



# Nota DeSoto

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 1



FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

## Who are Friends of DeSoto?

Friends of DeSoto National Memorial, Inc. was created for the purpose of supporting the National Park Service's DeSoto National Memorial. We are a private non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Florida. Our purpose and mission statement:

**To initiate, promote, and support the educational, historical, interpretive, and scientific activities of the DeSoto National Memorial.**

Please visit [www.friendsofdesoto.org](http://www.friendsofdesoto.org).

## Membership

We are now enrolling new members at a donation level of \$25 per person annually. Join our Email List. We send out periodic notices and email newsletters with the latest information on activities at the Park or with the Friends group.

Members help the park in various ways, including raising money to help pay for Junior Ranger camp, concerts, special membership events, the annual luminary walk, improvements to the park, and much more. Joining the Friends organization allows one to help preserve a valuable natural and historical resource, and enjoy a special relationship with the park and community.

Thanks to park volunteers for donating more than 1,000 hours of their time in the past year.

## Friends of the Friends

Many people and organizations play key roles in helping the Friends of DeSoto National Memorial Inc. The Friends and DeSoto National Memorial extend a hearty and heartfelt "thank you!"

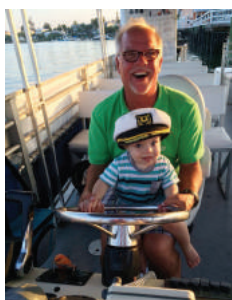
- Capt. Sherman and Paradise Boat Tours
- The Hair Company
- Bridge Tender Inn
- Mateo's Restaurant
- Shortcut to Fitness

## Paradise Boat Tours a True Friend

Capt. Sherman Baldwin and Paradise Boat Tours play a major role in helping the Friends of DeSoto National Memorial Inc. keep its heads above water when it comes to raising money for events at the local national park facility.

Friends need friends, and Capt. Sherman has proven a friend, indeed. His generosity touches all who attend the myriad special events at De Soto National Memorial.

"Capt. Sherman of Paradise Boat Tour has been instrumental in helping fund the activities of the park," said Margo Belaga, Friends president. "He has donated 100 percent of the proceeds of the Sunset Cruises that the Friends of De Soto



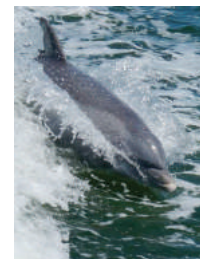
*A future captain learns the finer points of boating from the master.*

have used as fund raising event to help pay for special events at the park."

Capt. Sherman started boating as a child more than 46 years ago on Cape Cod, Mass., according to Paradise Boat Tours' web site. He discovered Southwest Florida, in particular Sarasota Bay and its dolphins, in 1984.

Paradise Boat Tours is renowned for its dolphin-sighting prowess, boasting a 95 percent success rate in up-close dolphin viewing. Capt. Sherman is a master captain and a graduate of New England Maritime.

Paradise Boat Tours is based on the Bridge Street Pier in Bradenton Beach. For more information, visit [www.paradiseboattours.com](http://www.paradiseboattours.com) or call (941) 465-8624.



*Dolphins are sighted on 95 percent of Paradise Boat Tours cruises.*

## Friends Seek Volunteers

Friends of DeSoto National Memorial Inc. is looking for volunteers from its membership to help with upcoming events and to help create some additional upcoming events for our members.

If interested in taking more of an active role and supporting the Friends and DeSoto National Memorial, please contact Margo Belaga (Friends president) at 941-704-6825.

## SAVE the DATES

**Through – Apr. 15, 2016  
10 a.m. – 3 p.m. daily**

Camp Uzita provides visitors a unique look into Spanish and American Indian life in the 16th Century. Park staff offer talks and demonstrations on the lasting impact DeSoto would have on the history of America and its native people. Programs run at the top of every hour.

**March 19 and 20  
10 a.m. – 3 p.m. daily**

Five Centuries of Florida History gives visitors a first-hand glimpse of 500 years of history. More than 30 re-enactors portray men and women from Florida's extensive history. All time periods set up camps and displays with talks and demonstrations throughout the weekend.

**April 16 • 10 a.m. & 3 p.m.**

Be at the park as conquistador Hernando de Soto comes ashore and claims Florida. Stay all day as park staff and volunteers provide talks and demonstrations about De Soto's expedition and its lasting impact on early American history, and the native people of the Southeast.



## February Concert Features Native American Group



Award-winning Native American group Injunuity comes to DeSoto in February.

**I**njunuity will entertain visitors at the Concert on the Lawn beginning at 5:30 p.m. Feb. 27.

The ensemble features a mix of Choctaw and Chickasaw members who play contemporary and traditional Native American music, park ranger Daniel Stephens said. They were selected as cultural ambassadors for the United States and have toured Europe.

The four-piece group has won various awards and offers an extensive catalog of favorites, ranger Stephens said. "This event will be our centennial feature for the 2016 Centennial celebration."

Friends of DeSoto National Memorial Inc. will cover expenses for the concert, said Margo Belaga, president of the fund-raising organization.

## History Lives at 5 Centuries Event

**D**eSoto National Memorial presents its popular 5 Centuries of Florida History timeline event 10 a.m.-3 p.m. March 19 and 20.

Come experience 500 years of history as more than 30 re-enactors portraying men and women from Florida's extensive history fill the park with a hands-on educational experience. Re-enactors from all time periods set up camps and displays, and conduct talks and demonstrations throughout the weekend.

More information on this event is forthcoming, park ranger Daniel Stephens said. Visit the park's web site at <http://www.nps.gov/deso/index.htm>.

The 5 Centuries weekend always brings enthusiastic crowds to the park. History comes to life for visitors as they learn about Florida's rich history. Plan to attend and chat with a conquistador, or a Vietnam War-era soldier.



Clockwise from upper left: Re-enactors representing the Vietnam War, the Seminole War, the Civil War and World War II share their knowledge at a previous 5 Centuries event.

## Luminary Walk Pleases Park Visitors

**A**bout 2,000 visitors got into the Christmas spirit Dec. 19 during DeSoto National Memorial's annual winter luminary walk.

"The evening had perfect weather," park ranger Daniel Stephens said. "Everyone was pleased."



Holiday lights brighten the boardwalk during the luminary walk in December.

Thousands of lights illuminate the park's trails at the luminary walk, an event that grows more popular with each passing year. In addition to the lights, visitors are serenaded with holiday music from a variety of artists.

Many visitors opted to park at King Middle School and ride shuttle buses to the park. Others found space on the roadside and walked to DeSoto.

"A special thank you goes to all of the entertainers like Juan Leon, Amberly, Waterman, G-man, and The Manatee High School Orchestra," ranger Stephens said. "Thanks also to the Boys and Girls Club of Manatee County for the buses, and The Feast for its excellent menu."

Friends of DeSoto National Memorial Inc.

played an active role in the event financially and with volunteer.

"The luminary walk was a great success and we look forward to next year," said Margo Belaga, Friends president. "The Friends of DeSoto was pleased to cover the expenses of the musicians, the cost of the transportation and security for the event."



The Manatee High School Orchestra played holiday favorites at the Visitor Center.



# Nota DeSoto



**FRIENDS OF DESOTO  
NATIONAL MEMORIAL, INC.**

## Walk the Nature Trails

The Nature Trail winds along the shoreline and through several Florida ecosystems, including a mangrove forest like the one that DeSoto's men would have encountered when they landed. Trails include interpretive signage and waysides that tell the story of the DeSoto Expedition and the natural history of the area. Bicycling is allowed in the parking lot, but not on the sidewalks or trails.

Forty-five minute guided Trail Walks are offered by Park Rangers daily at 11 a.m., staff availability and weather permitting. Inquire at the Visitor Center. For tour availability, call 941-792-0458, ext. 105.

**Picnic Area:** A ten table picnic area is located adjacent to the parking lot and is available for visitors on a first come basis. Large groups and schools should call ahead to reserve seating. Grills and alcohol are not allowed within the park.

**Bird Watching:** The seasonal migration of birds brings many bird watchers to the park in the fall and early spring. The exact timing of migration is dependent upon weather. Come to our visitor center and inquire what new and rare birds have been sighted recently at DeSoto National Memorial.

**Camping:** DeSoto National Memorial has no facilities for camping. The park grounds are closed from sunset to sunrise.

**Beach:** Several small beaches are located within the park. The DeSoto Point Beach is located west of DeSoto Point and northwest of the Visitor Center. This beach is exposed to the current of the Manatee River and the waves of Tampa Bay. The Cove Beach located on the south side of DeSoto Point and is more popular because it is sheltered from most current and waves. No life guards are on duty. Swimmers use park beaches at their own risk.

**Fishing:** Fishing with rod and reel is allowed within the park with a valid Florida drivers license and valid State of Florida fishing license. Fishermen are not allowed to stand on rip rap or to clear brush from any area in order to gain access to the water. For questions of licensure and eligibility please visit <http://myfwc.com/license/>

**Boating:** The Cove is a popular temporary anchorage for small pleasure boats. Canoes and kayaks may be launched and carried to the water by hand. They can be launched from the park beaches provided that vegetation, terrain, and wildlife is not disturbed. Loud motors and the creation of excessive wave action is prohibited.

**Dogs:** Dogs are permitted within the park only when on a hand held leash. For all of our dog walkers and four legged friends make sure to come to our Dog Days at DeSoto event held annually in March.

**Exhibits:** The Visitor Center includes stunning displays of historic armor, weapons, and related period items. Helmets and armor are available to try on.

**Theater:** Our newly re-modeled theater and museum features a wide array of exhibits of Spanish and Native American artifacts. The new museum exhibits are designed to be rotating with new items and art that will be displayed periodically. Our theater shows our parks film Hernando DeSoto in America throughout the year. During season the film is shown on a time schedule to coincide with scheduled living history programs.

**Bookstore:** The bookstore features an excellent selection of books about the DeSoto Expedition and the Native American cultures encountered, as well as keepsakes to remember your visit by. Some items may be ordered on-line.

**Other Amenities:** Modern restrooms and a drinking fountain and a dog drinking fountain are available in the Visitor Center.

There are no entry fees for the park or the Visitor Center.

## Contact Information

### Mailing Address:

Friends of DeSoto National Memorial, Inc.  
P.O. Box 14422, Bradenton, FL 34280-4422

**Email:** [info@friendsofdesoto.org](mailto:info@friendsofdesoto.org)

**Website:** [FriendsofDeSoto.org](http://FriendsofDeSoto.org)

## Donations *How to Support Your National Parks*

**T**he National Park Service appreciates your support in the form of visitation and donations. Your donations directly contribute to the services and features you enjoy at DeSoto National Memorial. Donation money supports the maintenance of our nature trails and boardwalk, they fund many of our special events like our living history programs and holiday events, and they support many of our youth programs like Junior Ranger Summer Camp.

There are several ways you and your family can make a donation to DeSoto National Memorial or the National Park Service. These options include: on-line giving through our friends group and cooperating associations, Memorial gifts for living or deceased family or friends, Wedding party favors or gifts, holiday gift, and wills and bequests.

Your donation and gifts will be greatly appreciated and be given direct recognition if you and your family desires. You have the option to give anonymously as well. Recognition of your donation can be used to inspire others to give to DeSoto National Memorial or to the National Park Service.

You can make a gift to benefit our park either directly to the National Park Service or to our primary non-profit tax exempt support organization the Friends of DeSoto National Memorial. If you make the gift directly to the park, the entire gift will be used for the purpose you identify. No administrative costs are deducted from your gift to the National Park Service. Your check will be deposited in a government account and the full amount will be spent as you intended. Most parks have separate donation accounts for park-specific projects and programs for which you can earmark your gift. Government accounts are non-interest bearing and cannot generate interest between the time it is deposited and the time it is spent.

The advantage of making your gift check to the Friends of DeSoto National Memorial, our parks Friends Group, is that the amount will be deposited in an interest bearing account to assist park-prioritized requested projects and programs.

To make a donation, go to [www.friendsofdesoto.org](http://www.friendsofdesoto.org) or mail your check to:  
**Friends of DeSoto National Memorial • PO Box 14422 • Bradenton, FL 34280-4422**

Shop at **AmazonSmile**  
and Amazon.com will  
make a donation to  
**Friends of DeSoto  
National Memorial Inc.**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Margo Belaga, *President*

Carol Heckman, *Vice-President*

Mary Hawk, *Secretary*

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### Directors:

Valerie Bell  
Joan Dowling  
Art Durshimer  
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Elfie Starrett



**D**eSoto National Memorial adds \$22 million annually to our local economy, according to a federal study of tourism dollars spend by visitors to our National Park. Help the Park maintain the programs that bring over 350,000 visitors to DeSoto each year. With federal funding cuts, the best way to maintain these programs is to join Friends of DeSoto National Memorial. Our Friends group raises money to support important programs such as concerts, educational programs, and maintenance of our Park's facilities. **Join today!**

Shop at AmazonSmile and Amazon will make a donation to Friends of DeSoto National Memorial, Inc.

## Become a Member

Yes, I would like to support my National Park by becoming a member. Memberships are tax deductible.

**(Check one)**

Individual Adult . . . . . \$25.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Family . . . . . \$40.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Youth/Student . . . . . \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Business . . . . . \$75.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Senior Citizen 65 and over . . . . . \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Active Military . . . . . \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Additional donation to help save the Gumbo Limbo trees is enclosed in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

My check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_, (membership renewal plus an additional donation if desired) made out to "Friends of DeSoto NM" is enclosed. Please send membership materials to the name and address below:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to help! (Check all that apply)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Committee
- \_\_\_\_\_ Publicity Committee
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fundraising/Special Event Committee

Print out and mail to:  
**P.O. Box 14422, Bradenton, FL 34280-4422**

(Renewals and donations can also be completed on our website using PayPal at [www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com))