

April 2026

This issue sponsored by - **Arlene Conley** in loving memory of  
my husband, **Warren Conley**, and my parents, **Leo**  
and **Hazel Williams**.

## PIONEER DAY WRAP UP—Con't. on page 3



### Gratitude For Pioneer Day 2026!

Thank you to everyone for a successful 22nd Annual Pioneer Day and BBQ on March 28 at the Turner Agri-Civic Center! From Florida Power & Light, our title sponsor, and all of our sponsors, plus our vendors and volunteers to the Arcadia American Legion K-Post 11 volunteers, antique tractor and hit & miss engine owners and the Peace River Car Club car owners and guests plus all attendees—we couldn't have done it without each and every one of you!



## Letter from the President

Dear Sponsors, Members, Volunteers, and Community Supporters,

On behalf of the DeSoto County Historical Society, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you for helping make our 22nd Annual Pioneer Day an incredible success.

Your generous support, time, and dedication brought this event to life in a truly meaningful way. To our sponsors, your contributions provided the foundation that made it all possible. To our members and volunteers, your hard work, enthusiasm, and commitment ensured that every detail was thoughtfully executed. To our community, your presence and participation created the vibrant spirit that made the day so special.

Because of you, this year's Pioneer Day was not only a celebration of tradition and togetherness, but also a reflection of the strength and unity of our community. The memories created, connections strengthened, and joy shared will have a lasting impact well beyond the event itself.

We are deeply grateful for your continued support and look forward to building on this success together in the years to come.

With sincere appreciation from the DeSoto County Historical Society,

*Adrian H. Cline*  
President

**Fri.  
May  
1**

You are Invited in celebration of America's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to the Grand Reopening and Ribbon Cutting of the Museum at 300 North Monroe Ave. on Friday, May 1, 2026 at 10 a.m. Light refreshments will be served and tours of the Museum will be provided. There is plenty of parking on our property on the SE corner of W Whidden St. and N Polk Ave.

## NOTICE

No member meetings are scheduled for April 20, 2026, or May 18, 2026. Board meetings will be held on those dates.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### "I Spy DeSoto Bus" for Suncoast Remake Learning Days

**Sat.  
April  
18**

**HOP ON, HOP OFF**  
**I SPY DESOTO BUS**

**FREE BUS RIDES ~ FREE SNACKS ~ FREE ACTIVITIES!**  
**April 18th | 9:30 AM to 2:00 PM**

**DESIGNATED STOPS**

Park at one of the designated locations and hop on the FREE I Spy DeSoto Bus! Enjoy learning about local history along the ride on a fun-filled family adventure.

**Events at DeSoto County Library:**

- 125 N Hillsborough Ave.
- Color Me Beautiful I Spring Remix**
  - 9:30 am to 12:30 pm
- A Look Within**
  - 10:00 am to 12:00 pm
- Activate the Future: The Next Chapter Starts Here**
  - 9:30 am to 12:30 pm
- Create Mosaic Art at the Library!**
  - 11:00 am to 1:00 pm
- Everyday Science**
  - 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
  - The McSwain Center
  - 16 S Volusia Ave.
- Arts and Crafts Fun and Learning**
  - 11:00 am to 1:00 pm
  - Friendship Missionary Baptist Church
  - 304 W Myrtle St.

- Cake Creators**
  - 10:00 am to 1:00 pm
  - Church of Christ
  - 710 SW Martin Luther King St.
- Football & Cheer Clinic**
  - 10:00 am to 2:00 pm
  - Richard Bowers Jr Stadium
  - 1175 SW Hillsborough Ave.
- Casa San Juan Bosco Family Fest**
  - 11:00 am to 2:00 pm
  - Casa San Juan Bosco
  - 2358 SE Arnold Andrews Ave.
- Together in Teal: A Child Safety Day**
  - 11:00 am to 2:00 pm
  - Walt Brewer Sport Complex
  - 1347 Hargraves St.
- STEM Day at SFSC**
  - 9:00 am to 12:00 pm
  - South Florida State College, DeSoto
  - 2251 NE Turner Ave.
- Crack the Case with DCSSO**
  - 10:00 am to 2:00 pm
  - DeSoto County Sheriff's Office
  - 208 E Cypress St.

**Mon. & Tue.  
May  
18 & 19**

The third grade classes of Memorial Elementary School will visit the John Morgan Ingraham House Museum on May 18 and 19 to learn about local history through hands-on activities

such as using the typewriter or washing clothes with a scrub board. If you would like to have fun with them, please contact Carol Mahler at 863-445-0789 or [desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)



CLICK THE BUTTON TO SEND AN EMAIL TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT VOLUNTEERING.

## PIONEER DAY WRAP UP—Con't. from page 1

### Hands On History

Instead of handing out our “Passport To The Past” this year, we celebrated the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence with the America 250 Timeline. Each of the 17 hands-on activities was placed on the timeline from 1776 to 2000, and we thank the volunteers who helped everyone with the hands-on activities: Greg Albritton, Martha



Bartenhagen, Steve Bartenhagen, Allie Bear, Coral Conner, Cindy McLeod Ely, James Faison, Eileen Froemel, Kenny Galt, Jackie Hampton, Gene Hietman, Tim Johnson, Elizabeth Kenney, Christian Hall, Dave Hutchinson, Jahna Leonard, Alibaba Lumumba, Katherine Lumumba, Marilyn McConnell, Claire Miller, Rocio Munoz, Adria Niklas, Anne Niklas, Marie Niklas, Paul Niklas, Duffy O'Donnell, Chelsea Palmer, Pam Perry, Mike Provau, Allen Reesor, Linda Reesor, Houston Ryals, Karen Smoke, Julian Stainbrook, Rylan Stalcup, Dakota



Vargas, Tonya Wallace, Keith Wallace, Crystal Walter, Judy Wertz-

Strickland, and Linda Williams.

—All Pioneer Day photos by Dan Sutphin



### Banners and Signs

We've learned over the years the one of the best ways to advertise our annual Pioneer Day festival is with banners and yard signs. Thanks to DeSoto Sign Co. for donating the update of our banners and signs as an in-kind sponsor and to Nancy “Eric” Erickson, Kenny Galt, Ron Jones, Sr., Carol Mahler, and Paul Niklas for setting them up throughout the City and County. After the event, they all have to be brought in, and for working on that, we appreciate Nancy “Eric” Erickson, Dave Hutchinson, Ron Jones, Sr., Jahna Leonard, Carol Mahler, Gil Muscarella, Chelsea Palmer.

We thank all of the businesses or organizations who gave us permission to hang a banner or install a yard sign on their property: 2829 Arcadia, Inc.; Big T Tire Pros; Collins Realty; Crews Bank and Trust, Member FDIC; Elizabeth Missionary Baptist Church; Fender's Auto Parts, Radio Shack; Rogers Oil; Palmdale Oil; Peace River Campground, Sevinny Eye Associates; Sunnybreeze; Turner Agri-Civic Center; and Valeries Auto Sales.

### Loading And Unloading Pioneer Day Supplies

The Turner Agri-Civic Center is a wonderful venue for Pioneer Day, and it takes a huge effort to transform it into an event that showcases our County's history and heritage. Part of that work is hauling supplies from the Museum and Research Library to the Turner Center. We are grateful to Easy Mini Storage/U-Haul for donating the use of an enclosed trailer and to Jeff Griffis for hauling it. We appreciate Kathy Bryce, Elizabeth Kenney, and Carol Mahler for packing up all the items to be transported. For loading the trailer on Thursday, we thank Kenny Galt, Jeff Griffis, Carol Mahler, and Maurice Skinner.

For unloading the trailer on Friday, we appreciate: Martha Bartenhagen, Steve Bartenhagen, Jeff Griffis, Dave Hutchinson, Carol Mahler, Pam Miller, Gil Muscarella, Duffy O'Donnell, Linda Keen, Vernon Keen, Keith Wallace, and Luke Wilson.

After Pioneer Day, all the supplies were stowed in the trailer for return to the Museum and Research Library thanks to Kathy Apodaca, Martha Bartenhagen, Steve Bartenhagen, Kenny Galt, Jeff Griffis, Dave Hutchinson, Jahna Leonard, Carol Mahler, Claire Miller, Chelsea Palmer, Liz Pine, Linda Keen, Vernon Keen, Keith Wallace, Tonya Wallace, and Luke Wilson. Finally, we appreciate those who unloaded the trailer

during a Sunday morning drizzle: Cindy McLeod Ely, Jeff Griffis, Dave Hutchinson, Jahna Leonard, Carol Mahler, Gil Muscarella, and Chelsea Palmer.





## Setting Up and Cleaning Up Pioneer Day

We appreciate all the volunteers who worked to set up Pioneer Day: Richie Ames, Martha Bartenhagen, Steve Bartenhagen, Cindy McLeod Ely, Nancy “Eric” Erickson, Kenny Gallt, Matthew Griffin, Dave Hutchinson, Linda Keen, Vernon Keen, Jahna Leonard, Carol Mahler, Pam Miller, Gil Muscarella, Bruce Neveau, Duffy O’Donnell, Karen Smoke, Dennis Tyson, and Keith Wallace. We are especially grateful for Duffy who climbed the ladder borrowed from the Turner Center to hang the “Hands On History” banner and Cindy who fetched the cream for butter churning donated by Dakin Dairy and the oranges donated by Joshua Citrus.

An essential part of Pioneer Day are our wonderful vendors, and although they take care of their own set up and clean up, we thank the volunteers who registered them and helped them find where to set up their booths: Kathy Apodaca, Nancy “Eric” Erickson, Carol Mahler, and Karen Smoke. We appreciate Eric for camping at the Turner Center, so that she could welcome in the BBQ vendors who needed to start cooking early in the morning. We are also grateful to Karen for keeping track of the vendors, organizing the Turner Center space—inside and outside, designing and hanging the sponsor banner on the stage, and for making the informational signs and PowerPoint program.

Thank you to the volunteers who cleaned up after Pioneer Day was over: Kathy Apodaca, Martha Bartenhagen, Steve Bartenhagen, Cindy McLeod Ely, Nancy “Eric”

Erickson, Kenny Gallt, Jeff Griffis, Jackie Hampton, Dave Hutchinson, Linda Keen, Vernon Keen, Jahna Leonard, Carol Mahler, Claire Miller, Pam Miller, Chelsea Palmer, Liz Pine, Karen Smoke, Dakota Vargas, Tonya Wallace, Keith Wallace, and Luke Wilson.

## Pioneer Day Parking

Thank you to Bruce Neveau and Dennis Tyson for welcoming everyone to Pioneer Day and collecting the parking fee! For helping us with parking, we are also grateful for Boy Scout Troop 39—Scouts Cole Hughes



and Weston Hughes—and Scout Leaders Susan Barnes, Mary Ferris, Candace McKie, Bill Payne, Merton Snow, and Meredith Snow as well as Volunteer Jeffrey Ross from DeSoto Memorial Hospital and Bobbie Mears and then Vernon Keen who guarded the exit gate.

## Pioneer Day Advertising

The Society is estimating attendance at Pioneer Day at more than 2200 people, and we thank those who helped advertise our event, especially anyone who told someone else about Pioneer Day because we know that “word of mouth” is the best promotion!

In addition, we are grateful to Kathy Bryce for daily posting a “thank you” written by Carol Mahler to each of our sponsors on our Facebook page and “tagging” them, and we appreciate everyone who “shared” those posts with their friends and family; Nancy “Eric” Erickson for delivering Pioneer Day flyers to mobile home parks; Nancy Humphrey for emailing sponsors and asking them to share our event on their social media; Carol Mahler for distributing flyers to businesses and restaurants in downtown Arcadia, mobile home parks and campgrounds, and many other locations; recording a Pioneer Day commercial that aired on WCXS 104.5 Classic Country in Arcadia and WENG Radio 1530 in Englewood and talking about Pioneer Day with Mark Anderson on his “Mark in the Morning” show as well as at other gatherings and with other groups; Tonya Wallace for drafting a marketing plan and for making a Pioneer Day video that we posted on our Facebook page with sound track by Carol Mahler with music donated by Vgo who also performed at Pioneer Day.

## Outstanding Outhouse



After Pioneer Day 2025, the “portable” outhouse was declared a loss and discarded. So as Pioneer Day approached, we searched for a new outhouse, and Linda Williams offered to help. She contacted the woodshop at DeSoto Correctional Institution (DCI), and not only did they build an incredible outhouse, but they will store it and deliver it each year for Pioneer Day. We thank Linda for her efforts and those



at DCI who built, delivered, picked up, and now will store the outhouse.

### Society Booth at Pioneer Day

Thanks to Kathy Bryce for coordinating the Society booth for Pioneer Day! We appreciate that she kept the inventory of t-shirts, hats, books, postcards and wildflower seeds—plus bottled water and offered those things for sale during Pioneer Day. We are grateful to those who assisted her: her son David Bryce and her daughter Erin Hoffer plus Jeff Griffis.

### Pioneer Day Entertainment

We are grateful to Luke Wilson for organizing the Pioneer Day entertainment with musicians Barney Miesse and Nancy Miesse; Johnny Shannon; the Janesville Band—Max Phillips, Lonnie Jones, and Rita Jones; Dennis Mader and Jeannie Heroux; Erin Hoffer—whom we thank for donating her performance; and Vgo.



### Care and Feeding of Volunteers

Thanks to Cindy McLeod Ely for asking for and receiving a donation of hotdogs from Fussell Meats to feed our volunteers! We also appreciate her for cooking the hotdogs and donating buns, chips, and cookies to go with the hotdogs.

We appreciate Carol Mahler for serving as volunteer coordinator and for recruiting volunteers from the Arcadia Rotary Club (Gene Heitman), the Interact Club (Allie Bear, Christian Hall, Rocio Munoz, Julian Stainbrook, Rylan Stalcup, and Sponsor Crystal Walter), and the Arcadia Police Explorers Post 1018 with their sponsor Angie Allred (Genesis Clifton, Aidyn Horkey, Bianca Penate, and Evelyn Pineda).

### Pioneer Day Ceremonies

Thanks to Arcadia American Legion K-Post 11 Members Mike Dempsey and Fred Wheetly for serving as honor guard for the opening ceremony; Terry Stewart for singing the National Anthem; the Rev. Cynthia Langston for offering the invocation; and Society Pres. Adrian Cline for welcoming everyone to Pioneer Day.

We also appreciate Adrian for presenting certificates of congratulations to the Arcadia landmarks marking their centennial anniversaries: Arcadia City Hall, J. L. Jones Building,



and Plaza Hotel as well as to title sponsor FP&L for keeping a DeSoto County tradition of agricultural at their solar centers with their agri-voltaic programs. We are grateful to Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland for accepting the certificate for City Hall and to Matt Silver for accepting the certificate on behalf of FP &L. In addition, we are grateful to Carol Mahler for preparing the certificates, presenting a brief summary of the history before each presentation and for making an historical display for each of the landmarks.



Thanks to Carol Mahler for performing two skits with our historical characters: we appreciate Milo Moreno for portraying his great-great-great grandfather James Mitchell “Acrefoot” Johnson and Spring Pace for playing Arcadia Albritton Coker, the



woman who had a town named for her because she baked a birthday cake.





### Pioneer Day Sponsors

We are so grateful to our generous sponsors: please let them know that you appreciate their support of Pioneer Day and their donations to the Society. In addition, we thank Cindy McLeod Ely, Nancy "Eric" Erickson, Jeff Griffis, Vernon Keen, and Carol Mahler for asking each of the sponsors for their donations. We also appreciate Nancy Humphrey for keeping the list and writing the thank-you letters.

**Title Sponsor (\$5000.00):**  
Florida Power & Light

**Bronze Sponsor (\$500.00):**  
Millennium Physician Group  
The Pink Building  
PRECO

**Event Sponsor (\$250.00):**

Adrian and Jane Cline  
Ames Agricultural Services  
Arcadia Centennial Lions Club  
Arcadia Rotary Club  
Arcadia Stockyard  
Big T Tire Pros  
Confederate Cow Cavalry, Sons of Confederate Veterans  
2181  
Cowpens, LLC  
Crews Bank & Trust, Member FDIC  
DeSoto County Republican Party  
Jim and Michelle Potter  
Mid-Florida Credit Union  
MyShelly's Kitchen  
People For Protecting Peace River (3PR)

**Entertainment Sponsor (\$100.00):**

Arcadia Abstract & Title  
Arcadia Kiwanis Club  
Before and After Beauty Salon  
Bethel Farms  
René Collins  
DeSoto County Democratic Committee  
Dragon's Den Books  
Ruth Reynolds Dunn  
E and I Family Trust  
Fender's Auto Parts  
Florida Farmhouse Coffee  
Robert W. Heine, Jr.  
Linda and Vernon Keen  
Cindy and Keith Keene  
Maassen Oil Co.  
Peace River Campground  
Peace River Tax Services  
Paul Bennett Seusy  
Recovery Solutions - Florida Civil Commitment Center

Reesort-Homestay by Allen Reesor  
Turner Realty Co. and Slim's BBQ  
United Country / Gulfand Real Estate  
Luis Velasco  
Wingman Aviation  
Judy Wertz-Strickland

**Pioneer Friend of the Society Sponsor (\$50.00):**

Arlene Conley  
Cindy McLeod Ely  
Parker Hall  
Peace River Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution  
Susan Kuczenska  
Karen Smoke  
Williamson Group Realty

**Friend of the Society (\$25.00):**

Arcadia Garden Club  
Dee's Bees by Dee Washington

**In-Kind Sponsor:**

Arcadia Computer  
Arcadia Printing  
Arcadia Rodeo  
Bryan Farm Supply  
Dakin Dairy  
DeSoto Nursery  
DeSoto Sign Co.  
Easy Mini Storage/U-Haul  
Fussell Meats  
Joshua Citrus  
JSC Roofing  
Kinard's Tree Service  
Peace River Shopper



**Take the Mobile-Friendly,  
Online, Self-Guided  
Tour of Historic  
Downtown Arcadia**

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## MARCH WRAP UP

### Rodeo Parade

Thanks to Cindy McLeod Ely for organizing our entry for the Arcadia Rodeo Parade on March 14. She did such a great job that we won "best in class" for walking units. We appreciate James Hampton for driving his truck to pull our wagon, and for carrying the banner, Kenny Galt and Carol Mahler, and for distributing candy and Pioneer Day flyers Cindy, Jeorgia Sutton and her daughter Dani, and Karen Smoke.



**THANK YOU** to our Arcadia American Legion  
K-Post 11 partners!



### Historical Society Newsletter Sponsors

Jan. - **Adrian and Jane Cline** in loving memory of  
**Howard and Celia Sorrells.**

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

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

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. - **Adrian and Jane Cline** in loving memory of **Ada Carlton Cline, Adrian B. Cline, Hazel G. Cline, and Donna Faye Cline.**

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

and on the second and fourth Saturday of the month.

**CLOSED** May-June-July-August.

**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



## THANK YOU to our Arcadia Garden Club partners!

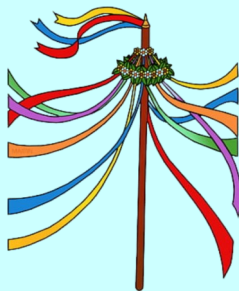


## May Day Picnic

The Fort Ogden Community will celebrate the 131st Annual May Day Picnic on the first Sunday in May—May 3—in the pavilion in King Park in Fort Ogden. The event is for Fort Ogden area community residents who are asked to bring a covered dish to share and a table and chairs. Meat, water, and iced tea will be provided.

In the "News From Fort Ogden" published in the May 9, 1968, "Arcadian" newspaper, Mrs. G. H. Mercer wrote that Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Martin started the May Day Picnic: "Mr. and Mrs. Martin came from Oxford, Florida, where it was the custom to have a May Day homecoming. The Martins enjoyed it so much, they organized one for Fort Ogden with the help of their many friends.

"The first meeting in 1896 began with a small group gathered down by the River Bridge. The Annual Picnic continued until the [second] World War, when it had to be discontinued because of gas rationing. A number of years later, it was resumed through the efforts of the ladies in the [Fort Ogden] Home Demonstration Club as the result of a motion by Mrs. Minnie Barnwell and Mrs. Roberta Thornton. A few years ago, the place of meeting was changed to King Park."



## Appreciation for TPF Donations

"The Patterson Foundation offers "Beyond the Blog" podcasts to inform and engage listeners while sharing compelling stories of people, organizations, and communities strengthened by its initiatives." This year, Alicia Exantus "had a high-performing podcast," so she was awarded a \$250 Pay It Forward award to an organization of her choice, and she selected the Society. We appreciate TPF and Alicia!

The Society thanks The Patterson Foundation and Lyndsey Smith for a \$100 donation: "In recognition of Lyndsey Smith's above and beyond contribution, The Patterson Foundation offered to make donation to the organization of her choice. So in that spirit, TPF is pleased to donate \$100 to the Society."

The Patterson Foundation celebrates the third year of publication of "The DeSoto Digest: Connecting Communities, Sharing Stories," and to show appreciation, "the names of all second-year contributors were entered into a digital spinner wheel for a chance to win this year's \$100 Pay It Forward Award." We are grateful to Carol Mahler, who was selected, for choosing the Society, and TPF for making the \$100 donation.

We appreciate The Patterson Foundation for providing an honorarium award of \$150 to the Society for "successfully completing the pre-requirements of event training, participation in the one-hour exhibitor exchange, and participating in the resource fair at "DeSoto County Ahead: A Community Update."

Thanks to Tonya Wallace and Carol Mahler for their efforts to organize and promote the "I Spy DeSoto Bus" as an event for the first day of Suncoast Remake Learnings Days. Generously supported by The Patterson Foundation, this 15-day festival features free family fun events from April 18 to May 2 in four counties including DeSoto. By submitting the "I Spy DeSoto Bus" event early, the team won an addition "early bird stipend" of \$500 for the Society—thank you, Tonya and Carol!

