

DEC 23
LAKE & SUMTER

style.



FOOD AND FUNDRAISING

SULEIMAN FAMILY
RESTAURANTS
SERVE UP A SIDE OF
PHILANTHROPY

'TIS THE SEASON... TO SHOP LOCAL

OUR GIFT GUIDE
PROVIDES CREATIVE
IDEAS FOR EVERYONE
ON YOUR LIST

AWESOME Twosomes

THESE
POWER
COUPLES
BALANCE
SUCCESSFUL
MARRIAGES
AND HIGH-
POWERED
CAREERS







EDUCATION Leads to Caring:

Local Preserve Dedicated to Conservation

PAID PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

When you're blessed with something special, the natural tendency is to protect it.

Fortunately for Central Florida, the board members of The Holloway Foundation are determined to do more than simply protect a magnificent piece of property. Their goal is to share this beautiful swath of Florida heritage and foster a heart for conservation in everyone who experiences it.

"We want to connect children and adults to nature and foster life-long conservation values," says founder Dr. Rufus M. Holloway, known to friends and family as Dick.

Holloway was raised in Leesburg and is a 1964 graduate of Leesburg High School. He attended the University of Florida and then went on to Duke Medical School. He pursued his career as an otolaryngologist in Orlando, specializing in disorders of the ear, nose and throat. Holloway retired in 2002 and is fully dedicated to furthering the efforts of The Holloway Foundation.

"The goal is to integrate education and conservation. We have been very fortunate to keep this land in the family for this length of time," he says. "We want to further enhance

the natural habitat so that we can preserve it for the future and not have development."

LONG HISTORY

Holloway's father, Rufus Holloway Sr., purchased the property in 1952 to run a cattle operation. The land, which now lies within the Leesburg city limits, later became Holloway Tree Farm and operated until 2017.

Through the years, the Holloway family spent countless hours on the farm, riding horses, fishing, and hiking the secluded trails.

The family formed the Holloway Foundation for Alternative Energy and Natural Resources in memory of Rufus Sr. Although some land was sold, the family retained 80 acres for preservation by The Holloway Foundation, as it is now known.

This unique slice of wild Florida features multiple habitats on one property. There are woods with majestic 300-year-old live oaks, grass and wildflower fields, sandy uplands and three different wetlands. In addition to an abundance of native plants and trees, the property is home to a great variety of birds and four-legged wildlife, including bobcats, grey and red foxes, for squirrels, armadillos, possums, and raccoons.



"We are not a public park. We try to keep things as natural as we can," says Holloway, noting that they just put up a number of Eastern blue bird and wood duck boxes.

"We have planted a lot of Florida native plants and flowers, including a large number of plants that provide natural food sources for birds," he adds. "We just planted 1200 long leaf pines, which are a native Florida pine tree once used for ship building, but these won't be harvested."

Situated in the center of the property is a 40-year-old, two-story barn made of heart pine that was harvested in Georgia in 1880. Initially, the wood was used to build a whiskey warehouse in

Kentucky's bourbon country. When that structure was set to be demolished, Holloway stepped in. The lumber was sent south to Leesburg and gained a second life as the family used it for constructing the barn in 1980.

Through the years, he and his sister, Ann Holloway Blackmon, hosted many class reunions there, prompting their Leesburg High School classmates to call it "The Reunion Barn."

Today, the barn holds some of the educational activities when guests come to the property. Programs have already featured a forester, geologist, botanist, chemist, solar expert and more. Beekeeping is also an important aspect, and the

farm has up to 100 hives on site.

"The whole idea of the foundation is to balance between the land being used as a natural preserve and for the education of all ages about conservation and preservation of natural resources," says Holloway, noting that all planned events are geared towards education.

Holloway and his wife, Leslie, an educator, established the foundation in 2005. Board members include Dick's son Michael Holloway, a physician; Dan Tatro, a resident; Rick Newman, an attorney; Justin Low, a solar expert; Dick's cousin Bill Barry, a businessman; Guy Colado, founder of Commerce National Bank and Trust in Winter Park; Malcolm Butler,

PhD, dean of the Cato College of Education, professor of science education, UNC Charlotte; and local teacher Dan Keeling.

EXPANDING ACTIVITIES

Dan Keeling joined the foundation last fall. As Director of Education, he's taking a hands-on approach to broadening the organization's outdoor and conservation activities.

He first learned about The Holloway Foundation after he picked up the August 2022 issue of *Lake & Summer Style*.

"I have an Outdoor Club I've sponsored at the middle school for the last six years. The goal is to involve families in outdoor activities

and get them interested in nature and conservation," says Keeling.

"When I read the article about Dr. Holloway setting up the foundation, I thought his foundation and my club were a perfect match. I called him, we set up a meeting, and things just fell into place. That article was responsible for getting me involved," says Keeling, who joined the foundation's board in October 2022.

He explains that the goal is for the property to be like natural Florida before widespread development came to the area. The whole farm is under restoration, and this will be an ongoing process.

"Nature is never 'done,' so that means the restoration will continue. We just had a controlled burn there so that is how many native plants and grasses regenerate," says Keeling.

He notes that the foundation is focused on the perspective of conservation, striving for a balance between nature and education.

For example, farm visits include guided walking tours educating guests about the natural environment and different habitats on the property.

It's vitally important to all board members that this land, which has been in the Holloway family for decades, be preserved and shared via invitation-only events. With that in mind, the property won't become a public park in order to limit the impact on the natural environment.

On October 21, the foundation hosted "Fall Fun Day at the Farm." This was the fifth formal event held at the farm and 120 participants took part.

Attendees were treated to interpretive tours and a hayride around the property with a tractor pulling the wagon. Back at the barn, they learned about the chemistry of season changes in a presentation by the Leesburg High School Environmental Science department. There was also a solar energy demonstration by board member Justin Lee.

Arts and crafts are always part of the fun and this event included scavenger and pumpkin decorating with fall nature crafts made from natural items gathered on the farm.

Acclaimed jazz guitarist Dave Sklarowski added to the atmosphere as guests enjoyed games and a picnic lunch under the majestic oak trees.

"A lot of school groups are usually among the attendees, but we are not connected with the public school system," says Holloway, noting that the foundation is open to local Scout groups and church youth groups. Children attending must be supervised by either a parent or guardian.

"We don't accept any fees and aren't trying to make money with this," he adds. "We don't want to have fee-based visitation; that's why we have the foundation."

EDUCATION LEADS TO CARING

In a 1968 presentation to an assembly of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Baba Dixon, a Senegalese forestry engineer, famously quoted, "In the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught."

Keeling says that powerful statement fully sums up the mission of The Holloway Foundation.

"Education today, conservation for tomorrow" is the focus of everything the foundation does.

"When people get to see and interact with an animal, like an eagle or owl, up close, they tend to care more once they understand something," says Keeling. "So many animals are misunderstood and underappreciated because people simply don't understand them. The more informed you become, the more you care about something."

Through his Outdoor Club, Keeling regularly takes families out on hikes and trips around Florida, and now he's determined to have them experience the Holloways' farm.

"People have no idea how wild and beautiful this area is because they just don't unplug and get out. We are going to change that," he vows.

"There's a huge disconnect with nature that's been going on for decades. There are so many physical, mental, and emotional benefits of being out in

nature, so we're just trying to bring that back," says Keeling.

The next event on the Holloway Foundation calendar is scheduled for December 16. Attendees will be treated to a performance by Jim Singsgro, a native Floridian of Manatee Creek (Minkole) descent and a living historian of the Southeastern Native American tribes.

The Audubon Birds of Prey Center in Matland will be bringing some of their birds.

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—DR. RUFUS M. HOLLOWAY

"We try to keep the events really family focused. We have three or four annual events the foundation regularly hosts, but other events are added as requested and needed. The goal is to have at least one event or more each month," notes Keeling.

Attendance is limited due to the space required for educational programs to ensure the best learning environment.

If you have a youth or family-focused group (church, Scouts, school group, or other organization), contact the foundation and an invitation-only event can be arranged. Email your request or inquiry to drkeeling@thehollowayfoundation.org.



Volunteers and interested individuals may contact The Holloway Foundation at info@thehollowayfoundation.org.
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