



# The Cuscowilla Chronicle

What's Happening with the Friends of Cuscowilla?

October 2022  
Vol 3

## Inside this Edition

Our third edition of the *Cuscowilla Chronicle* brings you up to date with the activities of the Friends of Cuscowilla (FoC). As a 501(c)3 non-profit, our primary mission is to provide support for Cuscowilla Nature and Retreat Center. In the past six months, FoC has supported Cuscowilla by receiving grants, financially supporting campers for summer camp, providing programming for summer camp, funding construction of an information kiosk, and creating a butterfly garden. Learn more about these activities and learn how you can help us continue to support Cuscowilla. In addition, meet the new Park Manager, Jamie Bass.

## Cuscowilla Butterfly Garden

On Saturday, April 23, 2022, over 100 volunteers gathered at Cuscowilla in a celebration of Earth Day to plant and mulch the new Cuscowilla Butterfly Garden. In addition, trees provided by Alachua County were planted in the new parking area.

Before that day, many volunteers and organizations worked to prepare the garden by tilling it, adding manure, creating paths, installing a trellis, adding boulders, and cleaning the flag pole centerpiece. Local nurseries, including Grow Hub and Blooming House Nursery, Alachua County, and many individuals donated plants and garden materials including bird baths and benches.

The Butterfly Garden is now a focal point as visitors enter the Park. Future Campers will use it as a place to learn about butterflies and their habitat. Visitors can stroll through the garden and enjoy the natural beauty it adds to the park.



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**CUSCOWILLA**  
NATURE & RETREAT CENTER

### What the new Park Manager is saying:

*"I am excited to continue to build a relationship with the Friends of Cuscowilla and establishing a love for camp and the outdoors in our local community and for children years to come."*

Jamie Bass





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## Summer Camp 2022



Cuscowilla Summer Camp provided over 400 Campers a memorable summer experience. Programming included hands on projects, environmental and nature education, swimming, arts and crafts, music, dance, personal care, history, archery, poetry, and civics. Campers made friends and grew as individuals. The daily guidance provided by the Counselors and Foster Grandparents provided an environment in which Campers could safely thrive.



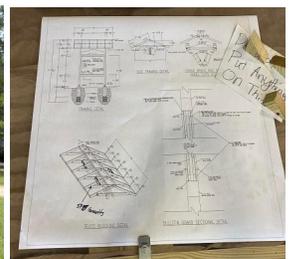
Thank you to all the organizations and people who donated time and expertise to make the 2022 Cuscowilla Summer Camp a success: IFAS Extension, Fire Station 80,

Animal Resources & Care, Kathleen Pagan, Marihelen Wheeler, Alachua County Audubon Society, Crisis Center, Foster Grandparents, Victim's Center, Solid Waste, Alachua Children's Trust, Environmental Protection Department, Corey Williams, John Powers, Kyle Lindsey, Florida Forest Service, Emergency Management, West African Dance, IFAS Honey Bee Research & Extension Lab, Prairie Life FL State Parks, Public Works, Parks & Open Spaces, Lee Pinkoson, Florida Fish & Wildlife, John Nix, Patsy Murray, Barbara Pivec, E. Jane Luzar and Cynthia Holland.



## New Information Kiosk

Friends of Cuscowilla partnered with the Student Builders Association at Santa Fe College to build an information kiosk for the Park. Funding for the kiosk is from a grant received by FoC . The students researched, designed, and built the kiosk over the summer. The kiosk will display a new map of the Park and handouts describing facilities, events, and Park rules.





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## Grants

FoC has received a grant for \$37,000 from Duke Energy to renovate and enhance the Nature Education Center at Cuscowilla. The Center will serve as the focal point for nature education and experiential learning related to the Florida environment at Cuscowilla. The Center will be used for environmental education by youth groups and environmental educators. The Nature Center is located in the heart of a diverse ecosystem in Cuscowilla comprised of wetlands, upland forest, and a pond, creating an outdoor living laboratory. The Nature Center consists of a pavilion with bathrooms, a storage facility, primitive camping space, an outdoor cooking space, and nature trails.



Renovations include updating the bathrooms, installing a fire pit, screening the pavilion, electrical upgrades, purchase of tables, chairs, and teaching materials, and refurbishing the outdoor kitchen. The grounds surrounding the Nature Center will be maintained to re-introduce primitive camping sites and nature trails. Interpretative signage will be installed throughout the area. The Nature Education Center will provide a unique resource in which to experience and study the natural environment.

## Meet The New Park Manager



Alachua County is pleased to announce the hiring of Jamie Bass as the Alachua County Cuscowilla Manager. She comes to Alachua County from Goochland, VA, where she served as the Program Director for Westview on the James. Previously, she served as the Camp Director for the Girls Scouts of Gateway Council in Jacksonville.

Bass will manage the Cuscowilla Nature & Retreat Center, the County's summer day camp and overnight retreat facility. She is responsible for developing new and innovative programming, marketing facilities to outside groups to promote rentals and usage, working collaboratively with internal and external partners, serving in an advisory role for the "Friends of Cuscowilla" and achieving accreditation for summer day camp during 2023.

"Jamie is a seasoned camp professional," stated Parks and Open Space Director Jason Maurer. "In her few weeks on the job, she has started developing fun and engaging outdoor nature-based educational programming that helps campers develop a love and respect for the great outdoors. She has also started the preliminary steps for accreditation. We are thrilled that she will lead Cuscowilla Nature and Retreat Center."

Jamie is married to Donovan and they have a 3 year old son, Brooks. They enjoy spending time as a family with their English Bulldog puppy, Maui. They are enjoying getting to know the Gainesville area and living out at the beautiful Cuscowilla grounds.



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## Renovations Update



Renovations and enhancements at Cuscowilla will be completed this fall. This year long process has included refurbishing the Olympic-sized swimming pool and all of the associated pool equipment. The south pool building was reroofed and electrical and HVAC completed. The two open courts near the pool were resurfaced to become all-purpose courts. New sidewalks were added to provide ADA accessibility.



The parking lot was paved and tree islands added to reduce surface water runoff. A butterfly garden was installed. The Lodge was reroofed and electrical and HVAC were upgraded to meet current codes. In the Lodge, new windows, flooring and ceiling were added. The kitchen was gutted and new appliances installed. Bathrooms in the Lodge were redone to ADA compliance.



The shore area of George's Pond was cleared to eliminate invasive plants and open an area for a dock. A new dock was built for George's Pond, including a kayak/canoe launch. The five overnight cabins were cleaned and updated. The laundry facility was updated and new laundry appliances added. The Arts and Crafts Building was painted and equipped with new shelving. The Archery area was cleaned and updated. A new climbing tower was added.



A new modular office building and a facilities manager residence were added to the Park. New entry gates and fencing have been installed and the overall grounds manicured. This fall, the Nature Education Center renovation will be completed, a new mural will be installed, and three buildings deemed unsafe for use will be demolished.



At the end of the renovations, Alachua County will hold a public ribbon cutting ceremony for the park. Please join us!

## Goals for 2023



Friends of Cuscowilla will strive to make 2023 another successful year. Our primary mission remains providing Camperships for Alachua County youth, enabling them to attend Camp at no cost to them. In addition, FoC will work with the new Park Manager to identify programming for Camp and the new Nature Education Center. A major goal for 2023 is fundraising for the proposed Cuscowilla Exploration Center. This facility will be located near the new Office Building and will offer space for lectures, programs, and meetings. It will also include areas for hands-on historical, nature, and indigenous people exhibits.

Cuscowilla will host the Hogtown Crafts Beer Festival in March 2023. This fundraiser will benefit Friends of Cuscowilla as well as a number of local nonprofit organizations. More information about how you can support these goals is included on Page 5.



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## How You Can Get Involved

### *Join Friends of Cuscowilla*

With a \$10 donation annually, you can make a positive change in the lives of children by becoming a member of FoC.

Interested in helping out even more? You can volunteer to serve on one of our committees.

Our **Fundraising Committee** writes grants and coordinates fundraising to support our goals.

Our **History Committee** coordinates materials and programming for our planned Exploration Center.

Our **Membership Committee** coordinates our membership drives and organizes volunteers for special events.

### *Stay in touch with Friends of Cuscowilla*

On our Facebook Page: Friends of Cuscowilla  
On our website: [www.cuscowilla.org](http://www.cuscowilla.org)  
By email: [friendsofcuscowilla.org](mailto:friendsofcuscowilla.org)

### *About Us*

Friends of Cuscowilla is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to support and preserve Cuscowilla Nature and Retreat Center as a nature-based and cultural resource for all. We work closely with local schools, universities, and governments to bring the opportunity to have memorable, enhancing experiences to all citizens, especially our youth.

### **Mailing Address:**

Friends of Cuscowilla  
P.O. Box 141523  
Gainesville, FL 32614

Email: [friendsofcuscowilla@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofcuscowilla@gmail.com)

### Upcoming Events

|                                    | <i>Date</i>     |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Cuscowilla Ribbon Cutting</i>   | <i>TBA</i>      |
| <i>Hogtown Craft Beer Festival</i> | <i>March 25</i> |





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## Cuscowilla Camp 2022

