

# RECIPE FOR A SUCCESSFUL CELEBRATION

by Marcy R. Bartlett

*This description of the Turkey Creek Celebration contains so many good ideas for carrying out a successful project that you should read it as a "how-to" article. The ingredients are planning, ideas, cooperation, and work.*  
— Editor.

Every town in Florida seems to have an art festival or a seafood festival or other celebration. Palm Bay has held their annual art festival since 1980 at the Community Center near the entrance to Turkey Creek Sanctuary. Each year, the art show committee encouraged more and more participation by the Turkey Creek Sanctuary Committee. At first, they only sold T-shirts, then added guided tours on the boardwalk, then canoe rides on the creek.

This year, the entire focus was on the Turkey Creek Sanctuary, even changing the name of the event from "Palm Bay Fine Arts and Crafts Show" to "Turkey Creek Celebration". The South Brevard Society of the Arts was able to obtain a grant from the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs because of the new educational focus of the Celebration: the DCA does not give grants for art shows.

The planning started in January of 1987 by setting a date that would present the Sanctuary at its most attractive stage, and offer good weather for the crowds. We were 100% successful on the attractiveness of the Sanctuary, but only 50% successful on the weather: the first day was glorious, the second day we were rained out.

But the park received good publicity in spite of the weather. We hired a public relations firm that provided us with exposure on three TV channels and two radio stations, and put major articles in both local newspapers. We received calls from as far away as Daytona and Sanford, and calls came in before 7 a.m. and after 9:30 p.m.

We created a whole new kind of Florida-centered festival. We had an art show, of course, but our main focus was a four-point educational program centered on Turkey Creek Sanctuary. We added rules to the art show to connect the arts with the study of natural history. (John James Audubon would have loved it! Incidentally, this is a Florida Audubon Sanctuary.)

Crowds were directed to parking by the ROTC. As they walked into the grounds,

they passed the food concessions on their way to the outdoor art exhibits. Inside the Community Center were arts and crafts demonstrations: a potter throwing pots, weavers making fabrics from delicate yarns, the Indian River Piecemakers making an entire quilt top that weekend. The Turkey Creek Art Competition was restricted to Turkey Creek flora and fauna, and included sculpture, photography, and paintings in several mediums, judged by Marion Sheehan of the University of Florida.

The art show traditionally invites Brevard County Schools to exhibit students' work, and this year the displays in the gym showed real discipline, even at the elementary school level. The work by high school students was not only disciplined, but exhibited experimentation in new techniques. The viewers' consensus was that this was not "kid stuff".

Beyond the visual arts, the Florida Native Plant Society, with an assist from Fran Adams of Fellsmere Nursery, had organized native plant sales by four nurseries, including some lectures on landscaping with natives. The constant question from visitors is: How do I make my yard look like this?

The committee also rented a large tent, set up near the native plant sales, for our main lecture series. Dr. Bernard Yokel, president of Florida Audubon, and Henry Swanson, retired Orange County Agricultural Agent and advocate of water conservation, were the speakers.

The other parts of our educational program were also well received. All of the questions that newcomers (and oldtimers) want to ask about Florida were asked that day! Steady streams of people on the boardwalk listened to our guides give their prepared informative speeches. Some of the guides had been recently recruited, and this was their first experience as docents — they loved it!

The local Sierra Club members provided canoe rides (this was the only feature of the Celebration other than food that was not free). More than 100 people

took canoe rides on the creek. We are still getting phone calls from those who want canoe rides available (at this time, they are not).

Most of the people who went into the park didn't stop at the education tent set up at the entrance. Even so, we were swamped with requests for information. Wendy Hale and other staff members from Florida Audubon brought a Red-shouldered Hawk and a Barred Owl for display (this must be the optimum educational exhibit). The Sanctuary Committee was presenting the building program for the Nature Center, the Sierra Club was promoting canoeing, and the crowd loved it all.

The Sanctuary Committee, in addition, had prepared a booklet of articles on Turkey Creek and related subjects for the Celebration, paid for by educational grants from businesses, including one from General Development Corporation, the company that donated the 60-acre park in 1978. General Development has shown a continuing interest in our educational programs.

Turkey Creek Sanctuary has a plant list of more than 300 species, a wildlife list that includes at least four endangered species, a bird list of more than 45 species, and a physical setting that is breathtaking. Dr. Yokel described it beautifully when he talked about the bluffs above the creek, and the wetlands and scrub, summing it up as "Florida in a compact area". After we've hooked people on the beauty, we start talking about water recharge areas, mycorrhiza (the symbiotic relationship of fungi and seed plants), and interacting systems. Until people are infatuated with turkey oaks, they won't care about the environmental needs of the turkey oak.

A sporadic count, kept whenever one of us is at the park, estimates that 1000 people a week go for walks on the boardwalk. More than 2000 schoolchildren have taken field trips to Turkey Creek Sanctuary by the end of this school year. A major realtor has asked for material to provide to lot buyers across the creek, to tell them how to keep their land as it is.

If you'd like to see this little jewel of a park for yourself, here are directions: Take I-95 to the Malabar exit (514); go east on Malabar Road to Babcock Street (less than 1/4 mile); turn left on Babcock and go north about 2 1/2 miles; turn right on Port Malabar Boulevard and go east exactly two miles. Turn right on Santiago Drive and go south one short block. The entrance to the park is on your left, right beside the Palm Bay Library. Please don't park in the library parking lot; there is designated parking for the Sanctuary on your right.