By Julie Crosby

Have you noticed the many large and small groups of busy new volunteers working outside on the Museum grounds from February through April? This influx of service is a result of the Museum's partnership with the HandsOn Network and Disney, Inc.

Many groups of busy new volunteers worked outside on the Museum grounds from February through April as part of the Museum’s participation in the “Give a Day. Get a Disney Day” volunteer promotion, a nationwide program that began Jan. 1. The program strives to increase volunteerism and draw attention to the opportunities available with thousands of organizations that rely on volunteers. That purpose was certainly accomplished, as the goal of 1 million volunteers was reached amazingly fast on March 8!

Volunteers who signed up through the special portal for select opportunities were eligible to receive one voucher for a free Disney ticket. The Florida Museum offered five events. Potentially, 243 volunteers could serve a total of 957 volunteer hours with the Museum, and nearly all of the positions were filled before the program ended. Tasks included weeding and pruning a very unruly native butterfly garden, pressure washing sidewalks, setting up/taking down or selling plants and assisting buyers during the Earth Day plant sale in April, or cleaning up the morning after the Passport event.

This exciting program benefits the ticket recipients and the Museum, because we will capture many new volunteers who enjoyed their work here and have decided to look into our other volunteer opportunities. Additionally, much of the work was extremely physical in nature and enabled staff to complete some large projects in a short time. It was especially rewarding to enable families to volunteer together on these outdoor projects.

Though the special promotion is over, the success of these efforts has allowed the Museum to plan future group projects. A big thanks goes out to all of the volunteers and staff who worked on these projects.

Letter from the Coordinator

What a winter! A big shout out to all who braved the unnaturally lengthy cold to carry out all the great work you do in collections, programs, research and exhibits. You accomplished your usual work and inspired us all to keep plugging away until spring. We truly appreciate your perseverance and trust it will bring you here throughout our usual hot summer, too!

As part of our desire to accurately acknowledge your time and effort, I'd like to remind you of our volunteer attendance policy. This ensures that all volunteers who receive the benefits of our program, such as free exhibit entrance, have contributed a minimal amount of service to the Museum. In this time of decreased budgets it's crucial for staff to know “who's on board” each day and for volunteer benefits to be distributed fairly. The attendance policy is displayed on the bulletin board in the break room and was e-mailed or mailed to all volunteers. The policy requires at least 12 hours of service per quarter to maintain “active” status and receive benefits. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Thanks again for your generous service.
Welcome These New Volunteers!

D = Dickinson Hall
M = McGuire Center
P = Powell Hall

Broun, Lane (D)
Brown, Jason (D)
Byrge, Catrina (D)
Eschmeyer, William (D)
Harper, Curtis (P)
Johnson, Lucas (D)
Joseph, Rejith (D)
Knight, Emma (D)
Lowe, Travis (D)
Marin, Marilyn (M) (P)
Melo, Venus (P)
Pistorino, Julie (D)
Ravunnikutty, Girish (D)
Ruccolo, Michael (D)
Salazar, Amanda (P)
Singer, Randy (D)
Vadala, Jeffrey (D)
White, Jodi (D)
Wilson, Taylor (D)

The world is hugged by the faithful arms of volunteers.
— Everett Mámor

Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida Cultural Plaza
P.O. Box 112710, Gainesville, FL 32611-2710, www.flmnh.ufl.edu

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Volunteers recognized for 100 hours or more of service

Please congratulate these 46 volunteers who reached 100 hours or more of service during the fourth quarter of 2009. Each volunteer received four coupons for free entrance into fee-based exhibits. The total number of hours (rounded) served since April 1, 2005, is listed in parentheses. Junior volunteers are indicated by ‘JV.’

Florida Museum volunteers contributed 7,426 hours during this quarter.

Vanessa Abreu (100)
Anita Alemanne (300)
Pat Atkins (400)
Ron Bertie (200)
James Bevile (1,600)
Jane Blanchard (700)
Claudia Brown (600)
Stephanie Buhler (100)
Martha Cade (1,200)
Janet Cornelius (600)
Jackie Fried (700)
Libby Furlow (700)
Bob Gwin (300)
Emily Hamby (600)
Darrell Hartman (200)
Andreina Hornez (600)
Jennifer Hunzinger (200)
Pat Hylton (1,600)
Ada Irizarry (700)
Kalli Kovoukis (JV) (100)
William Keeler (700)
Sandra Lessl (100)
Ryan Lloyd (100)
Colby Lowe (200)

Mary Lynch (500)
Mike McCowan (1,300)
Sylvia Moy (400)
Barbara Muschlitz (700)
Bishara-David Nassif (300)
Bonnie Ogle (1,000)
Linda Palle (100)
Fred Perry (100)
Margo Pettway (300)
Marcia Phillips (500)
Helen Jane Pridgen (200)
Mary Ranade (300)
Marybeth Rinzler (200)
Amanda Rowe (100)
Mandi Schlein (200)
Frances Seiler (1,200)
Erika Simons (300)
Robert Tarnuzzer (1,000)
Ashley Valdes (100)
Neil White (100)
Pat Williams (100)
Thomas Wood (400)

Mark Your Calendar!

April 18-24 - National Volunteer Week
THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!!

April 21 - Alachua County RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) Luncheon
11 a.m. – 1 p.m. | One Florida Museum/RSVP volunteer will be recognized in the Arts and Culture category. For more information, call RSVP, 352-264-6732.

April 27 - Work of Heart Banquet
6 - 9 p.m. | Paramount Plaza Conference Center
The Florida Museum’s James Pope Cheney Volunteer of the Year is nominated to receive an award at this county-wide event. For tickets or information, go to www.workofheartawards.com or call Julie, 352-273-2055.

April 21 – Alachua County RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) Luncheon
11 a.m. – 1 p.m. | One Florida Museum/RSVP volunteer will be recognized in the Arts and Culture category. For more information, call RSVP, 352-264-6732.

May 7 – CSI: Crime Scene Insects Docent Training
2 - 5 p.m. | Attend this informative and interesting training to learn more about the new temporary exhibit and prepare for exhibit docenting!

For more information contact Diane Milner, 352-273-2030, or dmilner@flmnh.ufl.edu, or Jeannette Carlisle, 352-273-2026, or carlislej@flmnh.ufl.edu.

May 8 - CSI: Crime Scene Insects Opens

June 6 – Junior Volunteer Training
1:45 p.m. | Mandatory training for all 2010 junior volunteers. Call (352)273-2055.

June 14 – Summer Camps and Junior Volunteer Program Open

June 21 – Discovery Room Opens
VOLUNTEER PROFILE:

Pat Atkins

By Bonnie DeVero

First a teacher, then an education materials store owner, Pat Atkins found that volunteering at the Museum was a natural extension of what she has always had a passion for – getting kids interested in learning. As a teacher, her focus was on reading and language development, but Pat feels the Museum has given her the opportunity to learn more about various science fields. She enjoys leading small group tours and attending training sessions for new exhibits.

One of Pat’s interests that is perhaps less well-known is her enthusiasm for scuba diving, a hobby she began in college. Though she only snorkels now, Pat says there are too many interesting things going on underwater to just sit on the beach. She described the feeling of being underwater as “the closest human beings can come to flying.” Some of her favorite exhibits are ones in which she can use her first-hand knowledge of marine life to give visitors unique insight into exhibits. During the showing of Megalodon: Largest Shark That ever Lived, she assured the kids that nothing like what they saw in the Museum was still in the sea and encouraged them not to fear swimming in the ocean.

After 10 years of volunteering, Pat still enjoys sharing her knowledge with visitors interested in the Museum, but she says what keeps her coming back is the quality of the staff. “They make it such a joy to be here,” she said.

Volunteer Recognition Reception Honors Our Dedicated Volunteers

By Bonnie DeVero

Set among sand, shell and sea grass decorations, the 2010 Volunteer Recognition Reception held March 31 was a pleasant night for volunteers to mingle and relax.

Upon arrival, the annual group photo was taken followed by a few words of welcome from Museum Director Doug Jones. Fun food and beverage were complemented by the lovely guitar music of Mike Boulware.

Following the dinner, years of service pins were presented to 22 volunteers who reached service milestones of five year increments. Recipients with 20 or more years of service included Anita Alemanne (20 years), Barbara Toomey (25 years), and Evelyn Hemp (30 years). Leslie Klein received a pin for a remarkable 40 years of service to the Museum.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the James Pope Cheney Volunteer of the Year Award to Jackie Fried (Education/Exhibits and Public Programs) and Jim Beville (Paleobotany/Research and Collections). These volunteers will also be nominated for Alachua County/Gainesville Work of Heart Volunteer Awards.

It was a great night to thank all of our volunteers and acknowledge their service.
Docents Tour Northeast Florida

By Jeannette Carlisle, Education Assistant

Fourteen docents and two staff recently took a trip through Northeast Florida and South Georgia to areas formerly inhabited by the Timucuan peoples. Lunch the first day in Folkston, Ga., at the Okeefenokee Restaurant was followed by a boat tour of the Okefenokee Swamp and the Chesser homestead.

Next was a stay at the Amelia Island Plantation Inn, a visit to the Fernandina Beach Museum and boat tour of the port of Fernandina and Cumberland Island. We learned a lot of history about this area of Florida.

The next day we crossed Nassau Sound and explored Little Talbot State Park and Fort George Island, then continued to Fort Caroline in Jacksonville where a park ranger gave us an exhibit tour. This is a beautiful park right on the water and even though the original fort had been burned, there is a replica at the approximate location of the original.

After Fort Caroline, we went to Palm Coast where we spent the night at a nice little hotel built with coquina in the 1930’s. It was a quiet and peaceful place to stay except for the motorcycles heading to Daytona Beach for Bike Week!

On the last day we headed south to the Ormond Beach area and enjoyed the Bulow Plantation Sugar Mill Ruins and Tomoka State Park which have beautiful waterways, marshes, palms and wildlife. After lunch at a really neat restaurant at the Flagler Beach Airport (who would have known!), we headed back home to Gainesville. Throughout the trip, the group skirted around rainy weather, but as Leslie Klein remarked “It never rains on docents!”

STAFF PROFILE:
Amanda Arner

By Bonnie DeVero

Amanda Arner first began working at the Museum as a summer camp teacher. She loved being able to teach in such a fun environment, and when she was asked to join the staff as a public programs education assistant, she enthusiastically accepted. Amanda says she is “a wildlife biologist by degree, but a teacher at heart.” She describes her job as extremely unpredictable and says she never does the same thing twice.

“Programming is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the community,” she said. “It’s a crossroad between scientific research and the general public.”

Amanda also has a passion for the outdoors and has camped in places as unique as Denali National Park in Alaska and Yosemite. Her family includes boyfriend Kyle and a cat named Jesse, and a room full of Kyle’s 26 snakes, the largest of which is over 8 feet long!