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## **A New Chapter for Palm City's Former Sports Resort Property**

*The Village Club & Preserve Presents a New Vision for the Future*

The West Villages and Crane Creek are seeing a new chapter unfold for the old tennis club property at the heart of their community. After years of sitting vacant, the 10-acre plot of land had become a dilapidated eyesore, with many who remembered its better days shaking their heads at the overgrown and blighted landscape—now barren of buildings, with an uncertain future. Through a monumental capital campaign, fueled by the passion and vision of over 350 Palm City households, the future is decidedly bright for The Village Club & Preserve—the organization that has purchased the land and looks to revitalize the former community hub as a non-profit, focused on serving local families through affordable youth athletics and enrichment programming for all ages.

This past spring, the idea of raising nearly a million dollars in 90 days seemed daunting, even to the four Village Club & Preserve (VCP) directors setting the goal and spearheading the effort. After careful consideration, they decided to take the first steps toward acquiring the land in February 2018 with a short window—three months—to raise the funds necessary to close and make the necessary year-one improvements. The most pressing needs after clearing debris would be to restore the two existing swimming pools, in poor shape after years of neglect, build the bathroom structure that would allow the pools to be used, and revitalize several tennis courts.

“Raising \$800,000 was an aggressive goal. Some may have chuckled when they saw the figure, but we saw it as a leap of faith,” said Krista Singleton, Crane Creek resident and VCP president. “We knew many were longing for something positive to be done with the land and felt that our vision of something more than ‘just a club’—a vibrant organization serving the community and meeting a need—was the right path to follow.”

A grassroots effort ensued, and the community responded, in a big way. Through “parlor meetings,” an online giving campaign, and good old-fashioned door-to-door groundwork of a team of committed “ambassadors,” donations by Founding Members, or “Friends of the Village” began pouring in, to the tune of \$10,000 to \$25,000 a day. Early on, a benefactor (who has requested that they remain anonymous), made a donation of \$100,000—to be a \$1,000 match on the next 100 contributions—adding to the enthusiasm and accelerating the giving.

“The announcement of the \$100,000 gift floored us all,” recalled Mark Mistarz, resident of Heronwood and VCP treasurer. “It served such a unifying purpose at a critical time, and got potential supporters thinking that this might actually happen, that the goal was attainable.”

During the “crunch” month of April, giving totals swelled from under \$100,000 to \$765,000, as givers joined the effort. From young families, single adults, and retirees, supporters came from an array of backgrounds and walks of life but had a common goal—to be a unifying force that would collectively see The Village Club & Preserve’s vision come to fruition.

Thanks to the generosity of those Friends of the Village, the VCP was able to close on the purchase of the property at 2261 SW Racquet Club Drive on May 16, heralding in what they hope will be the best days yet for the land. The non-profit plans to break ground on the initial building phase later in 2018, with a grand opening in June 2019.

Early programming will focus on attainable swim lessons (with a scholarship fund already in place to offset costs for families who need it and a commitment from H2O Kids, Pat Toner's Swim School, as its earliest non-profit partner), tennis programs for youth, and a continuing education speaker series and other enrichment programming for all ages. A playground is in its earliest stages of inception, where the VCP aspires to have a local history-themed focus, bringing the rich history of Martin County alive through imaginative play in a handicap-accessible format.

Local business-leaders have already begun stepping forward to lend a hand by offering to supply materials at cost and labor at cost, further extending the budget of the VCP as it takes on a long list of projects: a perimeter fitness trail, gardens, marked pickleball courts, sports fields/courts, a community building, etc. Future phases of the project will be funded through new membership, reserves, directed giving, and grants/gifts from the greater community.

For more information on how to become a Friend of the Village, members who want to further the mission of the VCP and enjoy the facilities, or how your business can contribute to the growth and programming of the VCP, please visit [www.villageclubpreserve.com](http://www.villageclubpreserve.com).

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### **About The Village Club & Preserve**

The Village Club & Preserve (VCP) is a Florida non-profit organization (501c3 status pending) dedicated to improving the lives of local families through youth athletics and enrichment programming. It is our mission to provide attainable sports and swimming lessons, as well as foster community engagement through educational programming and activities for all ages, hosted on our grounds. Membership opportunities are available to those who desire to come alongside us in our mission and have access to The Village Club & Preserve property. For more information, visit [www.villageclubpreserve.com](http://www.villageclubpreserve.com).

The Village Club & Preserve, Inc.  
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