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Dear Andrea,

I am very proud to present to you, a summary of Friends of Palmetto Island's 2023-2024 accomplishments in support of Palmetto Island State Park.

Over the last two years, Friends collectively **volunteered over 11,970 hours** in support of Palmetto Island State Park. We attracted an average of **45 members** each year. Annually **over 5,500 people** follow the park through our **Facebook** page. We also continued to publish the "**Palmetto Pals**" monthly electronic newsletter to **over 1000 subscribers** each month. Our website, [www.friendsofpalmetto.org](http://www.friendsofpalmetto.org), received an average of **over 8050 visits**.

In the past two years Friends of Palmetto has only conducted 2 large fundraisers, the 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> annual **Stir the Pot Seafood and Wild Game Cook-off**. From those two large events and a variety of small fundraisers and donations, Friends raised over **\$76,046** in support of the park.

Here is a little information on how we spent a portion of the money raised in 2023 & 2024. Over **\$40,962** went to **promotion, events and free programs**. Friends hosted, sponsored or partnered **over 16 free programs at the park**. We hosted our 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> annual **Cracklin' Cooking Demonstration & Tasting**. Both years, 40 locals demonstrated their personal techniques on cooking cracklins and tasty treats. Over **900 visitors** sampled their cracklings, wings, sweet potatoes, beignets and we welcomed over 40 Dutch oven cooks who provided sweet treats. Because of the limited amount of staff at the park, both years we provided volunteers for and /or sponsored the park's annual **Halloween Celebration and Campsite Decoration Contest, Easter Program and Pictures with Santa** programs, which attracted over **2650** people. Throughout the years, Friends is happy and proud to support and promote the LA Dutch Oven Society's **Latanier Cookers**. We partnered with them on **2 'Pork in the Park' Dutch Oven Gatherings**. Each November we sponsor the **'Cochon de Liat'** main meal for their annual gathering. We estimate that over the last two years they have hosted **15 Dutch Oven Gatherings** onsite. By our count, their 2 year impact was...over 2443 guests attracted to park, to sample 356 different dishes prepared by 327 cooks. We partnered with Latanier Cookers to host **2 Christmas Volunteer and Membership Socials**. This event is a little give back to the people who stand by us year after year. No work. Just visiting, eating good food and fun gift games. The **Krewe of Palmetto** hosted the **2023 & 2024 Mardi Gras Golf Cart Parades**. The krewe also offers fun activities for patrons like rock hunts, costume contests, photo backdrops, door prizes and choses an event King and Queen. They had a record 50 golf carts and over 1,000 guests in attendance. Friends often supports the krewe by sponsoring these events. All of the programs mentioned above were open to the public and increased park attendance and added variety and diversity for visitors.

We continued to maintain the **book sharing program** in the campground. Patrons have also contributed movies and board games. We promoted the Park's **JR Ranger Program**. Off property we promoted the park by attending the **Henry Volunteer Fire Dept's Fin, Fur, Feather Cook off** and the **Day Lily Festival**. In 2023, Friends of Palmetto granted \$2500 to the Louisiana Iris Conservation Initiative in support of enhancing the Abbeville Red Iris exhibit at Palmetto Island State Park's boardwalk.

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Founded in 2011, Friends of Palmetto Island State Park, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) public charity organized for the exclusive benefit, support, enhancement and promotion of Palmetto Island State Park.

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LICI has used the grant to purchase soil, pots and built a growing platform at their nursery to nurture the seeds collected from the Abbeville Red's native habitat. These seeds are then strategically place with different groups across south LA to safeguard the Abbeville Red should a disaster happen in Vermilion Parish that would completely destroy the iris at the park's exhibit or in its small native habit near the Vermilion River. Once these seedlings are ready they are transplanted into the park's exhibit. After blooming and confirming they are true reds the iris will moved back to their original native habit and the cycle begins all over again. Volunteers from LICI and the Abbeville Garden Club have planted over 1,280 Abbeville Red Iris at the boardwalk exhibit in 2023-24.

Friends contributed in kind donations directly to Palmetto Island State Park that valued over **\$25,431**. Please note the list below:

- purchased **annual passes, gift cards and guests' entrance fees**
- printed color copies of the Louisiana Amphibian and Reptile Enthusiast (LARE) **brochure**, created specifically for Palmetto Island State Park
- purchased new camp host and volunteer **T-shirts**
- purchased **throws** for staff to participate the Abbeville Christmas Parade
- purchased additional **eggs** for Easter Egg Hunt
- purchased material for **Handicap Transition** from Cement path to the Boardwalk
- purchased material for **Trail Enhancement** Project
- purchased **Microphone stand and PA system** for Meeting room
- purchased **10 books and material** for new StoryWalk on Kid's Trail
- purchased a new **sump pump**
- paid to **repair mower**
- purchased **supplies**
- purchased 20 new **Fire rings and pavers** for campground
- purchased 1000 **park logo stickers** for staff to give away to patrons
- purchased **4 new canoes** and enhanced the canoe rack
- secured a donation of **2 boat launch signs** for the Vermilion River

## **TOTALS SINCE 2011 FOUNDING**

**# of Volunteer hours**  
**62,957**

**Free Programs**  
**90**

**Dollars Raised**  
**\$533,653**

**Spent on  
Advertising & Events**  
**\$280,796**

**Value of Gifts given  
directly to Park**  
**\$179,500**

As you read through this report you might have noticed that Friends of Palmetto, Latanier Cookers and the Krewe of Palmetto's support has continued. We feel the information provided above is a testament to our passion and proof of community support for Palmetto Island State Park. We're excited to continue to be of support and benefit to the site in 2025 and we look forward to working with you to continue making Palmetto Island one of the best parks in the state of Louisiana.

Thank you,



Joey Hodges, President  
Friends of Palmetto Island State Park, Inc.