



DeSoto County Historical Society
PAST • PRESENT • FUTURE
ARCADIA, FLORIDA

DeSoto County Historical Society News

P.O. Box 1824 • Arcadia FL 34265 • 863-266-5774

www.historicdesoto.org

January 2025

This issue sponsored by - **Alvie Davidson** in memory of his parents,
Ollie & Mary Lee Davidson.

UPCOMING EVENTS

DeSoto County Ahead
Celebrate DeSoto and Register Now!!!

SAVE THE DATE!

Wed., Jan. 8, 2025

REGISTER HERE
bit.ly/DeSoto-Update

People Organizations Communities

THE PATTERSON FOUNDATION

For more information, please contact Lyndsey Smith, Community Engagement Specialist, at The Patterson Foundation:
lsmithpf@gmail.com.

DeSoto County Ahead: Celebrate DeSoto — Register Now!

On Jan. 8, 2025, you're invited to a community update dinner at the Turner Agri-Civic Center, 2250 NE Roan St., in Arcadia. To participate, you must register by scanning the QR Code or online at bit.ly/DeSoto-Update.

The event begins with a Community Resource Fair from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. that will "will showcase community organizations, such as our Society, and valuable resources. . . .

Attendees participating in the Resource Fair can earn a gift card after visiting 25 exhibitor booths and have a chance to win an honorarium!

From 6:00 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.,

dinner is provided by The Patterson Foundation. From 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., the program features "meaningful presentations by various community change-makers. Finally, from 7:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. is an opportunity for more networking.

"The event hopes to foster connections, promote learning, encourage the exchange of ideas, and ensure that each person leaves with a renewed sense of hope and inspiration as well as steps to propel positive change within our community."

Member Meeting:

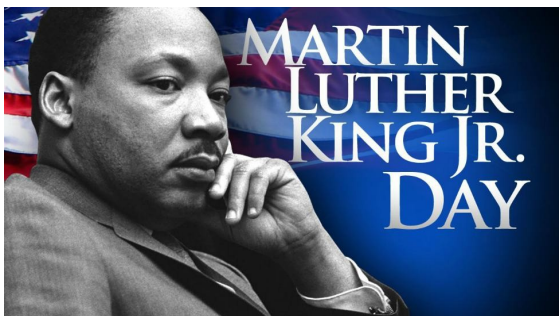
Monday, Jan. 20, 2025

DeSoto Memorial Hospital -
McSwain Room
900 N. Robert Ave., Arcadia
Room open at 11:30 a.m.
Meeting 12 noon

Cynthia Langston will speak about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his effect on her life. A retired educator and administrator of the DeSoto County School District, the Rev. Langston is also the pastor of Ivy Chapel AME Church in Nocatee. Lunch is available for purchase in the hospital cafeteria at 11:30 a.m.

Dues Are Due On January 1, 2025

Please renew your membership at your earliest convenience: individual - \$25.00; family - \$40.00; sustaining - \$50.00; business - \$100.00. You may bring your dues to the next meeting; to the Museum from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Thursdays, plus second or fourth Saturdays; use the PayPal button at historicdesoto.org; or send a check or money order to P.O. Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265.



The annual **Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade** will start at 10:00 a.m. on **Jan. 20, 2025**, at the intersection of S. Orange Ave. and Magnolia St., proceeding south and then west on Martin Luther King, Jr., St. to the Louis C. Anderson, Sr. Park, where a bazaar will be held from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Park. The change in the parade route was made primarily to avoid construction on State Road 70 (Magnolia St.).

DECEMBER WRAP UP

Happy 138th Birthday, Arcadia!

Thanks to Carol Mahler for baking a cake from a historic recipe for the celebration of Arcadia's 138th Birthday at the beginning of the Dec. 3 City Council meeting. She chose a confection from the Revolutionary War era called "Spoils-of-War Orange Cake" which she found on ancestorsinaprons.com by Vera Marie Badertscher. The recipe is actually from a book of historical fiction by Jodi Daynard. In her book *The Midwife's Revolt*, the main character's brother returns home with gifts—including oranges—and she uses them to bake a cake ([colonial-orange-cake-and-book](#)).

Carol reminded everyone that Florida was a loyal British colony, and she gave a brief history of the founding of Arcadia, including the following paragraph:

According to the October 23, 1886, *Fort Myers Weekly Press*, the new settlement had "about 40 dwelling houses, mostly two-stories, and about ten more being erected . . . four stores, general merchandise, all doing a rushing business; three boarding houses, all doing a good business, and still many a campfire can be seen in town," as quoted in "Florida's Peace River Frontier" by Canter Brown, Jr. "There are two saw mills and one planing machine, all kept busy until ten o'clock at night and still can't supply the demand for lumber; two drug stores with a good supply of drugs, medicines, &c . . . [and a] hotel, two-stories high." By the year's end, the settlement had enough population to incorporate as the Town of Arcadia, in Manatee County on Dec. 6, 1886.

Thanks to Ruth Dunn, Nancy "Eric" Erickson, Linda Keen, Carol, Karen Smoke, and Dylan Tyndall for handing out the pieces of cake to Council members, City staff, and those in the audience.

Pearl Harbor Day Commemorated

Thanks to Adrian Cline for serving as keynote speaker and Jim Potter for giving the invocation and benediction for the American Legion K Post 11's Pearl Harbor Day commemoration on the 1924 Peace River bridge. We also appreciate Ron Jones and all members of K Post 11 for organizing the event that included a gun salute. We are grateful for everyone who was able to attend.

Christmas Parade

Thanks to Cindy McLeod Ely for decorating the Historical Society's float for the annual Chamber of Commerce Christmas Parade on Dec. 7! We also appreciate James Hampton for driving his truck to tow the wagon/float. We are grateful to Allie Jane Griffin, Jackie Hampton, Cindy, Liz Pine, Jayden Ricki, and Isabella Tompkins for walking and handing out Pioneer Day Save-the-Date cards, as well as to Carol Mahler and Karen Smoke for carrying the banner.

Thanks to Mac Martin for decorating with Christmas lights and driving his 1924 Model T as part of the Society's unit. Mac was so pleased to show off the car on its centennial anniversary and has promised to display it at Pioneer Day 2025. We appreciate Dylan Tindall for taking and sharing photographs of the Society's entry.



Photo Captions: From left, Carol Mahler and Karen Smoke carried the Society's banner while Isabella Tompkins, Jackie Hampton and Allie Jane Griffin handed out Pioneer Day "Save-The-Date" cards to those watching the Christmas parade.

From left, Cindy McLeod Ely, Liz Pine, and Jayden Ricki walked with the Society's float—a covered wagon with a tree decorated for the "Cowboy Christmas Stampede" parade theme.

Mac Martin drove his 1924 Model T in the Christmas Parade as part of the Society's entry.

A Message From The President

Mrs. Cynthia Langston, a remarkable educator and administrator, has dedicated her life to shaping the minds and futures of countless students in the School District of DeSoto. I extend my deepest gratitude to Mrs. Langston for her unparalleled dedication and service and for agreeing to speak to the DeSoto County Historical Society on January 20, 2025, Dr. Martin Luther King Day. Her legacy in education will forever be a part of this district's history, and her impact will be felt for generations to come.

From the moment Mrs. Langston joined our school district, it was evident that we had gained not just a teacher, but a mentor, a guide, and a friend. With an unwavering commitment to excellence, she has inspired both students and colleagues alike. Mrs. Langston's passion for education has been a beacon of light, illuminating the path to knowledge and growth for all who have had the privilege of learning from her.

Please join us on this special day to welcome Mrs. Langston.

Sincerely,

Adrian H. Cline

President, DeSoto County Historical Society

CONNECT WITH HISTORY

For news from our **Sister Societies** go to:

<https://www.puntagordahistory.com/>

<https://www.sebringhistoricalsociety.info/>

<https://heritageassociation.org/>

[https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/HighlandsCountyHeritageAssociation/)

[HighlandsCountyHeritageAssociation/](https://www.facebook.com/HighlandsCountyHeritageAssociation/)

Manatee Genealogical Society <https://mgsfl.org/>

We encourage you to connect with your roots and discover your history!

Where are you from? Please share links to other historical organizations you may belong to or are interested in.

Contact Information

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Historian: Carol Mahler, 863-445-0789

desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

President: President: Adrian Cline, 863-494-5758

adriancline@outlook.com

Historical Society Newsletter Sponsors

Jan. - **Alvie Davidson in memory of his parents, Ollie & Mary Lee Davidson.**

Feb. - **René Collins in memory of Terry and Evelyn Collins.**

March - **Dale, Patty & Sue in loving memory of our parents, Howard & Velma Melton.**

April - **Arlene Conley in loving memory of my husband, Warren Conley, and my parents, Leo and Hazel Williams.**

May - **Marshall and Hazel Whidden in memory of our parents, Marshall and Barbara Whidden, and our beloved son, Douglas Marshall Whidden.**

June - **Michelle, Dan, & Dow in loving memory of our parents, Eddie & Iris Garner.**

July - **Ruth Dunn in loving memory of her late husband, Rudolph Dunn.**

Aug. - **Charlotte Hill Carter in loving memory of her husband, Frederick Lawrence Carter.**

Sept. - **Marguerite & Tom Hankins in memory of Mr. & Mrs. T.J. Pipkin (Pip & Alison Pickard Pipkin.)**

Oct. - **People for Protecting Peace River.**

Nov. - **Betty Hall Wood in memory of her late husband, G. Pierce Wood, Jr.**

Dec. - **The McLeod children in memory of their Dad, Harold McLeod.**

John Morgan Ingraham House Museum

300 N Monroe Avenue

MUSEUM OPEN:

9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Thursdays

9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the second and fourth Saturday of the month.

The Howard and Velma Melton Historical Research

Library in the Ingraham Seed House

120 W Whidden Street

Open by appointment only:

Research assistance available. 863-266-5774

JROTC Work Day

Thanks to Jeff Griffis for hauling the insulation board for the Museum Work Day on Dec. 7, and to Carol Mahler for fetching Gatorade and pizza for those who worked. We appreciate Norma Banas, Carol Mahler, and Karen Smoke for supervising the students, and the JROTC cadets who volunteered: Yandel Avila, Isabella Ayala, Jessenia Benitez, Joel Camacho, Nayeli Garcia, Jason Hirschy, Laura Hirschy, Manuel Macario, Juan Mendoza, Giovani Orozco, and Zamora Wicks.

We are grateful to Lt. Col. Ron Baynes, U.S. Army retired, for working with Carol to organize the work day and for helping the students to install the insulation board under the Museum. The cadets also edged the Whidden St. curbs and weeded the flower gardens in front of the Research Library.



From left, Cadets Jason Hirschy, Laura Hirschy, and Jessenia Benitez worked with Karen Smoke to weed the flower garden east of the Research Library.

From left, Isabella Ayala, Norma Banas, and Nayeli Garcia took a break from edging the curbs along Whidden St. in front of the Museum.



In the clump of trees growing north of the Museum, Giovani Orozco digs out the guinea grass, and Zamora Wicks gathers it in a tub to haul to the vegetative debris pile in the front of the Research Library.

From left, Juan Mendoza, Manuel Macario, and Yandel Avila stand alongside the Museum before they crawl back under to install another insulation board.

On his back, Joel Camacho nailed up the insulation board under the Museum.



Pioneer Day Sponsors

Thanks to the **Arcadia Garden Club** for being the first sponsor of the Society's 21st Annual Pioneer Day and BBQ by donating \$25.00 as a "friend" sponsor! Mark your calendars for this family-fun event on March 29, 2025, at the Turner Agri-Civic Center.

Established in 1937, the Arcadia Garden Club joined the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, a member of the National Federation of Garden Clubs, in 1939. The following year, the Club named the small parks in Arcadia. In 1948, the Club joined with the city council, county commission, Kiwanis Club, and other organizations to make a two-acre lake and a park with picnic tables and grills. In 1951, the lake was named "Lake Katherine" in honor of Kate Whidden Welles. The Club has beautified many public buildings, parks, and more.

In 1962, the Club built the Arcadia Garden Center, 1005 W. Magnolia St., on the southeast shore of the lake. Meetings are held there at 1:00 p.m. on the first Mon. of the month. For information, call 863-354-0808 or online at www.facebook.com/ArcadiaFloridaGardenClub or arcadiagardenclub2022@gmail.com.

Thanks to **Cindy McLeod Ely** for being the first Pioneer Friend sponsor by donating \$50.00. We appreciate Cindy for all that she does and donates to the Society. We are grateful to **Parker Hall** for also donating \$50.00 as Pioneer Friend of the Society.

We appreciate **Ruth Reynolds Dunn** for being the first Entertainment Sponsor of Pioneer Day 2025 by donating \$100.00, and for being a Friend of the Society sponsor by donating \$30.00.

Christmas Concert

Thanks to Adrian Cline for arranging with DeSoto Middle School Choral Director Scott Bourne to bring his 7th grade chorus class to perform for our Dec. meeting: Jordyn Banda, Dayaire Hernandez, Jordan Johnson, Natavia Moore, Klyia Salas, and Chloe Thompson.

We appreciate Adrian and Jane Cline for donating to a box of specially made, individually wrapped cookies for the students and to all members attending the meeting who brought cookies. We are grateful to Rene Collins for giving each student a quart-size ziplock bag to fill with cookies "for later."

The concert included the following selections: "Zat You, Santa Claus?" "Jingle Bells," "Joy To The World," "The First Noel," "The 12 Days of Christmas," "Frosty The Snowman," "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," and "Felice Navidad."

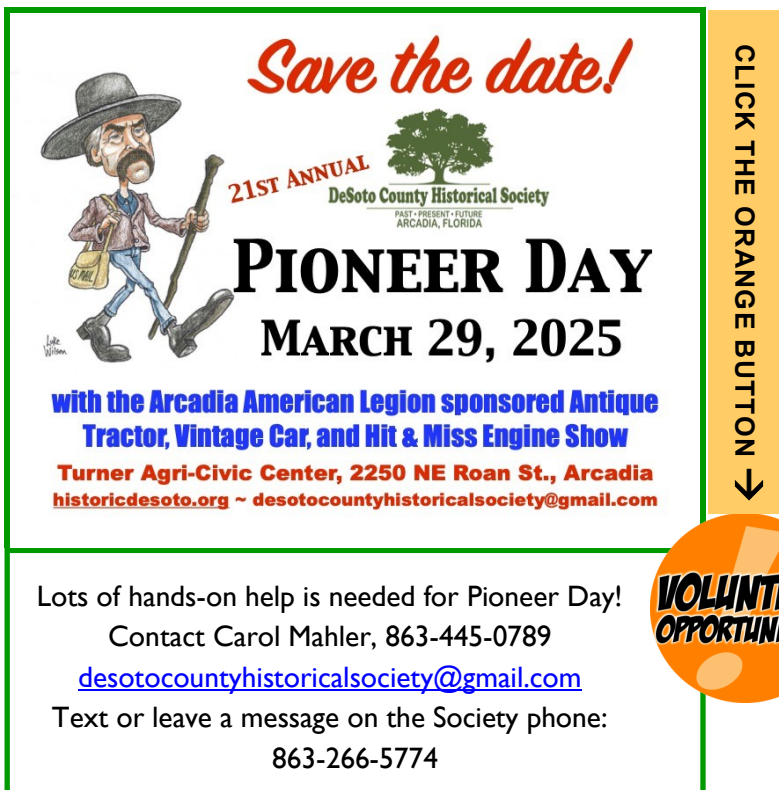
The concert's sensation was a rewrite of a traditional song with a Florida twist that Bourne said his wife found on Facebook (maybe on Matt Devitt WINK Weather's [facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) so with apology to the author for not giving credit, here are the lyrics for "Jingle Bells Florida" as requested by those at the meeting:

Dashing through the sand, in a rented mini-van,
Driving by the bay, laughing all the way,
Tourists drive too slow, everywhere you go,
Oh, what fun it is to live in sunny F.L.A.

Jingle bells, coconut shells, dolphins in the bay,
Oh, what fun it is to live in sunny F.L.A.
Orange juice stands, Mickey Mouse land, gators in your way.
Oh, what fun it is to live in sunny F.L.A.

Crowded shopping malls, lotto and bingo halls,
Sunshine that's too hot, a football team that's not.
When Santa hits the shores, he finds jellyfish galore:
Oh, what fun it is to live in sunny F.L.A.

Jingle bells, coconut shells, dolphins in the bay,
Oh, what fun it is to live in sunny F.L.A.
Orange juice stands, Mickey Mouse land, gators in your way.
Oh, what fun it is to live in sunny F.L.A.



The poster features a cartoon illustration of a pioneer man with a hat, a mustache, and a bag, holding a shovel. The text reads: "Save the date!" in red script, "21ST ANNUAL DeSoto County Historical Society" with a tree logo, "PIONEER DAY MARCH 29, 2025" in large black letters, and "with the Arcadia American Legion sponsored Antique Tractor, Vintage Car, and Hit & Miss Engine Show" in blue. It also lists the location "Turner Agri-Civic Center, 2250 NE Roan St., Arcadia" and contact information "historicsdesoto.org ~ desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com". A vertical orange button on the right says "CLICK THE ORANGE BUTTON" with a right-pointing arrow. At the bottom right is a circular orange logo with a white exclamation mark and the text "VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES".

Lots of hands-on help is needed for Pioneer Day!
Contact Carol Mahler, 863-445-0789
desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com
Text or leave a message on the Society phone:
863-266-5774

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

THANK YOU!

The Burton Family Foundation

We are grateful to the Burton Family Foundation of Tampa, Florida, for the \$2,000 donation! The Society did not apply for—nor expect—this generous gift from Captain Campbell Burton. If anyone knows how or why the Society was selected to receive this contribution, please contact Carol Mahler.

Dear DCHS Board Members,

I was so surprised by the certificate of appreciation for the years of volunteering at the museum and research library. Then the gift certificates to Rosé Cafe, Yellow Deli and My Shelly's restaurants were over the top.

Your gifts were super thoughtful and appreciated each time I used one.

Thank you! Thank you!

Sincerely, Kathy Bryce



In Memoriam: Thelma Grace Vickery Myrbo (1938-2024)

Born on December 4, 1938, in Preston, Georgia, Thelma was the daughter of Charlie W. and Mable (Mims) Mask. On April 8, 1955, she married James Vickery, and they had four children. As a military family, they moved frequently. After James died in 1986, Thelma married Calvin Myrbo in 1987 and gained four stepchildren.

Thelma and Cal enjoyed traveling across the U.S., and they settled in Florida in 1995. Faithful members of the Society, Thelma served on the Bylaws Revision Committee and sent get-well, encouragement, and sympathy cards to members. Calvin died in 2016, and in 2018, she moved to Kansas to be closer to her family. An online guestbook is available at www.swaimfuneralhome.com.



Arlene Conley wrote, “Thelma always had the sweetest smile, and I appreciated her friendship, and conversations with her were so informative. She had traveled a great deal and loved to share her experiences in life.

In Memoriam: Barbara Fussell Stimpson (1944-2024)

On Jan. 9, 2020, Barbara Fussell Stimpson presented to the Society her book—*The Ivey Family On the Florida/Georgia Frontier*—that she researched and compiled about Francis Alexander Ivey, and self-published in 2019. A resident of Lake Placid and Lewis Parker’s cousin, she joined the Society in 2020. She sold her book at Pioneer Day in 2021 and 2022.

As Society President, Lewis Parker (1956-2022), presented a certificate of appreciation to Barbara Stimpson after she spoke to the Society about her book at our Jan. 2020 meeting.

HELP WANTED!

Museum Guides – March 3

C and D Tours will bring a bus of 50 people from Polk County to Arcadia on Mon., March 3. Carol Mahler will present a brief introduction of DeSoto County's history to them as they finish their lunches at Myshelly's Kitchen, 15 W. Oak St.. Some of them will go shopping, but others will ride the bus to tour the Museum from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. Please volunteer to talk with them at the Museum! Carol has prepared notes to help you talk about a few key items in each room. Please let her know if you will volunteer.

Highlands County Heritage Festival -- April 12 & 13

The Heritage Association of Highlands County has invited the Society to set up an exhibit at the Highlands County Heritage Festival, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sat., Apr. 12, and Sun., Apr. 13, at the Edna Pearce Lockett Pearce Homestead on the Kissimmee River near the Highlands County/Okeechobee County Line. The Association wants to showcase the counties that were once DeSoto County in the Fort Basinger School House, so our Society will have a key display—if we have volunteers to staff the exhibit. Please contact Carol Mahler if you would like to represent the Society on one or both days of this festival.

Dues Are Due On January 1, 2025

Please renew your membership at your earliest convenience: individual - \$25.00; family - \$40.00; sustaining - \$50.00; business - \$100.00. You may bring your dues to the next meeting; to the Museum from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Thursdays, plus second or fourth Saturdays; use the PayPal button at historicsdesoto.org; or send a check or money order to P.O. Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265.

Dear Friends,

Here's a check for my 2025 dues for the DeSoto County Historical Society. Thanks for the opportunity of belonging, and for your work to keep this important task going!

Sincerely,

Dale H. Melton

Suncoast Remake Learning Days 2025



Sponsored by the Campaign for Grade Level Reading and with the generous support of The Patterson Foundation, the Suncoast Remake Learning Days Festival is April 19 to May 3. The Society has participated in this event in 2022, 2023, and 2024, and we're signed up for more fun this year, and we need volunteers to help. Please contact Carol Mahler.

At 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., on **Wed., April 23**, at the Arcadia Housing Authority, 7 Booker T. Washington Ave., the Society will present "Sensational: Florida Native Plants That The Pioneers Used." We'll encourage families to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell native plants that the pioneers used. They will sample a leaf and taste a tincture, make a rubbing of a native plant and a starter pot to take one home, and more.

Tentatively set for **Saturdays, April 26** and **May 3**, the Magic School Bus will be a partnership with the DeSoto County School District and the First 1,000 Days of DeSoto County. The Society will teach history through a historic site bingo game as the bus travels from one Remake Learning Days activity to the next. Tonya Wallace, director of The First 1,000 Days in DeSoto County, will lead the activities on one bus, and Carol Mahler on the other.

Make a Memorial Donation

The Society welcomes and appreciates memorial donations in memory of those we have lost recently, or any other Society member. Funds are used for the maintenance of the Museum and Society property. Donations may be made online at <https://historicsdesoto.org/>.

To donate by mail, make your check payable to Desoto County Historical Society, Inc. and mail to: DeSoto County Historical Society, Inc. P.O. Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265. Please include a note with the purpose of your donation.



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ANY OF OUR VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES, CLICK THE ORANGE BUTTON ↗

Please print and share this page with businesses and individuals that might Sponsor the Society!



DeSoto County Historical Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265
863-266-5774
desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com
www.historicdesoto.org
We're on Facebook, too!

21st Annual Pioneer Day

9 a.m. to 3 p.m., March 29, 2025, at the Turner Agri-Civic Center

with the Arcadia American Legion sponsored Antique Tractor and Hit & Miss Engine Show

*Please support the DeSoto County Historical Society
by sponsoring our 21st Annual Pioneer Day!*

The names of ALL SPONSORS will be listed . . .

- **in the Historical Society's Newsletter through April**
- **on the Society's Website for the year**
- **in a special feature on our Facebook page**
- **on the stage banner**
- **announced from the stage during the event.**

___ **Gold Sponsor - \$ 2,500.00**

- Listed on all flyers
- Listed in promotional materials and event program.
- Area of festival (fossil dig, for example) named for you

___ **Silver Sponsor - \$1,000.00**

- Listed in promotional materials and event program.
- Area of festival (fossil dig, for example) named for you

___ **Bronze Sponsor - \$500.00**

- Listed in event program.
- Area of festival (fossil dig, for example) named for you

___ **Event Sponsor - \$250.00**

- Area of festival (fossil dig, for example) named for you

___ **Entertainment Sponsor - \$100.00**

___ **Pioneer Friend of the Society Sponsor - \$50.00**

___ **Friend of the Society Sponsor - \$25.00**

___ **In-Kind Sponsor**

Sponsor Contact Information

Company name & contact person: _____

Telephone: _____ Email address: _____

Mailing address: _____

Amount or type of help offered: _____

Fill in the contact information and send check payable to the DeSoto County Historical Society
with this form to P.O. Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265.