

CONA Newsletter

The Council of Neighborhood Associations of South Pinellas County

April 2008

This Year's Pinellas Living Green Expo Features Bigger and Better Green Ideas

By Darden Rice, PLGE Co-Founding Officer and CONA VP

The Pinellas Living Green Expo started in 2006 with the mission to provide real solutions for people to live better, healthier lives with less impact on the environment. The Expo connects people who are interested in making a positive difference in their lives and the community.

The Expo started with the courage and might of a group of dedicated volunteers, many of them our key CONA leaders. Every year we keep growing, and we are looking forward to our new location at Clearwater's Harborview Center on May 3-4 located downtown at 300 Cleveland Street.

We have now sold out over 100 booths- a 40% increase from last year. This time, we will have even more selections, such as more vendors for tankless gas hot water companies, drip irrigation, roof run-off water collection systems, and two new high efficiency HVAC companies- even one that does geothermal!

We will have over 30 seminars focusing on issues such as building green homes, reducing energy costs, reducing water use, Florida friendly gardening, sustainability, and urban wildlife. The schedule will soon be listed on our website at www.pinellaslivinggreenexpo.org.

What else is new? The Solar Decathlon Team from Florida International University is coming over from the East Coast

to show a model of their solar house. This is the house they erected on the National Mall in Washington, DC for the International Solar Decathlon competition.

Also, the high school students from Lakewood High School will demonstrate their hydrogen fuel cell cars. Our Lakewood students went to San Antonio last year for the International Hydrogen Fuel Cell competition.

In our home building offerings, we will feature a specialized Leadership in Environmental Engineering and Design (LEED) architect firm. The US Green Building Coalition (USGBC) has joined our ranks this year as a vendor and sponsor; they are the creators of LEED building standards nationally.

Finally, the Expo is making an effort to reduce our own carbon footprint! Based on past attendance, we determined the number of people driving to the Expo and calculated the carbon pollution of the vehicle traffic. By working with local plant nurseries and local government, we will plant the number of native trees needed to help offset the carbon created by our own event. Yes - we are walking our talk!

We are still taking volunteers. Contact Amy Hall at www.pinellaslivinggreenexpo.org to sign up! Be a part of the Expo. Mark your calendars for a great weekend to Go Green.

CONA Board Meeting

April 16, 2008

The SUNSHINE CENTER, 330 5th St. N.
Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; meeting starts at 7:00 p.m.

Agenda Items:

Vote on Rays Proposal
CONA Business – Treasurer's Report – Updates
CONA Citizen of the Month
Guest Speaker

Important Upcoming Event:

April 13 – CONA Nite at the Trop
May 3-4 Pinellas Living Green Expo (PLGE)
May 21 – CONA General Meeting
June 26-28 FL Neighborhoods Conference

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CONA HISTORIC RESOURCES & LAND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS ON RAYS PROPOSAL FOR A NEW WATERFRONT STADIUM AND REDEVELOPMENT OF TROPICANA FIELD

The CONA Historic Resources and Land Development Committee was requested by the CONA Board to review the Rays proposal for building a new stadium at the Al Lang Waterfront Park and redeveloping Tropicana Field, and make recommendations as appropriate. The Committee held a series of meetings beginning in January, and met with representatives of the City, Rays Management, and the Preserve Our Waterfront and Wallets organization. Aside from these informational meetings the committee reviewed numerous documents and assessments relating to the Rays proposal.

The Committee's membership includes representatives from Bahama Shores, Downtown Neighborhood Association, Greater Woodland, Historic Kenwood, Historic Old Northeast, North Kenwood, Historic Uptown, Methodist Town, Old Southeast, and the Albert Whitted Airport Association. The Committee is chaired by Will Michaels, CONA Vice President. Subcommittee chairs included Marilyn Olsen and Bob Jeffrey. Barbara Heck, CONA President also participated in the committee as an ex officio member. The full report runs eleven pages and may be obtained by calling Erin Coleman at 72-388-4170 or by downloading the PDF from the CONA website - www.conastpete.org - link on the home page. Recommendations will be considered by the Executive Board and by the full Board/General Membership at their April meetings.

The Committee divided itself into three subcommittees: Downtown Impact, Redevelopment of Tropicana Field, and Financing. A summary of the Committee's findings and recommendations is found below.

Downtown Impact: Findings are that the proposal for relocation of the stadium to Waterfront Park does not adequately address the impact on existing businesses and cultural events; does not comply with the intent and vision of the City's Comprehensive Plan; and is out of scale for the Waterfront Park area. Environmental issues will not be resolved prior to the requested referendum in November. Information on parking and traffic circulation is incomplete.

Redevelopment of Tropicana Field: Findings are that redevelopment of the Tropicana site at some future date is in the best interest of the city. This is high value land, strategically located, and has the promise of meeting the city's development needs and contributing to the city's economy at a far higher level than is now the case. However, the current redevelopment proposals fall short of that promise. They should be rejected as they do not adequately address the desirable density for the Tropicana site, do not propose development that will generate jobs that pay the desired wages, and propose development that may be detrimental to development already occurring in nearby commercial districts.

Financing: the City (and other governmental bodies) has invested significant resources in the current stadium at Tropicana Field. Debt on this facility is still being paid. While the current stadium may be improved upon, overall it is in good condition and has many years of service remaining. The Rays are proposing to pay \$150 million towards the cost of a new stadium, however this payment will be in lieu of future rent payments. This amounts to a subsidy of the Rays by the City. The proposals for redevelopment of Tropicana Field fall short of providing the amount of funds expected for purchase of the property and needed for construction of the proposed stadium. The actual cost of the construction of the stadium for the City will be significantly more than the \$300 million given the cost of financing the necessary bonds. No thorough examination has been made of alternatives to relocating the stadium to Waterfront Park, including keeping the current stadium or building a new stadium near the current stadium. It is possible the current site may be redeveloped to some significant level with the stadium remaining on site. The City has lost money to date in operating Tropicana Field. Any new financial arrangements should emphasize the need for the City to realize a direct significant net from support of major league baseball. Studies reviewed generally discount the significance of positive net community economic impact resulting from baseball stadiums. However, redevelopment of Tropicana Field does have the promise of significantly contributing to the economic and development needs of the city.

Rays Contribution to Quality of Life in Our City. The commitment made by the Rays to continue to play in St. Petersburg and be a positive force in community life regardless of the outcome of their recent proposal is welcomed and very much appreciated. They have greatly added to St. Petersburg's near 100-year tradition of major league baseball. We take great pride in having the Rays in our city. They are great neighbors.

Recommendations

#1. The City should not approve a referendum to lease the Al Lang site for construction and use of a new stadium.

#2. The City should complete a thorough analysis of alternatives to the waterfront for a new stadium, including Derby Lane, Toy Town, and redeveloping a portion of the Tropicana site and nearby areas with either the current stadium or a new stadium in place there.

#3. Even if a new stadium is not pursued at Al Lang, the City should continue to explore the advantages of redeveloping the Tropicana site at some future date, either with the current stadium remaining in place or a new stadium built on or near the Tropicana site, or with the stadium relocated to the Toy Town or Derby Lane sites.

#4 With respect to pursuing redevelopment of the Tropicana site

at some level, the City should reject all bids previously received and issue a new RFP. A new RFP should be issued that includes the following components:

- The new RFP should require developers to offer a clear-cut purchase price in their proposal which cannot be changed at a later date, and directly address whether lease payments will be entertained as an option to an up-front cash payment.
- A minimum FAR of 2.5 to a maximum of 3.5 should be specified. While the community will not be able to absorb such a large amount of square footage within a time frame conducive to a single phased development of this site, this will make possible more productive dense development at some future date. This will also make it more feasible to develop the Tropicana site with the current stadium remaining on the site.
- Greater emphasis should be given to utilization that will generate higher paying wages. The creation of a “mini Carillon Business Park” at the Tropicana site could spark additional development of the nearby Dome Industrial Pilot Project. Uses that could collaborate with University of South Florida and medical uses such as the hospital complexes should be considered.
- The original affordable housing targets of the City RFP should be met. Retail uses should be geared toward

those needed and desired by the future occupants of on-site housing. A new “main street” node that may hurt nearby areas now seeking to redevelop should not be pursued.

Should the City decide to pursue relocation of the stadium and/or a referendum regarding the Waterfront Park site:

- #1. The City should request a significant share of naming rights revenue and profit sharing generally, and require payment of significant rent to offset construction costs, infrastructure and City operational support costs, and to provide the City with an additional stream of revenue that will potentially benefit a range of city needs, and not be limited to benefit downtown development.
- #2. The City should clearly state in the ballot language the full cost of its contribution to a new stadium, including financing costs.
- #3. CONA previous recommended that the Al Lang and Mahaffey portions of Waterfront Park be placed under the downtown Waterfront Park zoning, and receive the full protection of that zoning. This recommendation is again reaffirmed.



**Pinellas
Living Green
Expo**

**Save Money.
Save the Environment.**

FREE Parking and Admission

**Saturday, May 3
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

**Sunday, May 4
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

Harborview Center - Downtown Clearwater
300 Cleveland Street

Sponsored by



Nature's Food Patch • Sand Pearl Resort
Pinellas-Anclote River Basin Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District
Shirts of Bamboo • Tampa Bay Rays
PowerCurve • Sandy Alexander-FL
Clearwater Gas Systems • International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
Mister Landscaper • Mohawk Paper • Saturn of Clearwater • TECO/Peoples Gas

The **Pinellas Living Green Expo** is a **FREE**, fun-filled family event that helps residents make informed decisions and take action to lead more healthy and sustainable lives with less impact on the environment. This two-day event will provide information, ideas, resources, products and motivation to live more sustainably

Over 100 Exhibitors for 2008

www.PinellasLivingGreenExpo.org

President's Message

By Barbara McCormick Heck

Mark your Calendars – Important upcoming meetings.

In preparation for Hurricane Season, we will devote much of our June meeting to really "being prepared." We will have the experts here to talk to you. We want you to take this information back to your neighborhoods. Put the facts in your newsletters, set up a neighborhood policy on how to deal with a catastrophe now while you have the time to work out all the details. Better to be safe and ready now than very, very sorry later. We only have to look just a few miles to our south at Punta Gorda to see the devastation that is still there today.

To honor our CONA heritage, we will be having a special History and President's Night for an upcoming meeting. We are inviting all our past CONA Presidents and city officials to join us for a Social Night of Celebration. We want to share our history with all our newer members.

Hopefully, our past Presidents can take 5 minutes each and tell us the major concerns they faced during their administration. Let's see what has changed in the neighborhoods and what "challenges" we still face. Date to be announced very soon.

As you can see, 2008 continues to be very, very challenging. The Rays proposal, the "glitch" ordinance for the LDR's, the impending budget cuts (City, County and State-wide), the Bayway Tolls issue, the Raytheon waste issues all need our immediate attention. We really need your help and your participation. Please join your CONA friends in "**working together for a better St. Petersburg.**" Thank you for investing your time and your efforts in being part of the solution.

Please pay your overdue CONA dues to April Gausman, CONA Treasurer.



Easy tips to tune up your irrigation system and improve efficiency

Making sure your irrigation system is operating effectively and efficiently is always important, but it is even more critical during periods of drought when water restrictions are tighter.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District offers a few simple ways to check your irrigation system. Some of the repairs may require hiring an irrigation professional.

Inspecting your irrigation system

Manually start your irrigation system, for each zone on your irrigation day, to check for leaks, broken pipes, damaged or tilted sprinkler heads, blocked sprinkler patterns and overspray onto impermeable surfaces such as roads and sidewalks.

Check for soft, wet spots that are always around the inground sprinkler head. These spots could indicate a leak that is being absorbed into the ground. Contact your irrigation maintenance specialist if repairs are needed.

Look for dry spots. They are a sign of one of the following: the sprinklers may be placed too far apart; the water pressure is low; sprinkler patterns may be blocked by overgrown grass; shrubs or low-hanging limbs may be blocking the sprinklers; or the screens inside the sprinklers are clogged.

Adjust, move or add sprinkler heads if your current sprinklers do not throw water 80 to 100 percent of the distance to the adjacent sprinkler.

Rain shutoff devices

If you have an automatic sprinkler system, be sure it is equipped with a working rain shutoff device to override the system when enough rain has fallen. As water evaporates from the device, the irrigation system will resume normal operation. Rain shutoff devices are required by Florida law on all automatic irrigation systems installed since 1991.

Make sure the rain shutoff device is located away from overhead obstructions, with a clear view of the sky and at least five feet away from air-conditioning units or pool heaters.

Check the rain shutoff device regularly to ensure the device is working properly and that the corresponding switch in the control box is set at "on." Test the device by wetting the sensor to verify the system won't operate when the controller is turned on.

Adjust the sensor to interrupt irrigation after a half inch of rain. If there is a vent ring located just below the cap, the vent can be closed or partially closed to restrict air flow through the discs. Make sure the vent is closed so it will allow the disks to dry more slowly, thus keeping the system off for a longer period of time. This adjustment is used to compensate for an "overly sunny" location.

To learn more about how to create and maintain water-conserving Florida-friendly landscapes, please contact the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods coordinator in your area. Coordinator contact information can be found on the District's web site at www.WaterMatters.org/yards/.

Provided by Southwest Florida Water Management District

Progress Energy Florida plans annual tree giveaway

In an effort to promote planting of power line-friendly trees, Progress Energy Florida is holding its third annual tree giveaway in time for Arbor Day, as part of the company's Know Where You Grow campaign.

The company will give away thousands of native, low-growing trees, including Dahoon Holly, Eastern Redbud, Firebush, Simpson's Stopper and Wild Coffee, along with tips on planting and care. Trees will be distributed as long as supplies last; limit one per household.

"Wind-blown trees and limbs are a leading cause of power outages," said Rich Alexander, Progress Energy Florida's interim supervisor of vegetation management. "After major storms, the debris from downed trees slows our work to restore power quickly to you and your neighbors. You can help prevent problems when you plant native, low-growing trees around our power lines."

Colorado State University forecasters Philip Klotzbach and William Gray have predicted an above normal year for the 2008 Atlantic hurricane season, with three major storms and 13 named storms. The season starts June 1.

Customers who think a plant or a tree in their yards may interfere with power lines or other power equipment during storm season can have a Progress Energy Florida forester evaluate the situation. Please call toll-free (800) 700-8744. Progress Energy Florida has a comprehensive program to manage the plants growing around the company's power lines and equipment in its easements and rights of way.

Since 2006, Progress Energy Florida has been recognized as a Tree Line USA utility by The National Arbor Day Foundation. This honor acknowledges the effectiveness of the company's comprehensive program that manages plants while respecting the environment of the communities it serves.



May 3-4, 2008

Saturday, May 3 - 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Sunday, May 4 - 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Harborview Center - Downtown Clearwater
200 Cleveland Street

Stop by the Progress Energy Booth #310 & #312



LOOKING AT POWER IN A NEW LIGHT



CONA BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING MINUTES

The Sunshine Multi-Service Center - March 19, 2008

- President Barbara Heck opened our meeting at 7:00 p.m., leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance to our Flag.
- The current CONA Leadership Class and the Alumni were asked for a show of hands.
- City Councilman Wengay Newton, (District 7), was invited to comment.
 - Voter apathy is one of the most serious impediments to effective government.
 - The Councilman is, as yet, undecided about the Ray's Tropicana and Stadium proposals; more information must be provided.
 - The issues will not be resolved by Council, but must be put before a public referendum.
- Tom Killian, (Jungle Terrace), reminded our audience of CONA Baseball Ticket Sales for the April 13th Game, [deadline for neighborhood group ticket orders will be March 26th. Upper box seats are \$7. or left field tickets that include drink & hot dog are priced at \$15.
 - The neighborhood selling the most tickets will get 4 tickets free.
- Barbara Heck recognized Pinellas County Commissioner Ken Welch in our audience.
- Peter Belmont, speaking for St. Petersburg Preservation, explained their annual awards contest in three categories: 1) Outstanding maintenance to sustain an existing historic structure, 2) Restoration- Recovering the original architectural merit of an historic edifice, 3) Preservation of an historic business/commercial structure.
 - Neighborhoods are invited to submit votes for exemplary homes or business structures in their neighborhoods. [Voting forms can be downloaded from the St. Petersburg Preservation website: www.stpetepreservation.org. Entry deadline is April 25. Awards will be presented at a ceremony on May 19th at Studio 620
- Mr. Belmont also reminded us of their Downtown Walking Tours that offer a guided 2-1/2 hour survey of our historic downtown highlights, and Kenwood Bungalow District highlights. [Meet in front of the historic Detroit Hotel on select Saturdays at 10 a.m.. Check website for dates.
- Jason Diviki made an appeal for the implementation of curbside recycling pickups in St. Petersburg.
 - Of the 24 cities in Pinellas County, only 3, (including St. Pete.), do not provide curbside pickup for recycled material.
 - Wengay Newton offered the suggestion that once a week pickup of recycled materials might be more practical.
 - Ken Welch reminded us that there is a sizable "Solid Waste Fund", accumulated from electrical sales at the incinerator, that is currently available to assist in recycling programs.
 - It was acknowledged that some of the recycled materials end up being burned in the incinerator.....providing some electric energy saving. Councilman Bill Dudley concurred that this might be favorable.
 - Segregated collection of recycled materials is available at many schools.
 - It was agreed that a more proactive position by CONA would help persuade The Mayor and Council on this issue.
 - Darden wondered what the actual figures were for the sales of electric, to Progress Energy, from our incinerator/generator plant?
- CONA lauded the recent appointment of Ali Monsoeur to the Nuisance Abatement Board, a group who's work has become increasingly effective in protecting the quality of life in St. Petersburg.
- We then heard from Travis Jarman of the Bayway Tolls Task Force.
 - Their organization accomplished a turn-around in Tallahassee, on the tolls issue, in just 28 days.
 - They swiftly gathered representatives from many local community groups, established a web site, and printed 12,000 flyers distributed to folks using the Bayway.
 - Extensive press coverage resulted in a crowd of over 500 coming to attend an F.D.O.T. Public Hearing that only prepared seating for 170.
 - Groups as far away as the north county C.N.C.N. Joined our forces.
- Treasurer April Gausman reported that CONA currently units 56 member neighborhood associations.
- We were promised that the CONA "Library" of down loadable stories will shortly be available, on our web site, for use in any neighborhood newsletters. Useful "Generic" texts were submitted by members as well as Neighborhood Partnership Staff.
- Jeff Frank, (Public Safety), reported that limited free scholarships, for neighborhood representatives, will be available for the upcoming 3 day Police conference at the Hilton Hotel. [Find application on our web site.]
- Karl Nurse, (Pres. Ex-officio), invited all to attend this year's rendition of the Pinellas Living Green Expo, (PLGE). [This will be the third annual event].
 - The Expo will be 40% larger than last year, scheduled for May 3rd. & 4th.
 - St. Petersburg, Clearwater, and Pinellas County will each have displays in this year's venue, The Harborview Center on Clearwater Bay.
 - Our audience was urged to download PLGE flyers for their own newsletters from: www.pinellaslivinggreenexpo.org
 - Progress Energy has contributed 1,000 trees which have been calculated to absorb the "Carbon Footprint" of the motor vehicles used, by our audience, to attend the Expo.
- We then hear from Attorney Kathleen Ford and Architect Steve Lang speaking for "Protect Our Waterfront and our Wallets. Their perspective is to save the waterfront laid out by pioneers Straub and Snell.
 - The Rays have conducted illegitimate meetings with city staff based on the premise of modifying their long term contract- which subject matter mandates that such meetings are required to be public. These discussions were not shared with City Council.
 - The Ray's plans and proposals ignore the conclusions agreed upon in our Vision 20/20 series of meetings.
 - Of the 3 responses to the city's RFP, only the Hines proposal states a financial offer, [\$50M, which with \$150M from the Rays falls far short of the anticipated \$450M to build a new stadium]. The other two responses should be considered "Courtesy Replies".
 - We were told that the existing Ray's contract includes "Air Rights" for the city to develop the Tropicana parking lot for other functions. [This is seen as one reasonable alternative to demolishing The Dome.]
- Steve Lang faulted the foundations of the 123 page Parking Study the Rays commissioned citing the unwarranted anticipation that private property owners would concede their parking rights to the Rays.
 - He also faulted the "Slight of hand" preemption of 14 acres of the Mahaffey lot Ray's offices and parking facilities.
 - We were told it is illegal to "Dredge & Fill" along the waters edge if there are other expansion opportunities available.
 - It would violate the Deed of Trust for Al Lang Field to change the zoning appropriate for the new stadium project.
 - The Code Zone requires on sight parking or within 300 feet.

Hospital and USF parking spaces do not meet these criteria for a new stadium.

- ADA requirements represent a major additional "Hidden costs" as building projects unfold.

- Costs of Police Traffic Control, (often a "Hidden cost"), have been rising every year.

- Why give the Rays "Naming Rights". Over the years, they add to an enormous revenue stream.

- The Rays have been paying the city \$1.00 for every car parked at the Dome. When they decided to allow free parking, they stopped paying the per car revenue.

- A comment from the floor suggested that the logistics of water supply and sewerage have not been conspicuously integrated with the Ray's plans for their new stadium.
- In the current Real Estate Market, proposals to develop expensive condos on the Tropicana Site are irrational.
- A question from the floor repeated one in the Times- "What protection of our two sites does the city have if the Rays decide to move or sellout? {Tampa given a \$9M loan guarantee for the Central Ybor developers.}
- Mrs. Ford reminded us that if the city borrows more for Tropicana development our municipal bond rating will decline.
- Proposals for the Rays to use T.I.F. Money, [Tax Increment Funds], she deemed to be a scam!
- POWW urged that keeping the Rays in the Dome for the duration of their current contract would give the city an opportunity to pay off their original loans and begin to see some years of profit from their investment.
- Comment from the floor recalled, historically, that original Dome promoters promised to develop low cost housing, but instead tore down all of the housing around the old gas works and replaced it with a big, black parking lot.
- It was urged that if The Mayor and Council do not suspend Tropicana and new stadium development in their June deliberations. Then concerned citizens should sue the city to slow the decision making studies before launching a public vote on the subject.

- Experiences at Baywalk and the Florencia have revealed that the market for downtown retailers is very limited.
- Despite city claims that there are no longer any contamination testing wells around the Dome, there is still a contract to inspect that concern.
- If Baseball leaves the Dome. the title, (and all expenses), reverts from the county to the city.
- It was reaffirmed that Pinellas County does not want to share any prospective tax revenues from Tropicana real estate development.
- Arguing that dollar costs are not significant criteria in this deep pocketed entertainment industry, we were urged to "Just say no" to any and all blandishments offered by the Rays!
- Concern was expressed that Tropicana subterranean pollution might give rise to a "Love Canal" tragedy if Affordable Housing is developed on that site.
- It was suggested that the \$150M investment, by the Rays, for the new waterfront stadium be devoted, instead to keeping the Dome and developing the Tropicana Site with the offer of 30 years free rent for Rays.
- It was concluded that ingress/egress traffic flows were more of a problem for Baseball fans than simply finding an available parking spot.
- Our speakers from POWW appealed for an opportunity to address each one of our neighborhood associations before the Ray's proposals reach the stage of a public referendum.
- Our Treasurer April Gausman was pleased to announce the recovery of some recent, inappropriate bank charges. Our current CONA balance, exclusive of the Leadership Program, is \$1,784. We have 41 members.
- Kai Warren invited all to share in Saturday's Roser Park Walking Tour of Homes. [There is a \$10 fee for this year's tour access.]
- Our meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Conrad Weiser, Secretary

WE'RE LOOKING AT POWER IN A NEW LIGHT.

INTRODUCING A **BALANCED SOLUTION** FOR THE FUTURE.

At Progress Energy, we're using innovative and environmentally responsible solutions to meet our area's growing energy needs. We are expanding our energy-efficiency programs to help you save energy and money.

We are supporting advanced technologies like solar power and plants fueled by vegetation waste. We are investing in existing power plants to

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ensure their safe, efficient operation while assessing the need for new plants and better ways to get electricity to you. The result is clean, reliable, affordable power – for today and tomorrow. To learn more

about our bright thinking,
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Executive Board Members**

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Frequently Called Numbers

Neighborhood
Partnership Office: 892-5141
Mayor's Action Line: 893-7111
Codes Office: 893-7373

SPPD Community Service Numbers:

District: 1 551-3181
District 2 551-3182
District 3 551-3183

CONA Newsletter Deadlines

Copy Deadline:
30th of each month.

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2nd Monday of month.

Mailing:
2nd Wednesday of month.

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St. Petersburg, FL 33733-3693**

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CONA's Citizens of the Month for April Winnie Foster

For anyone who thinks idealism fades with youth, they need to meet the inspiring Winnie Foster. Winnie has been a mainstay of the St. Pete community for years, and she has worked tirelessly on important civil rights projects both locally and statewide.

In 1969, as a League of Women Voters board member, Winnie conducted research on St. Pete local government and, in doing so, discovered that a law was still on the books in the City Charter that said no black person could travel north of Central Avenue without formal permission. Although the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1965, this law was still on the books. It was then that she knew she had to be a City Hall watcher. City Hall later removed the law from the Charter.

Winnie was also involved in social action politics. She campaigned for Pinellas County's first African-American judge, James Sanderlin, in 1972. Winnie herself later ran for office for an at-large County Commission seat in 1994.

Foster founded the Sojourner Truth Center located at various locations throughout the years on the southside of St. Pete. Along with a group of dedicated community activists, Winnie has kept the Center alive and focused on its mission to promote racial equality, restore felon's voting rights, and educate people about projects, grants, and opportunities for families with low incomes.

The core value of the Sojourner Truth Center is to empower citizens and democracy. The center is named for the former slave, abolitionist, preacher and advocate of women's rights. As Winnie says, "We have to be active citizens to keep democracy alive. We have to be involved. We picked up Sojourner's mission to speak truth to power and named the Center after her."

Winnie has served on the boards of FCAN, AAVREC, the League of Women Voters, FL Acorn, and is a founding mother of the National Organization of Women. Winnie was the 1st Parliamentarian of the statewide Florida NOW chapter.

Now, at the age of 80, she is still working just as hard to promote equality, understanding, and creative new ideas to bring jobs to the southside. She continues to be an inspiration for us to empower ourselves by participating in democracy to make it work for us all.