturday, Feb. 2 from noon to 5 p.m. at the George LeStrange Preserve, 4911 Ralls Road, Fort Pierce. In honor of national fire awareness week, this family friendly event will feature hands-on demonstrations from various first responders throughout the area. For details call 772-462-2526.

## **QUICK STATS**

### **Building Permits:**

Overall building permit activity remained steady in October compared to September with 826 permits submitted. Revenue for that timeframe was up by 3 percent and above the yearly average.

### **Home Sales:**

According to the Florida Realtors Association, the average median home sale price in October was \$222,640 – up almost 5 percent from last year, while condos jumped in value by 11 percent with the median price at \$161,000.

### **Tourism Tax:**

The bed tax revenue decreased in October by 12 percent compared to the previous year.

### **Unemployment Rate:**

St. Lucie's unemployment fell to near record lows to 3.7 percent in October compared to September's 3.8 percent. Last year St. Lucie's unemployment rate was 4.7 percent. Statewide the unemployment was 3 percent. There were 4,200 more jobs on the Treasure Coast compared to last year with the largest gains in Education and Health Services with 1,300, mining and construction with 1,200 and Retail with 900.