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# Inside *{local}* March '24



**6**

## OVER 600 BEAUTIFUL ACRES

Foley's hidden gem,  
Graham Creek Nature  
Preserve

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## REMODELING MADE EASY

Local business focuses on  
flooring, bath and kitchen  
updates

## LOCAL FOCUS

FAITH & WORSHIP PAGE 12, 13

BUSINESS & SERVICE DIRECTORY 17

**ON THE COVER:** Head Park Ranger, David Eckman and Leslie Gahagan, Director of Graham Creek Nature Preserve are in charge of the 600+ acres that make up the Graham Creek Nature Preserve. Photo by Linda Williford

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**David Williford, Foley Local General Manager, at 615-243-3031, or email David at [dwilliford@wilcolocal.com](mailto:dwilliford@wilcolocal.com).**





Photography by Tim Noland Photography

# A NATURE PRESERVE IN OUR BACK YARD

**LINDA WILLIFORD**

---

The City of Foley owns over 600 acres of land dedicated to the preservation of native plants and wildlife. Graham Creek Nature Preserve is practically in your backyard. Less than two miles from the Foley Beach Express, with over 10 miles of nature trails to explore. This natural habitat has 700 species of plants, some of which are rare and endangered. It is one of the few places where the Pitcher Plant can be found. The park provides walking trails, a canoe launch, summer camps and workshops for children, an archery park, disc golf courses, and more.

In 2004, the City of Foley purchased the property for the sole

purpose of drinking water resources from Graham Creek. In 2006, Leslie Gahagan, who is the Sustainability and Natural Resources Director, had a vision for Graham Creek. In 2007, She talked with the mayor of Foley about opening the area for public access. In 2008, they opened a canoe launch for the community.

Gahagan holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of South Alabama with a major in Marine Biology. Gahagan says, "I grew up and still reside on the waterways of Wolf Bay in Elberta. I began my career with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management as a stormwater inspector." She is now employed with the City of Foley, where she manages the

**PAGE 8 >**



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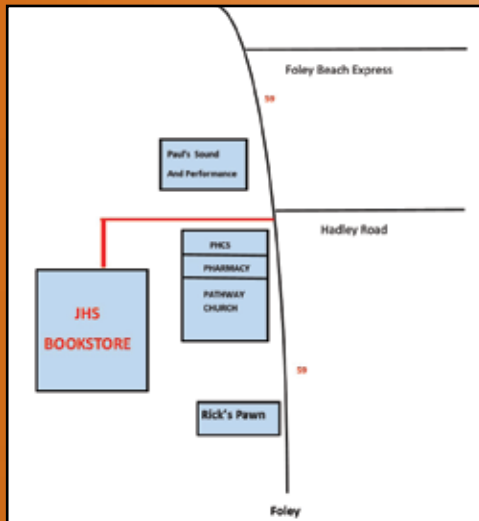
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Photo provided by Graham Creek Nature Preserve with permission from Leslie Gahagan.

## < FROM PAGE 6

Environmental Department and Nature Parks Department. “With over twenty years of experience, I continue to be active in public education for stormwater management and water quality,” she said.

In 2016, the park opened the Interpretive Center, which houses rabbits, turtles, flying squirrels, snakes, and fish. The Center also offers park maps and information about renting large meeting rooms and venues for weddings and other special events.

Gahagan says, “We have over 50,000 people who visit the park each year.” The park offers family fun and activities for all ages. In October, the park has the Haunted Forest, located behind the Interpretive Center on the boardwalk trail. “That is one of my favorite events,” says Gahagan. Her office was filled with haunted décor and props. Then comes the Christmas Trail in December, which ends with a visit with Santa. The fake snow and fog bubbles are very popular. “Everyone really enjoys popping the fog-filled bubbles, even the adults,” she said. Gahagan said that in the spring,

there will be a Bunny Scavenger Hunt and Easter Egg Hunt. The park recently hosted the USA Archery 3D Collegiate Nationals tournament event, attracting many people to the Foley area.

The Graham Creek Nature Preserve has ten employees, mostly Park Rangers. David Eckman, head Park Ranger, says, “We are all about community. We have service companies, Eagle Scouts, and other volunteers who do projects for the park.” Eckman says that they do golf cart trail tours. “One of our rangers will take you on a tour of the trails, but you must make reservations.” They have the regular golf carts and then a golf cart limousine, which will ride a small group.

Along the walking trails, you will probably see plenty of deer, birds, and other wildlife. Graham Creek Nature Preserve is a photographer’s delight to get close-up photos of the wildlife and the native plants in their natural habitat.

*The park is open from dawn to dusk and is located at 23030 Wolf Bay Dr. [grahamcreekpreserve.org](http://grahamcreekpreserve.org) | 251-923-4267.*





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# A message from First Baptist of Foley

“Even if I must die with you, I will never deny you!” These are the words of the apostle Peter in Matthew 26:33. Peter was certain of his faith and loyalty to Jesus. And yet, just a few days later, while Jesus was going through the most difficult moment of his life, Peter three times denied even knowing Jesus. We would have said Peter was the All-Star on Team Apostle, but when the rubber met the road, he seemed to only be a fair-weather fan.

However, we know that wasn't the end of Peter's story. Jesus would restore him, and Peter would go on to do great things for the Kingdom of God. So, what changed? What was the difference that brought Peter from being a nominal believer to a sold-out follower? It was the Resurrection! The Resurrection of Jesus isn't an event we celebrate out of tradition – it is a call to let Jesus radically transform our lives from the inside-out.

We invite you to worship the Risen Lord with us at FBC Foley on Easter Sunday at 8:15 and 10:45. The “Voices of Mobile” from the University of Mobile will be leading us in worship, and we will preach the good news of Jesus Christ.



Pastor Drew Whittington



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Photography by Chris J. Hinton.

# HOME MAKEOVERS

## JASON ZASKY

“We can handle pretty much any remodeling process on the interior of the home,” begins Andrew Lemovitz, a Worcester, Massachusetts native who has served as general manager for Home Design Center since 2022. “But our focus is on kitchens and bathrooms — everything from cabinets and countertops to flooring, tile, and luxury vinyl flooring,” he clarifies, noting that “99 percent” of Home Design Center’s clientele are either homeowners or condominium owners.

It all adds up to plenty of satisfied customers, if Home Design Center’s recent growth is any indication.

“When I started, we had a dozen employees, but now we are up to 27,” says Lemovitz, who attributes his team’s success to a

combination of factors.

“Time frame is one of the biggest things that differentiates us from competitors,” he explains. “Customers are not waiting long periods of time. We also go that extra mile — we go back and finish projects, whereas a lot of competitors take forever to do final punches.”

As a representative example, Lemovitz cites Home Design Center’s countertop turnaround, “which is the fastest in this area,” he says. “We guarantee 72 hours from measure to install on in-stock material.”

Lemovitz, who moved to the Foley area three years ago, encourages people to visit the company’s showroom, found on the service road off Foley Beach Express.

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Photography by Chris J. Hinton.

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“We have a 110,000 square foot warehouse here with all our slabs indoors. And we have a 10,000 square foot showroom with a variety of different cabinet lines — from a low-cost brand all the way up to custom cabinetry. Also, we have a full-fledged custom cabinet shop in the building, and tile displays as well.”

The bottom line is that visitors are likely to find what they are looking for — in stock — whether in ever-popular white or grey, or a look that is trending in 2024.

“More colorful countertops are being used, and stains are starting to come back, which is wonderful. Also, natural woods are becoming popular again,” explains Lemovitz, before noting that Home Design Center runs specials — and can also help with financing.

“We have a couple different financing options, and we have in-stock cabinetry that is 50 percent off. We also have 20 mil flooring

in stock that is starting at \$2.19 a square foot,” he says, the kind of deals he plans to promote on a forthcoming digital LED billboard that will soon be added to the sign in front of the building.

Meanwhile, Lemovitz said he plans to continue to enjoy living and working in Foley, having fallen in love with the area while on vacation several years back.

“My wife and I came down here to visit her grandmother, who was a snowbird. I said, ‘I’ll buy a house, and you can move in with us. And that’s how it all started,’” he says.

Now it’s hard for him to imagine living anywhere else, wrapping things up by adding: “I like being close to the water, and I love the weather.”

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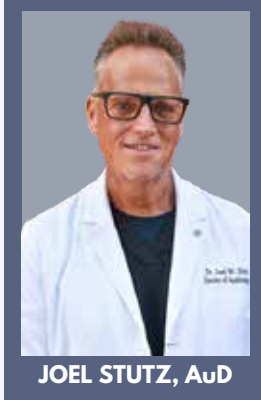


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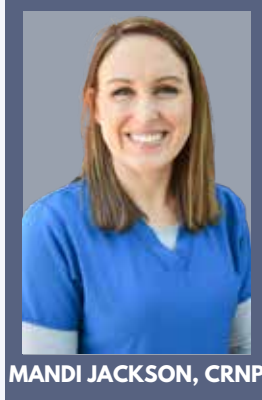
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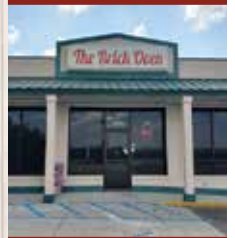
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